

Social Work Intervention in Child Labour Reduction

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1 INTRODUCTION

Sixty-six years after India's independence, our nation's children continue to toil under inhuman conditions, deprived of the joys of childhood, indelible emotional and physical scars carried into their adulthood. It is indeed a sad state of affairs in a country where architects of our freedom struggle, Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi considered children to be the wealth of the nation. The status of women and children in a country is a mirror to the developmental status of that country. And the present status of children in India is an open book for all to see. Child Labour is a serious violation of rights of the child. A Child's right to survival, protection, development and participation, which is ensured by the United Nation Convention on the Rights of Child, is denied if the child is employed. Child labour is

detrimental to the normal emotional, physical and mental development of a child. In our country, millions of children toil to feed themselves and their family members, in varied circumstances such as bonded and forced labour.

In India, children have been participating in economic activities along with their parents, since time immemorial, which has in turn helped them develop the skill required to handle the traditional family occupation. In modern times, however, extreme poverty has compelled them to join the ranks of wage-workers to support their family. India has got the dubious distinction of employing the largest number of children in the world. According to 1991 census 11.2 million children are employed in various jobs in the country. These are governmental figures and the vast majority of children working in the unorganized and family sectors are left out. Though, the Convention on the Rights of the Child considers anyone below 18 years of age to be a child, there is no uniformity in the age factor in Indian laws. The Indian Constitution considers anyone below 14 years of age to be a child.

UNICEF, along with the Government of India, has devised low cost and effective interventions to save children's lives. This ensures that every child gets the best start in life and is able to grow to his or her full potential. But nobody can do it alone and need social workers support. Social workers can become a

guardian of hope for these children today by interventions in helping them. There is a make or break up time for children and make a long lasting impact on their lives.

There is also a striking feature about the regional spread of child labour. Child labour is persistent in large numbers in the poorest five states of our country. This should not be surprising. What is however surprising is that there is a high incidence of child labour in the six industrially most advanced states of the country. This may in part be explained by the quality of enumeration and data gathering by governments in these states that is likely to be of a better quality than in the poorer states. The real story is however fairly complex. The states of Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Karnataka, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh, all have child labour in large numbers. One can therefore conclude that in these states industrial and economic expansion has happened on the back of child labour. Thus over the last two or three decades now and powerful industrial and commercial elite have emerged in these states from the profits of child labour. As a result we have a situation where on the one side children are being exploited generation after generation and on the other there are large business houses that are involved in extraction of surplus from over a core childhoods.

2 SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTION

There are three schools of thought regarding the concept and interventions on child labour. The first regards education as a fundamental right and believes that every child out of school is a working child. It regards the State as the agent of society and its primary responsibility to create the necessary infrastructure for facilitating free, compulsory and universal access to primary as well as elementary education. This school of thought does not make a distinction between hazardous and non-hazardous occupations. As a matter of fact, what do hazardous and non-hazardous mean? Many occupations are “non-hazardous” by law, but in reality highly harmful. The definition of hazardous only reflects physical harm to the child but children who do not have opportunities for self-development are harmed in other ways. This categorization is against the very principles of child rights.

The second school of thought appreciates the magnitude of the problem and the constraints of the State in ensuring immediate access to education for all children. The school advocates a gradual, sequential and selective approach by first dealing with children employed in hazardous processes. For providing them with education and training to rehabilitate them, they advocate a step-by-step approach and not a sudden and overnight approach.

The third school of thought takes a completely different stand. Its proponents believe that the state has failed in its duties

of providing education, incentives to poor parents and in creating an ambient atmosphere for the children to learn. They advocate leaving the choice to children at the same time providing them with a congenial and flexible environment that provides them with quality education or a comfortable working environment and the freedom to choose.

The approaches range from "Decision with the adults, of immediate withdrawal; to decision with the children, of whether to work or not". In fact all intervention strategies are somewhere along the line. Is the child being addressed or the cause? Whatever strategy is to be adopted, it should impact at least the most apparent cause of child labour. The strategy must be guided by the factors that lead that particular group of children into the labour force. We also need to remember that in trying to give back children their childhood, we do not impose adulthood on them.

2.1 Social Work Intervention Approaches

2.1.1 Consciousness on education

Support to programmes to improve the access to and quality of elementary education, awareness building, campaign and advocacy programmes on school enrolment, retention, levels of learning support to educational infrastructure, trainings and inputs into improved methodologies, support to early childhood care and

education programmes, experimentation and innovations in education and so on. Most agencies have combined support to specific micro level projects with support to campaigns, advocacy and policy interventions though there have been differences in emphasis.

Almost in all the households with children in the age group of 6-14 years, children responded that they enjoyed going to school. Awareness has been created in the child labourers and hence 48 percent of the respondents including 42 males and females accepted to go to school. Only two children responded that they never go to school as they do not have interest at all. Majority of the children realized the immense importance of going to school for becoming educated. Others responded that it was necessary for getting employment and for better future. However, 21 percent respondent children told that teachers did not take interest in teaching Others cited problems of sitting arrangement and drinking water.

About 53 percent of the fathers and 63 per cent of mothers of the respondents responded that it is necessary to educate the girl children. On the contrary 47 per cent fathers and 37 per cent of mothers of the respondents were of the view that it was not necessary to educate the children. According to them, the girl child would not go in the employment and that they had to take

care of house and children. All others responded that it was necessary to educate the girl child, so that: (i) they will have better future, (ii) they can read and write, (iii) getting marriage will be easier and (iv) they will have better married life. They did not send their children to the school owing to economic reasons and they want to send only boys to the school and not the girls. They told that they could not realize the importance of educating the girl child and that the economic problems were also behind it.

2.1.2 Preventing the Use of Child Labourers

Preventing and eliminating child labouring superseded by the elimination of conflicts that create environments where the use of child labourers seems expedient. Children are used because they are "cheap, effective and obedient fighters". They also are easy to exploit and are sometimes more fearless and cruel in their actions in combat than adults. Therefore, to prevent the use of child labourers, resolution of the conflict must be one of the highest priorities in addressing the use of child labourers. Historically, many social workers have been openly pacifist, and have been vocal in their opposition to child labour.

Resolution is the best way to prevent the use of child labourers this is not always possible. The most important question to consider then is "why do some groups recruit (children and not others?" The most difficult aspect of addressing the issue of child

labourers is dealing with the root causes. Some of the contributing factors to the use of child labourers include lack of employment opportunities, poor educational opportunities, social exclusion apart from poverty. pecuniary difficulties, domestic entanglements, soaring prices of cost of living etc. However, these factors are present in many situations where children are used as labourers. Because social work views people within their environment, and interventions are those that will work to transform the system as a whole, social workers are able to seek out the answer to why some groups use children as labourers and others do not. Education

concerning the ethics of exploiting children and their lifelong consequences also falls within the rubric of social work values.

There are many areas within the profession of social work that can be further developed to prevent the exploitation of children as labourers and the care for child labourers. Enough trained social workers are to be involved with the issue of child laboring. Social workers could relocate temporarily to areas of greatest need to assist the children and communities, and also to train local people in working with children and communities. In the long-term, schools of social works should be developed further in order to support the vast need of the people. Capacity could be developed in local communities through technology,

where available. Where technology is available, local people selected for their leadership abilities could be educated through long distance learning approaches, perhaps utilizing the train the trainer models, to teach others in their community.

2.1.3 Awareness generation

Awareness programmes among the community and the general public including political leadership and government functionaries at various levels and attempts to target employers and trade unions have been conducted and found overwhelming response.

2.1.4 Services to working children

Services on education, health care, nutrition reintegration in to schools, bridge schools, support education, organization of working children, skill training, saving programmes, recreational activities, theatre programmes, legal assistance and so on have been extended.

2.1.5 Services to community

Community development services such as economic empowerment programmes like savings and credit activities, entrepreneur development, assistance to individual business, agriculture inputs and assistance land and water development programmes, organization of women's groups, youth groups and farmers associations have been organized.

2.1.6 Privacy

The right to privacy of the children should be upheld at all times and in all situations, especially of the girl child. Children will not be asked to disclose any personal information against their wish. There should be separate sleeping arrangements and toilets for girls, in case of overnight stay or in residential complexes. Sheltered toilets have been advised to provide.

2.2 Intervention in Protection of Child Labourers

Protection to child labourers is imperative for their physical, mental and overall development and the development of the society. The physical protection, psychological protection and mental protection, media related protection have been provided.

2.2.1 Physical Protection

Through NGOs have been requested and assigned the task of giving children all forms of physical safety (including protection from sexual abuse) and security.

- They should be protected from nature's extremes- heat and cold.
- They should be protected from snakebites, poisonous insects. etc, by providing them with adequate protective gear.
- Children should be given healthy, nutritious and filling diets and safe drinking water.

- Children should be provided regular medical check-ups and necessary medication (if required).
- The staff/ chaperon should have adequate knowledge of first-aid.

The police authorities have been consulted and personally prevailed upon in the presence of advocates for protection child labour of both the sexes in the event of physical be labouring and abuse and sexual harassment of girl child.

2.2.2 Psychological Mental Protection

A series of meetings have been convened with the help of psychiatrists and psychologists for copious counseling and eliminating fears gripped the bodies of the child labourers. The psychological health of a child should be maintained in all conditions and efforts should be made to enhance the mental well-being of a child, especially those that have undergone any form of exploitation, mental, physical, or economical.

- The staff chaperons/ warden/ teachers and all responsible for and interacting with children should maintain dignity and respect in their behaviour (verbal and non-verbal) towards both boys and girls.
- Care must be taken to use proper language (non-abusive, non-defamatory and non-hurting)

2.2.3 Moral Protection

Moral rights and dignity of the children should be protected. Hence a limited number of meetings have been organized with the Aid of media people and local NGOs.

- Children should not be humiliated and caused pain because of their background
- Children should not be compelled to narrate their personal stories of abuse and exploitation against their wish.
- Self-esteem and dignity of the children should be upheld at all times and children should not be pitied because of their conditions.

Children should not be discrimination or humiliated because of any physical disabilities. Special attention should be paid to child with special (physical) needs particularly during their travel and stay.

2.2.4 Media Related Child Protection

The child shall have the right to freedom of expression, this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice. The exercise of this right to expression may be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary:

- For respect of the rights or reputations of others

- For the protection of national security or of public order, or of public health or morals. Children can anticipate an environment in which these principles will be adhered to.

Journalists will acknowledge that freedom of speech can be maintained while taking into account the rights of children. Journalists will respect the sensitive nature of the child labour issue and avoid sensationalizing their coverage of any event and its participants. Particularly in cases where the worst forms of child labour are being discussed, journalists will exercise discretion when reporting on the sexual and economic exploitation of children. Press will allow children to express their thoughts without coercion, payment or manipulation of their statements in any way. Fact checking done in conjunction with stories about child labourers will be done in such a way that children will not suffer repercussions for voicing their opinions.

2.2.5 Complaints and Redressal Procedure

The interaction with the police personnel the child labourers are informed to give complaint against their atrocities, humiliation, sexual abuse, physical torture etc. The children have been informed about their rights of participation and protection regularly for them to make informed choices.

- The democratic elected children's groups will have an ongoing task to observe and maintain child protection and participation at all levels.
- Children should be empowered and encouraged to express themselves fearlessly without any interference from adults.
- Children should be given space and opportunities to share their views and concerns regarding their safety, security and dignity with authorities who are responsible for them.
- Adequate avenues should be provided to children to air their grievances, and the advice of child specialist i psychologist would be sought (if required). Further, necessary counselling would be provided to children.
- The Team Leader, Project Head, management committee or the organization board may take cognizance and adequate action would be taken according the gravity and urgency of the issue.

2.3 The Role of Social Work in Response

Social work can play a significant role in addressing the issue of child labourers in individual countries as well as worldwide. Social workers can be involved in prevention and aftercare, in addressing the circumstances that cause children to be exploited, and contributing to the research and subsequent solutions to addressing root causes of the problem. A systems theory

approach, which seeks to deal with the problem at all levels, is necessary to create a holistic and systematic approach to ending the use of child labourers. Social workers specialize in working on this type of comprehensive change, and are particularly suited to combating problems at all levels.

2.3.1 Children's Participation in decision-making

Institutionalizing the concept of children's participation and that they need to have their own space is not easy. It is a constant battle with one's mental blocks among adults to truly give children right to freedom of self-expression and the right to form associations. Bal Sabha forms the core of our programme. It has helped in refining our programme interventions, in the process of organizing children and creating a forum where they can speak, share their ideas as well as critique the programmes and orientation of the organization. Further, children also learn the principles of democracy. In fact at one of the meetings of Bal Mazdoor Union (BMU), it was decided that representatives of the BMU would accompany street educators whenever they go to meet police or municipal corporation officials on issues related to them. The reason for this decision was that street educators quite often did not share the information on the outcome of the meeting soon enough. The practice was to share the information whenever a meeting of children took place.

2.3.2. Conducting Bal Mazdoor Union

The direct outcome of having the Bal Sabha (Children's Council) has been the formation of a Child Worker's Union. One of the major problems faced by street children is harassment from police, licensed coolies and shopkeepers. Quite often children are beaten up on false charges of theft and street brawls. They are also booked on false charges and remanded either to a special home Jail (the latter is done by hiking their ages to 17).

The Bal Mazdoor Union sees itself as a collective of street and working children. It is a platform of and for children who are denied their access to basic rights, which have been guaranteed to each and every child in India by the Constitution of our country and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which has been ratified by the Government of India. The Union seeks to educate and conscientious children regarding their rights both as children and as workers. It is important to point out that the Union is concerned about the situations of abuse and/or denial of access to basic fundamental rights, such as the right to education, right to recreation and leisure, right to respect and opportunities, right to shelter and health care, right to be protected from exploitation and oppression and the right to demand and implementation of all legislation's relating to the protection of children and their rights

with regard to all children, especially the disadvantaged and the most vulnerable.

Those who opposed the unionization of child workers do so because: 'They believe that (a) children are not mature enough to discuss and decide on issues pertaining to their lives, (b) unionization, in fact, legalizes and institutionalizes child labour, and (c) it is an unnecessary effort to politicize children. It is ironic that children are not considered “minor “ when they are forced to do adult jobs including working in hazardous occupation (match factories, fireworks, glass, gem polishing, lock, industry, mines, constructions and carpet industry) besides, they also work longer hours than adults and are paid less wages. Some of these children are the breadwinners of their families. However, when it comes to giving them power to make their own decisions they are suddenly seen as incapable and being too young to shoulder their responsibility. Convention on the rights of the children is a clear opportunity to the government, NGOs and the society at large to begin seeing children as individuals with citizenship rights like any other citizen and not merely as objects of charity and philanthropy. Our commitment should be to empower the children with the knowledge of their rights and equip them to protect their rights while the society ensures an environment that will facilitate the protection of all rights of all children.

2.4 Individual and Group Intervention

There are several mental health impacts on child labourers that are predictable. Using the indicators, the abusers engaged in corrupting the children, terrorizing them, isolating them, and disciplining them in a psychologically abusive way. Isolation is identified as the most damaging of the four indicators, but each of them prevents children from completing the tasks they need to in order to develop their identities and contribute positively to their community. The emotional consequences for the majority of the children interviewed included sad moods, preoccupations, suicidal thoughts and fears. Most of them experienced loss in relation to the death of members of their family and social status as a result of their actions. Some felt they had lost educational opportunity, but others felt they had gained educational opportunity, and some felt they had lost friendships while others felt they had gained friendships. While children experienced developmental, psychological, and mental consequences, in my brief search in the literature I found none exploring their specific experience. In any case, it is common in all countries for returning child labourers to be rejected by their families and communities who fear their violent behavior. There is a universal need for the rehabilitation of these children, their families and their communities. This is the purview of social workers.

2.4.1 Macro Practice and Political Advocacy

Another area in which social workers can become involved is advocacy on a national and international level. This includes organizing people in the countries that s atrocity, as well as using the networks we have to organize advocacy efforts. Areas that need advocacy include

- Funding for rehabilitation and reintegration, not only disarmament and demobilization on national and international levels. This rehabilitation must also be provided for communities which have endured violence and those from which children have become labourers. Economic development, access to quality education and vocational training (International Labour Organization, 2003), and the creation of jobs is essential to prevent further child soldiering.
- The creation of courts or commissions, modeled after one that has taken place or is currently taking place which can help communities resolve conflict and in bring justice to the individuals and communities that have been affected. The creation of a position in the national government, such as ombudsmen, to oversee children's rights, including dealing with the issue of child labourers.

- As a politician, ambassador, approached relevant non-governmental organizations in order to bring about these changes.

2.5 Mezzo Practice and Local Advocacy

The social work researcher involved on the local level in affected or at risk areas in many ways as well. Education, social integration and worked towards affected communities. These could include:

- Educating communities on their human rights as well as the rights granted to them through the various international treaties their governments have signed.
- Rehabilitation efforts that include normalizing the environment as soon as possible, not including. This should include the use of the cultural art to tell stories, which will promote healing and educate the community for prevention.
- Empowering the community through women's groups and other community groups to determine what they need to do in order to be safe, or what changes they may want to make in the community as a result of their experiences.
- Worked towards the social integration of those who have been physically injured through gaining access to healthcare for the community members to deal with the many physical injuries they have suffered.

- Worked with communities to create "safety zones so that even in the war zones children can continue to study and play"
- Promoted the reintegration of the child labourers needs to be one of the ultimate goals and better understand the best practices of rehabilitation for the communities and former child labourers. The reintegration the most difficult aspect of the recovery process used in improving the process.

Several activities are in progress to achieve the below-listed objectives of our advocacy against child labour:

1. Involve all concerned individuals and groups such as NGOs, civil society organizations to make AP a child friendly state.

2. Sensitize all departments and the community on the need for protection of children by upholding child rights in all places and at all times.

3. Ensure that the state creates mechanisms to address grievances and child rights violations by constituting Child Rights Commission and corresponding mechanisms at the grassroots level.

4. Sensitize political leaders/parties on children's issues for the right kind of policies to be created for the children.

5. Create a cohesive group of NGOs that reflects a strong Campaign against Child Labour network.

2.5.1 Policy Statement

In order to address the issue of child labourers, children's rights as an inherent value must be recognized. One area of international policy where this needs to be done is in the International Labour Organization's definition of the worst forms of child labour" (International Labour Organization, 1999). This definition needs to include all children who become labourers, 'not only those that were obviously coerced into joining or forced to join. Also, the U.S. must ratify the CRC in order to support the international community in combating the mistreatment of children around the world. All countries' national laws and implementation of those laws must reflect the rights of their children granted within that document. The U.S. is no exception.

Another important aspect of the international standards and definitions is the enforcement of those standards, and consequences when those standards are broken. It is strongly recommended that the U.S., under the Obama administration, work with other nations to address concerns about the International Criminal Court. This would not only strengthen accountability for the use of child labourers, but 'would also strengthen the many UN conventions that are unenforceable in

practice at this point. The involvement of the U.S. should also work to strengthen the public's perceptions of the United Nations in the U.S., as they work with other leaders in the UN to improve and strengthen the body. This will create more avenues through which to explore conflict resolution and immediate international response to many crises, including civil wars that lead to the abuse of children as labourers.

Last, since economic underdevelopment leads to many of the push factors of children into child soldiering, development assistance in the form of multilateral untied aid to the national governments and to The NGOs that works in their respective countries essential. Poverty and the presence of oppression play a clear role in the development of the conflicts that lead to the abuse of children as labourers. Greater efforts need to be made to eradicate extreme poverty to prevent this human rights abuse in the future. This is the essence of social work.

2.5.2 Employer's Initiatives on the Ground

Over the last decade and a half there have been a series of highlighted efforts to eradicate child labour. The ones that come to mind instantly are campaigns against the employment of child labour in the carpet industry in Uttar Pradesh, in the sports goods in Punjab especially in and around Jalandhar, in the garment industry in and around Tirupur and Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu,

and more recently, in the fireworks industry in Sivakasi, also in Tamil Nadu. In all of these efforts there is a persistent commonality. The employers have responded to the issue of child labour under the threat of well-articulated campaigns from consumer groups and NGOs.

These initiatives have resulted in the partial eradication of child labour in sub segments (export segment-where the fear of market boycotts appeared real) of the product markets that here manufacturers were threatened. In reality, what the threat of boycott has thrown up, are mechanisms of labelling and certification and voluntary monitoring through codes of conduct. The critical component in employer responses is that voluntary mechanisms' have been adopted as the route to legitimization. In the absence of a method of monitoring compliance that is acceptable to both the state and to trade union organizations, voluntary compliance is unlikely to raise confidence in employer initiatives. For instance in the case of carpets if a manufacturer signs an affidavit stating that no child labour was employed in that particular factory then that creates sufficient reason to issue a label.

In the case of codes of conducts, the Jalandhar sports goods manufacturers have created a monitoring agency called the Foundation for Promoting Education and Monitoring for Child

Labour'. Not just is membership to this body voluntary but compliance is voluntary too. And yet it is billed as a tripartite body with participation from government and the trade unions. Of course even their participation is left voluntary. In fact nowhere does the constitution of the organization identify which branch of government should come into the body, should it wish to. Similar lack of coherence marks the Tirupur Social Service Organization- the body created by the knitwear manufacturers in Tirupur.

Even if the efforts of the foregoing manufacturer groups were to succeed they would at best touch the tip of the iceberg. Only 10 percent child labour is employed in factories in urban industrial centres. This group represents the 'better paid' and 'better protected' section of child labour. 90 percent of child labour is outside the factory sector.

Child labour indeed draws directly from the politics of the labour market. Looking at this issue from a macro perspective, what have employers done to alter the political economy of the labour market? Nothing that employers have done has addressed the issues that create circumstances that lead to child labour. The contribution of the employers to employment is negative. The relative size of the unemployed mass is larger and growing. There is rampant violation in the payment of minimum wages. In particular the violations labour laws are greater in the case of

women workers who are as a matter of course discriminated against, in comparison with male workers, on the issue of wage and other employment conditions. The evidence indicates that children are more likely to seek work where female labour is poorly compensated. In the 15 years that anti-child labour legislation (Child Labour Regulation and Prohibition Act) has been in place, employers have violated labour laws more and have destroyed institutions of collective bargaining and those that defend workers' rights. Through such means they have driven down real wages at the bottom end. Thus employers have created an environment in which children are more likely to seek paid work.

2.5.3 Dwellings and other facilities

Only 18 percent of the total households possessed pucca houses. 55 percent households had Kachha houses. Others had Kachh-pucca houses. 3 percent were living in rented one-room accommodation. 75 percent of the households had one to two rooms (32 percent had only one room and 43 percent had two rooms).

2.6 Effects of Un-freedom on Female Illiteracy and II-Health

The employment of female children in hazardous work has an adverse impact on their literacy and health. There are many

reasons for not sending girls to school, but in cottonseed production areas, the main reason is that the girls must work in the cottonseed fields. About 60 percent of the children working in cottonseed fields in the study area are school dropouts. They went to school for a few years and dropped out to work in cottonseed fields. 29 percent of them never attended the school.

Female children labourers often complain of headaches, weakness, disorientation, convulsions and respiratory problems. Some parents also reported that their daughters who have been working for several years in the fields suffer from menstrual problems. In the absence of long term monitoring of the health of girl children, the permanent damage on the health of these children cannot be assessed.

There are two dimensions through which the problem of child labour can be looked at in the developing countries, which have been worst affected by the phenomenon. The first is that the problem of child labour is the product of the distorted development policies that these countries have been following for several decades. And, secondly, the recent threat arising from the threats handed out by the developed countries to use core labour standards as an instrument of trade sanctions against countries that have not been able to check the problem of child labour, in particular.

However, most of the philanthropic organizations have not been viewing the problem in the right perspective. These organizations have treated the problem in a simplistic manner. Rather than situate the issue of child labour in the overall context of development, short-term solutions to the problem have often been sought. It needs to be mentioned here that the core concern should be one of providing the right kind of empowerment and opportunities for skill formation. In practical terms, this can be seen in terms of long term responsibilities of providing education and empowering the disadvantaged

An important limitation, which the donors have suffered from while addressing the issue of child labour is that they have tend to handle this problem in terms of programmes and/or projects. This is true for both the bilateral and multilateral funding agencies. They have de-linked themselves from the larger perspective into these disparate projects, which shuts the so-called beneficiaries out of the context within which the problem exists. This results in providing only supply side solutions. For instance, even if it is ensured that children are sent to schools for getting a given level of education, there is hardly any idea as to what they would be doing subsequently since there are not many employment opportunities available for them. Providing education in isolation is not a necessary and sufficient condition for ensuring that the

target groups are empowered. The Vicious circle of misery that the disadvantaged sections face does not get taken care of by adopting this approach. The single most important limitation of this approach is that instead of treating each of these programmes/projects as a means to an end, it is seen as an end in itself. The outcome is usually evaluated in terms of meeting certain targets, either in terms of assessing the number of beneficiaries or meeting the financial targets, and most often, both. Whether or not the beneficiaries are put on a strong foundation, which helps them abandon their wretched past, rarely forms a part of the assessment report of the donors.

The objective has been to mainstream the concerns of working children into all our poverty alleviation work. Engaging partner organizations into discussions and debates on causes and consequences of large numbers of children in the work-force is dire essential. It is found that changing perspectives is not such a difficult task, provided those who negotiate these ideas believe in them. There is already evidence to show that concentrated efforts at getting children out of work and into school initiated by NGOs can be taken up at the policy level by government.

3 SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTION STRATEGIES IMPLEMENTED

3.1 Grassrootization of the campaign

People at the grassroots level from peoples' groups and dalit organizations have been actively involved in the campaign. NGOs working with people in rural communities and the urban poor are made part of the campaign and are actively involved in the activities and programmes of the campaign.

3.2 Alliance Building

A united and collaborative effort was made to tackle the issue of child labour. Hence, it is important that is constantly trying to build a strong alliance with other child rights groups and networks. The social workers knocked on the doors and gave them back the slate and pencil, demanding their right to education.

3.3 Networking

A network has been established with voluntary organizations to monitor the situation of the child labourers.

3.4 Involvement of other movements in the campaign

The campaigns were envisaged to the active involvement of other movements and groups like raithu sanghas, student groups, citizen's forum, advocates, professional associations, trade unions, etc in the campaign. Efforts were made to enroll them to ensure a broader reach and coverage of the issues.

3.5 Training

Training programmes were arranged for social activists, orientation session for newly initiated chapters, training for street plays on child labour, awareness and orientation camps for movement officials and media persons, are conducted regularly by various state units and constituent organizations.

3.6 Visits and observations

The researcher has undertaken fact-finding missions when complaints of child abuse, child labour death and other cases of violations of child rights received.

3.7 Building Rapport with Government Officials and Working with the Government

We were able to build rapport with officials from various Government departments like Education, labour, women and child welfare, etc and work with them to ensure strict implementation of laws. Working in tandem with the Government officials also ensures that the welfare measures and schemes reach the targeted people.

4 CONSTRAINTS

The programmes have been planned and executed and while conducting and executing there are several constraints in solving the child labour problem which is spreading like wildfire. The constraints encountered during the research are

- There is no strict implementation of the existing laws on child labour
- There is no clear cut central policy on the issue of child labour
- Lack of awareness among the bureaucrats
- Lack of political will to take stern action
- There is no convergence of laws
- Lack of an integrated approach in the implementation of developmental programmes and welfare measures
- No teeth for existing legislations like Child Labour regulation and Prohibition Act (CLPRA) as there is distinction between the hazardous and non-hazardous sectors.
- Low rate of prosecution of employers even when cases are filed in court.

5 NGO INTERVENTIONS

Is child labour the cause or the consequence, the view point determines the point of view and thus the way a situation is looked at determines the way it is dealt with. If the issue is approached as a 'cause of denial of rights' then necessarily the strategy will have to be one that will differ from the approach, denial of rights is a consequence of child labour'. There is a thin line between the two, activities may not differ but the difference

in approach will affect the thrust of the programme. Every child has the right to a childhood. Childhood cannot have a global definition and must be seen in the context of each child.

Our efforts are to eliminate existing child labour and prevent future child labour. Child labour is seen as the problem that needs to be sorted out and all out efforts are being made to that end. Is Child labour a problem or is it the symptom of a host of other adult problems? What appears to be diluted is that the situation of the parents that results from Macroeconomic policies and social structures that keep children out of school for one and in the labour force for another? Children are the focal point but the issue has to be looked at in the context of the family. Stakeholders are not the children alone; their care givers are primary stakeholders as well. Child labour is the tip of the iceberg taking off the top will not prevent another top from growing in another form maybe. Quite for long, children have been invisible and subsumed in the family. It was hoped and expected that targeting the family would make a difference in the life of a child. This has not happened and has led development workers to put children at the centre. If the pendulum now swings to completely concentrating on the child as an individual sustainable changes may be difficult to make. A balanced approach of seeing the child within his or her family context will ensure sustainable positive change.

The approach or the interventions are means to an end and they must not be seen as an end in themselves. No one approach or strategy that will eliminate child labour. The work that goes on is in pockets and limited to well-defined activities, constituencies or a geographical area. No single organization can reach out to all the children and their families, nor tackle all the associated problems. Networks and coalitions for activities other than workshops and conferences need to be formed for one to hand over and another to take over, as their remit ends and another's begins.

Identification, release and rehabilitation are the three points of any child labour programme. It is not always apparent why certain groups of children have been identified? Is it the trade or occupation the children are engaged in, geographical location of the children or the NGO or is it the factors that bring them into the labour force? Nor is the choice of a particular strategy for a specified group of children clear. Is it what the children want? Is it what the adults feel that children should have? It is essential to identify the root cause or causes of why a particular group of children are a part of the labour force.

When they are released from the child labour force whether out of bonded labour or hazardous occupations are we sure that

we are releasing them into a situation that is in their best interests? Who determines this?

It is very likely that children who are not enrolled in school may join the child labour force; however it is too general to assume that all children not in school are at work. They are denied many rights including access to education but they are not always at work. For many of these children the access to education is difficult for a host of reasons, including inadequate clothing and nutrition. To ensure Universal Enrolment and Retention a host of factors have to be addressed many the very causes leading to child labour for instance political will and SAPs. This brings us back to the need of an integrated approach beyond the Education and Labour Ministries.

Where children are taken into residential schools what support systems are in place for the families? Whether it is children sent by the families or runaway from their families it is the family situation that has put the child in this situation therefore that needs to be tackled. There is a difference between work and labour. Work within the community is also a socialization process. In ensuring all children have a uniform standard of education, sensitivity to culture and context must be maintained. Equally culture should not be used to prevent a child from claiming his or her rights.

Unionization like the India's National Movement of Working Children has strengthened children's groups, provided them some measure of security and made them more articulate. They have been successful in raising the agenda of the child labour force at various forums including international forums, can the impact on preventing newer entrants to this force be gauged. Unionization is important for any group to learn to claim their rights and respect other rights. This is only a means to an end and one of the processes.

There is also the flip side, whether it is selling of a product or ensuring civic amenities children are being used to get a message across. If childhood is a special period in an individual's life and requires care and protection are adults not getting away from their civic responsibilities and the burden on children being increased, one needs to be clear on what we are doing for whom. The invisible labour force is more vulnerable to exploitation. More recently work has begun with child domestic workers. Again these are directed at those already in the trap and on the demand factor,

There is a supply side and a demand side to this phenomenon. There is not much evidence of work on the supply side. The supply side needs to be investigated and the causes leading to children being sent out to work addressed. Many children are

trafficked for labour others are sent by their parents or come of their own volition. The interventions are largely aimed at the children already in the trap. Their needs to concerted efforts to deal with the supply side, awareness rising is not always enough. The issues that force them to send children to work are at the family end and need to be identified and addressed. One organization cannot handle both sides and this is where tie-ups with other local organizations are necessary. The issue is one of "Child labour", not of any organization's mandate. This is another face of child labour. The slowdown of the economy has resulted in reduced opportunities for employment at all levels. On the one hand it pushes children out of schools and on the other hand creates a demand for child labour. The increase in number of child domestic workers could well be a result of this slow down of the economy

An increased understanding of negative social impacts of macro-economic policies on the lives of people, particularly the poor and powerless has convinced development agencies of the micro-macro linkages necessary for effective policy design. This understanding should be influencing policy and resource allocation. Micro level analysis reveals a much broader range of factors influencing child welfare. These challenge macro-level assumptions concerning the effectiveness of policy or the social

impact of economic policies. This demonstrates the inadequacy of the assumptions on which macro policy is designed.

There is a belief that as the process of development especially rural development gathers momentum child labour will automatically come down. This belief is empirically incorrect. Therefore let us not think that as the development process proceeds, child labour will come down and parents' wills start sending their children to schools. The commitment to education is lacking. Rural development alone does not necessarily reduce child labour. Mid-day meals are a kind of supplementary income.

6 GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION IN ADDRESSING THE CHILD LABOUR PROBLEM

Our Government considers child labour only as a welfare issue and has introduced a number of piecemeal schemes without having a comprehensive approach & policy to ensure overall development and education for children. The diagnosis apparently shows the fragmented approach of the Government.

The first and foremost is Education for all children. Free, compulsory and quality education is the most important tool in the eradication of child labour. The proposed 939 Amendment Bill 2001 makes education a fundamental right and guarantees free and compulsory education to children between 0-14 years. Free, compulsory and quality education should be provided to all

children between 0-18 years of age. Early Childhood Care and Education should be included in the fundamental right. In an idealistic situation, once all the children are in school, child labour is automatically eradicated.

Secondly, ongoing efforts need to address development issues of the communities from where children come into employment. Initiatives for child labour eradication must be combined with community development and social mobilization. Provisions must be made for health, education, loan and credit facilities and ensuring adult employment and minimum wages for adults.

Thirdly, a comprehensive, integrated approach is required to address sector specific issues, rural/urban/tribal, regional and cultural specificity. This necessitates the active participation of civil society and a synergy between the various government programmes which are dealing separately with aspects that impinge on child labour. Local self-government should be activated, and have the central responsibility in the elimination of child labour. Strict implementation of existing laws hacked by political will can serve as an important preventive measure.

Fourthly, concerted effort from all civil society groups to create mass awareness is the need of the hour. Government schemes and welfare measures may remain only on paper if there

is no corresponding awareness among the public. The people should be made conscious of the effects of child labour and should be involved in the fight to eradicate child labour. Public opinion should move towards abolition rather than regulation. Finally, the role of proper dissemination of information in the success of a campaign cannot be understated. The mass media plays an important role in creating mass awareness and generating support for campaigns. The media has a social responsibility and the mass reach of the print and electronic media has to be used to influence the public.

Despite the efforts of the governments to prohibit child labour since the 1920s through the enactment of laws and policy guidelines, the problem continues to persist. Since child labour is considered as a major economic and societal problem and child labour jeopardizes the children's potential to become productive adults, the government is required to respond more vigorously. As the perennial problem of child labour is rooted in the economic structure of the country, the objective of the abolition of child labour can be achieved through sustained increases in standards of living. The ILO, in recognition of this fact, adopted a "two-pronged approach to the child labour problem. The goal is the eventual elimination of child labour by improving the conditions under which children work.

The current focus of actions in the country is on the elimination of risk to children than on ending their participation in all form of work. The ILO-IPPC believes that this approach is needed to accommodate the poverty clement in child labour and to allow families flexibility in maintaining their essential survival mechanisms while protecting the children involved. The government is focusing on rescue efforts for the most exploited forms of child labour and for high-risk children such as the very young (below age 12 or 1.3). For the rest of working children, however, until alternative for survival are set in place, heightened efforts are recommended be exerted, to assure that they are in jobs that are not harmful to their health and physical and mental development.

7 VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Social worker should continue the fight against child labour and for child rights, till every child is in school and is restored its precious childhood. Our vision is a child labour free INDIA, where children are treated as children and given their rightful place in society. A society, where all the children are given love and affection and allowed to blossom into healthy citizens, immediate action from all of us is imperative to safeguard the interests of the children of our country. Our efforts should be intensified to give the children of our country a better future.

8 THE SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTION AS SOLUTION

Child Labour is not just an emotive issue. It is the bane of existing exploitative society and a complex problem involving several factors like poverty, unemployment, lack of educational facilities, traditional attitudes towards employing children particularly girls and gender. It cannot be wiped out overnight through pious wishes or enacting laws banning child labour or by blaming the poor parents for sending their children to work instead of school. Elimination of child labour can be attained only by making it an integral part of the developmental policies. Multi pronged approach, which deals with adult employment, collective bargaining through strong trade union movement, enhancing the quality of working life of workers, particularly in informal sector, and strengthening the education system is required. All these are in turn linked to the policies of Government. Unless the Government adopts policies which will promote employment generation, undertake agrarian reforms, ensures decent living wages to the workers of informal sector, protects rights of the workers for collective bargaining and takes upon itself the responsibility to provide compulsory and free education up to high school and take effective steps to promote gender equality

and curb evil customs like dowry, child labour cannot be abolished.

CONCLUSION

Although relatively little research has been done to document the problem, child labour is present in virtually all areas of the Indian economy. Moreover, despite domestic legislation, prohibiting child labour and several programs announced by the state to help eliminate it, the number of underage child workers in Guatemala continues to grow. Although child labour is clearly not an easy problem to solve, to adequately protect children as it is obliged to do under its international commitments. Such obligations include protection from economic exploitation and provision of adequate educational opportunities. The provisions are necessary to hold responsible for failing to protect its children from exploitative labour conditions. Therefore provide full employment to adults with sustainable wages and good schools to children with relevant and quality education and there will not be a need for large expensive programmes to eliminate child labour.

Reference: shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in

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www.iraniansocialworkers.ir

