

THE PLIGHT OF CHILD LABOURERS IN BANGALORE CITY, INDIA: A MICRO LEVEL STUDY

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Abstract

Children are part and parcel of the economic activity of each and every society. Notwithstanding the fact that child labour is not a new phenomenon and it has existed even in ancient times, its form has been kept changing. Poverty, population explosion, survival strategy of the poor and exploitative economic systems are regarded as the causes of child labour in India. This paper discusses child labour as social issue on the basis of the data from an empirical study conducted in Bangalore, the capital city of Karnataka state in India. The data of the study pertain to the nature of the work done by child labourers, their socio-economic background (such as age, level of schooling, family size, and parental education and income), earnings and difficulties faced by them as child labourers. The paper also discusses the main measures taken by the government and non-government organisations in order to deal with the social issue of child labour, viz. legislation and school improvement programmes.

Introduction

Children under the age of 15 years constitute a substantial portion of the population in any country. In some cases they exceed even 40 per cent of the population. A good number of the children in the developing countries are working. Working children belong to the most deprived section of the community and are forced to earn a pittance or to contribute to family income.

They risk sacrificing their personal development at the prime age for want of opportunity.

There is no doubt that the iniquitous and exploitative nature of the economy and the socio-economic milieu lead to the harsh reality of child labour, and determine to a significant extent the working and living conditions of child workers. Social scientists have argued that the socio-economic parameters like survival strategy, place of origin, caste and religious background, occupational profile of parents, and family size are some of the basic factors associated with the malady of child labour (Singh 2006).

Child labour has drawn increasing international attention and concern since 1970s. During the same period many international non-government organisations (NGOs) and agencies have begun to speak out against the inhuman conditions under which children work in a number of developing countries. The issue of child labour has generated renewed interest because of the new economic policies formulated in line with the structural adjustment programmes. Developing countries have adopted a strategy to help their integration into the global market economy. Hence, the long neglected topic of child labour has suddenly attracted worldwide interest as a subject of research and analysis, particularly regarding the supply and demand aspects of the problem (Razawath 2003).

This interest among economists and other social scientists began during a transition period in which incidence of child labour was declining in the developed countries and increasing in the third world countries. This pattern may be a source of optimism that signals the spread of science and technology that have little use for child labour and values that endorse the preservation and protection of childhood. It is also known that dependence on child labour minimises the human capital accumulation, which is a prerequisite for development. The early 20th century witnessed the sharp and sudden reduction in child labour in western industrialised countries. However, unfortunately the same period saw the expansion of the problem in the third world (Mohanty 2001).

This paper deals with child labour as a serious social issue in India. It discusses the nature of the work done by child labourers, their socio-economic background (such as age, level of schooling, family size, and parental education and income), their earnings from work and the difficulties faced by them as child labourers. The paper also discusses the main measures

taken by the government and non-government organisations in order to deal with the social issue of child labour, viz. legislation and programmes for improving schooling of children.

Empirical data used in this paper are from a study conducted by the author in Bangalore urban district of Karnataka state, India. Five layouts of the city were selected for the study where large numbers of children were found in different types of work. A sample of 500 child workers (250 boys and 250 girls) from different socio-economic backgrounds was selected for the study. They were working in hotels, garages, construction sites, factories, shops and commercial establishments, and as domestic servants. Parents (father or mother) of all the 500 child labourers were also interviewed in the study. The data collection for the study was undertaken during 2007-2008.

Nature of Child Labour

The data of the present study, conducted by the author, show that as many as 81.6 per cent of the child labourers were engaged in the unorganised/informal sectors of hotel, garage, construction site and domestic work. Domestic work accounted for the largest (32.6) percentage of the child labourers as a whole. Both girls (80.4%) and boys (82.8%) showed the same pattern of being engaged in the unorganised sector. Just 18.4 per cent of the children were employed in factories. They constituted 19.6 per cent of the girls and 17.2 per cent of the boys. The major reason why majority of the child labourers are engaged in the unorganised sector is the non-requirement of any definite skills for work in the unorganised sector.

Table 1
Child Labourers by Type of Work and by Sex

Type of work	Girls	Boys	Total
Hotel	7 (02.8)	81 (32.4)	88 (17.6)
Garage	0	63 (25.2)	63 (12.6)
Construction	37 (14.8)	57 (22.8)	94 (18.8)
Factory	49 (19.6)	43 (17.2)	92 (18.4)
Domestic	157 (62.8)	6 (02.4)	163 (32.6)
Total	250 (100)	250 (100)	500 (100)

Figures in parentheses are percentages

However, the preferred sectors of child labour differ for boys and girls. The male child labourers are found mostly in the three sectors of hotel, garage and construction. In the present study the percentage of boys employed in hotels, garages and construction sites constituted 32.4 per cent, 25.2 per cent and 22.8 per cent respectively. Thus these three unorganised/informal sectors accounted for the vast majority of the working boys. Majority (62.8%) of the girls were employed as domestic servants. Compared to this, just 6 (2.4%) of the boys in the sample were engaged in domestic work. The data on child labour published by the state government show that the major part of the working children (61%) in the Bangalore rural district are found in the primary sectors and just a few of them (15%) in secondary sectors (National Institute of Applied Economics 2001). The difference may be explained by the fact that the government data belong the rural sector and the data of the present study are from the urban population.

Age of the Child Labourers

All the child labourers in the sample were of the age group of 6-14 years, the category specified for compulsory education. The study also shows that majority (51.6%) of the working children belonged to the age group of 9-11 years. But there is notable variation between girls and boys in the matter of age. On the whole girl child labourers were relatively younger than the boys. Nearly one fifth (18%) of the girls were found to be below nine years of age, whereas only 8 per cent of the boys belonged to the age group of 6-8 years. It is likely that in the early period of childhood, families would like to send boys to school and girls to work.

Table 3
Child Labourers by Age and by Sex

Age in Years	Girls	Boys	Total
6-8	45 (18.0)	20 (08.0)	65 (13.0)
9-11	181 (72.4)	77 (30.8)	258 (51.6)
12-14	24 (09.6)	153 (61.2)	177 (35.4)
Total	250 (100)	250 (100)	500 (100)

Figures in parentheses are percentages

Majority (72.4%) of the girls in the sample belonged to the age group of 9-11 years. Further, there is a sudden decrease in the percentage (9.6%) of the working girls aged 12 years and above. In contrast, majority (61.2%) of the working boys were in the age group of 12-14 years. It is quite likely that most families, following the traditional pattern, withdraw their working girls after they attain puberty.

Schooling of Child Labourers

As it can be drawn from the age of the child labourers, nearly half (45.2%) of the child labourers of the present study had never been enrolled in school. Over one third (36.8%) of the children have completed lower primary school education (class IV), while 14.4 per cent of the children studied up to class VII. A negligible 3.8 per cent of the child labourers in the sample have studied beyond class VII.

Table 4
Child Labourers by Schooling and by Sex

Education	Girls	Boys	Total
No Schooling	143 (57.2)	83 (33.2)	226 (45.2)
Lower Primary (Class I-IV)	73 (29.2)	111 (44.0)	184 (36.8)
Upper Primary (Class V-VII)	29 (11.6)	42 (16.2)	71 (14.4)
Secondary (Class VIII-X)	5 (02.0)	14 (05.6)	19 (03.8)
Total	250 (100)	250 (100)	500 (100)

Figures in parentheses are percentages

There is notable difference between girls and boys in the matter of educational attainment. While majority (57.2%) of the working girls had no schooling, the corresponding percentage for the working boys is 33.2 per cent. Boys outnumbered girls at all the levels of education. Gender discrimination in education prevalent in our society is well reflected in the educational backwardness of the girl child labourers found in the present

study. Divya (2005) in her field study of 600 mothers in a few villages in Karnataka state found similar gender discrimination in the case of schooling and child labour. She speaks of the need for a change in the attitude of society and parents towards girl children. According to her, parents should come out of their biases about their girl children. Data from her study point out the influence of traditional values, social institutions of family, kinship and marriage on girl child labour. It was revealed that 25 per cent of the sample of mothers expressed indifference at the birth of a girl child.

Family Size

Families of most of the child labourers covered in the present study can be considered to be relatively large sized. Only 67 out the 500 children (13%) belonged to families of 3.92 members. Majority (54%) of the children came from families of 6.75 members. The remaining 31.8 per cent of the children had large families consisting of over seven members. Larger family size means more dependants to be supported. A small sized family may be able to manage its needs with the parents' income. As the number of dependants increases, families of the economically backward sections of the society may be forced to have contributions from their child members to the family income.

Studies undertaken by Barnett and Richard (2001), Cain (1997) and Khan (2005) have also found higher incidence of child labour in larger sized families. Lloyd (2004) also has found some relationship between household size and child labour. According to him participation in education including investment will be less if the household size is large. He explains that the extent of the effect of household size on child labour is determined by: (1) the level of the socio-economic status, (2) the level of social expenditure by the state, (3) family culture (the effect of household size is weaker where extended family system exists) and (4) the phase of demographic transition.

Education of Parents

The present study has shown that mothers of majority (62 %) of child labourers were illiterate. Mothers of 30.6 per cent of the children had studied up to class IV or lower primary school. Only 4.6 per cent of the children had mothers who had gone beyond the level of lower primary school in education.

Table 5
Child Labourers by the Education of Mother and Father

Education	Mother	Father
Illiterate	311 (62.2)	237 (47.4)
Lower Primary Class I-IV)	153 (30.6)	177 (35.4)
Upper Primary (Class V-VII)	17 (03.4)	41 (08.2)
Secondary (Class VIII-X)	6 (01.2)	21 (04.2)
College	0	2 (00.4)
No Response	13 (02.6)	22 (04.4)
Total	500 (100)	500 (100)

Figures in parentheses are percentages

In the case of the education of fathers, 47.4 per cent of the child labourers had fathers who were illiterate. Fathers of 35.4 per cent of the child labourers had studied up to class IV. Child labourers whose fathers were educated beyond the lower primary level constituted 12.8 per cent of the sample. Fathers of two of the working children were college educated.

The data of the present study show that parents of the child labourers have been educationally backward. This partly explains why their children are not in school, but have been engaged in working. If the parents themselves do not value education, they cannot be expected to ensure schooling of their children.

Parents' Income

From the present study it is revealed that parental income of 58.8 per cent of the child labourers did not cross Rs.1500 per month. In the case of another 31.4 per cent of the child labourers their parents' monthly income was Rs.1501-2000. Parents of just 9.8 per cent of the child labourers in the sample have had an income of over Rs.2000 per month. Thus the families of the child labourers under study belonged to the economically weaker section of the

society. Economic hardship of the family in most likelihood is the main reason for sending children to do any type of work so that additional income could be generated for the family at the cost of schooling of the children.

Table 6
Number of Child Labourers by Monthly Earnings of the Parents

Monthly Earnings in Rupees	Number	Percentage
1000 – 1500	294	58.8
1501 – 2000	157	31.4
2001 – 2500	37	7.4
2501 – 3000	8	1.6
Above 3000	4	0.8
Total	500	100

It was not easy to obtain information on the exact family income of the child respondents. The tendency has been to understate the income. Even if some margin is given for this unwillingness to disclose the actual income, one can find that the child labourers without doubt belonged to families below poverty line. Dubey (1991) argues that child labour will never be eradicated until and unless poverty is eliminated. The conclusion drawn from this study is that child labour and poverty are inseparable as the poor very often depend upon the income generated by their children for their family maintenance and that call for an immediate ban on child labour seems unrealistic.

Obviously poverty is the prime reason for the children to be engaged in various types of labour in Bangalore city. It was reported to be the reason for child labour in the case of 69.8 per cent of the child labourers in the sample of the present study. Their families wanted the children to contribute to the family income, because the parental income was inadequate to maintain the family, especially in the case of large sized families.

Failure of the school system is another factor that is responsible for child labour. It has been mentioned as a contributory factor of child labour in the case of 137 out of the 500 (27.4%) child labourers of the present

study. They did not have a good school to study or feared corporal punishment in school or were not good at study or lacked interest in it. Parents of 14 children preferred to send their children to work instead of schooling because they thought that their children would be spoiled in the bad company of friends. In the report of his study conducted in Bangalore city, Sinha (2000) has also depicted the failure of the school system as the main reason, other than poverty, of child labour. Similarly the study of child labour conducted by Dwivedi (2007) in the state of Uttar Pradesh found that the maximum number of child labourers was of primary school dropouts and more girl child labourers belonged to the category of school dropouts. Low quality of education, lack of interest among teachers, absence of basic facilities in government schools and unappealing syllabus were important reasons for dropout.

Earnings of Child Labourers

The earnings of the child labourers in the sample of the present study were not more than Rs.2000 per month. The vast majority (82.6%) of them had an income up to Rs.1000 per month. They included 31.2 per cent of the child labourers who were paid less than Rs.500 per month. Thus on the whole the child labourers were paid very low wages.

Table 7
Child Labourers by Their Monthly Earnings and by Sex

Monthly Earnings in Rupees	Girls	Boys	Total
Below 500	123 (49.2)	33 (13.2)	156 (31.2)
500-1000	103 (41.2)	154 (61.6)	257 (51.4)
1001-1500	17 (06.8)	47 (18.8)	64 (12.8)
1501-2000	7 (02.8)	16 (06.4)	23 (04.6)
Total	250 (100)	250 (100)	500 (100)

Figures in parentheses are percentages

Gender discrimination is visible in the case of the wages paid to the child labourers. While nearly half of the girls (49.2%) were getting a wage below Rs.500 per month, there were only 13.2 per cent of the boys who were paid a wage below Rs.500 per month. On the higher side, while 9.6

per cent of the girls were getting a wage of Rs.1000-2000 per month, 25.2 per cent of the boys were earning the same amount. Thus both low wages and gender discrimination regarding wage structure are manifestations of the exploitation child labour by the employers.

Difficulties Faced

The child labourers have been facing several problems in their work. The main problem that they have to put up with is the long hours of work. Some of the children work as long as 12 hours a day. The present study has shown that none of the children in the sample has been working for less than four hours a day. Just 14.4 per cent of the child labourers in the sample have been working for 4-6 hours. A considerable percentage (41.8%) of the children have been working 10-12 hours a day, that is about half of the day.

Table 8
Child Labourers by Duration of Work and by Sex

Duration of Work	Girls	Boys	Total
4 – 6 hours	38 (15.4)	36 (14.4)	74 (14.4)
7 – 9 hours	115 (46.0)	102 (40.8)	217 (43.4)
10 – 12 hours	97 (38.8)	112 (44.8)	209 (41.8)
Total	250 (100)	250 (100)	500 (100)

Figures in parentheses are percentages

Girls have had marginally lower working hours. Those who worked 4-6 hours a day consisted of 15.4 per cent among the girls and 14.4 per cent among the boys. While 44.8 per cent of the boys have had 10-12 hours of work per day, 38.8 per cent of the girls have had the same duration of working time. Many of the girls who are engaged as domestic servants have to work for long hours and receive low wages. Subjecting children to long hours of work is another type of exploitation of the children by their employers.

Datta (2001) in his study conducted in Urban Bangalore found that the total number of hours spent on work by child labourers increased progressively with age. Further, this study showed that in over two-thirds of the families where the boys did not work the girl children were engaged in

wage domestic work only. In families where the boys went for work, about 60 per cent of girls did wage work along with their own domestic work.

Difficulties, other than low wages and long hours of work, faced by child labourers, include heavy workload and delay in payment of wages. One third (33.6%) of the child labourers in the present study felt the work given to them too heavy. Those who complained of delay in payment of wages constituted 11.4 per cent of the child labourers in the sample. A few (21 or 4.2%) of the child labourers mentioned non-availability of leave as a grievance. Thus the major complaint was about the workload.

Policies and Programmes of Government and NGOs

Both the government and the NGOs have been involved in dealing with child labour as a social issue. Two major schemes in this respect have been enactment of legislation on the part of the government and promotion of schooling of children on the part of both the government and the NGOs. Other programmes include welfare services for the well being of the children below poverty line.

Legislation

Undoubtedly child labour is embedded in the fabric of our society and is one of the serious problems facing the country as a whole. After the independence, the state in India has taken different steps in dealing with the problem. For the first time in 1979, a child labour cell was set up as an integral part in the department of labour, government of India. The cell was responsible for the formulation, coordination and effective implementation of various programmes for the welfare of child labourers. In 1981, the central government constituted the child labour advisory board. The main task of the board was to review the existing laws and acts, evaluate the field projects and recommend to the government areas wherein there must be rapid and progressive elimination of child labour.

In 1986 the government of India enacted a comprehensive legislation, the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act. It was an important step in dealing with the problem of child labour in India. The act envisaged total prohibition of employment of children below 14 years of age and proposed to abolish child labour within 10 years after its commencement. The act empowered any citizen to file a complaint against an offender in any court

of competent authority. Further it empowered the government to revise/improve any existing laws as need arose (Khan 2005).

The child labour act of 1986 has drawbacks or internal contradictions. One deficiency of this act was that it did not draw a clear line between hazardous and non-hazardous sectors of child labour. According to this act agriculture and household industry do not come under the hazardous sector. In other words, work in some of the unorganised sectors, where majority of the children are found employed, are excluded from the purview of labour legislation's definition of hazardous labour. There are also loopholes in the act that provide ample chances to the employers to escape from being guilty of engaging child labour. Further, the laws in the country are silent on the children who work in unregulated sectors with their parents. There are no laws to detect this kind of hidden child labour practices and to protect children from them. Poor enforcement is another factor involved in the failure of the legislations for controlling child labour. The Minimum Wage Act may have had some success only in the cities. Just a few employers know about the provisions of the Minimum Wage Act. It is partly the failure of the government and NGOs in creating awareness among the employers. It has also been pointed out that the legislation on child labour in India does not meet the ILO standards (Datta 2001).

Policies and Programmes

In 1987, the Government of India adopted the National Child Labour Policy under which several steps have been taken to curb the practice of child labour and several development schemes were initiated to rehabilitate the child labourers. Under this protected action plan, 13 projects are now operating in 79 districts across India. The services provided under the scheme include non-formal education, vocational training, supplementary nutrition, stipend and health care for child labourers. In 1988, the Ministry of Labour, Government of India launched the scheme of the National Child Labour Project for the effective rehabilitation of child labourers. The major activities undertaken under the National Child Labour Project have been establishment of special schools to provide a package of educational services, including technical and non-formal education to children who had been child labourers and who are currently engaged in child labour. In addition to the National Child Labour Project, the Child Labour Action and Support Programme with financial aid from the Government of Germany and an action programme under the International Programme for Elimination Child Labour with

assistance from the ILO have been in operation since 1991. In 1990 an independent child labour cell was established at the V.V. Giri National Labour Institute (Uttar Pradesh, India). The main function of the cell is publication of materials related to the child labour issue, documentation and evaluation of field projects undertaken by government and NGOs, and conducting projects of action research (Datta 2001).

The National Authority for Elimination of Child Labour (NAEC) was constituted in 1994. The role of this agency is to implement and monitor the progress of programmes, projects and schemes for the elimination of child labour, especially in hazardous industries. Further, it coordinates the different projects related to child labour run by various ministries. In addition, the Ministry of Labour, Government of India has been implementing many programmes in collaboration with the labour department of the state governments. In 1995 the Government of India set up the National Resource Centre on Child Labours (NRCCL) involving many local and national NGOs. This centre is intended to implement and supplement all the programmes taken up by the ILO under its International Programme on Elimination of Child Labour and by other foreign agencies. Besides, the NRCCL has been entrusted with the task of assisting the national and regional social groups working in the field of child labour (Singh 2006).

The National Child Labour Project has many administrative problems. For instance, the Department of Labour, Government of Karnataka is not giving full justice to the scheme. The strength of the personnel engaged in the implementation of the scheme is very small compared to the amount of work involved. There is also the problem of coordination among the state labour officials and the NGOs in the implementation of the programmes. Further, responsibility to implement and monitor the execution of the various central government programmes and policies rests with the state governments. So implementation of the projects depends on the willingness and efficiency of the concerned personnel of the state governments.

Schooling of Children

Universalisation of primary education is considered to be one of the best options in dealing with the problem of child labour. However, it has not had significant success in most parts of India, including the state of Karnataka. The main reason for this situation is paucity of funds and negligence of the baseline workers including school teachers. In many cases, as revealed

from the present study of child labour in Bangalore, the state government department of education and the local NGOs do not make a coordinated effort for eradicating child labour through strengthening of education.

Performance of many of the state government schools is very disappointing. According to the assessment of the present study of the author, about one fourth (24%) of the government schools do not have the basic facilities for teaching and learning. Some schools (31%) were found to have only one or two teachers to teach over 100 children. Another problem is that teachers in general do not give any attention to the below average students who are the potential child labourers. Corporal punishments can become an immediate easy reason for these children to leave school and become child labourers.

However, some of the initiatives taken by the NGOs and innovative programmes launched by the government have been helpful to the schooling of the potential child labourers. One such programme, that has been more or less successful in bringing children back to school in some of the child labour prone layouts of Bangalore city, is the *akshara dasoa* or mid-day meal scheme. It has significantly increased attendance of children in many schools. However, the scheme has its own drawbacks. It is pointed out that the food provided under the scheme is not nutritious enough. Other complaints about the scheme are that the food is prepared and given in an unhygienic environment in many government schools, brackish or hard bore well water is used for cooking and drinking, and teachers' time is wasted in preparing food and feeding children. Another peculiar issue is that a few parents do not want their children to eat the food in schools because they suspect that the food is cooked by persons from the lower caste. Despite these problems in the implementation of the mid-day meal scheme, teachers of many schools feel that attendance of children in general has improved on account of this scheme.

Other programmes in Bangalore that are specially designed for ex-child labourers are *chinnara angala* (bridge course), *come to school again* (for school dropouts), and *from work to school* (for working children). They could be rated more successful than the mid-day meal, although they too have their shortcomings. For instance, the specially designed curriculum for the bridge course has not included any vocational skills. The part time teachers, engaged for the programme, are not adequately trained. Those children who have completed the bridge course were supposed to be

mainstreamed into the school system depending on their performance. However, in many cases, they are mainstreamed according to their age only. These children should be enrolled in the class where they can perform better or they should be given more coaching in order to improve their performance for enrolment in a higher class that matches with their age. In the process it is the children who suffer and finally drop out again.

Programme for the urban street children is another effort at educating the child labourers. The urban deprived children include those residing in slums and squatter colonies, and those who stay on the streets, railway platforms etc. Many of these children work as rag pickers, shoe shiners and hawkers. The number of such children is on the rise in Bangalore city. A large section of these children have never been to school or dropped out of school. Many of these children are not in a position to attend formal schools with fixed timings and other rigidities of the formal system. It is to cater to these disadvantaged children that the Karnataka State Council for Child Welfare has been running a centre for the homeless and rag picking children aged between 5-14 years. They are given food and informal education during evening time. Vocational education is also being given to the children who have returned from child labour.

Intervention of NGOs

Some of the local NGOs are running special residential schools for the former child labourers. However, these schools are facing many internal problems. The NGOs that run these schools have no prior experience in dealing with child labour problem. They spend very little money on the children and therefore are not able to provide the basic facilities for the children. Nor are the teachers adequately trained and dedicated. Several parents are not satisfied with this residential school scheme. Initially a six month bridge course is given to the children in these special residential schools, and thereafter the children should go back to their houses and parents are expected to send them to the regular schools on their own expenses. The poor parents are not likely to send these children to the regular school. Some of the NGOs like CWC (Concern for Working Children) and CRY (Child Relief and You) are doing some impressive work. These are professional agencies that have had considerable experience in the field. They have succeeded in motivating parents, mobilising resources, and initiating community leadership and participation in the developmental programmes for children.

Some NGOs are working towards improvement in the nutritional status of the children. They also campaign for putting an end to malnutrition amongst

the children through the laws concerning child rights. NGOs like CWC, CRY and ROAD (Rural Organisation for Appropriate Development) have established special cells in their operational areas to closely monitor the implementation of the rights of the children in sectors where they are working now. However, it is found that their programmes are not so effective. Clear and strong initiatives need to be established to pursue this goal more efficiently and effectively.

An issue related to NGO intervention in child labour is that there is hardly any healthy coordination between the NGOs and the state department of labour in the programmes for eradicating child labour. They often tend to find fault with each other. Some of the labour department officials feel that the NGOs are encroaching in the field of their official work. This has to be sorted out. Both the NGOs and the government need to develop a joint strategy and have a comprehensive and practical approach towards protection of working children. Efforts should be made by everybody to create awareness about the programmes for working children and to provide greater opportunities to out-of-school children.

Above all, political commitment is the key to the effective abolition of child labour. Various urban poverty alleviation programmes have not been successful because of low level of the local people's participation. Many anti poverty programmes are rural oriented rather than rural people oriented. They have been programmes designed by the government officials without any involvement of the concerned poor (Datta 2001; Rao 2003). The success of any programme for eradication of child labour will be dependent on the extent of community participation.

Conclusion

Poverty in various forms and school related factors are the two main reasons behind the problem of child labour. Well-planned rural development programmes for poor families will be helpful in restricting the migration of children to the city in search of a job. In addition, effective implementation of the welfare programmes, especially in the slums of the city will uplift the families from the poverty line. Then the parents may not be compelled to send their children to work and supplement their family income, but send them to schools for their all-round development. Programmes for eradication of child labour and poverty alleviation should be complementing each other.

The government efforts to deal with child labour may have demonstrated a sincere desire to end child labour, but the programmes have not been supported to a level at which they can be effective. The amount of time and money necessary to remove all child labourers from work and prepare them for joining the formal education system is yet to be realised.

Both the government and the NGOs have failed to adequately consider the situation of poor households with working children and the economic impact of child labour eradication programmes on these households. The government has failed to adequately conceptualise child labour as a symptom of a complex household problem experienced by the poor. The government and NGOs blame the victims of generations of structural violence and dysfunctional households as the primary cause of the problem. The problem of child labour reflects the lack of a social safety net in the event of serious illness or death of the breadwinner in a family, the dearth of regular work for unskilled labourers, wife beating and alcohol abuse. The poor openly talk about social problems such as alcoholism as being related to child labour, but they also more broadly see alcohol use and the like as symptomatic of chronic poverty, uncertainty in the employment sector, and the failure of economic development and social advancement in the marginalized communities. They believe that solving these core problems will enable parents to send their children to school rather than work.

Finally the basic reason why most of the policies and programmes of both the government and NGOs have got relatively low success or failed to create much impact on child labour situation is that they are simply not designed to do so. A closer look at the premise on which these programmes are based reveals that their very nature leads to a situation where no impact on child labour is possible. Under certain circumstances some project may yield good results and in some other situations the whole project may end with poor results. The NGOs in India are yet to become professionalised in their approach and programmes. They have been paying attention to working with their clients. They need to go beyond that to organising themselves as agencies that seek legislative and programme changes. They need to become a pivotal force in the local community.

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