

Child labour

[Family](#), [Children](#)



CAUSES OF CHILD LABOUR • Poverty • Parental illiteracy • Tradition of making children learn the family skills • Absence of universal compulsory Primary education • Social apathy and tolerance of child labour • Ignorance of the parents about the adverse consequences of Child labour • Ineffective enforcement of the legal provisions pertaining to child labour • Non-availability of and non-accessibility to schools • Irrelevant and non-attractive school curriculum Employers prefer children as they constitute cheap labour and they are not able to organize themselves against exploitation. Causes of Child Labour Some common causes of child labor are poverty, parental illiteracy, social apathy, ignorance, lack of education and exposure, exploitation of cheap and unorganized labor. The family practice to inculcate traditional skills in children also pulls little ones inexorably in the trap of child labor, as they never get the opportunity to learn anything else.

Absence of compulsory education at the primary level, parental ignorance regarding the bad effects of child labor, the ineffectivity of child labor laws in terms of implementation, non availability and non accessibility of schools, boring and unpractical school curriculum and cheap child labor are some other factors which encourages the phenomenon of child labor. It is also very difficult for immature minds and undeveloped bodies to understand and organize themselves against exploitation in the absence of adult guidance.

Poverty and over population have been identified as the two main causes of child labor. Parents are forced to send little children into hazardous jobs for reasons of survival, even when they know it is wrong. Monetary constraints and the need for food, shelter and clothing drives their children in the trap of premature labor. Over population in some regions creates paucity of

resources. When there are limited means and more mouths to feed children are driven to commercial activities and not provided for their development needs. This is the case in most Asian and African countries.

Illiterate and ignorant parents do not understand the need for wholesome proper physical, cognitive and emotional development of their child. They are themselves uneducated and unexposed, so they don't realize the importance of education for their children. Adult unemployment and urbanization also causes child labor. Adults often find it difficult to find jobs because factory owners find it more beneficial to employ children at cheap rates. This exploitation is particularly visible in garment factories of urban areas. Adult exploitation of children is also seen in many places.

Elders relax at home and live on the labor of poor helpless children. The industrial revolution has also had a negative effect by giving rise to circumstances which encourages child labor. Sometimes multinationals prefer to employ child workers in the developing countries. This is so because they can be recruited for less pay, more work can be extracted from them and there is no union problem with them. This attitude also makes it difficult for adults to find jobs in factories, forcing them to drive their little ones to work to keep the fire burning their homes.

The incidence of child labor would diminish considerably even in the face of poverty, if there are no parties willing to exploits them. Strict implementation of child labor laws and practical and healthy alternatives to replace this evil can go a long way to solve the problem of child labor. Children who are born out of wedlock, orphaned or abandoned are especially vulnerable to

exploitation. They are forced to work for survival when there are no adults and relatives to support them. Livelihood considerations can also drive a child into the dirtiest forms of child labor like child prostitution and organized begging.

Child Labour in India: The Causes The complex issue of child labour is a developmental issue worth investigating. The notion that children are being exploited and forced into labour, while not receiving education crucial to development, concerns many people. India is the largest example of a nation plagued by the problem of child labour. Estimates cite figures of between 60 and 115 million working children in India -- the highest number in the world (Human RightsWatch 1996, 1). What are the causes of child labour in India? How do governmental policies affect it?

What role does education play in regard to child labour in India? A critical analysis of the answers to these questions may lead in the direction of a possible solution. These questions will be answered through an analysis of the problem of child labour as it is now, investigating how prevalent it is and what types of child labour exist. The necessity of child labour to poor families, and the role of poverty as a determinant will be examined. Governmental policies concerning child labour will be investigated. The current state of education in India will be examined and compared with other developing countries.

Compulsory education policies and their relationship to child labour will be investigated using Sri Lanka and the Indian state of Kerala as examples of where these policies have worked. Finally, India's policies concerning

compulsory education will be assessed. The Problem of Child Labour in India How many children are involved? It is difficult to cite a current figure for the number of children engaged in child labour. This difficulty is attributed to the fact that the Indian Government " has been negligent in its refusal to collect and analyze current and relevant data regarding the incidence of child labor.

As of 1996, official figures continue to be based on 1981 census figures" (Human Rights Watch 1996, 122). The 1981 Indian census reports that there were 13.6 million child labourers in India (Census of India 1981 cited in Weiner 1991, 20). Indian government extrapolations of this 1981 data place the current number of child labourers at between seventeen and twenty million (Human Rights Watch 1996, 122). This extrapolation seems highly unlikely as " The Official National Sample Survey of 1983 [of India] reports 17.4 million child labourers, while a study . . . sponsored by the Labour Ministry, concluded that the child-labour force was 44 million" (Weiner 1991, 20-21). UNICEF " cites figures ranging from seventy-five to ninety million child laborers under the age of fourteen" (Human Rights Watch 1996, 122). A universal difficulty in obtaining accurate data may be that individuals fail to report child labour participation during surveys, for fear of persecution.

Although the figure for the number of child labourers varies, they are all significantly high when considering that the Child Economic Activity rate for 1980-1991 was 13. % for males and 10. 3% for females (International Labour Organization, 1995, 113). In comparison, other developing countries such as Sri Lanka and Malaysia (where data is available), have lower activity rates: 5. 3% for males and 4. 6% for females in Sri Lanka, and 8. 8% for males and 6. 5% for females in Malaysia (International Labour Organization, 1995, 113).

Historical census data shows an overall child work participation rate of 12.69% in 1961 and 7.13% in 1971 (Census of India 1971 cited in Devi 1985, 50).

This data is misleading because the definitions of child labour are different in the two censuses (unpaid workers are not included in the 1971 census), thus a comparison cannot be completely valid (Devi 1985, 37). The data shows that in a period of twenty years (1961-1981), the proportion of children who are working has not changed significantly, but since comparisons with this data are not valid, this conclusion is questionable. What are children doing in terms of work? The 1981 Census of India divided child labour into nine industrial divisions: I. Cultivation, II. Agricultural Labour, III.

Livestock, Forestry, Fishing, Plantation, IV. Mining and Quarrying, V. Manufacturing, Processing, Servicing and Repairs, VI. Construction, VII. Trade and Commerce, VIII. Transport, Storage and Communication, and IX. Other Services (Census of India 1981 cited in Nangia 1987, 72). Table 1.1 shows the percentage distribution of child workers by these industrial divisions in 1981. From this table it is observed that the majority of rural child workers (84.29%) are employed in cultivation and agricultural labour (divisions I and II). Urban child labourers are distributed differently, as table 1.1 shows 39.6% of them are involved in manufacturing, processing, servicing and repairs. Although more children are involved in agriculturally related jobs (table 1.1 shows a total of 78.67% for divisions I and II), human rights organizations tend to focus on the manufacturing types of child labour because most children in these situations are bonded labourers. Bonded labour " refers to

the phenomenon of children working in conditions of servitude in order to pay off a debt" (Human Rights Watch 1996, 2). Estimates place the number of bonded child labourers in India at close to one million (International Labour Organisation 1992, 15).

Causes of Child Labour in India and Government Policy Dealing with it How necessary is child labour to families in India? Child labour is a source of income for poor families. A study conducted by the ILO Bureau of Statistics found that " Children's work was considered essential to maintaining the economic level of households, either in the form of work for wages, of help in household enterprises or of household chores in order to free adult household members for economic activity elsewhere" (Mehra-Kerpelman 1996, 8). In some cases, the study found that a child's income accounted for between 34 and 37 percent of the total household income.

This study concludes that a child labourer's income is important to the livelihood of a poor family. There is a questionable aspect of this study. It was conducted in the form of a survey, and the responses were given by the parents of the child labourers. Parents would be biased into being compelled to support their decision to send their children to work, by saying that it is essential. They are probably right: for most poor families in India, alternative sources of income are close to non-existent. There are no social welfare systems such as those in the West, nor is there easy access to loans, which will be discussed.

What is apparent is the fact that child labourers are being exploited, shown by the pay that they receive. For the same type of work, studies show that

children are paid less than their adult counterparts. Table 2. 1 shows a comparison of child wages to adult wages obtained by a study of child workers in the Delhi region of India. Although 39. 5% of employers said that child workers earn wages equal to adults, if the percentage of employers admitting that wages are lower for children are added up, a figure of 35. 9% is found. This figure is significant when taking the bias of employers into account.

Employers would have been likely to defend their wages for child workers, by saying that children earn the same wages as adults. The fact that no employers stated children earned more than adults, should be also be noted. Other studies have also concluded that " children's earnings are consistently lower than those of adults, even where there two groups are engaged in the same tasks" (Bequele and Boyden cited in Grootaert and Kanbur 1995, 195). Child labour is a significant problem in India. The prevalence of it is shown by the child work participation rates which are higher in Indian than in other developing countries.

The major determinant of child labour is poverty. Even though children are paid less than adults, whatever income they earn is of benefit to poor families. In addition to poverty, the lack of adequate and accessible sources of credit forces poor parents to engage their children in the harsher form of child labour -- bonded child labour. Some parents also feel that a formal education is not beneficial, and that children learn work skills through labour at a young age. These views are narrow and do not take the long term

developmental benefits of education into account. Another determinant is access to education.

In some areas, education is not affordable, or is found to be inadequate. With no other alternatives, children spend their time working. The Constitution of India clearly states that child labour is wrong and that measures should be taken to end it. The government of India has implemented the Child Labour Act in 1986 that outlaws child labour in certain areas and sets the minimum age of employment at fourteen. This Act falls short of making all child labour illegal, and fails to meet the ILO guideline concerning the minimum age of employment set at fifteen years of age.

Though policies are in place that could potentially reduce the incidence of child labour, enforcement is a problem. If child labour is to be eradicated in India, the government and those responsible for enforcement need to start doing their jobs. Policies can and will be developed concerning child labour, but without enforcement they are all useless. The state of education in India also needs to be improved. High illiteracy and dropout rates are reflective of the inadequacy of the educational system. Poverty plays a role in the ineffectiveness of the educational system. Dropout rates are high because children are forced to work in order to support their families. The attitudes of the people also contribute to the lack of enrollment -- parents feel that work develops skills that can be used to earn an income, while education does not help in this matter. Compulsory education may help in regard to these attitudes. The examples of Sri Lanka and Kerala show that compulsory education has worked in those areas. There are differences between Sri

Lanka, Kerala and the rest of India. What types of social welfare structures do these places have? What are the attitudes of the people?

Is there some other reason why the labour market for child labourers is poor in these areas? These are some questions that need to be answered before applying the concept of compulsory education to India? India is making progress in terms of educational policy. The DPEP has been implemented only four years ago, and so results are not apparent at this time. Hopefully the future will show that this program has made progress towards universal education, and eradicating child labour. Child labour cannot be eliminated by focusing on one determinant, for example education, or by brute enforcement of child labour laws.

The government of India must ensure that the needs of the poor are filled before attacking child labour. If poverty is addressed, the need for child labour will automatically diminish. No matter how hard India tries, child labour always will exist until the need for it is removed. The development of India as a nation is being hampered by child labour. Children are growing up illiterate because they have been working and not attending school. A cycle of poverty is formed and the need for child labour is reborn after every generation.

India needs to address the situation by tackling the underlying causes of child labour through governmental policies and the enforcement of these policies. Only then will India succeed in the fight against child labour. Child Labour •Fight for their rights •What can you do •No Barbie for me; A hacksaw if you please Fight for the rights of children We fight for our rights

at home for almost everything from late nights to going out of station with friends. We chat about human rights with our parents, teachers and friends. But have we ever thought about the children who are forced to work and do not even have basic rights?

India has the largest number of children employed than any other country in the world. According to the statistics provided by The Government of India around 90 million out of 179 million children in the six to 14 age group do not go to school and are engaged in some occupation or other. This means that close to 50 per cent of children are deprived of their right to a free and happy childhood. Unofficially, this figure exceeds 100 million but the fact that a large number of these children work without wages in fields or in cottages alongside their parents, unreported by census, makes it very difficult to estimate accurately.

However, it is estimated that if these working children constituted a country, it would be the 11th largest country in the world. A large number of children work in cottage industries producing carpets, matches, firecrackers, bidis, brassware, diamond, glass, hosiery, hand loomed cloth, embroidery, leather goods, plastic, bangles and sporting goods. The highest number of children are found working in the agricultural sector. Poverty has often been cited as the reason for the child labour problem in India.

While it is true that the poorest, most disadvantaged sectors of Indian society supply the vast majority of child labourers, child labour actually creates and perpetuates poverty as it displaces adults from their jobs and also condemns the child to a life of unskilled badly paid work. Merely passing laws

is obviously not the solution, as they need to be enforced, in which our country has a poor track record. What are the causes for child labour? One can attribute it to various factors -- unemployment, low wages, poor standards of living, ignorance and illiteracy, social attitudes, and the like.

Together they culminate in poverty and exploitation. The poor would rather have children who work to supplement the income. There are many cases where the parents sell their children as bonded labour for a petty sum of money. Banning child labour therefore is not the solution, nor is the step by the U. S. and Europe to ban carpets from India. Ignorance is one of the main problems; ignorance on the part of the parents who believe that with the children working, poverty will be eradicated; and ignorance on the part of the children who do not know their rights in this country.

The working conditions of the children are inhuman and the incomes given are also meagre. Eighty per cent of the children work in hazardous conditions. At present, the legislations in India only specifically outlaw child labour in designated hazardous industries and bonded child labour, but both Article 24 of the Indian Constitution and Section 67 of the Factories Act explicitly direct that children below the age of 14 years are not to work in factories. In addition, the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986 forbids the employment of children in specified hazardous industries.

The Supreme Court ruling of December 10, 1996, in an attempt to fill the loopholes left in previous legislation and to bring in judicial activism to social issues ordered the setting up of a fund for the child workers aimed at controlling and eventually eliminating child labour across the length and

breadth of the entire country. While setting out a long list of child labour monitoring obligations of the State Governments, it also prescribes heavy fines for employers caught with children at work. In addition, India has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Laws pertaining to Child Labour: •Children [Pledging of Labour] Act (1933)
•Employment of Children Act (1938) •The Bombay Shop and Establishments Act (1948) •Child Labour -Prohibition and Regulation Act •The Indian Factories Act (1948) •Plantations Labour Act (1951) •The Mines Act (1952)
•Merchant Shipping Act (1958) •The Apprentice Act (1961) •The Motor Transport Workers Act (1961) •The Atomic Energy Act (1962) •Bidi and Cigar Workers (Condition of Employment) Act (1966) •State Shops and Establishments Act

What you can do -- JOIN THE GLOBAL MARCH AGAINST CHILD LABOUR In June 1998, when the International Labour Conference (ILO) will debate a new Convention on Child Labour, a huge motivated and determined group of people will swarm the streets of Geneva. Coming from five continents and marching for five months, they comprise the Global March Against Child Labour. The marchers may have traveled by bus, plane, boat or may have walked some distance. They may have taken over " the torch" from other marchers along the road. They will end up in Geneva to mark the importance of the ILO discussions.

Though the March is spearheaded by a few select organisations working on various issues related to human rights, we think that the real strength lies with you -- the general people. The pith of this movement is the actual junta.

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Issues of child labour has reached such demonic proportions that until the people at the grassroots are mobilised enough, desired results will remain a far away dream. The Global March is but a fraction of our continuous efforts towards stopping child labour globally, and to make it a success, every sincere offer of help is welcome.

Marching along with the Core Marchers is not the only way to express your concern for this scourge. Every person, individually or collectively, can affect a change if he/she is sensitive and observant to this growing menace. You may be a student or a teacher, a parent or a child, an employee or an employer, each of you can help make the March and its cause reach the cherished goal. What we demand is not impossible, neither is child labour the 'normal' process of a developing economy, as some groups will want you to believe. The use and abuse of these little souls is an unpardonable sin.

Simply blaming the ineffectiveness of the laws and lackadaisical attitude of the lawmakers will not absolve us of our responsibility. The roots of this growing affliction has the capacity and strength to grow deeper and wider unless every heart, every mind and everybody sheds the complacent attitude and makes small but significant steps towards its complete elimination. No Barbie for me; A hacksaw if you please " It's finally happened", the old bearded man in red uttered in sheer disgust. " The world has gone to the dogs," he thought aloud.

Standing alone in the dark night, he looked as vehicles whizzed past him, and through him, with uncaring ferocity. Merriment and festivity filled the air as brightly-lit homes exuded an atmosphere of festivity and opulence. It

wasn't as if he hadn't been warned. " There will come a time when no one will be able to see you," his `Father' had told him. (He always referred to God as `Father'). " Why can nobody see me," the old man asked. " Hadn't I told you earlier that you won't be visible to the wicked, treacherous, liars, backbiters, putrid schemers, thieves, cheaters? " asked God. So what? None of the grown ups can see me even now. Its only the children and don't tell me they would turn into such vile creatures," argued the old man. " Okay, don't believe me," God shrugged helplessly, " just wait till they invent television. " He hadn't believed God then. But then, God had that notoriously bad habit of being right. Now he stood there lonely, alone facing the silence that confronted him, nostalgic about the past when he and his `jingle bells' were eagerly awaited. The children would spell out their wishes and he would grant them their wildest desires. You there old man, move! " A shrill voice commanded him. He turned and faced a dirty-looking kid with a hardened face looking irritatingly at him. The old man was stupefied, " You can actually see me? " he asked. " You crazy or what? " retorted the child. " Just tell me, can you really see me? " The old man was almost shouting now. The kid started to walk away. " Wa... Wait. Stop," the man shouted. He did not want to lose the only person he could talk with. " Come back. I'm not quite feeling alright now. Could you please talk to me for a while? " he was almost pleading. The boy turned back. I understand," winked the boy knowingly, " You're just BPT, isn't it. " " BPT? " The old man looked perplexed. " Bewda Peeke Tight. Ha! Ha! Ha! ", the child explained and burst into peals of laughter. The laughter sounded strange especially coming from a person who appeared incapable of relishing the finer shades of life. But when he saw

the sad look on the face of the old man, the child was filled with shame. " Sorry, uncle", he apologised. " Whether you drink or not is none of my business. In fact, my father drinks like a fish everyday. " " No need to apologise son. I didn't mind anything you just said.

For that matter, I'm not even drunk now," said the old man understandingly.

" You don't appear to now, but a while ago you were talking just like my father and walking on the middle of the road. So I thought " The boy paused. " Say, anyway isn't it an odd time to be roaming about, its almost midnight? " queried the old man. " Yes, of course, I'm usually at the factory at this time. They leave us usually at 1 am, but you know because of all these riots, the supervisor left us early," pat came the reply. " You work in a factory ? " The old man was astonished. " Don't you go to school? " " Sure,

I do, thrice a week. Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays. I have to go to the factory on other days, Ramu goes to school on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. " " Who's Ramu ? " asked the old man. " My little brother. He's only this high," the boy touched his knee, palm stretched out and downwards. " and still he can easily pick you up and throw you down. Of course, he cannot pick me up and throw me down but then he's only this high. " He once more pointed to his knee. Matters were getting complicated for the old man. The rest of the dialogue followed thus -- " Won't your studies suffer? " " What is that ? " Don't you study ? " " No. " " You do not go to school to study? " " No. We go to clean up all the rooms, with all those big black and green slates with cloth and water and take all the kachra and dump it in the street. " " Don't your parents scold you for not going to

school? " The boy's eyes being moist. " I want to go to school carrying books and wearing white shirts and blue pants. My father doesn't allow me to. I asked him once when Shamu started going to school in uniform and with brown books. He beat me up and said that reading books and going to school causes one to lose his God. " But that's idiotic, crazy. I never heard a thing so ridiculous before," the old man shouted. " I know, I guess even father knows it. Its just that we do not have enough money to pay for the school. And then if I go to the school who will go to the factory? ", the boy looked soulfully at the old man. He understands nothing, he thought. He was right. The old man was stupefied, he didn't know how he could bring cheer to the only person who could see him. And it was his job to make the boy happy, if he could. He thought the best way out would be to ask him. " What would you like to have? Just tell me.

See here, in this sack I've just about all the toys in the world. " " But what in the world would I possibly need a toy for? " " Don't tell me you do not like toys. Children love toys, they bring a sparkle to a child's being, everyone wants a toy, everyone needs a toy," the old man declared. " But I don't," the boy replied, " When would I play with them? " " Just look at this sweet little Barbie," the old man continued " and this is a G. I. Joe, here's a He-Man, take your pick. If you like cars, I've a whole lot of them, battery operated and remote controlled, the latest and the best. I have eroplanes and helicopters and I have a dog that barks, a cat that mews, a donkey that brays and a doll that says 'mama, papa, good day. And a house of cards, chess, carom board, darts, checkers. I also have computer games, TV games, " " Do you have a hacksaw blade? " the boy asked hesitatingly. " What? A hacksaw blade?

What's that ? " The old man was bowled. " A blade that's fixed in a hacksaw. You see I broke one today, they will cut my pay for today. So do you have one? " the boy pleaded. The old man rummaged through his sack. It had everything he felt would bring cheer and happiness to a child.

Till now, that is. He looked and looked and finally gave up. " It isn't there, is it? " Seeing the hopeless look on the face of the old man, the boy said: " It's okay. Thanks anyway for trying to help. I'll go now, its getting late. " " Wait," shouted the old man, " look here's a golden sword, a magic lamp, a do-it-yourself kit, WAIT, anything you want, its there. " The boy didn't turn back this time. He was already late for work. NEW DELHI—Ten-year-old Sonu sits forlornly on a plastic chair in a ramshackle street food stall in New Delhi, taking a break after serving customers tea.

A ban on child labor in households, restaurants, hotels and resorts came into effect in India on Tuesday but nothing has changed for the tired-looking boy, dressed in scruffy blue jeans and a faded green shirt. Sonu, whose father also works in a food stall, says he'd rather be in school. " But what to do? This is necessary," said the boy, reality teaching him an early and harsh lesson in life. Sonu comes from a poor family from a New Delhi slum and is one of the millions of children who work in roadside food stalls or in the homes of India's upper and middle-class.

Officials hope the new ban, which will apply to children under 14, will protect underage workers from psychological and sexual abuse as well as from strenuous working conditions. On the eve of the ban, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh warned of " firm action" against violators but appealed to

Indians to give up the practice voluntarily. Under the country's existing Child Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Act of 1986, children under 14 are already banned from working in industries deemed "hazardous" such as fireworks, matchstick-making, auto workshops, or carpet weaving.

ILLEGAL HELP: Babulu, an 11-year-old boy, cleans tea cups outside a roadside eating place in New Delhi, earning INR 25 (50 U. S. cents) per day. The government is working on media advertisements to warn people that they could be jailed for employing children under 14 as domestic helps and in roadside eateries. (Raveednran/AFP/Getty Images) Activists say they have their doubts about how authorities will implement the new ban, given their past record. "This ban on child domestic labor is a welcome step, but changes on paper are not enough," Zama Coursen-Neff of New York-based Human Rights Watch said in a statement.

Less than three miles from India's labor ministry, 10-year-old Shehzad is covered with grime and dust as he uses a foot pump to inflate the tire tube of a scooter belonging to a policeman, who watches him impassively. Shehzad does not know that children have been banned for a decade from working in workshops but says it does not make a difference. "I can't go to school as my father can't afford to buy books for me," the son of a rickshaw-puller said, while picking up a plastic container of spare parts. The new ban for children in food stalls and working in homes is aimed at providing legal protection to millions more children.

Those found violating the law could face up to two years in jail, a maximum fine of 20,000 rupees (\$435), or both. The labor ministry says there are 12

million children under 14 years old working in India, but activists say the number could be as high as 60 million. " This is a good tool for us to fight child labor. Now we have a legal instrument to take it on," said Kailash Satyarthi, head of the Bachpan Bachao Andolan (Save the Childhood Movement). Authorities say results from the new ban will not come overnight, as many Indians do not see the age-old practice of employing children from impoverished families as a crime.

Activists say the new ban will expose the problems faced by child servants— whose living and working conditions are not exposed to public scrutiny— including loss of childhood and sexual exploitation. " These children are very vulnerable. Their employment is an invisible form of slavery," Satyarthi said. Even though local authorities have been asked to prepare to accommodate thousands of children expected to be freed from raids conducted on homes and restaurants by police, activists say there has been little provision for rehabilitating the freed children.

A WORLD WITHOUT CHILD LABOUR can be a reality if there are adequate rehabilitation mechanisms. The Times of India, 15 Oct 2006, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/2172660.cms> October 10 was a benchmark date for the child labourers working in households, and the hospitality sector. On this day, the amended Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act of 1986 came into force, prohibiting households, officers, hotels and guesthouses from employing children aged below 14 years as domestic help.

It is heartening to read news reports that the Labour department has tracked complaints of child labour in hotels and homes, and implemented the Child Labour Abolition Act. But the lack of effective alternatives and inadequate rehabilitation mechanisms makes the implementation of the law a daunting task. Labour minister G Vinod hits the mark when he says, " The task will be difficult. We will have to intrude into the privacy of thousands of households, to check for child labour. The most striking thing about child labour is that it's ubiquitous everywhere, despite multi-pronged crusades by government legislations, non-governmental agencies and awareness programmes through media and literature. The issue might be the pet peeve of middle and upper middle class families in the social sphere, but a child working in the homes of most of them isn't an uncommon sight. Most employers assuage their conscience by the thought that they are offering employment to a child, and in the process, the law gets hoodwinked into selective amnesia.

A case in point is J Arvind, a resident of Sainikpuri, who employed a 14-year-old " to help her family that was in dire need of money for survival". Arvind says, " The earnings of my maid and her mother together is hardly enough to feed two younger ones in their family. A drunkard father makes matters worse for them. If we cease to employ her, what will happen to her family? The child is free to choose whether she should earn or learn. "

Subramanyam, secretary of an apartment in West Marredpally that was recently declared child labour free, suggests, " In most cases, kids work because either their parents are alcoholics or sick.

Apart from prohibiting their employment, the government should also counsel parents and ensure that they are fit to work. " While there is a debate on which kind of child labour is exploitative, most people agree that there is an intrinsic link between elimination of child labour, elimination of poverty and retention of children in schools. " Recently, when I had gone to an MLA's house, I was surprised to see a 10-year-old working there. The irony is that the lawmakers themselves break the law. But let us consider that even if the child is sent back to his home, can his family afford to educate and feed him?

In the first place, if they could, they would have never sent him to work," says R Vijayan, a resident of Begumpet. However, Shanta Sinha, founder of MV Foundation that has been actively fighting against child labour, says observes, " People are aware of the law but don't pay much heed to it because the government isn't actively implementing it. " So what are the solutions? While lawmakers chalk out action-plans to mitigate the problem, Shanta says, " The government should treat the situation as an emergency and get cracking on it. If communities come together and cooperate with the government, the problem can be solved in a year or two.

New forums need to be formed to support the cause. The day we feel a sense of shame for making a child work, that would be the end of child labour. " Citizens like Shanta Kumari of Bowenpally opine, " I think the state should build homes where such kids can study and get vocational training. Otherwise, employers could educate them at home. " " Such measures seem like an egalitarian dream in a scenario where even if people are booked for

employing children, they bribe their way out or produce fake age certificates showing workers as over 18," concludes Subramanyam.om

Fate of Children in our World : Fact sheet Unicef, http://www.unicef.org/voy/explore/sowc06/explore_2463.html

•More than 1 billion children suffer from a lack of proper nutrition, safe drinking water, decent sanitation facilities, health-care services, shelter, education and information. •Of those orphaned by AIDS, 12.1 million, or more than 80 per cent, are in sub-Saharan Africa. •Every day, nearly 1,800 children under 15 are infected with HIV. Children under 15 make up 13 per cent of new global HIV infections and 17 per cent of HIV/AIDS deaths every year. About 30 per cent of rural children in developing countries are out of school, compared with 18 per cent of those living in urban areas, and over 80 per cent of all children who are not in primary school live in rural areas. •More than 900 million people live in slums; most lack access to safe drinking water, improved sanitation facilities, sufficient living space and decent housing. •In 2004, an estimated 10.5 million children died before they reached age five, most from preventable diseases. Vaccine-preventable diseases cause more than 2 million deaths every year. There are some 300 million indigenous peoples in more than 70 countries, around half of whom live in Asia. Many of them face extreme exclusion. •There are an estimated 150 million children with disabilities in the world, most of whom facediscriminationin one form or another. •An estimated 48 million children in 2003 – 36 per cent of total births that year – were not formally registered. •At the end of 2004, roughly 48 per cent of all refugees worldwide were children. During the same year, roughly 25 million people were displaced within their own countries by

conflict or human rights violations. At the end of 2003, there were an estimated 143 million orphans under the age of 18 living in 93 developing countries. •The exact number of street children is impossible to count, but estimates are that tens of millions exist across the world. •More than 1 million children are living in detention (jail) as a result of being in conflict with the law, according to estimates. •UNICEF estimates that in 2005, 48 per cent of South Asian females aged 15 to 24 will marry before age 18. •The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that 246 million children between 5 and 17 are engaged in child labour.

Of these, nearly 70 per cent are working in hazardous conditions – in mines, with chemicals and pesticides in agriculture or with dangerous machinery. Some 73 million of them are less than 10 years old. •Reliable global statistics are impossible to compile, but it is estimated that trafficking affects about 1.2 million children each year. 23 months ago: Two young Indian labourers load and carry mixed concrete during up-grading work at a railway station in New Delhi, 18 February 2007. India has one of the highest percentages of child labour in the world as it is a source of income for poor families.

The United Nations Children's' Fund says that the sheer volume of children engaged in work world-wide is living proof of the world's failure to protect them. Although India has laws in place to protect children and bans the use of young workers, these laws remain pretty ineffective Day in pictures Babu, a six-year-old Indian boy, works with his grandmother despite a new law prohibiting child labour in India. Child labour is a burning problem in all over the world. In developing countries like India, Srilanka Bangladesh etc is

becoming a current issue and government also thinking this issue very seriously and succeeded in some areas .

They are taking support from the public , media , service organizations and voluntaries. Child labour and the most evil forms of child labour , as defined by international labour organization conventions, damage children’s health, threaten their education and lead to further misuse and abuse. Heavy duty: The pile of tyres seems an overload even for six hands, a sad spectacle caught on camera near Royapettah. When will the shame of child labour end in our country? © The Hindu, January 6, 2008. One thing I find difficult to get used to in India is seeing children at work.

The young boy who rides a bicycle in the mornings delivering milk can’t be over 13. Same with the kids in shorts and bare feet who clear tables and mop floors in restaurants. The rag pickers who roam the streets and rummage through garbage for plastic and other salvageable items are often children. Children are also employed on farms, in hotels, tea shops, and factories. Many young girls work as maids in private homes. Today’s paper reported that over 10. 5 million children work in India, while 60 million children are neither in work or at school.

The law on child labour prohibits the employment of children under 14 in ‘ hazardous’ jobs, which includes domestic, hotel and restaurant work, but it is not enforced and children at work, like the image above, continues to be a familiar sight. Not only are they missing out on a childhood and education, but with no one to fend for them, these children are often subject to exploitation and abuse at the hands of their unscrupulous employers. Many

of these children's parents cannot afford to pay for their schooling, and to make ends meet, they send them to work so that they can bring home a little extra income.

The only way to give these children a future is to send them to school. Some employers of domestic staff are willing to pay for the schooling of their employees' children. There are also many NGOs working to eradicate child labour by putting working children in school and offering support to families so that their children can stay in school. Some of these organisations include the Lovedale Foundation, the MV Foundation and the Parikrma Foundation, and there are many others. The cost of sending a child to school for a year is 7090 rupees (123 EUR / 185 CAD / 179 USD).

For many of us, this is a small price to pay for the future of a child, a family, a country. But it's only through enforcement of the child labour law, responsibility being taken on the part of employers to respect the rights of children, as well as the responsibility of the government to support education for the underprivileged that the 'sad spectacle' pictured above will become a less familiar sight. 26 months ago: An Indian street child holds a rose at a traffic light as she waits for commuters in New Delhi, 13 November 2006, on the eve of Children's Day.

Universally, Children's Day is celebrated on 20 November, every year. This date was chosen as it marks the anniversary of the day in 1959, when the Declaration of the Rights of the Child was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. However, in India this day has been preponed to 14 November, the date which marks the birth anniversary of independent

India's first Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Despite a ban on children's labour imposed under the 1986 Child Labour Prohibition and Regulation Act