



CHILDREN IN INDIA 2012

- A Statistical Appraisal



Social Statistics Division
Central Statistics Office
Ministry of statistics and Programme Implementation
Government of India

Chapter 6

Children engaged in work

Child labour is the practice of engaging children in economic activity, on part-time or full-time basis. Contrary to the notion that it is better when all members of a family, irrespective of age, work and earn money, child labour actually makes poverty worse. The more children are forced to work, the fewer opportunities are there for adults to earn a living. By driving down adult wages and depriving children of education, child labour results in poverty passing down from generation to generation. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) "Born to parents who themselves were uneducated child workers, many child workers are forced to continue a tradition that leaves them chained to a life of poverty" (ILO, United States Policies to Address Child Labour Globally, 2010). That is why child labour is a very complicated development issue, affecting human society all over the world.

Although India has the largest number of child labourers under the age 14 in the world, child labour problem is not unique to India; worldwide, in many countries children are forced to work with disastrous consequences. Children, under age 14 are often forced to work for as many as 18 hours a day. They are subject to malnutrition, impaired vision, deformities from sitting long hours in cramped over crowded work places, they become easy preys to deadly diseases like serious respiratory diseases, T.B., and Cancer. They are often forced to lead solitary lives away from their families, deprived of meaningful education and training opportunities that could prepare them for a better future. Child labour not only leads to a perpetual cycle of poverty for a family, it depresses the economy also. The immense benefits of abolition of child labour cannot be measured in economic terms alone, its enormous long term beneficial impact on the Society as a whole far outweighs the nominal economic hardship that some families would suffer only for a short span of time.

Child Labour is recognized as a serious and enormously complex social problem in India. The Census found an increase in the number of child labourers from 11.28 million in 1991 to 12.66 million in 2001. In addition, nearly 85 per cent of child labourers in India are hard-to-reach, invisible and excluded, as they work largely in the unorganised sector, both rural and urban, within the family or in household-based units. The Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act 1986 aims to prohibit the entry of children into hazardous occupations and to regulate the services of children in non-hazardous occupations but still a significant portion of children in the country are engaged in such activities.

The following are some of the situations in which children are engaged in work:



➤ **Agriculture-** Children working long hours and under severe hardships on the fields. They are also exposed to the hazards of working with modern machinery and chemicals.



➤ **Hazardous Industries/ Occupations-** Like glass making, mining , construction , carpet weaving, zari making, fireworks and others as listed under the Child Labour Act.



➤ **Small industrial workshops and service establishments.**

➤ **On the streets-** Rag pickers , porters ,vendors etc.

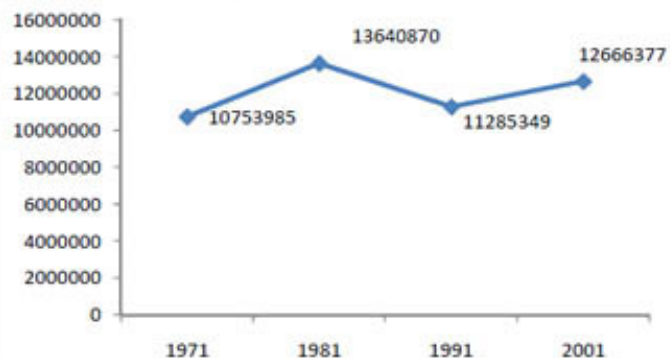
➤ **Domestic work-** Largely invisible and silent and hence face higher degree of exploitation and abuse in the home of employees.

Measuring Child Labour

The census results shows a fluctuating trend in child labour over the years.

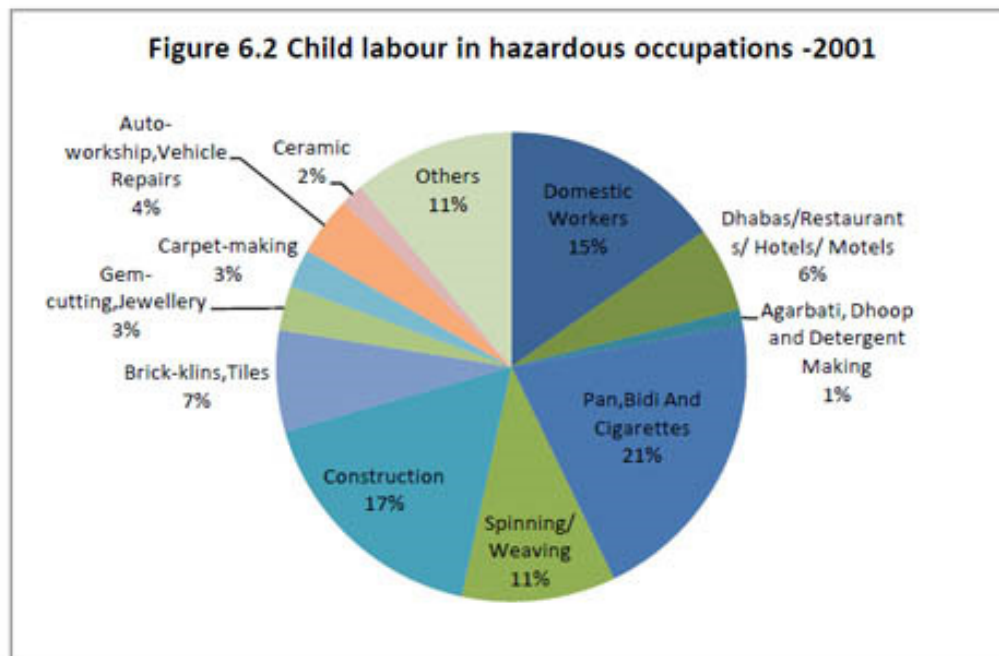


Figure 6.1 Child labour in India (age 5 -14 years)



Source: Population Census, Office of Registrar General of India

The occupation wise distribution of children engaged in hazardous occupations as per Census of India 2001 shown below. The major occupations engaging child labour are Pan, Bidi & Cigarettes (21%), Construction (17%), Domestic workers (15%) and Spinning & weaving (11%).



Source: Census 2001

As per census 2001, Uttar Pradesh (15.22%) recorded the highest share of child labour in the country, followed by Andhra Pradesh (10.76%), Rajasthan (9.97%), Bihar (8.82%), Madhya Pradesh (8.41%), and West Bengal (6.77%).

The census data reveals that, the trend on the magnitude of child labour is not uniform across the country. On one hand, there is considerable increase in the absolute number of child labour between 1991 and 2001 in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Chattisgarh, Bihar, West Bengal, Haryana, Uttaranchal, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Nagaland, Assam, Meghalaya, and Delhi. On the other hand, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Orissa, Gujarat and Kerala have shown significant decline in the number of child labour.

It is also to be noted here that there is a general increasing trend in the magnitude of child labour in the north east region of the country. Sikkim had the highest Child Work Participation Rate (WPR) in the country with 12.04 % child labourers among total children in the age group of 5-14 years, followed by Rajasthan 8.25 % and Himachal Pradesh (8.14%) during 2001. The other states having higher than the national average of 5 percent WPR for children are Andhra Pradesh (7.7%), Chattisgarh (6.96%), Karnataka (6.91%), Madhya Pradesh (6.71%), J&K (6.62%), Arunachal Pradesh (6.06%), Jharkhand and Assam (5.07%).

The **Worker Population Ratio (WPR)**, defined as the number of persons employed per 1000 persons are available in the Reports of **Survey on Employment and Unemployment (NSS 2009-10, 2004-05)** brought out by the National Sample Survey Organisation. There is significant decline in the number of child workers per 1000 by principal usual activity category during 2004-2010.

Table 6.1 Work Participation of children							
		Distribution of (per 1000) of persons by principal usual activity category					
NSS	Age (in years)	Rural		Urban		Total	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
2004-05	5-9	2	1	2	1	2	1
	10-14	54	49	44	24	52	43
2009-10	5-9	2	1	0	0	1	1
	10-14	27	21	24	8	26	18

Source: Key indicators of Employment and unemployment in India, NSS July 2009- June 2010 , Employment and unemployment situation in India

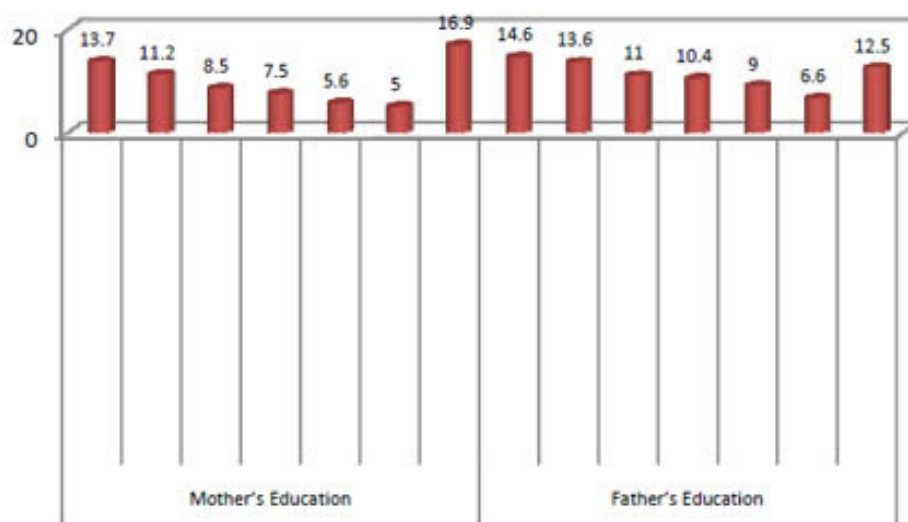
The **National Family Health Survey -3** also throws light into the percentage of children age 5-14 years, who were engaged in different activities in the seven days preceding the interview, by background characteristics. As per the NFHS -3 (2005-06), nearly one in every eight (11.8%) children aged 5-14 years works either for their own household or for somebody else. Among the children who work for others, 2.2% children are engaged in paid work and 2.9% are engaged in unpaid work. 3.1% children are engaged in household chores for 28 or more hours in a week, and 4.8% are engaged in work in a family business. Since children are involved in multiple activities, the total work participation rate of 12 percent is less than the sum of the percentages of children engaged in each type of work. The work participation rate as revealed by NFHS 3 is the same for girls (12 percent) as it is for boys (12 percent). The very young children (age 5-7 years), both boys and girls, are mainly doing unpaid work for someone who is not a member of their household. The

older boys age 12-14 are mainly engaged in paid work or family work, whereas girls in this age group are involved mainly in household chores or family work. Notably, at all ages, girls are more likely than boys to be doing chores and boys are more likely than girls to be working for someone who is not a member of the household or doing other family work.

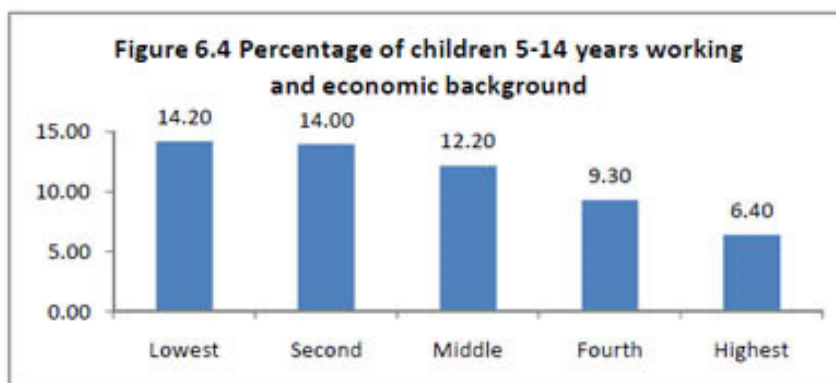
Rural children age 5-14 years (12.9%) are more likely to be engaged in work than their urban counterparts (8.6%). The percentage of children engaged in work activities decreases steadily with mother's increasing education, father's increasing education, and increasing wealth quintile. With parents' higher education and greater household wealth, there is a substantial reduction in the extent of paid work, involvement in household chores, and other family work, but involvement in unpaid work for someone who is not a member of the household remains more or less the same.

The impact of parent's education, in sending the children for work is very significant as shown below.

Figure 6.3 Percentage of children working and Parent's educational background



Poverty is a prominent cause for child labour, and the NFHS 3 results also reveal this. One in every 7 children in the lowest and second lowest wealth index category is working.



Source: NFHS 3 (2005-06)

About 12.1% children from households headed by Hindus are engaged in work, while the corresponding figure for Muslim and Christian are 10.8% and 7.4% respectively. 16.6% children from households headed by a member of a scheduled tribe are engaged in work while the corresponding figure for Scheduled Caste and Other Backward Class 11.6% and 12.2% respectively.

The Annual Health Survey 2010 – 11, revealed that in the 8 Empowered Action Group States and Assam, the percentage of children aged 5-14 engaged in work varied between 2.2% in Uttarakhand to 5% in Rajasthan.

Table 6.2 Children engaged in work in 8 Empowered Action Group States & Assam				
Children age 5-14 years engaged in work (%)		Total	Rural	Urban
Assam	Person	3.4	3.6	2.1
	Male	4.4	4.6	2.8
	Female	2.3	2.4	1.4
Bihar	Person	3.6	3.7	3.1
	Male	4.0	4.0	3.8
	Female	3.1	3.2	2.3
Chattisgarh	Person	3.3	3.6	2.0
	Male	3.5	3.8	2.3
	Female	3.0	3.4	1.5

Table 6.2 Children engaged in work in 8 Empowered Action Group States & Assam				
Children age 5-14 years engaged in work (%)		Total	Rural	Urban
Jharkhand	Person	3.2	3.6	1.9
	Male	3.7	4.1	2.4
	Female	2.7	3.1	1.3
Madhya Pradesh	Person	4.5	5.0	3.4
	Male	5.1	5.6	4.1
	Female	3.9	4.4	2.7
Odisha	Person	4.1	4.3	2.9
	Male	4.5	4.7	3.3
	Female	3.8	4.0	2.4
Rajasthan	Person	5.0	5.4	3.7
	Male	4.9	5.1	4.2
	Female	5.1	5.6	3.1
Uttar Pradesh	Person	2.7	2.7	3.0
	Male	3.5	3.4	4.1
	Female	1.8	1.8	1.7
Uttarakhand	Person	2.2	2.0	2.8
	Male	2.6	2.3	3.3
	Female	1.7	1.6	2.2

Source: Annual Health Survey 2010-11

Conclusion

Child labour denies the child of his basic right that is the right to education. 'No education' means unskilled jobs and exploitative wages. This leads to the creation of an unskilled adult labour force which causes early physical decay, economic insecurity, low quality of life and ultimately high poverty. Thus child labour creates a vicious circle of poverty, unemployment, underemployment and low wages. Over the years the Government of India has multiplied its efforts to address the needs and rights of exploited children. Still, the issue remains grave and demanding more rigorous measures. In order to eliminate the social evil of child labour there is a need for more intensive initiatives to tackle poverty and promote education opportunities to all children to help children and families in crisis.
