



Child Labour in Mizoram: A Case Study

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Abstract

Child labour is a serious issue and the figure is alarming in the global context and in the context of our nation. The problem of child labour is much more complex than it seems to be. In the context of Mizoram which is an ethnic close knit society, all forms of works performed by children are not considered child labour as per the cultural practices. This can be because of deep association of this society with cultural practices and traditions where children working with elders are not an issue of compromising the child rights. In reality, officially no accurate figure of children who are engaged as employee or involved in one or other form of work throughout Mizoram are not available. Moreover, in-depth study of them has not been conducted so far that could create awareness among the people of the society and for taking measures by the state government. The present study was undertaken to have some close in-depth case observations of children who were engaged as labourers. Six children, three male and three female, under the age of fourteen were identified from their work places in rural and urban areas of Aizawl. The study revealed the socio-economic causes of child labour in the state.

Keywords: *Child Labour, Poverty, Social Causes, Educational Status, Educational Prospect.*

Introduction

Child labour is a global phenomenon, particularly in developing and under developed countries. Since the foundation of International Labour Organization ((ILO) in 1919, the protection of children has been embedded in the Preamble of ILO's Constitution. The ILO celebrated 100 years of advancing social justice this year on 12th June 2019. In the convention, it was reported that 152 million children were still in child labour all over the world. The ILO review edits achievement over the 100 years of its support to countries on tackling child labour and also looked forward towards the UN Sustainable Development Goal Target 8.7 set for an end to child labour in all its forms by 2025. The theme of ILO's 100 years celebration is *Children shouldn't work in fields, but on dreams.*

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Though, there is no universally acceptable definition of child labour, age is a universally accepted criterion. India's Census 2001 defines child labour as participation of a child less than 17 years of age in any economically productive activity with or without compensation, wages or profit. Keeping the Right to Education Act, 2009 in view which is meant for universalising elementary education for the children between the age group 6-14 years, in the present study child means who has not completed his fourteenth year of age. The children in this age group are in formative stage physically and mentally. Any kind of exploitation and oppression on them lead to child abuse.

Child labour continues to be a serious problem in our country though there are governmental acts, schemes, rules and regulations for protection of children's interest and end child labour. Access, retention and quality are the parameters which are emphasised at all levels of education. There is broad consensus that the single most effective way to check the flow of school age children into labour market is to extend and improve access to quality school education. The Constitution of India had made a provision under article 45 as a directive principle for free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of fourteen years within ten years of promulgation of the constitution. Free and compulsory education became a fundamental right with the 86th Constitutional Amendment in December 2002 resulting insertion of Article 21-A in part III of the constitution. Subsequently, The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 was made on 26th August 2009 and became effective in all Indian states, except Jammu and Kashmir, with effect from 1st April 2010 confirming Article 21-A. This Act is a milestone in the history of Indian school education which would address the issues of child labour in our country. Besides, through articles 24, 39-e, and 39-f, the Constitution of India has made provisions to prevent child labour in our country.

The major national legislative and judicial developments for eradication of child labour in our country include The Factories Act, 1948, The Minimum Wages Act, 1948, The Mines Act, 1952, The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986, Supreme Court Decision, 1996, and The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) of Children Act, 2000. Some of these acts have also been amended. After the enactment of the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986, a National Child Labour Policy was adopted in 1987. Government of India has initiated the National Child Labour Project (NCLP) in 1988 after two years of enactment of National Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act, 1986 to rehabilitate working children which is a 100% centrally funded scheme.

Causes and Consequences of Child Labour

For many reasons children join the labour force. Studies conducted in different parts of the country have revealed children working the main causes of child labour to be poverty, large family size, migration, illiteracy and ignorance, family break up, natural disasters, urbanization, unemployment of elders, addiction of parents, orphans and the like. Child labour refers to that type of works which are likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children. Hazardous child labour is the work that is performed by children in dangerous and unhealthy conditions that can lead to a child being killed, injured, permanently disable, and

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