



## CHILD LABOUR IN INDIA - GS I AND II MAINS

Q. What are the causes of child labour in India? Describe the measures taken by the government to reduce the menace of child labour in India. (15 marks, 250 words)

**News:** *India-Australia trade deal: Australian parliamentary report questions deal over concerns of 'child labour' in India*

### What's in the news?

- An Australian Parliamentary committee in its recent report has raised concerns over Child Labour in India.
- According to the Parliamentary report, the mini trade deal (The Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA)) signed between India and Australia, does not recognise international labour rights and disregards environmental standards.

### Key takeaways:

- The report has also noted that India has a well-documented presence of child and forced labour, which is a form of modern slavery.
- Child Labour is a rampant problem in India, despite a plethora of legislations to curb it.
- It is a humanitarian crisis which tarnishes the international image of India as well as damages its trade prospects. Hence, the malpractice needs to be curbed at the earliest.

### Child Labour:

- According to The International Labour Organisation (ILO), child labour is a work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and dignity, and that is harmful to their physical and mental development.
- However, children or adolescents who participate in work that does not affect their health and personal development or interferes with their schooling, is not child labour. For example - Helping their parents at home, assisting family or earning pocket money outside school hours and on holidays.

### Statistics of Child Labour in India:

#### 1. Number of Child Labourers in India:

- According to the last available Census 2011, there were 10.1 million child labourers in India.
- According to the International Labour Organisation, India has the highest number of child labourers in the 5-17 age range in South Asia.

#### 2. NCRB Report 2022 on Child Labour:

- According to NCRB Report 2022, in 2021, around 982 cases were registered under the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986. The highest number of cases were registered in Telangana, followed by Assam.



### 3. Impact of COVID-19 on Child Labour:

- According to a study by Campaign Against Child Labour (CACL), there has been a significant increase in Child labour in India.
- According to a new report by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and UNICEF, the number of children in child labour has increased to 160 million worldwide.

### 4. Biggest Employers of Child Labour In India:

- India's biggest child labour employers are Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra.

### Causes of Child Labour in India:

#### 1. Poverty and Indebtedness:

- Poverty is the greatest cause of child labour in India.
- For impoverished households, income from a child's work is crucial for his or her own survival or for that of the household.
- For example - Bonded Labour due to Family Indebtedness.



## 2. Adult Unemployment and Under-employment:

- High prevalence of adult unemployment and under-employment often force children to work to support family.

## 3. High Prevalence of Illiteracy and Ignorance of Parents:

- Illiteracy and ignorance of the parents put children under the risk of inhuman exploitation.

## 4. Lack of Access to Quality Education and Skills Training:

- Deplorable quality of education and lack of coverage of 15-18 year age group in compulsory education, has led to increase in dropout rates and forced children into child labour.

## 5. Cultural Factors:

- Children often take up family's traditional work from an early age, contributing to enhancement of child labour.
- For example - A Goldsmith's son taking to gold-smithery, or a carpenter's child taking up carpentry from an early age.

## 6. Social Factors:

- India's differentiated social structure also contribute to child labour.
- The majority of child labourers in India belong to the marginalised social groups like SCs, STs and the Muslim religious minority.

## 7. Epidemics and Disasters:

- Natural disasters, conflicts, and pandemics increase the vulnerability of Children towards forced labour, as they forced to work for survival and are often exploited by traffickers and perpetrators.

## Impact of Child Labour in India:

### 1. Impedes Children from Gaining Skills and Education:

- Child labour impedes children from gaining the skills and education they need to have opportunities of decent work as an adult.
- This violates their right to life and liberty as provided by the constitution.

### 2. Health and Physical Risks:

- Long working hours and hazardous working conditions adversely affects a child's physical and mental health and impairs their intellectual, emotional and psychological development.

### 3. Negatively Affects Human Capital Formation:

- Child labour diminishes children's ability to accumulate skills and knowledge, thereby affecting their future productivity and income.

### 4. Perpetuation of Poverty:



- Child labour is both a cause and consequence of poverty. Household poverty forces children into the labour market to earn money.
- Thus, the children miss out on an opportunity to gain an education, further perpetuating household poverty across generations.

## 5. Obstacle to Socio-Economic Welfare of the Country:

- Presence of a large number of child labourers has long term effect on the economy and it is a serious obstacle to socio-economic welfare of a country.
- For example - Cancellation of trade pacts on account of human right abuses such as child labour.

## Challenges in Combating Child Labour in India:

### 1. Issues with Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016:

- a. The amendment act has drastically decreased the types of hazardous industries provided in the list - allows employers in industries like chemical mixing units, cotton farms, battery recycling units, and brick kilns etc. to employ adolescent labour.
- b. The amendment allows the child to be employed in “family or family enterprises” - promotes child labour in agrarian rural India, where poor families are trapped in intergenerational debt-bondage.

### 2. Definition of Child:

- One of the biggest challenges in eradicating child labour is the confusion around the definition of a child, in terms of age, in various laws dealing with child labour.
- For example - Conflicting age of Child provided in Juvenile Justice Act and Child Labour Act.

### 3. Lack of Proper Identity Documents:

- Child labourers often lack school registration certificates and birth certificates, which, creates an easy loophole in the law to exploit.
- The lack of reporting of children of migrant workers working as labourers and domestic help also aggravates the problem of child labour.

### 4. Weak Enforcement of Law and Poor Governance:

- Weak enforcement of law, lack of adequate deterrence and corruption is a major hurdle in eradicating child labour.

### 5. Socio-Economic Crisis:

- The economic contraction and lockdowns lead to income reductions for enterprises and workers, promoting child labour.

## Way Forward:

### 1. Strengthening Legislative Framework:



- Enforce and strengthen existing laws, such as the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, to ensure comprehensive protection for children and stricter penalties for offenders. Amendments should align with international standards.

## 2. Access to Quality Education:

- Ensure universal access to free and quality education for all children.
- Implement and enforce the Right to Education Act, focusing on reducing dropout rates and increasing enrollment in schools.

## 3. Poverty Alleviation:

- Tackle the root causes of child labour by implementing poverty alleviation programs, providing economic support to families living in poverty, and promoting livelihood opportunities for parents.

## 4. Awareness and Sensitization:

- Conduct widespread awareness campaigns targeting parents, communities, and employers about the detrimental effects of child labour on children's physical, mental, and educational development.

## 5. Rehabilitation and Social Protection:

- Develop and implement comprehensive rehabilitation programs for rescued child laborers, including access to education, vocational training, healthcare, and psychological support. Establish social protection schemes for vulnerable families to prevent children from entering the labour force.

## 6. International Cooperation:

- Collaborate with international organizations, such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNICEF, to access expertise, technical assistance, and financial resources to combat child labour effectively.

## 7. Empowering Local Communities:

- Involve local communities, including parents, teachers, and community leaders, in preventing child labour.
- Empower them to identify and report cases of child Labour and provide support for rehabilitation and reintegration efforts.

It is important to recognize that addressing child labour is a complex and multifaceted issue that requires sustained efforts, collaboration, and the commitment of all stakeholders to create lasting change.