

## **CHILD LABOUR: GOVERNANCE/POLITY**

**NEWS:** Recounting Velpur's story in ending child labour

### **WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?**

The World Day Against Child Labour highlights the global and Indian struggle to eliminate child labour, despite strong constitutional and legal safeguards. The Velpur Model in Telangana stands out as a rare success story, demonstrating how community-government collaboration can eradicate child labour sustainably.

### **Context and Observance**

- June 12 is observed globally as **World Day Against Child Labour**, under the **International Labour Organization (ILO)**.
- The aim is to raise awareness, inspire policy reforms, and mobilize efforts from governments, employers, civil society, and international organizations.
- Despite **SDG Target 8.7**, which calls for ending child labour in all its forms by 2025, the global community is off track.

### **Constitutional Provisions in India**

- **Article 24:** Prohibits employment of children under 14 years in factories, mines, and hazardous occupations.
- **Article 21A:** Mandates free and compulsory education for children aged 6 to 14 years.
- **Article 39 (e) and (f):** Directs the State to prevent child exploitation and ensure children are not pushed into unsuitable vocations.

### **Legal Framework in India**

- **Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 & Amendment 2016:**
  - Bans employment of children below 14 in all occupations.
  - Allows work in family-based non-hazardous enterprises post-school hours.
  - Adolescents (14–18) are prohibited from hazardous occupations.
- **Factories Act, 1948:** Prohibits employment of children below 14 in factories.
- **Mines Act, 1952:** Restricts employment of children below 18 years in mines.
- **Bonded Labour Abolition Act, 1976:** Abolishes all forms of bonded labour, including children.
- **Right to Education Act, 2009:** Strengthens the legal mandate for education, indirectly combating child labour.

### **Global Scenario**

- **160 million children** are currently engaged in child labour worldwide (about 1 in 10).
- **Africa, Asia, and the Pacific** account for nearly 90% of the global burden.
- COVID-19 exacerbated child labour due to **economic hardship** and **school closures**.
- Many children who dropped out during the pandemic have not returned to school.

### **Child Labour in India: Current Status**

- As per **Census 2011**, **43.5 lakh children (5–14 years)** are engaged in child labour.
- Key industries exploiting child labour include **beedi rolling, carpet weaving, and fireworks**.
- Despite legal reforms and schemes like **National Child Labour Project (NCLP)**, enforcement remains inconsistent.
- The **2016 Amendment** to the Child Labour Act banned all forms of child labour under 14 years.

### **Velpur Model: A Case Study of Success**

- Located in **Nizamabad district, Telangana**, Velpur was once notorious for child labour.
- A massive community-driven campaign launched in **June 2001** targeted school enrolment.
- Within **100 days**, every child aged **5 to 15** was brought back to school.
- On **October 2, 2001**, Velpur was declared **child labour-free**.
- Even after **24 years**, Velpur maintains **100% school retention and zero child labour**.

### **Government–Community Collaboration in Velpur**

- All **village sarpanchs** signed an **MoU** with the district administration under the **Andhra Pradesh Compulsory Primary Education Rules, 1982**.
- The government committed to providing necessary **infrastructure and teaching staff**.
- Local NGOs, officials, and civil society played a key role in mobilization and awareness.

### **Recognition of the Velpur Model**

- **VV Giri National Labour Institute (VVGNI)** celebrated the 20-year milestone during **Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav (2021)**.
- **ILO, National Human Rights Commission**, and former President **A.P.J. Abdul Kalam** praised the initiative.
- In **2022**, the **Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour** invited the former District Collector to present the model.

- Velpur serves as a **replicable model** of grassroots activism and effective governance against child labour.

## Conclusion

- The fight against child labour needs sustained community action, strong legal frameworks, and continuous state support.
- Velpur stands as a **beacon of hope** and a **template** for other regions aiming to eliminate child labour sustainably.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/recounting-velpurs-story-in-ending-child-labour/article69683703.ece>