

In regard to child labour, the Indian government implemented the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986. The Act prohibits employment of children in certain specified *hazardous occupations and processes* and regulates the working conditions in others.

National Policies and Legislation

- Royal Commission on Labour, 1929
- Children Pledging of Labour Act, 1933
- The Labour Investigation Committee, 1944
- The National Commission on Labour, 1966
- Gurupada Swamy Committee on Child Labour.
- Central Advisory Board on Child Labour, 1981
- Sanat Mehta Committee on Child Labour, 1986
- Child Labour(Prohibition and Regulations) Act, 1987
- National Child Labour Policy, 1987

The Supreme Court of India delivered a landmark Judgement in *M.C. Mehta V/s the State of Tamil Nadu and others* (AIR 1997 SC 699) the essence of which is that children below 14 years cannot be employed in any factory or mine or hazardous work and that they must be given education as mandated by Article 45 of the Constitution.

The problem of child labour still remains even though all of these policies are existent. Enforcement is the key aspect that is lacking in the government's efforts. No enforcement data for child labour laws are available.

Child Labour and Poverty

Child labour is the primary source of income for poor families. The major factor responsible for child labour is poverty. Even though children are paid less than adults, whatever incomes they earn benefit the poor families and sometimes to an extent that the family will perish without them. In addition to poverty, the lack of adequate and accessible sources of credit forces these poor parents to engage their children in harsher forms of child labour – bonded child labour.

Some parents also feel that a formal education is not of any help, and that children gain skills through labour at a young age. Such narrow views do not take the long term developmental benefits of education into account.

Another determining factor is the access to education. In some areas, education is not affordable or is inadequate. Without any alternatives, the children are pushed to spend their time working.

A prominent indicator of child labour is low literacy level and high dropout rates in the most vulnerable parts of India. The educational system is required to be made more accessible for those vulnerable sections of the society. However poverty also 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.

Conclusion

Child labour cannot be eliminated by focusing on one determinant, for example education, or by mere enforcement of child labour laws. The government of India must ensure that the needs of the poor are filled before waging a war against child labour. If poverty is addressed, the need for child labour will automatically diminish. No matter how hard the government tries, child labour will continue to persist until the need for it is removed.

Though policies are in place that could potentially reduce the incidence of child labour, enforcement is a problem. 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. The objective of eliminating child labour must be approached through legislative action combined with social and economic incentives that take into account not only the types of child labour and child labour arrangements in a country but the country's institutional and administrative capacity.

REFERENCES

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