



Child laborers: Protection and Rehabilitation through Public health interventions

Dr Rajeev Seth
Chair ICANCL group & Executive
Councilor, ISPCAN
Email: sethrajeev@gmail.com

Status of Children in India

- India has the highest number of children in the world (19%):440 million below 18years
- 27 million children born each year
- 40% of above need care & protection
- Poverty & socially marginalized
- Largest number of child laborers(13 million)
- Child rights, protection, child abuse & neglect, child exploitation need urgent attention!

Child labor: International Labor Organization (ILO) definition

- Work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development .
- It refers to work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children
- Interferes with their schooling

Not all work done by children should be classified as child labour

- Children's participation in work that does not affect their health and personal development or interfere with their schooling is generally regarded as being something positive.
- *For example, activities such as helping their parents around the home, assisting in a family business or earning pocket money outside school hours and during school holidays.*

Magnitude of problem

- Child Labour is global phenomenon.
- Decreased from year 2000 246 million to 168 million children.
- More than half of them, 85 million, are in hazardous work (down from 171 million in 2000).

Global Prevalence

- Asia and the Pacific largest number (almost 78 million or 9.3% of child population) (India 13million)
- Sub-Saharan Africa continues to be the region with the highest incidence of child labour (59 million, over 21%).
- Latin America and the Caribbean and in the Middle East and North Africa 9.2million (8.4%)

Child labour distribution by branch of Economic activity

- Agriculture (commonest type of child labour, 58%)
- Services other than domestic work (25.4%)
- Industry (7.2%).
- Domestic work 6.9%

Categories of Child labour

- Street Children
- Migrant Child labour
- Bonded Child labour
- Children used for Sexual Exploitation
- Female working children, engaged in household activities:
- Agricultural child labour

The International Labour Organization (ILO) Declarations

- ILO Convention No. 138 on the minimum age for admission to employment and work
- ILO Convention No. 182 on the worst forms of child labour

Hazardous work is defined as any work which is likely to jeopardize children's physical, mental or moral health, safety or morals should not be done by anyone under the age of 18.

India & Child Rights

- In 1992, India endorsed the UN CRC.

In the last two decades the government has certainly made several steps:

- Juvenile Justice Act 2000.
- National Plan of Action for Children(2005)
- National Commission (NCPCR)(2005)
- Right to Education Bill (2009)
- Protection of Children from Sexual offences(POCSO) Act 2012

STILL, there is a wide gap between policy & implementation /practice & outcome.

Developing Country Experiences

- Child labour is essentially a socio-economic problem, inextricably linked to poverty, illiteracy and huge population size
- In its most extreme forms, child labour involves children being enslaved, separated from their families, exposed to serious hazards and illnesses and/or left to fend for themselves on the streets of large cities – often at a very early age

Child Protection: Whose Responsibility?

- Whose responsibility is it to ensure the safe, protective and caring environment that every child deserves?
- “Protection” must also include protection from disease, poor nutrition, and illiteracy, in addition to abuse and exploitation.
- The concepts of child protection need to extend beyond traditional understanding of abuse and look at access and deprivation.

Public Health Intervention amongst Child laborers

- Understand Ground Realities
- Two Public Health intervention efforts for protection of child laborers at urban & village levels, India.
- Influence Government Policy & Practice
- Persistent Child Advocacy and Moral imperative

Street Child (United Nations 1992)

Definition :

- Any minor, for whom the street has become his or her abode
- and/or source of livelihood
- who is inadequately protected , supervised or directed by responsible adults.

Street Children, UNICEF (1989)

- **Children on the street (80-90%)**
‘Home based’, who spend most of the day on the street, but have some family support and usually return home at night.
- **Children of the street (10-20%)**
‘Street based’ children who spend most days and nights on the streets and who are functioning without family support.



Street Children Rehabilitation- Results

- Drop in Centers (PCI since 2000): served more than 30000 street children
- Shelter home placement(2005-): 347
- The present strength of children is 35, all are attending regular Government school.
- The rest of the children attend non-formal education

Street & Working children Program: Drop in center, New Delhi



Orphan & Vulnerable Children Shelter Home, Mewat, Haryana



Village Model of Child Protection

- Village Bhango, district Nuh- Mewat, Haryana, which is primarily focused on provision of primary education and basic health care.
- Village Bhango is situated about 70km from New Delhi; has a Population 1300. [Adults: 592 (M 311 & F 281) and Children: 708].

Village Bhangu Mewat, Haryana

CANCL group project “Education & Healthcare”



Village Model of Child Protection

- Monitored the school program with help of local village *panchayat* (local self government) education committee, and senior community members.
- An extra English remedial teacher was hired.
- Repair of building, safe water and regular mid day meals were administered.
- Health care clinic for sick children and preventive immunization drive

New Systemic Public Health Approach

- From child rights based perspective; there can be no excuse for existence of child labour.
- More focus on prevention

Public health Approach to Child Exploitation and Labor

- There is need to have real priority commitment to protect all children and supporting families ,
- Before they reach the point of abuse and neglect, exploitation as child labours
- **Prevention is the key**



**BUILD MY FUTURE WITH
BOOKS NOT BRICKS**

Dubhavi
16 year old

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC), 1989

- Article 32 of the UNCRC addresses child labour
- A key Child Advocacy tool ; hold Government accountable (India has ratified the treaty in 1992)
- Development of new National Policy for children (2013) for children up to the age of 18years

Development of Indian Constitutional provisions

- The Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act 1986.
- The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) was set up in March 2007, under an Act of Parliament of India (13).
- The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE) 2009,

What is Wrong with Indian Child labour Act 1986

- This law has become redundant as two new legislations have been enacted later
- Juvenile Justice Act (2000)
- Right to Free and Compulsory education (RTE) Act 2009
- The existing law bans child labour only up to 14year, but not total ban upto 18years
- Draft Amendments to ban all child labour till 14years, and hazardous forms up to 18years

Rehabilitation & Intervention strategies

- Rehabilitation should be part of new amended Child labour law
- The National Policy on Child Labour & Projects: Seeks to adopt a gradual & sequential approach with a focus on rehabilitation of children working in hazardous occupations & processes in the first instance.
- Linking Child Labor to education, the task of eliminating child labor and education has become synonymous

International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC)

- Operations in 88 countries
- IPEC has worked through country-based programs which promote policy reform,
- Build institutional capacity and put in place concrete measures to end child labor;
- Awareness raising and mobilization intended to change social attitudes
- Promote ratification and effective implementation of ILO child labor Conventions.

Public Health Approach In Developing country

- Ensure that all children and families have access to school, basic health care, nutrition, besides supportive social welfare and juvenile justice systems.
- The families and the community must be educated, informed and empowered

Summary :Public Health Approach

- Awareness of their rights and information about governmental assistance would ensure proper utilization of various “schemes”
- The development of child protection systems, community ownership and participation can contribute to break down cycle of inter-generational poverty & exploitation.

THANK YOU

**June 12
is the
World Day Against Child Labour :**

Please do join hands