CHAPTER VI

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter the summary of findings of the whole analysis of the study has been furnished in section one followed by suggestions and policy implications in section two. It is attempted to analyse in this study to identify the factors responsible for child labour in gem cutting units from both demand and supply side, the contribution child labour to the household income by relating to their socio economic characteristics and finally the performance of the sample units employing child labourers. Several interesting findings are found which furnished in the following section.

Findings Section I

The specific findings are as follows

Gem-cutting is carried out as an important cottage and small-scale industrial activity for the past sixty years at Illuppur town panchayat of Pudukottai district. Currently there are about 49 gem cutting, shaping and polishing units in the study area. These units employ a significant proportion of child labour. Out of 518 workers in 49 units, 456 are child labourers nearly 88 percentage. Besides, most of them are girls.
Sample Profile

Age and sex-wise distribution of sample children revealed that female children (52%) are slightly higher than male children (48%) in the sample. Average age of male children at present has been 12.8 and female children was 12.6 indicating that there is no significant difference between age of male and female child labourers. Similarly the mean age at which children entered into job market has been 9 which is the same for both the sex.

The minimum age at which they joined the labour force was 8 years and majority of them joined the labour force due to financial problems.

The nativity of the child labourers revealed that just 7.6 percent of them have hailed either from out side the district or State and the rest belong to the same district. Hence no distress entry like the street children has been observed.

Majority (96%) belongs to Hindu religion, as the study area itself is concentrated with Hindus.

Community-wise distribution revealed that none of them belonged to forward communities but only to economically weaker sections like SC/ST or MBC / BC. Among these, BC alone constitutes to (48%) followed by SC (36%). This indicates that the economic condition of the households in the study area is not so different among BC and SC.
Caste-wise distribution indicated that pallar and parayar (SC) constitute the maximum followed by Kallar (BC) and remaining are distributed in single digit percentage. In total as high as 18 communities are represented implying thereby that the evil of sending children to work has been slowly spread from certain communities to other communities due to economic compulsion.

**Household size and Parental background**

Average size of the family has been found to be 6 relatively a large size. However around 80 percent of them live in nuclear families. Interestingly it is revealed that the mean number of children has been 2.5 in which the mean number of children working has been 1.5. The percentage of children to total family members constitutes to 43 percent and it is quite astonishing to find that in the total working population, child labourers constitutes to as high as 40.5 percent. From the work participation ratio of adult and child population, it is understood that children are more or less equally participating like adult and thereby supplement the income to the family and fail to enjoy their childhood.

Land holdings of the sample households revealed that more than half of the sample households (58%) do not own land, which implies that these households totally depend on wage earnings and in the event of insufficient earnings and non-availability of regular work for the adult, the children become the victims.
The nature of occupation of the sample households explained that more than three-fourth (76%) of the parents are in gem cutting. It is observed that most of the parents stop the children after certain age from school and incidently put to work. The parents feel that instead of sending them to school, if the children are brought to work spot, they not only earn and reduce the burden of the adult members, but also train on a vocation for their future and hence it is justified.

The residential status of the sample households explained that 90 percent of them could live in own houses. But the conditions of the houses were very poor and they often lack finance to mend their damaged houses.

**Education, Drop-out Problem**

The level of education of the respondents revealed that more than 40 percent are illiterate and the remaining had upto primary education, except 7.3 percent who received secondary education. The dropout of the children has been mostly due to home-related factors. It is pathetic and a great injustice done to children that 40.67 percent never attended school. Of the children who received some education or the other, the dropouts mostly occurred at the primary levels, and only 12 percent could reach upto VII standard and than dropped out. The dropout has been forced and influenced by the factors of poverty at home, peers going for work at the factory and reasonable earnings at the young age.
Not only that the children had very low education but the parents also received very poor education as more than 75 percent are illiterates. Relating the level of education of head of the households and the percentage of child labour in respective categories revealed that child labour population has been higher with households having better education, which seems to be contradicting the belief that educated parents prefer to infant better education to their words.

The child labourers dropped out mostly before completing primary schooling and more than half of them did not attend school and hence the average experience put in has been nearly 4 years. Among the male and female, the experience is slightly higher for female.

**Reasons and Motivational Factors**

In the analysis of reasons to become child labourers, it is found that, poverty, peer group influence and large size of family were the three major factors influenced them to enter into occupation.

Again the source of motivation has been the family members, neighbours and to some extent ill-treatment of the teachers at school which were the three major sources.

From the opinion of the parents on continuing the child labour occupation of the wards it is learnt that the inability to bear the school expenses, insufficient earnings in the family and not regularly attending the
school were identified primarily responsible for parents sending the children to work.

Hence on the supply side, both school and home related factors as mentioned above are responsible for child labour phenomenon to exist in the study area, as held by both parents and children.

**Working Conditions, Wages and Exploitation**

Regarding the conditions of child labourers it is observed that children are exploited by long working hours of 9.23 per day excluding the traveling time. Though wages are paid on piece rate (except 38 children in the sample) where long hours of work may not be treated as exploitation but only additional wage to the children, the children are not always given only the gem cutting work but some additional work are also given say going to teashops, attending and helping the guests, look after household duties, and in some cases girls are abused sexually, all these results in exploitation.

There is always a threat on the part of owners if the children do not obey their owners, as they may have to be asked to return the advance and hence they just accept whatever is imposed.

There are three types of operations associated with gem cutting namely cutting, shaping and polishing. Most of the units (72 %) are engaged in polishing alone and none of the female children are found in gem cutting operations and as such it appears as if it is male specific. Similarly around 38
female children who belong the age of below eight with few months of experience are given a fixed wage rate giving them only stone joining work saying that in that young age children may not be able to perform cutting or polishing properly without damage. No male children are found in this age and hence they are not given this fixed wage work of present, male children below the age of eight, also would be given only such fixed wage.

There is considerable improvement in the performance of children between initial and current years as the average stones cut or polished or shaped has more than tripled from 30 to 99 for male and 25 to 79 for female. Hence there is a direct association between an experience and performance of the children.

**Adult and Child Labour: Productivity Versus Wage Differences**

There is significant productivity difference between the adult and children in all the activities including cutting, shaping and polishing children doing more than adult and the difference is very high with shaping operation. But the average wages received by the children and adult differ considerably in the reverse direction as it is observed that children get lower wages than adult in spite of higher productivity. The wage difference is the highest with polishing operation. This has been attributed to the fact that some children who are doing stone joining are given only fixed wage. If they have been given
piece rate, the average wage received by children would have been higher than adult.

**Bondage of Child Labour**

Advance availed by the parents is the real villain for the child labour to persist. Parents mostly (73%) availed advance to meet the food expenses. It is found that on an average more than Rs. 2000 has been availed per child and it is slightly higher for male (Rs. 2376) than female (Rs. 1888). Since the sample households continue to toil in poverty they failed to repay the advance. In the event of getting the advance accumulated, the parents never hesitate to introduce other children subsequently to this occupation.

Nearly 8 percent of the parents did not get any advance and thereby they have greater freedom to move out of the unit at any time.

However, there is frequent shifting if the parents or children are not satisfied with the treatment of the employers. But they have to repay the advance before leaving. There is an easy option available right at their front to get the advance from the next owner to pay the owner to whom they had already borrowed. The age group wise shifting has shown that relatively young age group shift within two years and little older group stay with single unit at least for three years. Also it is observed that male are more frequently shifting than female.
The average monthly income earned by children has been Rs. 520 with an average daily wage of Rs. 17.3. Of this, the female wage earning has been found to be (Rs. 499) less than male wage earnings (Rs. 549) as some of female children are paid fixed wage rate. There is a positive association between age and wage drawn.

The wage earnings and experience have also been positively associated as it is observed that higher wages are drawn by more experienced children. Between male and female, it is found that in the highly experienced group say above four years, female draws more than male though the average wages drawn has been higher for male children.

As far as the working hours are concerned there is no much variation between male and female but average monthly earning differ considerably which again has to be attributed to the fixed wage paid to some girls.

Of the average wages drawn of Rs. 520 roughly an average amount Rs. 102 has been retained as pocket money which is spent on tea, snacks, smoking, card playing etc. Some of the children (67) do save an average of Rs. 67. This apart, around 52 children either use bicycle or bus as their transport and spend around one fourth of their earnings on transport. Hence ultimately these children may contribute only 50 percent of their earnings to the family. Apart from the wages, the children are paid bonus once in a year and the experience and bonus amount moves positively. The female children though quite experienced than male, get less bonus than male in certain
categories and also in total average, which again due to fixed wages paid to few girls.

**Contribution of Child Labour to Household Economic Status**

An important analysis in this piece of work is why children are sent to work? What is the extent of contribution of income to the family? To what extent the households will be affected in the absence of child labour income.

Interestingly for all these questions, a single answer, is ‘Yes’ the child labour income considerably contributes to the sample households which may be better explained in terms of incidence of poverty with and without child labour income. The per capita income without child labour has been Rs. 2670; with child labour it is Rs. 3756. The average contribution by child labour to total household income has been 28.9 per cent and it varies among different occupational categories of head of the households.

**Child Labour and Poverty Reduction**

In terms of incidence of poverty with respect to households, it is found that nearly 55.3 per cent of households remain in poverty with child labour income and this percentage jumps considerably to 91 per cent without child labour income.

Similarly, in terms of members of the family, it is found that roughly 62 per cent of the member suffer in poverty with child labour income while it
increases to 93 per cent without child labour income. Hence, it is the sheer economic necessity of the sample households, which is very much responsible for sending the children to work. In the event of withdrawing these children from workforce, the compensation to be given would be very high or the consequences faced by the households would be very severe.

Change in the per capita income from Rs. 3756 to Rs. 2670, increasing the percentage of sample households in poverty from 55 per cent to 91 per cent and household members from 52 per cent to 93 per cent would be the result in the event of sending these children out of work. This clearly indicates the supply side factors responsible for child labour. Any amount of rehabilitation of child labour have to necessarily address the above mentioned consequences and the households need to be fully compensated.

**Dependency Dimension**

Another interesting analysis is related to the dependency ratios. The extent of dependents has been relatively higher among the potential earning age group of 15-60. On the whole, 33.4 per cent are dependents including children, adult and elderly and work participation rate is 66.6 per cent. Though child population constitutes only less than 40 per cent, their work participation rate is more than 60 per cent and only less than 40 per cent of the children remain as dependents. Though they are supposed to enjoy schooling and live with the
parents support these children go to work, losing their childhood, right to have schooling etc.

**Income, Expenditure and Indebtedness**

It is found that there is a gap between earnings and expenditure of the sample households. The per capita income is only Rs. 3756 (including child labour income) where the per capita expenditure (on essential items only) has been Rs. 5634, indicating that the difference of Rs. 1878, per head is to be made up of. Similarly per household income has been Rs. 21163 (including child labour income) but expenditure is Rs. 31736 a difference of Rs. 10973 is to be made up of per household. This forces the household to borrow from various sources including moneylenders at high rate of interest. Hence an average borrowing of Rs. 8765 has been found among these households including the advance received from the parents.

In the event of absence of child labour income the situation would be still worst because the gap between income and expenditure further widens as it would be Rs. 2670 per capita income, but Rs. 5634 per capita expenditure. Similarly per household income would be Rs. 15745 but expenditure would be Rs. 31736 resulting in a difference of more than Rs. 15000, more than double of what it has been at present. Hence, the child labour income contributes to them very significantly.
**Occupational Health Problem**

The children working in gem cutting do encounter many health complaints and for that they consult mostly the private doctors due to poor service rendered by government hospitals. This also takes away a part of their earnings. It is to be underlined that apart from the health complaints that they encounter at present, their health will be totally spoiled in future after 40 as they started working in their very early age in such hazardous occupation. In any attempt to eliminate child labour its cost and benefits the total loss of future for the children need to be considered.

**Employer Perception on Child Labour**

The reasons given by entrepreneurs for employing children include quick and past nature of work done by children, low wages and regular to work. Advances are given to child labourers to retain them form shifting and the ways by which it is deducted include giving over time work and additional work.

Average size of employment has been found to be 7.5 for adult and 4 for child labourers of which both more percentage of female are found to be employed in both adult and child labour categories.
**Recommendations**

On the basis of the findings of both child labour and entrepreneurial performance analysis, following section brings some recommendations and policy suggestions.

It is found that child labour has been caused by poverty and hence attempt to eliminate child labour may have lot of repercussions on family survival and hence efforts to rehabilitate the child labour needs to address such consequences before attempting to eliminate the child labour.

Child labour in any form is an offence as long as it denies the right of the child to get necessary education. There are different solutions to different categories of child labour. If it is caused by poverty, these children must be protected from the exploitation of the employees by the way of social security, proper working condition, unionisation of child labour and equal pay like adult in the event of same productivity etc. It is true in this study that child labour is the cause of poverty and hence it is necessary to protect the interest of the child by getting them social security through legislation.

**Credit**

To eliminate poverty from the households of working children of gem cutting units in Pudukkottai district and to reduce the inequality of income, loan may be extended to establish small-scale industry or household units with
subsidy to the child labour families after ensuring that they do not send their children to the gem cutting units.

**Family Planning**

It is observed that in families having large number of children, parents’ income is insufficient to maintain the families. Therefore, they force their children to work in the gem industry. To prevent this, the parents should be motivated to have less number of children. Hence the provisions and benefits of the Family Planning Scheme should be explained to them clearly and persuasive campaign may be carried on to plan their families.

**NGOs Role**

Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs), should be motivated and assisted to start pre-school, crèches, evening schools, poultries and dairies for working children to enhance the income of the parents of the child labourers.

Government of India has launched in 1995 a project called Child Labour Elimination Project (CLEP) which is working in Pudukkottai district also. The Pudukkottai district administration with the help of the project society has already released 2000 child labourers from hazardous occupation. The project society has started full time schools, which are functioning since February 1996 in two blocks namely Annavasal and Viralimalai nearly 17 NGOs adopted the schools.
The District Administration, project society and the NGOs who adopted the schools have taken all possible steps for regulation, elimination and rehabilitation of child labourers and effective implementation of the project. The parents who are interested in sending the children can approach the societies and revive the education of the children.

**Child Labour Wage Regulation**

With regard to wage structure, the fixed rate system for certain categories should be abolished in order to stop the employers from taking undue advantage of children by making them work for long hours. The number of working hours can be fixed, minimum wages plus incentive for higher productivity based on the efficiency can be given. Some regulation can be introduced with regard to enhancing the wages reduce the working hours, incentives for additional work, bear transport to long traveled children etc.

**Bondages to be Removed**

It is identified that the child labourers are taking the advance (Loan) from the owners of gem cutting units. The advance amount may be timely and helpful to child labour family but it will affect the child labourers in their future course of time. They may not be able to relieve from the unit due to the inability repay to the advance amount. Hence the parents must remain not
receiving any advance, if availed must repay periodically by deducting from the wages.

**Working Conditions to be Improved**

The child worker should be assured of safe and healthy working conditions and it should be made obligatory on all part of the employers to provide them certain amenities like medical benefits, insurance, recreational and educational facilities.

Wiener emphasised (1991) that the introduction of compulsory education was the main reason for the decline in child workforce participation in the developed world. As mass primary education preceded the rising incomes associated with industrialization, increasing rates of schooling cannot be attributed to economic factors. Instead they were the result of a willingness to implement universal compulsory education legislation amongst the ruling elite.

**Educational Facility and Arresting Dropout**

It may be pointed out that even if there is introduction of free education like full exemption from payment of tuition fees, the students may not still be able to bear the burden of other allied expenses of education including cost of purchasing books transaction cost involved daily, etc. It was held by a parent that “the school are distributing books and note books but not in time. But
there are several other daily expenses say pocket money, stationeries, morning breakfast if he is to be sent to school in time, if they fail to prepare at home etc. All these are absent and it will be contributing instead of sending to work than to school.

It has also been observed that the introduction of mid-day meal in schools attract poor students of rural areas and primary schools in urban slums and conversely, its absence or discontinuation causes exodus of students from such primary schools. Hence such schemes need to be sustained to increase retention ratio.

As it is discussed above free and compulsory education is very often suggested and can be so in the study area also. It is found in several countries that child labour has been eliminated mostly by making education compulsory. But in India and regions like the sample area, it is difficult to enforce such regulations of compulsory education given the economic contribution of the children and poor economic condition of the households. Hence it necessary that compulsory education is enforced upto some stage say below 10 years gradually rising further so that the incidence of child labour within 10 years may be addressed first.

There is another misunderstanding which needs to be addressed. Compulsory education does not mean that the children should not work but education should be the primary and children can go for part time jobs, during
the holidays or in the evening, help on the family vocation, train as apprentices etc. which is learning process not child labour.

As already mentioned the school hours need to be revised to accommodate the children in rural areas to attend to school and work. It is prevalent among rural area children particularly girl children to impose them to look after household duties and younger siblings, in the absence of parents during peak seasons. In such cases absenteeism would be higher. Very often the prevailing school hours assume that the female members at home are available for domestic chores and the children will attend school regularly in the scheduled time. But it is not so in reality as women are not available totally at home to look after household duties. Hence flexible school hours and sufficient infrastructure in the form of required buildings, teachers, books and other teaching aid and above all noon meal scheme and free distribution of books in time all will go a long way in reducing the magnitude child labour.

**Factory Regulations and Child Labour Legislation's**

Another way by which this problem could be tackled is by making the units employing child labour to the limelight is by making them with Inspector of Factories rather than keeping in informal sector. Very often these household units employee many labourers which may be more than to be brought under Inspector of Factories but they never show by making the children work behind
curtains or bribe the officials from the Inspectorate which is very common in recent years.

There are loopholes in the legislation itself say child labour if it is a part of family labour need not be disturbed justifying in the since the production process in many industries had the small artisans as the representative figure.

It is also true that parents or families may have to encounter several economic hardships in the absence of child labour earnings. Unless the families are compensated thoroughly, any measure of addressing the issue would be least effective. As already mentioned in Pudukkottai District, National Child Labour Project has been implemented since 1995 to effectively rehabilitate working children but the sample children has not been rehabilitated for one reason or the other as the parents or employers (supply and demand side factor) prevent such rehabilitative measure to be effective.

In the Employment of Children Act 1938, children working in non-hazardous occupation need not be disturbed but those who are found in hazardous occupation need be punished. However there is practical problem in classifying and identifying a job as hazardous or non-hazardous. In fact gem cutting operation is hazardous as far as it spoils the health of the children by inhaling the waste pieces of gems stones everyday but in the National list it has been brought under non-hazardous. Hence it is too difficult for the official of Inspector of Factories to have thorough knowledge of such occupations and penalise accordingly.
The sample children explained that they had many health problems including loss of eye sight after certain stage, headache which is a symptom of other diseases, tuberculosis, which is the result of unhygienic and lack of ventilated residential premises, poor environment etc. All these would totally retard the growth of children as eligible adult and hence child labour after certain stage say 15 years need not be disturbed as it is a skill development but prior to this age need to be addressed.

State government centers do have children who are delinquents and they are trained in some vocation after 10 years. This is quite contradictory to the (Child Labour Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986 which underlines that children aged below 14 years should not work. Seeing the State government itself training the children on work, the private units and parents may justify and do employ children.

**Globalisation Challenges**

There has been increasing lobby to not to buy the products manufactured involving child labour. Recently the importers abroad also joined in this. Such measures may be extended to gem stones also because, gem stones are largely catering the demands of importers.

It is not possible to entirely eliminate the child labour nor offer a single solution for all categories of child labour. In gem cutting industry since the nation has not classified the work as hazardous and it is also necessarily
supplementing the incomes of the household, it is quite possible for the State
government to meet the private owners to reduce the hours of work for few
hours and send the children to school for the rest of the hours which would
serve both the parents and the employers and the one hand and also the children
in learning both the skill and schooling on the other. Special schools meant for
such children for few hours in the morning or evening would be thought of.
Hence such industry specific or occupation specific solutions would address the
issue better. With the policies of government changing, integrating the Indian
economy with the global market two things may happen. It may with
collaborate such countries, which require products produced without child
labour, which would naturally eliminate the child labour, if the enforcement is
seriously applied. Secondly, the worst part of it is that in order to compete with
global market, the employers may seek cheap labour to achieve higher
productivity and hence child labourers may be the victims being the cheapest
source of labour. Hence any effort in the context of globalisation must be such
that it is in the large interest of the child population to establish their rights.

The women are working in informal sector has no security or any
stipulated working hours. In such a situation there is burden on the children to
look after the domestic work particularly female child as by tradition only girl
children are made to look after domestic responsibilities. There is no such
research available as to find out the magnitude of the child labour with respect
to working women households. Such attempt would throw more light on identifying the causes and accordingly enact measures.

The non governmental organisations, the media, the researchers and other volunteers can contribute in identifying the nature of occupations in which child labourers are working, the root causes for the same etc. Any commission to setup to tackle the problem of child labour has to face the reality, visit the field, identify the causes from several angles of children, parents, employers, peer group, teachers etc., so that a holistic analysis could, be done and fruitful solution may be possible.
Conclusion

With the introduction of technological development, bringing industries to formal sector, increasing the enrollment ratio by reducing the dropout by means of some incentive measures, compensating the parents with self-employment loan, increasing the infrastructure, teachers, providing better access to schools, making the education interesting through 'joy of learning' process, and all similar measurers the incidence of child labour would likely to fall. However, India is far behind in these achievements. In the present scenario of Globalisation, the contract system of production would still worsen the situation by absorbing additional child labour. Hence it is necessary though not to eliminate completely child labour but to regulate such that some amount of education is imparted near the factory site and also they work and thereby learn the skill. It is true in this study given the poverty of the households that such measurers of introducing part time school would facilitate the children to have both education and vacation and supplement the household income.