Chapter V
ROLE OF GOVERNMENT AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATION IN AMELIORATING THE CONDITION OF CHILD LABOUR

Child Labour is a social problem which needs positive, constructive and timely intervention by experts, government and non-governmental organisations with adequate supportive services supplementing the family income. The Government of India has been concerned with child labour ever since the country's independence in 1947. In the early 1980's, the government of India became increasingly concerned about the growing problem of child labour. These included the promulgation of a new law on child labour called the child labour (prohibition and regulation) Act, which entered the statute books in 1986, and the framing of a National Child Labour Policy in 1987. The entry of the Government of India into ILO's IPEC programme in 1992 indicated the government's growing concern about child labour and the need to act against it. The advent of IPEC in India coincided with government initiatives to tackle the problem systematically. These included the historic declaration made on August 15, 1994, India's Independence Day, by the then Prime Minister. The Prime Minister emphasized the need to eliminate child labour across the country and fixed the year 2000 A.D. as the target date for ending child labour in hazardous industries, occupations and processes. He also announced Rs.850 crores fund to be administered over the next five years on schemes for the elimination of child labour in hazardous industries. The Prime Minister's Statement is an unequivocal demonstration of the Government's concern about the deep rooted malady of child labour and its determination and commitment to overcome it. A National Authority for the Elimination of Child Labour was established to oversee the implementation of schemes using the fund. The Ministry of Labour, the nodal ministry for implementing the government's programme, has set in a brisk pace in the implementation of the scheme.

The period 1992-95 marked a turning point in the country's perspective on child labour. The impetus for the change came from the increasing media attention on the issue, spurred by the work done by NGOs. But most important, was the clear direction the government took, focusing on a phased elimination of child labour.


The National Authority for the Elimination of Child Labour (NAECL)

Several initiatives have been taken by the government to effectively tackle the problem of child labour. A high-powered NAECL was set up on 26 August 1994 with the Union Minister of Labour as chairperson and with Secretary-level representation from the other ministries. This national body has the authority to take decisions on child labour without consulting other government bodies. A key member of the NAECL is the Secretary (Expenditure) of the Finance Ministry. The main functions of the NAECL are to lay down the policies and programmes to monitor and to coordinate implementation of child labour projects of the various sister ministries of the Government of India.

The NAECL adopted a circular instruction on "Identification, Release and Rehabilitation of Child Labour" and has been circulated by the union labour secretary to all the 133 child labour endemic districts of India. The circular was forwarded by the Prime Minister to the Chief Ministers of all the state with a request that it be implemented effectively. The circular outlines policies for the enforcement of laws, support to families of child labourers and the creation of educational opportunities, among other things.

As a result, Government of Tamil Nadu have sanctioned Rs. One crore to Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board (TNSCB) for eliminating child labour in a phased manner in Chennai City, as the child labourers are mostly drawn from the slum areas.

Since no authentic information is available on child labour in Chennai City, TNSCB organised a city level survey covering child labourers in Chennai. According to a recent survey by the TNSCB, there are more than 13,000 child labourers in the city. At least 72 percent of the 10,596 families covered in the survey had one problem or the other and this resulted in children taking up work at a tender age. The risk factors pushing families into further backwardness was high among 9,175 families (86.5 percent). The indicators of risk are: the child is the only earning member, alcoholic bread winner or any other member, broken family, chronically ill or disabled parents or any other member, where the family has only one meal a day or where a family with one adult earning member with no steady income.


"TNSCB scheme to eliminate child labour", The Hindu, 29 July 1998, p.3.

As part of its Community Development Programme, TNSCB launched a two year project from January 1997 to December 1998 for elimination of child labour in Chennai City.

Under this project an essential component (ie) training and orientation for the government / NGO personnel who were partners of the project, were conducted by TNSCB at various levels proposing six major components detailed below for achieving the objective of Elimination of Child Labour in Chennai City.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Physical Target</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Situational Analysis - Conducting survey</td>
<td>All the slum areas and pavement dwelling families 20,650</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Training and orientation for Government / NGO functionaries and community representatives</td>
<td>Entire Chennai City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Social Mobilization and Public Awareness Programmes</td>
<td>Mothers of Child Labourers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Income generation activities for mothers of Child Labourers</td>
<td>20 Nos. (ie) 50 children per shelter to shelter 1,000 children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Construction / Reconstruction Upgradation of shelter homes</td>
<td>The child labourers withdrawn from work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Transit school and Child Development activities.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

AIM

The major aim was to identify the child workers in Chennai City, mainly drawn from 1,413 slum areas and pavement dwelling families.

Abstract on Child Labour Elimination Project in Chennai City - Training and Orientation Programme by TNSCB, Community Development Wing, March 1997, p.5.

Ibid, p.2.
OBJECTIVES

i) To enlist the number of child workers in different categories area-wise (Family / Institutional).

ii) To identify the existing infrastructure of Corporation Schools in Chennai City.

iii) To identify the type of work undertaken by a child.

iv) To find out the areas of child labour concentration.

v) To focus one or two areas with indepth participatory approach.

vi) To ascertain the guiding factors of the project.

vii) To obtain the profile of child workers.

viii) Evaluate the district facilities and capacity such as primary school / non-formal education centres etc. to accommodate the child labourers once they return to the normal life.

ix) Reviewing the existing manpower and its capacity to participate in child labour elimination activities.

x) To consolidate the data already available.

TNSCB is the co-ordinating/monitoring/sanctioning authority. In view of the quantum of coverage and considering the work already initiated by Non Governmental organisations, the survey was conducted through NGOs. They were assigned a cluster of divisions or zone of the Corporation of Chennai, based on the coverage of divisions of the NGO. The lead NGOs were responsible for covering their respective zones.

LEVELS OF TRAINING PROGRAMME

Training were envisaged at three levels. It has trained functionaries of various government departments, NGOs, community based organisations and private sector groups connected to this issue.

LEVEL-I (CHENNAI) DISTRICT LEVEL TRAINING PROGRAMME

A one day training course for 100 senior level officers and 250 middle level officers of various departments of governments, non-governmental organisations, service clubs etc. who have been part of the Child Labour Elimination Programme (CLEP) were held and a half a day orientation course for the elected District Level Members of Parliament, Legislative Assembly and Corporation Councillors were also held covering 10 zones of the city.


LEVEL - II TRAINING AND ORIENTATION

A one day training and orientation programme for 250 Zonal Level Government/NGO/Service Clubs and Community Based Organisation functionaries were held covering 10 zones of the city.

LEVEL - III FIELD LEVEL TRAINING AND ORIENTATION

A half a day training and orientation programme was held for the field level functionaries of total literacy programme, Non-Governmental Organisations, Pre-school and Primary school teachers, health workers of I.P.P.(V) and community level volunteers covering approximately 20,000 persons spread over 10 zones of the city. This training and orientation were held by the NGOs working for the slum areas of Chennai City.

The first two levels of training and orientation programmes were handled by the TNSCB directly. The third level of training and orientation programme were handled by the NGOs in collaboration with TNSCB

SOCIAL MOBILIZATION AND PUBLIC AWARENESS PROGRAMMES

In order to mobilise the community for a collective action to address the child labour issues in the slum areas, different campaigns and awareness programmes were undertaken in collaboration with the NGOs and concerned departments. The launching of this awareness programme is neither a government nor an institutional programme but a community based initiative in which TNSCB acts as a catalyst and a facilitator for the success of the programme. Some of the activities undertaken under this component are:

1. School enrollment drives and observance of special days.
2. Brochure on child labour project.
3. Newsletter
4. AIR/T.V. Publicity
5. Production of T.V. serials through NGO / sponsors
6. Rallies and human chain
7. Seminar and conferences
8. Wall paintings / wall writings
9. Street play performances
10. Orientation programmes
11. Procuring audio cassettes
12. Special campaign / Newspaper appeals / Hoardings

INCOME GENERATION ACTIVITIES FOR MOTHERS OF CHILD LABOURERS

Economic factors considerably influence the slum families to send their children below 14 years for work to supplement the family income.

The child labourers families are mainly categorised as:

1. The child labourer is the main bread winner and the adults are dependent in the child’s income due to sickness of its bread winner (including alcoholism) or some family calamity or poverty.
2. The child labourer supplements the family income which helps the family to take care of that child’s needs and some essential expenditure of the family.
3. The income supplemented by the child goes not essentially for the basic needs of that child but for some additional needs of the family or the child.
4. The income earned by the child is spent by the child only for its own purpose and does not in any way support the family.

In the first two categories stated above, it is difficult to remove the child from current employment as this would affect the family’s sustenance. Hence the families under these categories are classified as “High Risk Families”. The families falling under the other two categories are not dependent on the child’s earning and even if the child is withdrawn from the work and admitted to Transit school or formal school, the family condition would not deteriorate provided the initial support and motivation are provided to these children and the family members (especially mothers of child labourers) by the NGOs.

For creating additional jobs or supplementing the income of the high risk families, self help groups of 20 to 25 members (mothers of the child labourers) were formed at the slum level and a home needs service centre at the zonal level by the concerned NGOs which handle this project at zonal level.

1. SELF HELP GROUPS

Self help groups formation is adopted as a mechanism and as a tool for organising the mothers of the child labourers and empowering them. As a part of empowerment through economic activity, it organised self help groups, consisting of 20-25 mothers of child labourers. These self help groups under NGOs guidance decide their priorities and help each other in the socio-economic programmes. Approximately 200 such groups are promoted and

cover 5,000 mothers in total with the help of the NGOs (25 persons per group). These self help group members would initiate income generation activities, identify training requirement of its members and also promote savings and credit activities among its members.

The group identity of these marginalised members give them collective power to raise their voice against the child labour issue, thereby influence the other women groups in the community.

II. HOME NEEDS SERVICE CENTRES (HNSC)

The Home Needs Service Centres (HNSC) formed as part of child labour elimination project in the ten zones of the city takes care of the demands and other services in demands by society. There is a lot of demand for trained geriatric care personnel, house maids, physiotherapy assistants, child care (Baby sitting) personnel and trained persons from other Home Needs Services. There are only limited organisations in Chennai City who train and provide these service with regular placements and employer followups. But these organisations are not in a position to take care of the growing demand for these services in the city and hence HNSC was formed. At each zone this centre is managed by the Nodal NGOs (identified for this purpose). One member from each of the high risk families of the child labourers is identified from the self help groups formed and trained in various home needs services.13

The NGOs identified for this programme establish a home needs service centre in the respective zones either attached to their present setup or independently and work as full-time placement and follow-up agency. These centres provide placement facility for the trained candidates and exchange information to the prospective employers about the availability of trained hands. The initiative taken by TNSCB through the HNSC under child labour elimination project is innovative. Establishing a HNSC in each zone by the NGOs puts additional commitment on the NGOs by way of setting up an office, personnel and expenditure on stationery and documentation work.

CONSTRUCTION OF SHELTER HOMES14

There are considerable number of child labourers who live on the street or depend on the employer for accommodation. These children are with the background of remote family ties or abandoned or those who are runaways. Due to lack of parental love, estranged

"TNSCB Scheme to eliminate child labour", The Hindu, 29 July 1998, p.3.

family ties, socialization and social control they are vulnerable to child abuse, exploitation and delinquency. So shelter homes play a vital role in the rehabilitation process of child labourers. The existing shelter homes by a few NGOs in the city are inadequate to meet the requirements of child labourers. As part of the project, nearly 20 shelter homes have been put up to accommodate 1,000 children at the rate of 50 children in each.

TRANSIT SCHOOL AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

The word "Transit School" implies a preparatory place for the child labourer to transfer him to the formal schools. TNSCB promoted these schools for the child labourers in the slum areas through the NGOs. Along with the schooling, these children were also given cultural, sports, leadership training etc.

The children withdrawn from work were admitted in 35 specially established Transit schools run by 20 non-government organisations in various parts of the city, with an average strength of 20 in each school. The children underwent non-formal education for the first 3 months, and started their education under the formal curriculum with regular text books in these schools, before being admitted in appropriate classes in regular corporation schools in the current academic year. To orient them towards attending regular schools along with other children, a 10-day residential camp was held for them and the expenditure for the camp being funded by UNICEF. This included academic and non-academic activities, separately for girls and boys, value education, group prayers and entertainment was part of the proceedings.

PROGRAMME ON TRANSIT SCHOOLS FOR CHILD LABOURERS

A programme to train NGO organizers on conducting transit schools under the State Government’s Child Labour Elimination Project (CLEP) was conducted by TNSCB. Transit schools are preparatory centres for child labourers before they are sent for formal schooling. The duration of the transit school was for 12 months, with four capsules of different levels and each level designed for three months to accommodate the children in the formal school classes equal to their ages. The training was necessary, as the NGO organisers have to handle in the transit school, 25 children aged 9 to 13 as a single group. The children from different age groups are being addressed in the multigrade curriculum. Teachers from

District Institute of Educational Training (DIET) Chennai, provided the technical input for the special training needed to handle the children.\footnote{16}

All the NGOs/CBOs already working in the respective zones cover different slum areas. They extend their valuable co-operation to the Nodal NGO in this work. It is firmly believed that, it is only by NGO/CBOs continued support that the TNSCB could make this child labour elimination project in Chennai a community based programme and get the community commitment to this cause.

**MONITORING SYSTEM\footnote{17}**

A three level committees was set up to monitor the various items of work undertaken by TNSCB. The three level committees are:

1. A District Level Monitoring Committee (DLMC)
2. A Zonal Level Monitoring Committee (ZLMC)
3. An Area Level Monitoring Committee (ALMC)

Besides, there is also an consultative committee to assist and suitably guide the various components of the project.

1. Social Mobilization Committee
2. Transit School Committee
3. Legal & Enforcement Committee
4. Rehabilitation Committee
5. Income Generation Programme Committee
6. Special Trades Committee

TNSCB claims that, there are 15,000 child labourers in Chennai City. But the figure of Labour Welfare Board shows that, there are only 1,085 children working in both hazardous and non-hazardous industries in Chennai City. It also states that the total number of child workers working in both hazardous and non-hazardous industries in Tamilnadu is 25,431.

\footnote{16}{"Programme on Transit Schools for Child labourers", *The Hindu*, 5 August 1998, p.3.}

\footnote{17}{Abstract on Child Labour Elimination Project in Chennai City, Op.cit., p.16.}
A Turning Point in the present effort of the Government was the Conference of regional administrators held by the Ministry of Labour in New Delhi having the highest incidence of child labour. The workshop launched the Prime Minister's Scheme for the elimination of child labourers in hazardous industries and occupation. The National Child Labour Project was made operational and 76 projects have been on the ground. They are at different stages of operationalisation and their pace of operations have not been uniform, which is natural in a country with such a large size where conditions vary from state to state, region to region and even vary within the same region. District level child labour project that have been implemented in the country has been given in (Appendix X).

The need for time bound action for the elimination of child labour has been recently emphasized by the Supreme Court of India. The Hon'ble Supreme Court, in its judgement dated 10th December 1996, in a Writ Petition has given directions regarding the manner in which the children working in hazardous occupations are to be withdrawn from work and rehabilitated as also the manner in which conditions of children working in non-hazardous occupations are to be regulated and improved upon. (Appendix XI shows copy of the Supreme Court Judgement). Since the judgement, a conference of Labour Ministers of State Governments was held and concrete decisions to conduct a national survey to expedite recovery of Rs.20,000/- per child from violators, to set up welfare-cum-Rehabilitation centres of released child labourers and to arrange provisions for education of these children were taken during the conference. According to the judgement of Supreme Court, it is the responsibility of the appropriate government to ensure that in lieu of each child withdrawn from work an adult member of the family is provided an alternate employment. This is a massive exercise and much depends on the co-operation of the community.

In order to give effect to the directions of the Hon'ble Court, a survey was conducted in Tamilnadu State by the Labour Department. The findings of the survey on child labour in Tamilnadu and Chennai City in both hazardous and non-hazardous industries is given in Table 15.1 and 15.2.

### TABLE 15.1
FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY ON CHILD LABOUR IN TAMIL NADU STATE

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<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Name of the District</th>
<th>Total No. of Est'ment to be surveyed</th>
<th>Total No. of CL in urban and rural</th>
<th>Total No. of child labour in both hazardous and non-hazardous</th>
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<td>No. of C.L. Identified</td>
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### TABLE 15.2

**FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY ON CHILD LABOUR IN CHENNAI CITY**

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<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Zone</th>
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GOVERNMENT MEASURES

In India, there have been several legislation - both before independence and after which are mainly directed to restrict the minimum age of children at the time of employment in certain type of work, as well as to regulate the working conditions. Many enquiry commissions have been constituted by the government to look into the problem and suggest remedial measures to ameliorate the problems of working children. Unfortunately, all these efforts seem to have had very little impact on the incidence of child labour, as the available evidence does not show any decline in the number of child workers in general, not even in hazardous occupation like the match - industry in Sivakasi, Tamil Nadu.21

The inability of the government of India to achieve the set goals had led it to modify its policies. The labour ministry has indicated that despite the provision of restrictive laws, the practice of child labour continues unabated, because exploitation of children is of financial advantage to employers and a matter of economic compulsion to parents. Under these circumstances, being forced to accept child labour as a 'harsh reality', the Ministry proposed to take measures to improve the working conditions of children, rather than removing them from the work force. The National Child Labour Policy announced in 1987 were formulated in pursuance of this. The policy announced by the Government of India for 30,000 children in 10 project areas is not an adequate response to the 44 million children working in the country. However, it is a modest beginning towards the right end. The policy comprises of a) Legal action on plan b) utilising on-going development programmes for the benefit of child labour and the families and c) a project based plan of action22.

However, in terms of implementation of National Child Labour Policy, the emphasis on general development programmes has remained largely unimplemented, though of late, some activities are visible in terms of launching of prosecutions aimed at securing effective enforcement of legal provisions related to child labour under various labour laws. Some concrete steps have been taken to implement project based plan of action through National Child Labour Projects.

Pati, R.N. Rehabilitation of Child Labour in India, Ashish Publishing House, New Delhi, p.269.

NATIONAL CHILD LABOUR PROJECTS

The main thrust of the National Child Labour projects is to reduce the incidence of child labour in the project areas thereby encouraging the elimination of child labour progressively. The project activities include:

- Stepping up enforcement of child labour laws
- Non-formal education
- Adult education
- Income and employment generation
- Special schools
- Raising public awareness
- Survey and evaluation

The principal agency for implementation of these, were project societies which were formed and registered under the Registration of Societies Act, 1860. District Magistrates/Collectors of the concerned society are representatives of departments concerned with the programmes of non-formal education, vocational training, health and suitable voluntary organisations. A part-time or full-time project director who is an officer of the state government, is entrusted with the execution of the project. The actual implementation of various schemes under the project are being carried out by local NGOs. Project society / NGO receive funds directly from the Ministry of Labour, Government of India.

NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTRE ON CHILD LABOUR

The task of progressively eliminating child labour calls for an effective mechanism to provide inputs for policy formulations and programme support. A modest beginning in this regard was made by setting up a child labour cell in the V.V.Giri National Labour Institute (VVGNLI) in 1990 with the assistance of the Government of India and UNICEF.

The increased pace of activities and emerging needs for various types of support by different agencies led to the upgradation of the child labour cell into the National Resource Centre on Child Labour (NRCCCL). The NRCCCL was set up in March 1993 to assist national and state governments, NGOs, policy makers, legislators and social groups through a variety of interventions and to develop capabilities of the target groups.


It has built up an impressive and one of the largest documentation on child labour and is now assisting the Ministry of Labour in the implementation of child labour projects. Research and training are two other important activities of the NRCCCL. The focus of the research projects of the centre has been on updating and upgrading the existing information as well as exploring new aspects related to child labour. These training are aimed at bringing about attitudinal changes among the trainees and raising their motivational level in order to enhance their capacities to fulfil the task of implementing child labour projects. Dissemination of information through its number of publications is yet another activity of the centre. It also provides technical support services to various agencies engaged in the task of implementation of child labour projects. Besides collaborating with ILO, UNICEF and various state labour institutes, the centre has established a network with about 400 NGOs in assisting them through various ways of implementing child labour programmes.

It is high time for the government to realise that the problem pertaining to child labour is quite a complex one and it may not be possible for the government to achieve success unless it seeks active cooperation from other concerned quarters by ensuring active involvement of experts, activists, planners, administrators and above all non-governmental organisation already working in the area of the child labour. Although government has already started working actively on the aforesaid lines, it is desirable on its part to associate all these people consistently from its inception to the conclusion of the action programme and there should be total involvement of all such persons at each and every stage of the work. Training may be imparted to officials and NGOs working in the area of child labour. All the programmes should be evaluated with a hope that a positive and meaningful purpose will be served by all these programmes and it may probably improve the lot of child labour in the coming decade and the new century may start with a hope of better future for the child labour in terms of improved working and living conditions for them.

CONCLUSION

Since there is no authentic information on child labour in Chennai City, the TNSCB have done a tremendous work in bringing out the census survey of child labourers in Chennai City. The figure given by TNSCB is 15,000. But a person travelling throughout Chennai City would find the figure to be slightly more than the above mentioned figure. What is still astonishing is that, there are only 1,085 child labourers in Chennai City according to Labour Welfare Board survey. There is a wide difference between the above stated figures given by the two boards. What is needed at this hour is that, a third survey can be conducted in Chennai City by an organisation / social service organisation to find out the reason for this discrepancy. It is not possible to get an accurate figure of child workers in Chennai City, but the figure can be somewhere approximately near the above mentioned figure or slightly more.
The level of training programmes conducted by TNSCB for government/NGO officers not only give them experience but helps them to get an in-depth knowledge of child labour issue.

Social mobilization and public awareness programmes undertaken in collaboration with the NGOs and concerned departments by the TNSCB paves way for better understanding on child labour problems among the people/community, particularly the mothers of the child workers. But the school enrollment drive adopted by them will not be favourable among the child workers, because most of the children who work in Chennai City have absolutely no interest in studies. Even if the parents enroll them in school, they attend the classes for a week and then, stay at home ultimately becoming drop-outs. So, the Board, instead of enrolling all the child workers into transit school/formal school, should find out who is genuinely interested in studying and can enroll only those children. If the children who are not interested in studying are also enrolled, then during the course of time they become drop-outs and seeing these children, the children who are really interested in studying would also become drop-outs. By adopting this method, the project would not only be successful but the children who are genuinely interested in studying would be benefitted.

Income Generation Activities for mothers of child labourers is a good approach. But one has to wait and see how far this method would be successful, because most of the mothers of the child labourers are already employed as housemaids or work in construction sites. Further for some of the mothers the health problem do not permit them to do any work.

Awareness generation programme has been the most crucial intervention of the programme and the most effective. The main thrust of this element of the programme was to increase the awareness and understanding of a wide section of society about child labour.

Close interaction with government is essential in order to integrate any work concerned on child with the national agenda. This interaction has to take place at many levels, not merely at the national policy-making tier. The contours of the national policy on child labour are set by the views, opinions and pressures surfacing from below. It is therefore necessary to work closely with government bodies at the bottom tiers as well, especially in the States and districts.

ROLE OF NGO

In every society there have been people inspired by the idea of social progress and social change. Generally they organise themselves at various levels as groups and these people have been prepared to accept responsibility for social action and to devote time and energies to achieve their objectives by means of democratic social action outside the
machinery of government. These associations are Non-governmental organisations and are independent of statutory authority. Their policies are framed and controlled by their own members. The thoughts and actions of these NGOs are aiming at the creation of a society in which good life shall be possible for all.

A large number of NGOs work to organise the masses to fight for their rights, make the oppressed aware of their position or they lead the struggle against the inhuman exploitation. They try to bring about a structural transformation and social revolution. They represent the collective will of the people to innovate, promote and to implement programmes with or without Government support. Invariably they are initiated and governed by their own members on democratic principles without external control. With definite objective and plan for fulfilling their objectives, NGOs carry out their programmes and they are flexible. In various fields of national life they have played a vital role in social progress. It is a human institution designed by human beings to meet human needs of its members and have active participation of far more people than the government. They provide chances for the individuals personal participation in the affairs of the community.

India's 17 million child labour force make up seven percent of the country's 700 million population. It is a matter of great concern for NGOs, which work towards the elimination of child labour by 2001 AD.

REASONS FOR THE GROWTH OF NGOs

NGOs working in Chennai City with child labourers came up as a challenge to confront the problems the children and the society faced as a whole. There was a growing feeling that, there was something missing in these children, which made them come and work. Perhaps the society did not provide them with what they needed as they grew up. Concerned groups began to organise themselves that, they could provide those things which was missing in their growth. It was a feeling that NGOs meant for them could supply what was missing and make them once again useful citizens of this country.


Ibid, p.150.


In the present scenario, NGOs would have to play greater role which requires redefining their roles, change in approach and global thinking. The NGOs have primarily concentrated on provision of basic amenities to the deprived children while functioning at the grass-root level. Most of the NGOs have made available to the needy children, the services which are better in terms of quality as well as effectiveness. Several NGOs have made effective use of the available resources and with most appropriate methods generated resources on their own. However, beside service delivery, there is also a need for education of the community, particularly at the grass-root level regarding its responsibilities towards children in need of help. Not many NGOs have taken up education of people at grass-root level in an intensive manner. As a result, care and protection of children living in exceptionally difficult circumstances is perceived as the sole responsibility of the NGOs, whereas the primary responsibility lies with the family and the community. Looking at the magnitude of the problem, NGOs, however, sincere and committed their efforts may be, have not yet been able to reach all the needy children. The reasons are manifold; scarce resources, inadequate trained man power, lack of cooperation from government and other bodies etc.

CHARACTERISTICS OF NGOs

The following are the characteristics of NGO.

1. It is registered under the society’s Act to give a corporate status to a group of individuals.
2. A name is given to the organisation and it has definite aims, objects and programmes in fulfillment of these objectives.
3. It has a general body with all its ‘members’ and an executive board or a managing committee to look after the management of the association.
4. It is well known and accepted by the community in which it is formed.
5. Resources like financial and other facilities are clearly measured and there are also publications by the NGO periodically.

The problem of child labour in the country is so complex that the State alone cannot tackle it. The State requires the support of the NGOs to supplement its effort. People’s initiative need to be encouraged and even protected by the State. The State may profit from the experiences and the experiments of the NGOs. A large number of NGOs have played supplementary and complementary roles to the State with regard to child labour.

There are seven NGOs working in Chennai City, to fight against the problem of child labour. Some NGOs are held in high esteem. They range from those who provide relief to the needy, work for reforms, want to help the government to extend its programmes like helping the corporation in cleaning the street by employing the children who are under their care.

However, two factors bind all these different or diverse NGO’s together. One is their tendency to give solutions to the causes for child labour and the other is their inability to find a fulcrum. Many, if not most NGOs lose effectiveness because they are engaged in fighting on too many fronts from rehabilitation to deforestation, community health, sati, housing rights, natural resource management, police atrocities, corruption in high places, eradication of untouchability, child labour or some scores of other similar causes. Secondly, partly as a result of this, but mainly because of a stubborn refusal to admit that they do not occupy any neutral space between the directly gaining or losing interest groups, and hence do not have any privileged perspective or clout to back up their high moral stance, they are reduced to making weighty pronouncements which they are unable to implement themselves or force the government or anybody else to implement.\textsuperscript{30}

In Chennai, the number of children who come to work is on the increase. As a result, an NGO Forum was set up to take care of these working children\textsuperscript{31}. The NGO Forum is a group of organisations which is concerned about the problem of working children and is making concerted efforts to curtail the problem, if not eliminate it altogether. Part of this study has dealt with some of the organisations that are working with child labourers and are members of the NGO Forum of Chennai. An attempt has been made to study the growth of the organisations in Chennai, who are working with these children and the problems they face.

The forum activities are carried out by the contributions from members and from UNICEF to a large extent. There is no full-time or paid personnel to carry out the activities of the Forum. The present co-ordinator, besides his responsibility of his own organisation, monitors the forum activities. Since the forum does not have a full-time personnel, planning


and execution of programme gets slowed down, communication gets delayed and lack of funds set limits to the activities of the forum.  

In Chennai, seven non-governmental organisations are actively involved in working with child labourers with social objectives of rehabilitation in the city of Chennai. They are Nossakkaram, Asha Nivas, Don Bosco Anbu Illam (DBAI), Arunodhaya, Asian Youth Centre (AYC), Marialaya and Morning Star. Interventions were made by non-governmental organisations to improve the living and working conditions of the children. Steps were taken by them to reduce the work problems of these children such as police harassment, exploitation by the traders and to facilitate access to health facilities and vocational training. DBAI which works exclusively for rag-pickers formed a union or co-operatives to enhance their income and strengthen their bargaining power. Such attempts were small and sporadic and could not reach a vast majority of the rag-pickers.

Talking of the groups working with child labourers a distinction has been made between those working alone and those with the children living with their families. In the latter case the children are inducted into the family work by their parents or elder siblings to increase the family income. It is therefore necessary for the organisations to plan for implementing income generating schemes for the families of working children along with specific schemes for the children.

Since the family members are involved in the work of their children, the non-governmental organisations in Chennai have adopted two approaches to deal with the working children.

Some organisations attempt to remove working children completely from their work by training them in alternative skills. They take steps to protect the working children from the dangers of street life until they are rehabilitated. The second approach is increasingly adopted by NGOs in some cities. This involves organising the children around waste work in the case of rag-picking by developing alternative methods of collecting systems. The organisation belonging to this group feel that, it is difficult to eliminate children completely from rag-picking and views integration in collection schemes as a temporary first step in reducing the harshness of life.


The various kinds of activities undertaken by both the groups are as follows:

a. Non-formal education
b. Vocational training and Job placement
c. Issue of identity cards to protect them from police harassment
d. Access to health and recreation
e. Hygiene education and nutrition programme
f. A non-exploitative shop
g. Night shelter

ORGANISATION STRUCTURE OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATION

The NGOs in Chennai City have a well defined hierarchial structure. The director who is the head of the organisation is responsible for the activities of the organisation. Below him are the co-ordinators who undertake various projects assisted by assistant co-ordinators, field workers, street educators and vocational trainers. The shelter homes of these organisations have warden and assistant warden to help them. The system of communication followed in these organisations - a two way communications. Many of these organisations had flexible planning, given the nature of work and clientele they served. Before being absorbed into the organisational hierarchy, the staff were given a minimum of training. Almost every week the workers in the organisation met, submitted weekly reports and compared notes. The decisions regarding nature of work to be undertaken were mostly taken by the director or secretary of the organisation and passed on to the members. The members followed the directives of the director in their work.

ORGANISATION STRUCTURE

Director
  |   Asst. Director
  |   Project officer
  |   Program Co-ordinator
  |   Asst. Co-ordinator
  |   Street Educators
  |   Vocational Trainers
  |   Warden
  |   Part-time teachers
  |   Typist
  |   Part-time Person for materials and maintenance
  |   Part-time person for documentation and publication
SERVICES OFFERED

Almost all the organisations offered similar kind of services. They included providing food, shelter, vocational education, basic education, recreational facilities, health care, counselling and personality development. Some NGOs concentrated on legal issues like releasing children arrested by police, some others focussed on training the parents of these children and if they were willing, were sent home with their parents.

TRAINING GIVEN TO STAFF

All NGOs conduct initial training for new staff members and periodic training for the regular staff members. The main area of training centered around the special education the animators were giving to the working children. The focus of the programme was to learn how to attract the children to the classes, how to make the classes interesting and at the same time relevant to their life and environment. Another area of training was how to befriend the working children. This required special skills as these children were basically suspicious of strangers and took a long time before they trusted any one. The second aspect of training was how to convince these children to come to the organisation and retain them in the organisation.

Training was also given to the workers on vocational education, counselling, persuasive skills and the do's and don't in dealing with the working children. They were also trained in social analysis and understanding of social problems, more specially the problems related to youth and adolescents.

Many of the new organisations lacked the needed training. Some of the workers of these NGOs were not adequately trained and their level of motivation was minimal. The older, well established organisations had better training facilities, better trained workers and better motivated workers. The NGOs Forum of Chennai organised programmes periodically for the workers. The problem that many of the NGO faced was the turnover of the trained workers. Many of them left the work when they got a better job with high salary. Low salary and problems of late hours and lack of interest of the children in participating in the programme seemed to be the other problems which made the workers leave the NGO. This was a big drain on the NGOs as they had to train workers afresh all the time. The common features of NGOs programme in Chennai City are that, they have health and nutrition components, non-formal education, vocational training.

recreational facilities, counselling and saving schemes. But they vary from one another in their philosophies, approaches and strategies. The NGOs have common activities but their implementation strategies differ.

In this context, all the NGOs working for child labourers in Chennai City (reaches out to hundreds of working children with the objective of restoring their lost childhood).

Nesakkaram, a centre for working children was established in 1991. It is a registered trust and true to its name "Nesakkaram" the members of the organisation have extended their love and friendship to many thousands of needy children. They were able to enroll and put back many working children in the main stream of school education.

OBJECTIVES OF THE ORGANISATION

The objectives of the organisation are as follows:

1. To reach out to many working children and to open more centres.
2. To promote people's participation - initiate and motivate more individuals and groups.
3. To bring about public awareness of the problems of working children through Radio, T.V. and print media.
4. To find alternative work opportunities - establish income generating jobs, training in tailoring, auto-mechanism, driving etc.
5. To rehabilitate children who need special care and guidance for a longer period - create a youth village.

ACTIVITIES OF THE ORGANISATION

Nesakkaram has developed a series of activities catering to the needs of the working children. Of these, non-formal education or "Life education" is the prime activity. Besides NFE, Camps, Recreation, Vocational Training, Health care, Rehabilitation, Creative skills are also conducted. Apart from these activities, Nesakkaram has initiated a "DESK" at Egmore Railway station for children in Difficult Circumstances.

Nesakkaram - seed - Brochure, Chennai.

"Non-Formal Education" or rather "Life Education" is the prime activity of Nesakkaram, covering around 900 children through 13 centres. The syllabus used are three level primers designed with the combined efforts of NGOs dealing with working children, State Resource Centre, and UNICEF. This is followed by a vocational skills training primer in which the child can select according to his/her aptitude and capacity. Though the syllabus is formulated with intense background study and scrutiny, there are certain shortcomings. Due to the irregular presence of children there is a difficulty in continuity of classes. As the group is highly varied, a planned syllabus has not been very successful. So, many times the educators guide the children as per their needs. The next step forward from the non-formal education class is entry into formal education. In a period of one year of non-formal education the children are motivated and facilitated towards formal education.

CAMPS

Camps are held at two levels namely one-day and three-days camps. One day camps are organised with the objective of identifying what they need to learn. These camps are held for each area separately. The three-day camps are a follow-up of one-day camps. Camps are also held separately for boys and girls. Boys face the problem of getting addicted to panparag, gambling and drugs; whereas girls are more affected by shelterlessness, physical insecurity and exploitation. Such problems are taken into consideration while planning three-day camps for special groups.

RECREATION

Recreation is also a part of education where children learn to live together, play together and respect each others preferences and gain general knowledge. Picnics are also a part of this. Their knowledge about environment, science and history has been developed by these trips.

CELEBRATIONS

Pongal, Diwali, Literacy Day, Annual Day and Independence day are some of the occasions celebrated at Nesakkaram. Celebrations provide an opportunity for the children to come together and enjoy their childhood. This is the time when they relax and expose their talents. Sports, creative expressions like Drawing, Painting, Rangoli, Handwork etc. are held to mark the occasion and prizes and clothes are distributed.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Vocational training is given to a working child after identifying his/her aptitude and capacity. The usual training given to them is tailoring. Usually girls take up this training and set up their own tailor shop.

a) **Carpentry:** Boys get trained in this skill. They learn for about three to six months and join individual groups to earn by this work. It fetches them a good income and also facilitates them to be self-employed.

b) **Auto and car driving:** Many boys aspire to be an Auto or car driver. May be because it keeps them moving and also in the course of time they can own an auto.

HEALTH CARE

Owing to the nature of work the children do, and the environment in which they live, they are prone to severe skin and respiratory diseases. Due to their crude mobility they are exposed to cuts and burns. A medical check-up is arranged for all the children in contact. Children suffering from anaemia are followed up at the Government Children Hospital by their staff in charge for health. The psychological needs of the children are taken care of by frequent counselling either informally by the staff or professional counsellor at the Child Guidance Clinic (Government Children Hospital).

REHABILITATION

As far as rehabilitation is concerned, the prime importance is given for home placement. Either the child is motivated to reach home on his/her own or a staff accompanies him/her if need be. On the other hand the parents are also called for a family counselling session before receiving their child, so that such a misfortune doesn’t happen again. In Chennai City, especially in Nungambakkam area, Nesakkaram has adopted a process of rehabilitation for the working children. The volunteers of Nesakkaram identify the children through surveys. They either meet them at their homes or at work places. Many a time the work place serves also as the child’s shelter. Initially the volunteer tries his/her best, convincing the employer about the child’s need for a couple of hours of non-formal education. Education here, does not mean just letters and numbers alone but a combination of awareness songs, stories, role plays, drawing and painting all based on everyday life.
PREVENTIVE EFFORTS

In order to curb the rise in number of working children from coming to the streets, methods have to be innovated and Nesakkaram has initiated a Desk at the Egmore railway station for children in Difficult circumstances to intervene at the point when the children jump into the streets.

Each child takes the ultimate daring decision of walking out of his/her home because of various factors. In certain cases parents themselves pave way for the child to go away from them. The factors identified by the NGO are:

To find a job in the city.
Children facing frustrations.
Peer group’s influence or pressure
Indifference or negligence of the teachers
Attraction towards city life / film personae
Education not being interesting or motivating
To get away from their step - parents ill treatment
Inhuman treatment suffered by the child at work place
Parents not showing enough care or responsibility towards the child.

Besides the above mentioned activities, street plays are conducted by Nesakkaram in Chennai City. Street plays are performed by rag-pickers - turned-street theatre persons. The beauty of these plays is its simplicity and honesty. The actors belong to the most oppressed class, rag-pickers. Their expression of emotions is something they have experienced in life. Thus it is a real and honest effort to relive. Nesakkaram Awareness street theater troupe has performed so far 180 times different type of plays, for approximately 75,000 audience.

ASHA NIVAS

Asha Nivas is a registered Non-governmental organisation initiated in 1976 out of a deep concern for the marginalised and exploited children in difficult circumstances residing in Chennai City. As the needs and problems of the community increased, the organisation had formed registered trusts and a society in order to give special attention to the different segments of the community. The motive of the Child Development Trust is mainly concerned about the development of children - children in the pre-schools and day care centres, street and working children and sponsorship of children for education.
OBJECTIVES OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

1) Sponsorship and scholarship for education of the working children
2) Continuing education for the school drop-outs
3) Non-formal education and vocational training for working children
4) Shelter homes for working children
5) Re-habilitation programmes for working children
6) Savings and credit societies
7) Health care and Health education programmes
8) Recreational activities.

There are many activities and programmes undertaken by the NGO for the welfare of the working children. They are as follows.

SPONSORSHIP AND SCHOLARSHIP

Sponsorship and scholarship programme is a promotive as well as a supportive measure to enable the children to continue education as long as they wanted to do so, who otherwise would have resigned to fate and added to the brigade of child labour. Therefore, retaining children in school and preventing them from becoming child workers is the prime concept that is realised through this programme.

The financial assistance extended to these children is fully utilized to buy books, uniforms, pay school fees, exam fees. The person in-charge of this programme closely monitor the progress of the children and guide them to do better. Besides regular meetings are organised for the mothers of sponsored children wherein the role of parents in educating children is discussed and thereby, parents are motivated to provide better milieu for the children that is conducive for education.

SUMMER CAMP

Summer camp are arranged to nurture the human potential. The camp mainly focussed on building confidence and self-esteem. Besides communication skills, problems of adolescence and how to tackle it competently and tips for better learning were taught. Thus summer camp itself created opportunities to exercise and experiment what was learnt in the camp which would have enabled them to understand the teachings of collective responsibilities of the individuals in the society.

There are ninety non-formal education centres assisting more than three thousand working children in the field of education. Each centre is assisting an average of 30 to 35 working children every year and equipping them to read and write. As the very system of education imparted to these children demands different approach, a team of professionals formulated special syllabus covering various aspects like literacy, numeric, general knowledge, moral stories, awareness songs and quiz in order to provide them comprehensive education. More importance is given for free and easy adaptability to the learning milieu. In tune with this, all the centres are programmed in such a way to run at the convenient time for the working children of the local area.

SAVINGS SCHEME

Children attending non-formal education are motivated to save and firmly believe in save-as-you-earn. The motivation given by the organisation helped the children to join in save-as-you-earn policy.

RECREATION

Recreation and Picnic are regular programme in the non-formal curriculum in order to refresh and revitalize the drooping shoulders, burdened with untold miseries. Besides, it helps the working children to put aside all their problems and to be happy for a while. All the animators who are directly involved with working children are well trained to organise recreation through various games with available sources. As a matter of fact, games are so important to clear the fatigue and keep the mind free for learning. Thus it is always the first item of non-formal education, in order to enable the children to have the right frame of mind and attitude.

CONTINUING EDUCATION

The socio-economic factors often contribute towards isolating several segments of the population from the main stream of education. However the drop-out rates should not be restricted to socio-economic factors alone. As a result, 30 continuing education centres have been started to prepare these drop-outs for government exams.
SHELTER HOMES

Shelter Homes basically a short stay home, provides family atmosphere for children to grow towards change. The person in-charge for shelter home ensures that children are disciplined and organised. Daily schedules are formulated to systematise their work. Non-formal education, recreation facilities and health services are regular feature of the shelter home. More than three hundred children benefit every year from this service. Apart from this, the NGO has 2 shelter homes in Chennai, one in Choolaimedu and the other is located in Walltax road. Children in the Choolaimedu shelter home, are in charge of a warden. One meal at night is provided in the night shelter for the boys.

POSTER CAMPAIGNS

One of the deliberations of the planning committee is to campaign against child labour and mobilize public opinion on the incidence of child labour through posters. Taking into the account of hectic election campaign where the interest of the mass was concentrated at the out-come of election results, silent campaign against child labour was conduced. Hundreds of colourful posters were printed with thought-provoking slogans to draw the attention of people from all walks of life.

HEALTH CARE FOR CHILD WORKERS

Most of the children hail from low social strata of society. Often they are underfed and malnourished. They live in unhygienic condition where bacteria and virus contaminate the living atmosphere. The poor sanitation and lack of facilities for good drinking water eventually accentuates the possibilities of spreading numerous diseases. As children from this background are often prone to respiratory problems, skin diseases, asthma, tooth decay and diarrhoea, it is imperative to organise medical check-ups. Most of the children are runaways. They live care-free, uncared life and are exposed to hard realities of life that they never dare dream of. Once they are on the streets the immediate available job is rag-picking. However the hard reality is that, children labour for their own livelihood even at the cost of their health. Most of these children have health problems from scabies to respiratory problems. Therefore medical check-up is provided for these children at regular intervals to ensure normal childhood by the organisation.

Development programmes were implemented for child workers to rehabilitate them by the NGO in Chennai City slums. Local leaders of the respective areas were called to participate in such programmes, as the organisation felt that, their co-operation and participation is a must at all levels. To a certain extent awareness were created among the people living in slums about the evils of child labour.
Apart from this, the organisation has a street theatre called sirpi, comprising of their staff. This special mass media created a lot of changes in the lives of the poor people living in slums through the skills, dramas and awareness songs. The running theme of the skit varies from importance of health check-up to the current topic. Twice a week meetings are held with all the field officials to evaluate the programmes.

DON BOSCO ANBU ILLAM (DBAI)

DBAI is a registered social service organisation functioning in Chennai City from 1987. It is an institution working for the welfare of the working children living in the streets, especially rag-pickers. It has 4 shelter homes and 10 contact centres with programmes, and schemes for rehabilitating rag-pickers. Various link centres have been established near the Central station, Beach railway station, and theaters. Dynamic and dedicated commitment of the director to the cause of these working children has led to the expansion of its activities, of course with the help of the dedicated band of followers (ie) staff.

OBJECTIVES OF DBAI

The objectives of DBAI are as follows

- To rehabilitate the rag-pickers by providing alternative employment
- To provide non-formal education, health care, recreational facilities to the working children.
- To instill in them thrift and saving habits and to prepare them to be responsible citizens of the country.

DBAI STRATEGY

DBAI through regular contact get in touch with the fresh runaways. Besides fresh runaways, they also contact various working children. All these working children are offered various alternative choice of either education (Academic / Technical)

AIM

DBAI's aim is to be a friend, guide, and counsellor to child workers. They feel that these children need more love, affection and understanding than money.

Brochure of Don Bosco Anbu Illam, Chennai.
REHABILITATION PROCESS OF DBAI

It is not possible to put the working child on the pedestal of regular life at once. Hence their starting point is, where the child is, from picking papers in the garbage. DBAI make him collect the garbage. From the money earned, he is asked to save certain amount. Then with a contribution from the management he is able to own a cycle-rickshaw and lead an Independent life.

THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN REHABILITATION

DBAI follow two types of educational system as they enter into the process of rehabilitation:

1. **Non-Formal Education**

   In this, children who do not go to a regular school take part. The alphabets, elementary maths and simple ideas are taught to them for a short time. This is to provoke interest in them, so that they become eager to join a regular school.

2. **Technical Education**

   Children who are not able to study for one reason or other enter into technical education such as tailoring, 2 wheeler mechanism, car driving, electrician, gardening etc. This type of education make them independent and when they feel confident in the trade, they set up their own business and thus they are rehabilitated.

PROGRAMMES CONDUCTED BY DBAI

The following programmes have been started successfully by DBAI.

1. A residential training centre with active collaboration of the state government of Tamil Nadu.
2. Evening schools in 5 slums of the city to prevent vagrancy and to check drop-out under the prevention of Vagrancy project.
3. A tailoring institute and two wheeler mechanic sheds to train the boys.
4. Started the Don Bosco Anbu Illam Paper Pickers Co-operative Society Ltd., to coordinate the rag picking work profitably.
A rag-pickers co-operative society has been started by DBAI, since they felt that mere promise of non-formal education was not enough to motivate children engaged in rag-picking to give up their lucrative job. They need to retain their job and yet have a role to play in the marketing process of the rags they collect. Active participation was the remedy to keep away the exploitation of children by shopkeepers.

The first step towards a lesser exploitation of rag-picker boys were the founding of paper shops, run by the boys themselves. This would instill a certain responsibility towards their mates which would make cheating a lot more difficult. In 1987 the first paper shop was opened and it was run by one of the former rag pickers who was given a loan through the bank. Now there are four shops operating in North Madras (with the help of bank loans) by former rag pickers. The boys who would like to set up their own shop should be well known to the organisation and should have attended the evening classes regularly. A group of rag pickers are attached to these shops (ie) they sell their materials only to these shops. Sometimes they are helping to sort out and bundle the materials. Every month staff evaluation meetings of the NGOs are also held to assess the work done and to be done.

Besides this, a centre has been set up at Ezhil Nagar, near the Kodungaiyur dump. The main focus is on women and children. The idea is to motivate the women to keep their children away from the dump. A sum of Rs. 125 per month is spent on the beneficiaries (children) for education and maintenance, as the families live in poverty in these areas. The children begin to move away from their families - as their parents take away the money they earn. The aim of the NGO is to bring them back into the mainstream and help them to save the money.

DBAI has been making use of Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY) by giving vocational training to the girls working in the dumping ground of Ezhil Nagar. They were taught tailoring & a stipend of Rs. 100 per month were given to them.

DBAI promoting waste buying shops, see their role as facilitator. They strive to organise and prepare the beneficiaries to operate the shop independently. Contrary to this, NGOs often find themselves spending a lot of time and energy in the administrative and financial activities of the shop. The imbalance of power among the group members, the waste pickers perception of the NGOs promoting such units as their employers and the illiteracy of the waste pickers are some of the reasons that make it difficult for an organisation to promote such units.

ARUNODHAYA

Arunodhaya, centre for working children was established in 1992 with a commitment to work for the cause of child workers.

OBJECTIVES AND GOALS

1. To create alternative support systems for child workers that take into account their needs and arrive at concrete solution.
2. To work towards changing the hazardous and exploitative situation of child workers and articulate / advocate appropriate long term and immediate solutions to this phenomenon.
3. To provide protection and assistance to child workers who have been victims of various forms of abuse and exploitation.
4. To promote alternative education that is relevant, developmental, creative and geared towards empowering the child workers.
5. To strengthen existing system and provide additional support system for the families of child workers that will help ensure quality life and an environment conducive to the proper development of children.
6. To conduct action oriented research, document and disseminate information on child workers.
7. To network and liaison with government and Non-governmental organisation involved in the issue of child workers.

The organisation has 15 Non-Formal Education Centres for working children, 7 special schools Day centre and 7 Tuition centres. The children after their work come to these centres to learn. Apart from this 15 NFE centres, the organisation has 7 special school day centres. These 7 special schools are run by Arunodhaya with the aid provided by Child Relief and You (CRY) for girl children and ILO for boys. Special school, here means, that if a child wants to attend the formal school, he can’t go directly because he would have discontinued his studies or he may be overaged. In order to put these children into formal education system, these children are trained in special schools by the staff of the NGO. Once the children get equipped with the lessons, they are enrolled into the formal school by the NGO, providing scholarships. They provide the children with books, uniform, slates and other materials that are necessary for them to study. If the parents of these children are not able to pay the fees then the organisation takes up this responsibility also. To check whether these children are attending the formal school regularly, the centre conducts tuitions for them. For the benefit of these children, 7 tuition centres have been organised by the organisation.

Brochure of Arunodhaya Social Service Centre, Chennai.
Apart from the educational activities, the organisation also conducts creative activities for these children. This is in the form of drawing, painting and clay modelling. Besides this, camps are also conducted to boost the children's I.Q. The children who are not interested in studying are absorbed in their tailoring units, which is operational one at North Chennai and other at Kodambakkam.

AREA OF FUNCTIONING

The centre's main focus of the area is North Chennai - comprising of Korukupet, Tondiarpet, Royapuram and Kodambakkam.

ASIAN YOUTH CENTRE (AYC)

The Asian Youth Centre was formed in 1984 to act as forum for the various peace, Youth and Development Action Groups across Asia. The Centre is committed to:"42

- Building awareness in Asia and in the world about the fundamental causes of poverty and exploitation.
- Working towards the creation of a new society based on equality, freedom and justice.
- Acting as a centre for the dissemination of information to groups across the world that have limited access to such information.
- Promote the democratic participation of youth in the development process

The Centre is currently involved in enabling people working and living in most pathetic condition in various parts of Asia. Some of the programmes undertaken by the organisation in the city are:"43

1. The Young Hotel Workers' Association
2. Shelter Home for Working Children

The young hotel workers' association was formed to act as a pressure group to identify and solve specific issues of the young, employed in small hotels, tea-stalls, mobile canteens and road-side eateries. A recreation centre where these children can involve themselves in recreational and cultural activities has been set-up. Along with non-formal educational programmes, they are also provided with counselling facilities, educational and vocational guidance and legal and medical aid. The main focus of this centre has been on elimination of child labour in hotel industry.

Brochure of Asian Youth Centre, Chennai.

SHELTER HOME FOR WORKING CHILDREN

The shelter home set up by the centre with the assistance of the Government of Tamil Nadu in 1990 shelters about 70 children. Besides, the home provides medical, educational and recreational facilities, regular non-formal education, vocational and educational counselling. Through the Central Government Scheme for the welfare of the children, non-formal education along with vocational guidance and skill development are provided leading to rehabilitation and resettlement into the families. Other welfare and health aspects of the child are also covered under this programme catering to about 300 children. Besides this, AYC runs an education centre for school going and working girls. Presently 75 girls are attending the centre.

AYC is working for the gradual elimination of child labour. Since late 1980s, various methods and strategies have been worked out. The working children are constantly in touch with the staff of the organisation. The children are given opportunity to meet staff of the organisation and discuss about their various problems.

MARIALAYA

Marialaya started in 1990 is one of the member organisations of the Madras Non-Governmental Organisations Forum for working children. Through collaborative efforts and sharing of experience, the Forum supports its member organisations. Common programmes are organised for the staff, leaders, children and youth representatives from the member organisations. UNICEF Madras sponsors the common ventures of the Madras Forum on behalf of these children. Marialaya is responding to the problems and needs of the children and young girls working on the streets of Chennai City.

AIM

The main aim of the organisation is to restore Human Dignity which is their due by creating a conducive climate and offering necessary opportunities and facilities. The children working on the streets are the neglected and uncared children. They earn their livelihood and supplement family income through tying and selling flowers, helping in small shops and offices as unskilled workers and in export units as semi-skilled labourers. These children are taken care of by Marialaya and are rehabilitated.

Annual Report of Marialaya Social Service Society, Chennai.
PROCESS OF REHABILITATION

Marialaya rehabilitates the working children through the following process:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affected</th>
<th>Repair</th>
<th>Growth</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
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<tr>
<td>Damaged</td>
<td>Put at Ease</td>
<td>Development</td>
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ACTIVITIES OF THE ORGANISATION

Marialaya provides the following welfare facilities to the working children. They are:

1. Shelter home, Open Shelter and Contact centres.
2. Formal and non-formal education, education to life and vocational training
3. Medical check-up and health care
4. Counselling and guidance at all levels

The shelter home gives the working children an experience of a home. Moreover, it protects them from anti-social elements and activities. The gigantic building of the corporation of Chennai known as the Corporation Night Shelter at Kannappar Thidal is given to Marialaya for running the non-formal education centre and vocational training in tailoring for the girls of the locality. The corporation building also serves as a training centre for children of other areas also.

Non-formal education are conducted by the NGO for working children who are interested in studying. Apart from this, health care are also provided to the working children.

AWARENESS PROGRAMME

Awareness programmes are also conducted by Marialaya. Awareness creation on issues like the status of women, AIDS, drug addiction, value education and education to life have been given thrust through these programmes.

MORNING STAR

Morning star is a non-governmental organisation working for the cause of the underprivileged and abused children. The organisation has been set-up very recently and is still awaiting for fund to carry out its developmental/ welfare activities for working children.
AIMS

The aim of the organisation is to motivate children to attend non-formal education, inculcating in children a sense of health and hygiene, developing leadership qualities for better interaction with society, training children and youth in vocational skills to make them self-supportive, organising local communities to educate and motivate parents.

ACTIVITIES/PROGRAMMES CONDUCTED BY THE ORGANISATION

Morning star provides the following activities for the welfare of the working children. They are:

1. Evening schools to provide non-formal education
2. Conducts periodical health-camps
3. Arranges sports, competitions and picnics
4. Organises seminars and training for children as well as parents
5. Organises training in vocational skills
6. Organises awareness programmes on savings, health etc. for mother and children
7. Organises cultural programmes like street-plays, group dance, etc.

All the above mentioned activities are yet to pick up in full swing, as they are awaiting funds from various funding agencies.

Child labourers contribute significantly to the nation's economy. But in return, they get a raw deal. In fact, being a child, he/she gets less than an adult wage, for the same work and sometimes more work. Besides, other eternal forces such as crime, police harassment, drugs, shelterlessness create a living milieu which mutilates a child's physical and emotional life.

It is at this stage the Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Chennai City strives to bring back into a child labourer's life the inherent right to life. The right to education, shelter, food, health, recreation, peace, love, understanding and much more. In short, they wish to reinstate a child's right to a childhood, and to help each child breathe easily in a world which cares.
CONCLUSION

There is a growing rhetoric from the government that NGOs can play a more important role in resolving the problem of the poor. However, the spirit of this rhetoric is dubious. It is not that the government believes that NGOs have magic solutions for solving the problems of the poor, but it is rather shifting the State's responsibilities onto the NGOs. NGOs are being invited to take over and implement various social welfare programmes primarily because NGO strategies and approach are effective and low cost. The government is thus relieved of the burden of maintaining a huge infrastructure and permanent personnel by handing over the responsibility of looking after the needs of the poor to the NGOs. It therefore becomes even more imperative that NGOs form a strong alliance, an alliance that believes in the right of the child to survival, protection, development, growth, participation and freedom of expression. A belief that whenever a child is denied his/her rights, it is a denial of human rights.

The rise of non-governmental organisation in Chennai City is natural and their participation in the process of development obvious. These organisations not only extend development to larger areas geographically and socially but also help State action come closer to social and environmental issues.

An NGO forum plays a vital role in dealing with working children. With the coordinated efforts of NGOs working for the same cause in a given city, there is a great scope to work in the areas of orientation, awareness-building and empowerment of children. Most of the NGOs are functioning as liaisoning and co-ordinating bodies. However the forum should also work as a pressure group on behalf of children. Due to ideological differences and ego clashes between member NGOs, this has not happened in every city.

The prevailing development and welfare programmes implemented for the working children by the NGOs have to be reassessed. Before selecting the beneficiaries for different schemes, their felt needs should be identified and depending upon their choice, schemes be allocated. The Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY) is a welcome step in this direction. The DBAI has been making use of (JRY) by giving vocational training to the girl children working in dumping ground of Ezhilnagar. Such programmes if adopted by other NGOs would help in raising the socio-economic standards of the children. The development programmes would be successful only if there is periodical evaluation of its activity.

A large number of NGOs have come into existence in Chennai City and have helped to build a basic infrastructure of educational, health and economic services for the child labourers. Many NGOs are small in size, and have their own particular area of operation. Though these NGOs are small, they have the will, enthusiasm and capacity to mobilise the community resources.