PREFACE

Children are the hands by which we take hold of heaven. But instead of using these hands to hold the heaven, we are engaging them to toil at hell. In the name of learning the family craft in our occupation based caste system, we are taking away their childhood, happiness, joy, play, education, affection, independence, emotion and most important is their child rights. In today’s seller-buyer market system these children are now considered as a cheap article of trade. Poverty is the prime cause of child labour. Parents are also unable to realize the importance of education in their children’s life is a reason for which they do not send their kids to schools and treat them as helping hands to supplement the family income. These ‘hordes of dirty’ as described by Charles Dickens are now prime concern of the societies, governments and academia. Conventions were ratified, laws were enacted and institutional mechanisms were created for their welfare, protection, rehabilitation and education.

National Child Labour Project (NCLP) is a government sponsored scheme meant for such children who were living an adult like life in childhood. Special schools were opened under the scheme where working children were enrolled, provided with education, nutritive food, monthly stipend, health care facilities and marketable vocational skill and finally after three years mainstreamed into the regular schools. These special schools act like a bridge for such children which make them students from labours, give them education from exploitation and admit them in a school instead of engaging at a workplace. National Child Labour Project which begins in 1989 in 12 districts of India is now extended to 271 districts in 21 states from 12th five year plan. Based on the experiences from the implementation of NCLP scheme during 10th plan period, certain changes in programme components and functional area has been made during 12th plan where mainstreaming and convergence of welfare programmes of different department has been given priority. In this plan period some existing programme components are enhanced and some new components were added in the scheme.

The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 is a piece of law, which is prohibiting and regulating the working buds of India always remain controversial since the day of its enactment on 23/12/1986. This act is suitable for children engaged in hazardous work and working outside the family for wage. But it seems to be irrelevant for children engaged in non hazardous work and working inside the family without wage in the name of family craft and skill transformation. This law listed a few occupations and processes and left thousands of other occupation and processes, even if they are exploitative and likely to harm the growing body and mind of children.

An evaluation of NCLP is carried out to know its impact on the child labour of Odisha. At the time of data collection 18 districts of the state were covered under the NCLP scheme. Now it is 24. Keeping in view the demography, industrialization and urbanization and socio economic transformation four districts, namely Bolangir, Sonepur, Jharsuguda and Sambalpur are taken as study area, with five NCLP schools from each district. It may be mentioned that
Sambalpur (Rengali Project) is one of the 12 oldest districts of India, where NCLP has first started in 1989. The Rengali project area is dominated by beedi workers and children were engaged in beedi making as a part of family labour segment. This may be the reasons for which the above area attracted the attention of policy makers and selected for one out of 12 NCLP project areas.

Chapter one presents a bird eye view of child labour issue and its importance in present scenario, as child right is now the prime concern of United Nations and its bureau. Child labour policy and programme components of NCLP are the focus of second chapter where as analysis of the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 is carried out in chapter three. Chapter four highlighted the functioning of NCLP scheme in Odisha and cases of child atrocities in the state. Chapter five analyses knowledge of public, employers and parents about the government policy/programmes, attitude of the NCLP functionaries and efficiency of prohibitory and regulatory legislations meant for child labours. Impact of government’s support on socio economic conditions of families of child labour seems to be unsatisfactory, which is the main theme of chapter six. The essence of chapter seven is mainstreaming of child labour students which is the main indicator of success of NCLP scheme is directionless. It fails to give the child labour student a healthy life and a bright tomorrow. NCLP do not have any mechanism to know the problem and conditions of mainstreamed child labours. Chapter eight summarizes the important findings.

Keeping in view the aim and objective of the study, child labour students, their parents/guardians, employers of children, functionaries of NCLP at school, block and district level, representatives of governments, non government organizations and trade unions along with general public in the study area were asked on different aspects of NCLP and child labour issues.

Data of on Census, 2001 is taken as base of this study, but where ever possible recently available data of Census, 2011 is also used.

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