Chapter 2

Child Labour: Nature of the Problem

In order to understand the rationale for this study, it is necessary to introduce certain underlying factors and concepts connected to child labour.

1. Child Labour: Definition and Magnitude

Child labour is simply the single most important source of child exploitation and child abuse in the world today. The overwhelming majority of working children are in developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. But pockets of child labour also exist in many industrialised countries. Numerous children work in occupations and industries, which are dangerous and hazardous. They are found in mines, in factories making glass bangles, matches and fireworks, in commercial agriculture, in service sector as vendors, domestic workers, and coolies. The list is endless, as are the hazards and consequences.

However, the distinction between 'child labour' and 'child work' made in the research and policy-oriented literature indicates that not all child work is bad as some work helps in the socialisation of children. 'Child labour', on the other hand involves one or more of the following elements: (i) work by very young children; (ii) long hours of work on a regular full-time basis; (iii) hazardous working conditions (physically or mentally); (iv) no or insufficient access, attendance or progress in school.
1.1 Definition and Categories of Child Labour

Child labour is most comprehensively defined as follows:

"A working child is a child in the age range of 5 to 15 who is doing labour, either paid or unpaid, and is kept working at any hour of the day within or outside the family: basically, a child who is deprived of the right to education and childhood."

What makes this definition important is that it points out that all out-of-school children are child labourers in one form or another. It does not make a distinction between children working in the so-called hazardous industries and children working as part of family labour. If child labour has to be eliminated then we have to take a holistic approach to children and not categorise them: we cannot condone the fact that some groups of children work and not others. However, to understand the kind of work that children are subjected to in different sectors, the following typology may be of use:

**Child Labour**: "Those children who are doing paid or unpaid work in factories, workshops, establishments, mines and in the service sector such as domestic labour". Since the law prohibits the employment of children below the age of 14 in factories, mines and other hazardous employment, all such children, except those who work in the service sector or as domestic labour, can be assisted legally.

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Street Children: “Children living on and off the streets, such as shoe-shine boys, rag-pickers, newspaper-vendors, beggars, etc.” Found working in the informal sector of the economy, the problem of street children is somewhat different from that of child labour in factories and workshops. For one thing, most children have some sort of home to go back to in the evenings or nights, while street children are completely alone and are at the mercy of their employers. They live in the dhaba (small eating-place), on the pavement, in the bus terminal or on the railway platform. They are at the mercy of criminals, drug addicts and the police. They have no permanent base and are constantly on the move. So their problem is more acute than that of children working in a factory and living at home.

Bonded Children: “Children who have either been pledged by their parents for paltry sums of money or those working (mainly in rural India) to pay off the inherited debts of their fathers”. Bonded children are in many ways the most difficult to assist because they are inaccessible. If the dhaba owner has bought them, they cannot escape. If the landlord in the village owns them, they will spend their life in servitude till they get married, and can in turn sell their children.

Working Children: “Children who are working as part of family labour in agriculture and in home-based work”. If children are working 12-14 hours a day along with their parents at the cost of their education, their situation is similar to that of children working for other employers. In fact children, particularly girls, are expected to take on work burdens by parents in complete disproportion to their strength and abilities.
Neera Burra adds the following fifth category of children in this typology.

**Children Used for Commercial Sexual Exploitation:** Many thousands of young girls and boys serve the sexual appetites of men from all social and economic backgrounds. Direct links between the commercial sexual exploitation of children and other forms of exploitative child labour are numerous. Factories, workshops, sweatshops, street corners, railway stations, bus stops and homes where children work, are common sites of sexual exploitation. The physical and psycho-social damage inflicted by commercial sexual exploitation makes it one of the most hazardous forms of child labour.

1.2 **Magnitude of Child Labour**

While there is no accurate accounting of how many of the world's children contributes to their families or to their own economic support, the number of working children is surely in the hundreds of millions globally. Statistics on child labour are elusive not only because of the special and practical difficulties involved in the design and implementation of child labour surveys but also because of differences in perception about who constitutes a child, or child work or child labour. In India, on the one extreme, is the official definition of child labour, which limits it only to that in which worker gets monetary returns. On the other extreme, are those who include in this definition all those who do any work, even part time or help at home, even if they go to the school. Yet others take into account the socio-economic conditions.

Estimation made by International Labour Organisation (ILO) in 1998, points out that developing countries alone account for 120 million

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working children (between 5 to 14 years of age). The vast majority of all child labourers live in Asia, Africa and Latin America. More than half of them (61 per cent, according to ILO estimate of 1998), can be found in Asia alone, although their proportion is declining in South-east Asia, as per capita income increases, basic education spreads and family size decreases as also the number of child labourers.

The economic exploitation of children is rampant in India. The 1991 Census put the number of child labourers to 11.28 million. Unofficial estimates, are however, much higher, ranging between 44 million to 100 million. The Operations Research group (ORG), Baroda, an organisation involved with market and social research, through an all-India Child Labour Sample Survey commissioned by the Ministry of Labour in 1980-81, put the figure of working children at 44 million. It defined a working child as “that child who was enumerated during the survey as a child falling within the five to fifteen age bracket and who is at remunerative work, may be paid or unpaid, and busy any hour of the day within or outside the family”.

Concern for Working Children a voluntary organisation in Bangalore, estimated about 100 million children as workers.

The National Consultation, organised by the Indian Council for Child Welfare, in collaboration with the UNICEF, suggested that all children who do not go to school should be considered as working children. On this basis the figure would be 90 million.

According to the Bandhua Mukti Morcha Chairperson, Swami Agnivesh, the country has about 65 million child labourers.

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Some of these estimates may be highly exaggerated, as they seem to be affected by a deep concern for the child labour. However, the fact remains that there are a large number of child workers in India. At the same time trend of entry of children into the labour force is increasing and the age of entry into the labour force is falling. Sexual exploitation of children is also increasing phenomenally.

These working children spend most of their lives employed in unskilled occupations in dangerous conditions, abused and often in bondage. They work for long hours for minimal or no pay.

2. Sectors of the Economy that Employ Child Labourers

Children are employed in almost every aspect of human work and life. Generally, they are employed in agricultural sector, helping in agricultural operations like sowing, weeding, harvesting and threshing. According to Dube, in rural areas when a boy reaches the age of 10, he is expected to know how to handle a wooden plough, reap the harvest, cut and bring the fuel from forest, and sell and purchase articles in the market. Similarly, a girl of that age is expected to know how to handle a wooden plough, reap the harvest, cut and bring the fuel from the forest, and sell and purchase articles in the market. Similarly, a girl of that age is expected to be proficient in weeding paddy fields, harvesting, cooking meals, fetching water, taking care of her youngsters, sweeping and washing the house, etc. a tribal boy begins taking the cattle out for grazing by the time he is 6-7 years old. He also participates in the food gathering activities and learns how to hunt animals and catch fish.

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In urban areas, children are engaged in more diversified activities such as loading unloading, hawking, looking after parked vehicles, rag-picking, shoe-shining. Besides, they are also employed as helpers in tea shops and auto-repair shops or are engaged as domestic servants. They are employed in house and road construction works, brick-kilns, stone breaking, etc.

Few occupations, such as domestic services, street trades, jobs in the hotels, restaurants and various other shops are common for children everywhere.

Child labourers are also engaged in small enterprises of the informal sector, which use indigenous technology and are relatively labour intensive; where workers skill can be acquired outside the schooling system. According to the Labour Bureaus Report\(^8\), children are entrusted with light work in plantations of tea or coffee, such as weeding, manuring, care of nurseries, harvesting, plucking of tea leaves and picking coffee, etc. in bidi industry, they roll the bidies and assist the adult workers. In handloom and carpet weaving, children help the weavers by working in the middle of the loom. In the glass bangle industry, children are employed for doing light duties in the process of manufacturing bangles or assisting the adult workers as helpers. In factories, they are usually employed in packing, pasting, labelling, etc. They also work in mica factories, wood and cork, furniture and fixtures, printing, publishing and allied traders, leather and leather products, rubber and rubber products, machinery, transport equipment and personal services like laundries, dying and cleaning.

They are also employed in some specific industries, which emerge at some specific locales due to socio-economic and geographical conditions. Thousands of children work in the carpet weaving factories of Kashmir, Mirzapur-Bhadohi, lead mines of Madhya Pradesh, printing presses and match box units of Tamil Nadu, handloom centres and garages of Maharashtra, tea and coffee plantations in the south and north-eastern parts of the country.

3. Causes of Child Labour

Child labour is the cumulative effect of a number of factors. Poverty is widely recognised as one of the main causes of child labour, since children are often required to make significant monetary or labour contributions to their families- contributions that may be critical for family survival. Poverty also hinders school attendance because of costs associated with schooling: both direct costs such as costs of books, uniform, etc., as well as opportunity costs such as lost income. Indeed, most of the child labourers belong to poor, landless and semi-landless families, whose income is otherwise, insufficient to keep the family alive.

According to a study, 92 million out of 228 million of India children are in the families below poverty line. This is because of the iniquitous distribution of land. According to the Government of India Report on Child Labour, the lower 50 percent households own only 4 percent of the land. In a study of child labour in Kashmir, Ali noted that 97 percent of children came to carpet weaving in Kashmir due to poverty. Extreme poverty forces people to take loans by pledging their young children who work with the masters for very low or no wages till the loan is paid. The social customs and obligations like births, marriages, death in the

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families and drinking habits play an important role in compelling the poor to resort to borrowing. Indebtedness becomes an economic inevitability and child labour and exploitation a way of life to many of them. In a study of the Sivakasi match factory, M.N. Kulkarni reported that the “child in ‘womb’ is pledged to the factory and consumption and maternity loans are obtained on the undertaking that the child born, girl or boy, would work for the factory”.

Social forces such as their low-birth seal the fate of many child labourers. The Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other backward classes are the main victims of the child labour problem. In a study of Surat textile industry, U.C. Sahoo noted that 86 percent of child workers belonged to Backward Castes while it was negligible for the upper caste group.

Demographic factors like size of the family also compels children to participate in the labour force. The larger the size of the families that are poor, greater is the tendency of seeking employment for younger people for their own maintenance as well as that of the families.

The problem also persists because employers prefer children to adults for various reasons. Children are more amenable to discipline and control. They can be coaxed, admonished, pulled up and punished for defaults without jeopardising relations. Children are not organised on lines of trade unions which can fight for their rights, not unionised and thus are paid a minimum wage to work for long hours. Children are paid substantially lower wages than their adult counterparts on the pleas that

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they are less efficient, their requirements are less and they are learning
the job. This keeps the cost of production low.

'Sometimes, even the poor parents want their children to work, as
they perceive several advantages in child's taking up a job. They feel that
the job disciplines them, terminates their dependency protects them
against the infection of delinquent culture.14

'Absence of compulsory education is another major factor behind
prevalence of the practice of engaging children to work. Many children
are forced to stay at home because their parents cannot afford the
prescribed minima of uniform, books and stationery, etc. Besides, in the
remote areas of the countryside, schooling facilities are scarce and
inaccessible.'

'Unemployment is also a strong deterrent and disincentive to the
weaker sections in putting their children to schools. In our country, the
agricultural workers are engaged maximum for 290 days in different
agricultural and allied works, and are idle for the remaining period,
which compels them to engage their children for small sums. Also the
increasing volume of unemployment among the educated youth erodes
faith in the value of education.

'City-ward migration is yet another factor. The progressive
mechanisation of agriculture has lead to the squeezing of farmlands out
of this sector, thus forcing people to migrate to cities. Migrant children
account for around 20 per cent in urban areas.15 They come to urban
areas to avoid economic helplessness and poverty at their villages. Field
studies show that the migrant conditions encourage child employment.'

14 ibid. p. 10.
Inadequate legislation coupled with its insufficient enforcement, is also responsible for the continuation of child labour. The employees succeed in the evasion of the existing laws for the protection of children due to inadequate inspection machinery evolved by the State.

The prevalence of child labour is also blamed on the State’s failure to spread the social safety net and the administrative machinery. The absence of social security measures compels some children to work consequent upon the death of their parents/guardians. Children, who leave their homes due to ill treatment of their relatives like drunkard father, step-mother/father, etc., have to join the labour market in the absence of child welfare programmes.

4. Consequences of Child Labour on Child Labourers

The problem of child labour involves various far-reaching socio-economic consequences. It deprives the children of the opportunity for education, play and recreation, stunts their physical growth and their development for adult responsibilities. Child labour not only disfavours general physical growth, but also leads to defects and ailments. Different types of labour produce different kinds of ill effects. Though some industries are intrinsically hazardous, in many cases, an industry may not be intrinsically hazardous, but it becomes so because of lack of precautions or because no care is taken of the surroundings.

The health hazards in some of the industries are summarised in the Table 1.2.
Table 1.2

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Health Hazards</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Bidi Industry</td>
<td>Chronic Bronchitis &amp; T.B.</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Glass Industry</td>
<td>Asthma, T.B., and Eye defects, Bronchitis</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Handloom Industry</td>
<td>Asthma, T.B.</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Zari &amp; Embroidery</td>
<td>Eye defects</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Gem Cutting and Diamond Cutting</td>
<td>Eye defects</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>Stunts growth</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>Rag Picking</td>
<td>Tetanus, Skin diseases</td>
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<td>8.</td>
<td>Pottery</td>
<td>Asthma, Bronchitis, T.B.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Stone Quarries</td>
<td>Silicosis</td>
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The age of a child labourer, many a times, makes a job hazardous which is not so for adults. This includes occupations like domestic work, working in restaurants, where children are at the mercy of employers and consequently in a hazardous situation. The employer often pushes children beyond their physical capacity. This exploitation includes sexual abuse, which harms the psychological development of these children.

When children labour, besides health, their education also suffers. The future of a working child is endangered as he/she cannot go to school, or is bound to leave school before time, or is unable to coordinate the two activities. In most cases a working child lacks fundamental general and professional knowledge, which is required for normal mental and intellectual development and to prosper in the social and occupational fields.16


Child labour has an important economic consequence. The entrance of children into the labour market results in the maintenance of low wages for the labour force as a whole, and increases the adult
unemployment and under-employment. Child labour results in a permanently weakened and damaged labour force. Since it involves the use of labour at its point of lowest productivity, it is an inefficient utilisation of labour force.

Certain social implications follow from the economic effects of child labour. The adult unemployment leads to iniquitous distribution of income, which in turn leads to labour displacement, migration, the break-up of family and kinship bonds and competition for survival. In the external work or jobs accomplished in the streets the child is exposed to social perils and even crime, such as drugs and prostitution. Thus, child labour is economically unsound, psychologically disastrous, and physically as well as morally dangerous and harmful.

5. International and National Efforts to Tackle Child Labour

5.1 International Efforts

Until recently, child labour was not an issue of major concern, at either the national or the international level. The problem itself was viewed with a mixture of indifference, apathy and even cynicism. It was so widely practised that many accepted it as part of the national order of things. For others, child labour was equated with child work, excused with the argument that work is good for children and a means of helping families. This is no longer the case. Today, child labour is one of the dominant issues of our time. It has now shot to the top of the global agenda and consumer concerns in both developing and industrialised countries. Corporations are reacting to consumer and other pressure in rich countries demanding corporate responsibility from manufacturers to respect human rights, including the ILO's Conventions on worker's rights and child labour. World-renowned manufacturers such as Levi Strauss,
Reebok, Sears and others in the sporting goods industry are now looking into the conditions under which their products are being produced.

At the international level, there has been considerable discussion as to whether global competition rules should require the implementation of certain basic international labour standards, including the progressive elimination of child labour. But there has been wide agreement on the need for intensified action against child labour with an immediate attack on the worst abuses. This change in attitude has led to some remarkable changes in the behaviour of the major actors, particularly governments. Many governments, such as Brazil, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, United Republic of Tanzania, Thailand and Zimbabwe have embarked on a review and updating of national legislation on child labour and adopted practical policies and programmes on child labour. The ILO's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) is now operational in more than 25 countries. More than 100 countries have ratified one or more of the International Labour Conventions, which provide protection for child workers in specific occupations or sectors. Today a large number of both industrialised and developed countries have adopted child labour legislation that, on the whole, is progressive and reasonably close to international standards. While many improvements remain to be made, a legal foundation has for the most part already been laid.

The most important developments made towards tackling the issue of child labour in the last few years can be summarised as follows:

1. The media seems to be paying increasing attention to child labour. This enhances the public debate and clearly places the issue on the
international policy agenda and on the agendas of individual countries and governments.

2. Greater public attention, as well as, increased efforts by donor agencies and governments to contribute to workable solutions, has encouraged more NGOs to pay attention and dedicate resources to this issue. In addition, many more studies on child labour are being conducted. On a community level, more local schools have been built for working children, more awareness campaigns are being launched on the hazards of child labour and there is more consultation and coordination among local NGOs to combat child labour.

3. International organisations with expertise in children's issues and labour matters have expanded their commitment and the number of efforts/projects to eliminate the exploitation of child labour. They have forged innovative partnerships between governments, NGOs, the private sector and local communities all pre-requisites to accomplishing the goal of eliminating child labour.

   The ILO's International Programme on Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) is now conducting hundreds of projects throughout the world. In addition to the German government, which provided the initial financing for IPEC, the US and numerous other nations now contribute funds to IPEC's programmes worldwide. UNICEF is developing and implementing educational strategies to get more children into quality primary school. UNICEF and ILO have drafted a letter of intent that will provide a framework for cooperation between the two agencies in the areas of child labour policy development and research as well as technical cooperation at the country level.

4. Interest in child labour has spawned action by consumers of industry worldwide. Consumer groups in many countries actively disseminate information on products made by children under exploitative conditions. Many Multi-national Corporations are developing codes of conduct to prohibit the use of child labour as defined by ILO Convention 138.

5. There is a growing debate by many governments and in various international forums on the problems and solutions to the exploitation of child labour.

6. Additional governments are introducing legislation to make primary education compulsory. Others are raising the number of years
children are required to attend school or the minimum age for compulsory education.

5.2 National Efforts

India has a long history of legal protection given to the working children. Although, child labour is not banned in toto in India, and nowhere is there an outright ban on the employment of children under a certain age, there does exist an outright prohibition of bonded labour and employment of children in hazardous industries. However, there are areas where no legislation exists such as in the unorganised sector-agriculture, domestic services and the urban informal sectors, which place them at high risk of maltreatment, denial of basic human rights and lack of access to those who could help them.

There are both Central and State enactment on child labour– the former covering mainly employment in industries and mining, and the latter covering shops and establishments. India has also signed some of the declarations and agreements prepared by the ILO. The Indian laws and the ILO conventions mainly deal with four matters– (i) minimum age for employment of children; (ii) medical examination of children; (iii) maximum number of hours of work; and (iv) prohibition of night work for children.

The Constitution contains provisions for protection of children from work, which is beyond their capacity, or involves long hours of work interfering with their education, recreation, rest and overall physical and mental development.

'Article 15 (3) of the Constitution empowers the state to make special provisions for women and children. Article 23 prohibits traffic in human brings and begar and other forms of forced labor. Article 24
provides categorically that "no child below the age of 14 years shall be employed to work in any factory or mine, or engaged in any other hazardous employment".

Apart from the fundamental rights related to children, certain directive principles in the Constitution direct the State policy and action in relation to child rights, including employment and education children. \textit{Clauses (e) and (f) of the Article 39} states that:

a) The tender age of children should not be abused and citizens should not be forced by economic necessity to enter avocations unsuited to their age and strength;

b) Children should be given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity and that childhood and youth would be protected against moral and material abandonment.

This article is substantiated by other articles such as \textit{Article 45}, which directs the State to ensure compulsory education for all children under fourteen years and \textit{Article 47} which requires the State to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people.

Protection is also available under various industrial acts and labour laws enacted from time to time. The provisions relating to the age for admission to employment, regulation of working hours and conditions of employment and appropriate penalties and sanctions for effective enforcement form part of all the relevant labour and industrial laws. Some of these laws are: The Employment of Children (Amendment) Act, 1949; The Plantation Labour Act, 1951; the Employment of Children (Amendment) act, 1951; The Mines Act, 1952; the Factories Amendment)

The most comprehensive of such laws is the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act of 1986, that prohibits the employment of children (5-14 years of age), in jobs that are hazardous to their lives and health. It also prohibits engaging children in night shifts, making them work in more than one shift, prevents their working near dangerous machinery, handling hazardous chemicals, etc. The working conditions of the employment of children are regulated in all occupations and processes where their employment is not prohibited. The Act also ensures that they have adequate hours of rest and holidays.

A number of other initiatives and programmes have been undertaken during the last two decades, with the basic objective of dealing with the problem of child labourers. The formulation of a National Child Labour Policy, 1987, the enactment of the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986, the setting up of a Task Force on child and labour and the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child have all formed a part of this process. The Government is also implementing an ILO programme entitled “International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour”. The programme aims at pooling together the resources of the government and those of the non-governmental organisations in an attempt to encourage, promote and support action-oriented programme.

The most significant step in the recent past (December 10, 1996) was the Supreme Court Judgement, which fulfilled the legislative
intention of the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986. It aimed at abolishing child labour in occupations specified in the Act as well as implementation of free and compulsory education for all children until they attain the age of fourteen. For every child employed in the contravention of the Act, the court has stipulated that the employer must pay a sum of Rs. 20,000 into a “Child Labour Rehabilitation-cum-Welfare Fund”, which would form a corpus whose interest would be used for the child concerned. Besides this, a job in lieu of the child’s would be offered to an adult member of the child’s family. The government is also obliged to contribute Rs. 5000 to the fund if it is unable to provide alternative employment to an adult in the child’s family.

In spite of the several of laws on child labour and the various measures initiated to curb the evil, child labour is prevalent on a large scale in India. The fault lies partly with the loopholes and weak enforcement of laws and partly with the belief systems of the society, which lead to an indifference towards child labour problem on the part of the Government, employers and parents.

One of the major criticisms of the legislation on child labour is the lack of uniformity. These laws do not conform to a single agreed minimum age. The minimum age differs from Act to Act, state to state and industry to industry. This is true not only of the definition of minimum age, but also the working hours, rest periods, night employment.

Protective labour legislations do not cover girls. The work in domestic sectors, and other non-industrial sectors where majority of children work, are excluded from labour legislations.
One major loophole in the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986, the most comprehensive Act to date, is that it exempts child labour in family enterprises from the ban. Thus, it permits employment of children in hazardous processes if a process is undertaken by any of their family members. (Here, “family”, in relation to an occupier, means the individual, the wife or husband as the case may be of such individual, and their children, brother or sister of such individual). 18 That is why many clever employers have installed looms for carpet weaving in children’s homes. Bidis, too, are largely manufactured this way. Also, since people have become aware of this law, they freely claim parenthood of the children they employ.

Weak enforcement machinery in the form of small inspectorate of laws related to child labour is another factor for the failure to implement such laws. The penalties are very light for transgression of laws. The offenders are not worried about deterrent punishment because they can always bribe the Labour Commissioners. When the employers get advance notice of the visit of commissioners, they entrust ‘safe’ jobs to the children. The law is also evaded thus to non-awareness of the existence of laws, and illiteracy, of the people. Added to all this is the fact that the trade unions are not interested in protecting the interest of the child. Thus, the peculiar socio-economic environment prevailing in the country makes it difficult to eradicate child labour. Thus, there is a need for a total ban on child labour.

6. NGO Intervention in Dealing with Child Labour

The non-progress in the direction of achieving success to solve the problem of child labour, leads one to look towards NGOs for action.

NGOs have a vital role in this field since they have flexibility, ingenuity and conviction to identify needs and gaps in public action and to initiate and implement cost-effective programmes for the protection and assistance of the working children. Regarding the need to involve communities, NGOs have an especially important role to play. They often have detailed knowledge of local conditions and are closer to community members than government institutions. NGOs can also be more creative. They often invent and implement new approaches to protect children.

Key areas where NGOs can demonstrate effective strategies include removal and rehabilitation of child labourers, public awareness and sensitisation, social mobilisation and environment building. During the last two decades, NGOs have played a strong advocacy role in campaigning against child labour and providing services to working children and their families. Experiences have shown that projects and programmes encounter problems associated with the reality faced by child labourers' families – in particular, poverty affects the success. This is why the need to replace the child's income or labour contribution to the household and to encourage attendance in school of poor children by providing economic incentives, either in cash or in-kind. The economic incentive programmes being implemented by the NGOs may involve the following activities:

- Income-generating activities for families or communities

- Income-generating activities for children ("safe work"), apprenticeships, informal schooling or schoolwork combinations

- Increasing school attendance by providing food, cash stipends, clothing, books, etc., waiver of school fees

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Income grants to children or families with the specific purpose to eliminate or reduce child labour

Non-formal education (NFE), recreation, camps etc. that break the cycle of children

Other community development programmes (awareness-raising etc.)

### 6.1 Income-generation for Families and Communities and Other Community Development Programmes

Income-generating activities for families and communities include support for micro-enterprises, credit schemes and employment training for mothers and/or fathers. They are designed to improve the economic situation of families and communities, and thus make child labour less necessary. Regarding cost-effectiveness, income-generating activities are not designed to be welfare schemes but to give families tools to escape poverty. Therefore, when successful, they have a sustainable impact on a whole group of people, not only the targeted child.

### 6.2 Apprenticeships, Imparting Vocational Training in Schools, School and Work Combination and “Safe-work”

These different approaches for children are all practical, emphasizing skill acquisition and the need for children to obtain practical working experience. However, these are not suitable for very young children, but they may provide a relevant option for older children.

As a mechanism to assist working children, apprenticeships have been widely used, both positively and negatively. They can be merely additional mechanisms to exploit children, in which employers provide training for children, but often without payment. Apprenticeships have also been used as a mechanism for employing underage children. The use of apprenticeships in a controlled situation, however, can provide a very positive mechanism for teaching literacy and job skills.
In the school-work combinations programme, children go to school for example in the morning, and work during the afternoon to earn some money. School can have flexible hours to enable children to work and include, for example, vocational training components in the curriculum to support the work.

Income-generating activities for children which provide “safe work” as a transition to education have received more interest lately because it has become better recognised that child labour cannot be eliminated quickly. Therefore, an improvement in the working conditions of children is increasingly being seen as one step in the right direction. However, this approach in a way promotes child labour.

6.3 Alternative Approaches: NFE, Recreation Activities and Residential Camps

These alternative approaches are designed to break the cycle of child labour and help and ensure entry into school. These activities do not replace any income children forego, but they have the purpose of persuading children to reduce their hours of work or to leave their work altogether. These types of activities are frequently implemented in combination with other activities, such as sponsorship in the form of payments in-kind to increase school attendance, non-formal education, motivation camps and recreation. Sponsorship enables child labourers to attend school, and non-formal education, motivation and recreation activities motivates children to leave jobs, as has happened in the Ranga Reddy District of Andhra Pradesh due to the efforts of MV Foundation, discussed later in this chapter. However, follow-up activities (taking stalk of the situation to see to it that the children who left their jobs after residential camps, have not taken up the jobs again) are a must in such programmes.
With regard to the Indian NGOs with concern towards the problem of children, they may be, and in some cases are, involved in the following tasks:

1. Keeping vigil over the enforcement machinery at all levels in order to ensure that the child labour laws are applied in their true spirit.

2. Conducting survey in their areas of operation to identify child labourers and working conditions and to evolve suitable and innovative programmes for health, nutrition, education, recreation, etc. geared towards the overall development and growth of working children.

3. Building pressure through the press and media regarding the employment of children in hazardous occupations.

4. Drawing public attention to the tragic practice of child labour.

5. Participating in government programmes of child workers.

6. Monitoring programmes in their areas of programmes in their areas of operation to ensure that the benefit actually reach child workers and are not cornered by vested interest.

NGOs have already started some interesting and useful programmes for working children in non-formal education, vocational training, recreational facilities, health and nutrition, etc., and have also set up examples for others to follow.

Here, mention may be made of the effort made by the M.V. Foundation, an NGO in Andhra Pradesh. It provides replicable model to be followed by the government and other non-governmental agencies. It demonstrates that social mobilisation can achieve the desired results. Parents do not want to exploit their children. Even the poorest want their children to be educated, to better themselves and escape from the poverty stranglehold that they are trapped in. It also help in exploding
the myth that poverty is the principal cause of child labour and that child labour cannot be totally eliminated till poverty is rooted out.  

The M. V. Foundation (MVF), in the rural areas of Ranga Reddy District in Andhra Pradesh, is working towards the abolition of child labour through making mainstream education accessible to the children, since 1991. Creating the right climate to achieve their goals, MVF began by building up close contacts and relationships with the immediate community: parents and schools teachers, employers and administrative officials, women’s groups and local youths. Involving them in each process and drawing on their interest and goodwill, a major breakthrough was made. From one unit- Shankarpally Mandal MVF have now extended its activities to 10 district administrative units covering over 400 villages. Today, 80 per cent of all children in the age range of 5-8 are in school in these villages. Sixty villages have been made completely child labour free, with every child in the age group of 5-14 in school. And 30,000 working children, including 3000 bonded children and 5000 adolescent girls are receiving education.  

The process of social mobilisation began in 1992, drawing on the support of the local people, and with the organisation of education orientation camps, bridge camps and night schools. Most importantly, it identified child labourers and established direct contact with each child through local youth volunteers.

The night schools in fact played the role of identifying the hard-core child labourers and creating the right atmosphere for discussing the issue of child labour and education. Simultaneously, there were village-

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level meetings, public meetings, poster campaigns and cycle rallies by the youth to build an atmosphere where the parents would feel confident about sending their children to school and where landlords were persuaded to reconcile themselves to the fact that children would no longer be available as bonded labourers. This activity was also given an organisational form by forming parent-teacher associations at the village-level and mandai education committees at the mandal level.

The mechanism used by the MVF has been to enroll the children in the 5-8 years age group into regular government schools with the help of youth volunteers and provide for an additional community teacher to work in government schools along with government teachers. The community sponsors the MVF teacher and the community pays 50 per cent of the salary. The 9-14 age-group children are identified through the night schools and admitted into government-run residential hostels, wherever these exist. Through the bridge courses, MVF is able to prepare children of different age groups through an accelerated learning programme to enter the formal school system. The bridge courses have been important in that these children need to be away from home in an environment which is conducive to study, when staying at home could mean slipping back into doing odd jobs and not concentrating on their studies. Parents' committees have been set up to monitor the running of both the village schools and the hostels.

From the start, the strategy of MVF has been to put the elimination of child labour on a non-negotiable agenda. It has never used the incentive of income-generation activities for parents, midday meals, supplementary incomes or stipends to wean the children away from work. It has depended entirely on the community's change of attitude towards their children. Building up community-based initiatives and making the community responsible for the programme has established it
on a firm footing. The educational bureaucracy in other words the school authorities- is now accountable to the community. Protest marches, petitions to the education authorities demanding accountability from teachers, have resulted in strengthening community schools.

The success of MVF shows that if properly motivated, children are willing to go to school. It shows that by sustainable strategies and strengthening people's participation, communities can be mobilised to getting children out of work and into school. Most importantly, it demonstrates that child labour can be eliminated without the eradication of poverty. And thus, it is not just the success story of an NGO but also the role model, upon which future strategies may be based. However, it is unfortunate that inspite of its success, its strategy has not been replicated at a wider scale in India, neither by the government nor by the NGOs.

The issue of child labour and solution to the issue, like any other developmental issue, depends on mobilising the competencies of not only the governmental organisation but also private business and non-governmental organisations, in a complementary way. The government, business and voluntary sectors represent three mutually dependent yet in some ways opposing, forces within society. Government is society's instrument for maintaining stability and for reallocating resources from one group to another for public purposes. Business is its instrument for mobilising private entrepreneurship to produce and distribute goods and services in response to market forces. Voluntary action is its instrument for insuring a constant process of self-assessment, experimentation and change in accordance with the evolving values of people. The society that lacks any on the three is a deeply troubled society. The major international assistance agencies have demanded that assisted countries stop using the power of the state to constrain the essential development
function of the business sector. In this context, David C. Korten\textsuperscript{22} has rightly argued that, it is equally important that they, (international assistance agencies), demand an end to the use of state power to constrain the development and effective functioning of the NGO sector in its unique role as social and political catalyst.