Chapter V

Profile of Case Study Districts
CHAPTER V

Child Labour In Export Sector: A Profile Of Case Study Area

5.1 Introduction

In Karnataka, children engage in a variety of economic activities both in the organized as well as the unorganized sectors; the latter accounts for more than 85% of the child labour force in the state. Children are predominantly found working in agriculture and allied activities, small scale industries, construction, hotels and shops, mechanic shops, domestic labour, beedi and agarbathi rolling, cotton cultivation, quarrying processes, fish processing, sericulture, and brick making. Children are involved in almost every possible kind of work in the unorganized sector. Girls work at home as domestic help, engaging in chores such as cleaning, cooking, and sibling/child care. Children are also engaged in non-domestic, non-monetary work such as the collection of fuel, fodder or water and other farm related work.

The city of Bangalore has gained prominence as the Silicon Valley of India. The city has grown manifold in every sphere of economic activity. The economic growth brought about informalization and urban poverty, as there was migration of people from rural areas to the city in search of employment. The migrants as well
as the urban poor could not cope up with the high cost of living in the city as a result of globalization. This forced the parents to send their children to work so as to supplement the family income. Children were found to be working in hotels, restaurants, eateries, workshops, garages, small scale and cottages (Home based) industries. These home based industries consisted of beedi rolling and agarbathi making, both being export industries.

Urbanization has also led to deceptive child labour, especially in the garment sector where majority of the employees are women. Though the child labor is not seen in forefront, most of the work is taken home where the work is done by children. It is very difficult to get the statistics of child labour as the employers don’t reveal it as it is against the law, for example Floriculture around Bangalore city is a thriving business and it is an export sector but one cannot get the statistics as most of the children who are working there, their age is manipulated just to escape the law, so one can see that urbanization of Bangalore has also led to the inducement of child labor.

The chapter intends to give a brief profile of Bangalore Urban and Rural Districts, comprising of Ramanagaram, Bidadi and Magadi Taluks, to study the prevalence of child labour in export related activities.
5.2 Bangalore Urban

Bangalore Urban is a district of the Indian state of Karnataka. Bangalore Urban district came into being in 1986, with the partition of the erstwhile Bangalore district.

Bangalore occupies a prominent place in information and communication technology (ICT) activities at the national and global levels. In particular, exports and inflow of foreign investment in ICT-related activities have shown remarkable performance. This has been contributory to economic globalization (or globalization, in brief, throughout) of Bangalore in terms of increasing the degree of openness to trade in goods and services and internationalization of capital. Since 1991, India’s economic reforms in external sector have contributed to this globalization by liberalization of (a) foreign trade in goods and services and (b) inflow of private foreign capital into manufacturing, infrastructure services’ sectors. In addition, India’s founder-membership to World Trade Organization (WTO) has intensified the pace of globalization by further freeing trade in goods and services, and trade-related investment measures.

This is the most advanced district in Karnataka. It has a population of 6,537,124 of which 88.11% is urban as of 2011(from the 2011 census report).
Bengaluru (formerly known as Bangalore) is the capital of the Indian state of Karnataka. Located on the Deccan Plateau in the south-eastern part of Karnataka, Bangalore has an estimated metropolitan population of 65 lakh (6.5 million), making it India’s third most populous city and Fifth-largest metropolitan area.

It is home to numerous public sectors such as heavy industries, software companies, aerospace, telecommunications, machine tools, and heavy equipment and defense establishments. Bangalore is known to be the *Silicon Valley of India* due to its pre-eminent position as the leading contributor to India’s IT industry. Bangalore has developed into one of India’s major economic hubs and was rated by CNN as the “best place to do business” in the world.

**Poverty Areas and the Informal Economy:**

The city’s informal sector of the economy is growing at high rates. It increased the home-based economic activities, a trend that has also been observed in recent years. Since then, given the almost continuous boom-like growth of the city, poverty areas have become not only sites of residence but also areas to which a large number of home-based economic activities are being relocated. The production of home-made food items, piece-goods, tailoring, agarbathi and beedi rolling, etc. now take place in the urban poverty zones. As a
result, urban poverty areas are emerging as multi-activity zones which not only house the laboring classes and an army of service workers but are also centers of the informal economy and sites of contract production.

Before becoming famous as the country’s IT capital, Bangalore’s claim to fame was as the number one producer of agarbathis in India. No longer, according to Mr. Rohit Seth, joint secretary of Fragrances and Flavours Association of India, the city is losing out due to a neglected labour crisis. This he said while addressing the association’s 20th seminar (28th January 2011) - Future of Fragrance and Flavour Industry.

Bangalore has been the citadel of the agarbathi industry, introducing the concept of branding in this largely unorganized sector. The city alone accounts for about 60 percent of the Rs. 800 crore industries. The woe of this industry is that they are now facing unaffordable labour as they are losing it to the textile industry where they are better paid. As most of the agarbathi making is a cottage industry, most of the owners cannot afford to pay high salaries as compared to the textiles. This in turn leads to more children being employed, but there is no official figure as such.

A sample of 33 children was chosen for primary data in the slum of Azad Nagar in Bangalore city. Children roll agarbathis or incense sticks for domestic
and export markets. They work in unhygienic conditions with no proper ventilation and lighting, many of the children complained about breathing and skin disease related problems. Urban growth, poverty and educational deprivation have led to an increase in child labour.

While the presence of children in a range of occupations and services has increased, there are no accurate surveys or data about the actual number of children and conditions of labour in the city. While data from the State’s Labour Office indicates an increase in the number of children employed in hazardous and non-hazardous industries, the actual numbers and figures are not reliable.

5.3 Bangalore Rural District

Bangalore Rural district enjoys a captivating landscape because of the unevenness of its topography. A series of hills dot its landscape, most of them enhancing settings blessed with temples on their tops, which are centers of pilgrimage too. Bangalore Rural District is essentially an agricultural district with ample scope for industrialization, dairy, development and sericulture.

Bangalore Rural District came into being on 15\textsuperscript{th} August 1986 Bangalore Rural District is located in the South-Eastern corner of Karnataka State. Spanning a geographical area of 5,814 sq. km, 3\% of the area of the state, the district lies stretched between the latitudinal parallels of 12 15’ N and 13 35’ N on the one
hand and the longitudinal meridians of 77° 05’ E and 78° E on the other. The new district physically almost surrounds the Bangalore (Urban) District except having an opening in the South-East, the Anekal Taluk, the connecting area between Kanakapura and Hosakote Taluks, being a part of the Bangalore (urban) district and the headquarters of the new district is at Bangalore itself.

The new district forms a part of Deccan Plateau and the rock formation belong to the category of peninsular gneiss. The Granite Gneisses that abound in Kanakapura, Nelamangala, Devanahalli and Ramanagaram Taluks have created captivating landscapes all along and they have provided jobs to hundreds engaged in quarrying.

Animal Husbandry is being practiced since generations as an adjunct to agriculture. A high degree of urbanization of Bangalore City has enhanced the economic importance of dairying, poultry keeping and horticulture which provide livelihood to a very large section. Considerable numbers are also engaged in raising sheep for wool as well. Channapatna, Ramanagaram, Vijayapura and Kanakapura have been the most notable centers of Sericulture and Doddaballapura and Devanahalli are known for its prosperous weaving Industry. The toys of Channapatna, lacquer-ware and the pottery objects of Ramanagaram are the
outcome of flourishing crafts. Considerable number of people is engaged in rolling beedis and Agarbathis.

Bangalore Rural District consists of taluks namely: Magadi, Ramanagara, Channapatna.

The main industrial activity of the taluk is silk twisting and other activity includes, power looms, bamboo works, pottery works, stone cutting, carpentry works and agarbathi manufacturing. Magadi, situated in a valley (51 km from Bangalore) is to be reached by a serpentine ghat road crossing the chain of hills running from Shivaganga through Magadi and Savanadurga. The place name has been referred as Magadi in a record dated 1524 from the same place. There is a tradition that Magadi was founded by a Chola king, it is also described as associated with Sage Mandya. Under Achuta Raya one Samanta Raya is said to have been appointed to manage the district and he is also said to have fortified the tall hill of Savandurga, in return for which that part of the country was granted to him as a Jagir.

5.4 Child Labour scenario in Magadi Taluk

Magadi town is tucked away amongst the low-lying hills about 50 kms south of Bangalore city, the capital of Karnataka, in south India. It is the taluk headquarters of 520 villages in Magadi Taluk of Bangalore Rural district. Magadi
taluk itself, with a population of about 200,000, is one of the eight taluks of Bangalore Rural District.

The main occupation of the people is agriculture, but the taluk’s 80 square kilometers lie in a rain-shadow area. Due to the hilly terrain, inadequate irrigation facilities, irregular rains and lack of planning, agriculture is a strain on the farmers. While Bangalore is known the world over as one of the drivers of the Indian economy, much of this progress has bypassed Magadi.

Magadi taluk falls in the sericulture belt of Karnataka, which contributes over 80% of Karnataka’s silk production. The area was declared as ‘silk seeding land’ and it became famous for its twisting units, which started as early as 1947. 1990 saw a big boom in the number of these units. The work process is highly labour intensive and consequently, to enhance profits, the employers decided to employ children. The prevailing socio-economic conditions, unproductive agriculture work, absence of any other industry, low wages and the lack of focus on children’s rights to education and development, led to families exploiting their own children.

The GoK – UNICEF Partnership

By 1998, the Department of Labour, government of Karnataka and UNICEF, had together initiated several activities towards the sensitization of local officials
and others on the child labour issue, including the development of training and communication material like T.V. spots and a short film. The then Labour Commissioner was enthusiastic about initiating action in Magadi, through a community-based approach. A team of senior officials including the then Principal Secretary (Labour), Commissioner (Labour) and Commissioner (Education) visited the community based child labour projects. It was decided that while enforcement was important, it had to be supported by social norm within communities on child labour issues.

Initially, raids were conducted on the silk production units, sending a very strong message to employers. It was carried out on a ‘need to know basis. The local people could not estimate the timings of these raids, and unit owners were unable to access this information. The Labour Commissioner personally supervised the raids, and organized regular reviews on the enforcement. While the unit owners found new ways of evasion – including having multiple doors for the children to be spirited away in case of raids. Members of the National Human Rights Commission also visited Magadi. The community was informed about the ill effects of child labour. The NGOs worked at the local level, with advocacy and lobbying taken up at the state level. Through concerted action, video recording of the raids, and placing the children in state homes, the administrative machinery was able to destroy the nucleus of this practice.
However, the raids revealed that unit owners included gram panchayat members – elected members of the local government – along with school teachers and other local leaders; in the community perceived child labour to be the natural order of things, and no stigma was attached to the employers. Instead they often claimed the moral ground of being benefactors to needy families. In addition, the rehabilitation of children at state homes away from Magadi highlighted the need for a systematic programme intervention and an organized approach to the issue.

Convinced that only a comprehensive community-based approach would work to eradicate the practice of child labour, the Magadi project came into being in 1999, with the Department of Labour and UNICEF entering into a partnership. The project focused on drawing upon the strength of local NGOs, Panchayats and children and other sectors with an emphasis on prevention.

**Initiatives on child labour in the silk industry**

There have been plenty of initiatives when it comes to rescuing child labourers employed in the silk industry in the Magadi belt of the state.
• One such is the Magadi Child Labour Elimination Project, which worked towards withdrawing children employed in sericulture-related activities in Bangalore rural areas.

• According to a report entitled United Nations in India, sponsored by the United Nations Inter-Agency Working Group on Child Labour, the silk twisting units have been an alternative employment option because of poor irrigation facilities for agriculture and sericulture cultivation.

• The Magadi Makkala Dhwani (MMD) or the Voice of Magadi children organized a people’s movement to eradicate child labour from these silk twisting units that are hazardous to the health and development of the children.

• The Magadi Project is a joint initiative of the Government of Karnataka, NGOs BOSCO, Chiguru, Vikasa and Sankalpa (representing the network MMD) and UNICEF to rehabilitate these working children and prevent fresh entrants to the work force in the taluk, covering directly over 125 villages and reaching out, through government support, to the surrounding 300 villages of Magadi.
• The focus of the Project was the withdrawal of children from the work situation; bringing them to school through Residential Transit Programme, addressing related services in terms of hostel; vocational training and sustaining the initiative through community based support groups as well as the local Government Task Force Committee.

• The project personnel and all local and district officials were oriented and trained to undertake the specific strategies in the field areas. Expertise from government organizations was utilized for capacity building measures of project and field staff. Regular monitoring of project activities at state, taluk and field level enabled better programme management, resolve local issues and address specific policy interventions.

• The project developed effective partnerships with other stakeholders especially local NGOs, employers’ organizations, local communities, parents of the target groups especially Self Help groups.

• The Task Force Committee comprising local government officials, NGOs and people’s representatives played a major role in enforcement, and their objectives included the following:
➢ Identification and release of children employed in silk twisting activities and other hazardous occupations like construction work, brick making, etc.

➢ Rehabilitation of these released children though education strategy by inducting them into formal schools, further to Bridge program when required.

➢ Provide access to vocational and life skill training to older children in the 14+ age group to whom mainstreaming to formal school is not the appropriate intervention.

➢ Create sustainable social mobilization against practice of child labour through partnership approach with local community, employer, parent and local elected representatives.

➢ Organize community, women and adolescent girls as Self Help Groups to support education initiative at village level and protect child exploitation and abuse.
5.5 Ramanagaram: Child Labour Scenario

Ramanagaram taluk is situated in Bangalore rural district, but now after 2007 it has become a district by itself. It covers 62,930 hectares of geographical area and consists of four hoblies.

The taluk is potential in the areas of silk industry, general engineering Auto mobile engineering, Brick industry and artisans like carpentry, blacksmith and masonry are engaged in particular activity. Taluk has tourist places like Janapada loka, S.R.S. Betta.

RAMANAGARAM situated in a valley surrounded by (48 km from Bangalore) rocky hillocks is sub-divisional headquarters from 1884. It became a taluk headquarters in 1928, and the place was named Ramanagaram in 1949. It is the biggest cocoon marketing center now. It is spread on either banks of the Arkavathi and the old bridge connecting the town was built by Sir Barry Close, the Resident at the Royal Court of Mysore. Hence, the place was named as Closepet, as mentioned in a Persian as well as Kannada record, erected by Diwan Purnaiah in 1800. The township was also founded around the same time for greater security of the high road, which then passed through a wild forest route.

The silk industry in India has roots dating back to the Tippu era. Hyder Ali and Tippu Sultan were instrumental in bringing the 2000-year Chinese silk
tradition to Mysore. The two-century-old silk cottage industry has seven major production centers spread across Karnataka including Sidlagatha, Ramanagaram, Kollegal, Vijipura, Kokar, Chickballapura and Kanakapura and continue to create silken ripples in post-Independent India.

Ramanagaram is reputed to have one of the largest silk cocoon markets in the whole of South Asia. The industry, for centuries, has been using conventional methods popularly known as charkhas to generate mulberry silk which is yellow in colour. It is only in the recent past, that machines have been introduced. There has been improvement in the strength and quality of silk thread.

The introduction of Korean made automated multi-end machines in 2002-03 has resulted in the generation of superior white silk. It is estimated that there are nearly 3,000 licensed reelers in Ramanagaram alone, and only 600 are active reelers today. The year 2006-2007 generated 13,000 metric tons of silk which is the highest transaction that was ever made at the cocoon market till date.

At Ramanagaram, nearly 10,000 people are directly linked to the production and trade of silk. Last year, nearly 9,000 metric tons of Chinese silk flooded the Indian silk market, that too in Bangalore alone. This is because of the liberalized import policies of the government. Globalization and free trade have become major threats to the traditional cottage industry.
Nothing concrete has been implemented to improve the conditions of silk reelers and the silk industry. The industry, has for centuries, been using conventional methods popularly known as charkhas to generate mulberry silk which is yellow in colour.

Children work in the sericulture industry mostly on compulsion exerted by the parents who have taken an advance from the employers (reelers). The children are made to work as bonded labourers till the advance money is adjusted against the wages of children or till it is paid back.

The sample children were from Yarab Nagar which is one of the biggest slums in Ramnagaram town, situated close the railway station. Yarab Nagar forms part of the chain of slums in the Kothipura – Ammaalikere area of Ramnagaram. This together with the surrounding slums houses the maximum number of filature units in the town limits and also employs the highest number of children. The area thrives on a workforce of adults, youth and children alike, in the sericulture sector. Some of the women and young girl children are engaged in beedi-rolling within their homes.

**Occupational hazards of Child Labour in Sericulture Industry**

Children worked in the region’s sericulture industry as turners, helpers, pupae pickers, and cocoon cooks in the filature units. Besides, the working
condition also necessitated employment of children, as children stood cornered against the wall, and trapped under the machinery waiting for a ladleful of cocoons to be put aside by the reeler every now and then.

The hands that should have been playing with toys were killing silkworms while cooking the cocoons, inviting skin diseases. They were involved in unhygienic processes of mulberry cultivation, cocoon rearing, reeling, winding, doubling, twisting, and re-reeling in a cramped, damp, dark, poorly ventilated place with loud, music playing in the background. They inhale the vapours from the boiling cocoons and the diesel fumes from the machines which lead to respiratory diseases among the kids.

The NGOs experiences of working on the child labour issue in sericulture sector of the Bangalore rural since 1998 has made it realize that the issue has a link with intricate network of other socio-cultural aspects such as hostile school environment, parents’ priority of expenditure and the lifestyle which deprive the child of its childhood and fundamental rights.

Most of these children were forced to work here because their parents had borrowed loans (for marriages and festivities) from the employer. A documentary was made by the NGO MAYA. In its documentary film on child labour in the silk
industry, Indebalya (Childhood now), MAYA focuses on the inhuman working condition at the industry units.

The organization points out that children are involved in all stages of work in the units and the machines, such as reeling equipment, miniature wheels, cramped spaces and low bobbins used here are designed in such a way that a child can work on them.

The study points out that there is a need to ensure that the development projects bring not just money, but a quality change in the life of all including these young citizens working in the sericulture industry. In Bidadi taluk of Ramanagaram district children surveyed were involved in sericulture and helping their parents in beedi rolling.

**Chinese Silk Imports: A Cause for Concern**

Explains B C Kempe Gowda, Deputy Director, Government Cocoon Market, we should ban the import of Chinese silk to improve the silk industry in Karnataka. Habeebullah, a silk merchant from Kottipura locality of Ramanagaram says, “Liberalized policies have hurt the very essence of silk in Karnataka”.
Adds Gowda, while we liberalize our policies, we must protect the interest of reelers and bear in mind that it is a cottage industry in Karnataka and is the second largest labour-oriented industry after handicrafts in the state.

Some like Mohammed Muheed Pasha, President of the Ramanagaram Silk Reelers’ Industrial Co-operative Society Ltd. have lost all hopes. “We do not have any expectations from neither the government nor the sericulture ministry or any other individual. They have absolutely no concern for this dwindling cottage silk industry in the state”.

5.6 Channapatna:

Channapatna is one of the taluks in Bangalore Rural District. It is a home for wooden toys which is very famous both at national level and international level. It is one of the export activities of the state. Previously child labour was prevalent in this cottage industry but when the researcher went for survey and having met some members of an NGO MAYA Organic. It was found that the child labour has almost become negligent. So no statistics could be collected from this area. MAYA Organic is a livelihood development initiative that aims to create wealth and build capacities for artisans in the informal sector. It promotes worker-owned enterprises. This NGO which worked in the domain of child labour grew into a company that now sells goods under the brand name MO (Maya Organic).
With the initiative of this NGO empowering people in Lacaware sector, child labour has become negligible in this industry.

Table 5.1


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<th>Figures in numbers</th>
<th>Figures in %</th>
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<td>7591</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bangalore Rural</td>
<td>35000</td>
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<td>2633</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
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Figure 5.1


From the above figure it can be observed that from the 1991 census that in Bangalore Urban area the number of child labourers was 39000, in 1997 survey 7591 and in 2002 survey it was 1814. In Bangalore Rural there were 35,000 child labourers according to the 1991 census report, in 1997 survey 1948 and in 2002 survey the child labour increased to 2,633.
Figure 5.2

Percentage wise child labour prevalence in Bangalore Urban and Rural District

Figure 5.3

Census 1991

53% Bangalore Urban
47% Bangalore Rural

Figure 5.4

1997 survey

80% Bangalore Urban
20% Bangalore Rural

2002 survey

59% Bangalore Urban
41% Bangalore Rural
In the figures 5.2, 5.3 & 5.4 show the percentage prevalence of child labour in Bangalore Urban and Rural District. In 1991 the percentage of child labour was 53% in Bangalore Urban district and 47% in Bangalore Rural. In 1997 survey the prevalence of child labour was 80% in Bangalore Urban and 20% in Bangalore Rural and in 2002 it increased to 59% in Bangalore Rural and decreased to 41% in Bangalore Urban.

According to Human Development in Karnataka State – an inter district disparities – report 2005 the incidence of poverty in the state is somewhat higher than the national average. The expert group set up by planning commission estimated that in 1999-2000, 20.4 per cent of the population was living below the poverty line in Karnataka, compared to all India average of 26.10 percent (GOI-2002) planning commission.

However when only rural areas are considered, poverty ratio was lower in Karnataka. 17.38 per cent in comparison to 27.09 per cent at the all India level. Urban poverty appears to be particularly high in Karnataka.

Bangalore urban is being recognized as the new growth center in reforming Indian Economy. This brought about a rise in inequality in between the rich and the poor. Globalization has led to growth in informal sector, thus leading to increase in social and economic disparities which in turn have increased child labour in Bangalore urban.
The comparative position of child labour in Bangalore Urban and Rural reveals some interesting features. The Child Labour Census Survey Department of Labour Government of Karnataka [1991, 1997 and 2001) clearly shows that the magnitude of child labour in urban Bangalore is increasing, compared to rural. This takes us to four different understandings.

- Rural poverty ratio in Karnataka has come down to 17.38% in comparison to 27.09% at all India level (Government of India 2002, Planning Commission).
- Under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan the enrolment of school children has increased significantly in rural areas.
- As per the Harris-Todaro Model of Rural-Urban migration because of the availability of informal jobs and also future expectations, children also migrate to cities along with parents and get absorbed in outsourced supply chain activities.
- Further, Bangalore Urban, itself being a centre of wide variety of economic activities, offers lot of scope for the flourishing of deceptive child labour.
Summary

To sum up this chapter, a brief profile of Bangalore Urban and Rural districts, comprising of Ramanagaram, Bidadi and Magadi taluks have been looked into where child labour in export sector is prevalent. Children were found to be working in sericulture industry, Agarbathí making (incense sticks) and beedi rolling, most of the children were forced to work because their parents had borrowed loans from the employer. Children faced a lot of occupational hazards. As Bangalore urban has become a hub of economic activities, there is lot of scope for the flourishing of deceptive child labour. The local NGOs like BOSCO, Chiguru, Vikasa, Sankalpa and MAYA have done a lot rehabilitate the children working in these hazardous occupations.