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Child labour and child Issues in Maharashtra

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Introduction:-

Child labour is internationally recognized as a violation of children's rights and defined by Article 32 of the Convention on Rights of the Child (CRC), as "any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, spiritual, moral or social development". Having ratified the CRC in December 1992, India has made considerable progress towards addressing the issue of child labour in recent years with an overall decline by nearly half in the number of child labourers. According to the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), India, an estimated five million children were engaged in child labour in 2009-10 as compared to nine million in 2004-05. While this is a positive development, a significant proportion of children in India have yet to be granted their fundamental human rights. In line with the CRC, UNICEF aims to build a protective environment for children across several States in India.

The Project 'Promoting Protection and Education Rights of Children in Cotton Areas' is an initiative that was implemented in Gujarat, Maharashtra and Rajasthan over the period 2009-2013 to tackle the problem of children working in cotton fields. New Concept Information Systems (NCIS) has been commissioned by UNICEF to conduct an evaluation of this Project, which builds on the previous and ongoing IKEA Foundation support to the UNICEF Child Protection Programme.

Child labour in cotton fields is endemic in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. The use of child labour in cotton seed production especially for the purposes of cross-pollination is widespread in all the major cotton and cotton seed producing States of India. Gujarat, Maharashtra and Rajasthan have the highest proportion of children aged 5-14 years engaged in child labour in India.

Poverty and child labour are contemporary to each other. Since India has an agri based economy and since 70 per cent of the Indian population live in villages, therefore child labour is found mainly in this field. In poor families a large number of children in a family are considered to be an economic asset rather than a liability. The problem of child labour is existent not only in our country but all over the world. The latest statistics show that about 250 million child labours exist in the age group 5-14 all over the world. India alone accounts for the largest number of child labours¹⁾.

Objectives:-

1. To prevent the child labour in civil society
2. To advise the people for development of child sincerity.
3. To introduce children problems and Issues before government.
4. To interpret main reason of child in nation.

Reasons of Child Labour:-**Parent's Illiteracy:-**

Illiterate parents discourage children to attend schools because they lack the awareness of the merits of education. In an analysis made by Geetha (2005), it was found that there was a high incidence of illiteracy with around 50 per cent of them reporting lack of education. Lack of education may have also induced them to send their child to work.

A high degree of illiteracy is dominant in the research study area and parents also rigidly stood their ground of not wanting to educate their children. Most of the parents believe that like them, their children are born to work, and let them join school on and off, when children do not have much work on their hands. Also, they say that the children's income helps sustain a part of their livelihood. They don't even bother that initially, children earn low wages, because what matters is that the child earns, incomes will always rise.

Negligence of Parents Regarding the Ill Effects of Child Labour:-

Since parents don't consider child labour bad, hence, they can be directly held responsible for the ill effects suffered by them. Illiteracy prevents them from taking right decisions about their children. Because of excessive number of children, issues such as health, education, social activities etc. are not paid attention to.

Most of the parents interviewed did not agree with the notion that child labour has an adverse consequence on the child's future. By involving children into the labour force, they believe themselves to have done a wonderful job. Ultimately the child ends up earning, something which he could not do while in school.

Improper Implementation of Compulsory Primary Education

Although there is a free provision for education up to primary level, the schemes, however, are not properly implemented, hence, resulting in the improper education patterns of people. Education is a weapon which can be effectively used to tackle the social evil of child labour, but the primary schools fail in providing the kind of education which can brighten the future of the children. The kind of education provided in most educational institutions is of little relevance to the children and does not prepare them in any way for the challenges ahead.²⁾

Poor Education System:-

Poor education system along with the inaccessibility of schools plus an irrelevant and unattractive school syllabus, lack of skilled teachers will be taken up for discussion in this section. Accessibility of schools is important for the children of remote areas, usually they do not have conveyance means to reach school. Schools are far away from the research areas. Distances make schools unattractive for children as well as parents.

Extra curricular activities are almost non-existent in these primary schools and no due time and importance is given to sports and physical activity because of the lack of teachers of the subject. Primary schools should basically be clean and safe. In the area researched, most of the schools had concrete (pucca) buildings; the rest had semi pucca or raw (kuccha) buildings. Most of the schools in remote areas have only one or two rooms with open verandahs.³⁾

Basic amenities like toilets and water are not to found in the entire area. Students generally use nearby fields for toilets; and to drink water, they take permission to go home, and do not come back. Electricity is not present in the schools. Most of the schools almost have no seating arrangements, and students sit on the floors.

Hypothesis:-

1. Reasons of Child Labour.
2. Constitutional provision.
3. The National Policy.
4. Plan Strategy

Constitutional provision for child development:-

The Constitution of India provides that the State shall direct its policy towards ensuring “that children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity and that childhood and youth are protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment”¹. This Directive clearly positions children as deserving of the highest priority in national realization of the Fundamental Rights and the special provisions for those most vulnerable to discrimination and exclusion. This is India’s clear national mandate. for what must be done, through policy, law, planning, and practical programming, with conscious provision of the required resources of knowledge and skills, time and attention, material and financial support, and dedicated practical effort to reach all children, throughout their period of childhood.⁴⁾

The National Policy for Children 2013 reaffirms this as a pledge to every child. The National Plan of Action for Children 2016 flowing from National Policy for Children 2013 therefore stands as the country’s practical expression of commitment to national progress. This is a declaration of foundational investment. In setting out goals, strategies and actions for the coming years, the Government is carrying forward its dedicated effort to ensure a safe, dignified and fruitful life for all children.

The National Policy for Children, 2013

The National Policy for Children 2013 was adopted by the Government on 26th April, 2013. It adheres to the Constitutional mandate and guiding principles of UN CRC and reflects a paradigm shift from a “need-based” to a “rights-based” approach. It is based on the cardinal principles of right to life, survival and development, protection, non-discrimination, best interests of the child and respect for the views of the child.

The National Policy for Children 2013 recognizes that:

- A child is any person below the age of eighteen years;

- Childhood is an integral part of life with a value of its own;
- Children are not a homogenous group and their different needs need different responses, especially the multi-dimensional vulnerabilities experienced by children in different circumstances;
- A long-term, sustainable, multi-sectoral, integrated and inclusive approach is necessary for the overall and harmonious development and protection of children

This Policy is meant to guide and inform all laws, policies, plans and programmes affecting children. As children's needs are multi-sectoral and interconnected, and require collective action, the Policy aims for purposeful convergence and strong coordination across different sectors and levels of governance; active engagement and partnerships with all stakeholders; setting up of a comprehensive and reliable knowledge base; provision of adequate resources; and sensitization and capacity development of all those who work for and with children.⁵⁾

Plan Strategy:-

The State Plan of Operations (SPO) of Maharashtra is in line with the overall strategy of Result Based Management (RBM) adopted for the Master Plan of Operations (MPO), which is the National perspective plan of Unicef India. RBM is intended to serve as a blue print for managers to help them focus on measuring and reporting on outcomes throughout the life cycle of the policy, programme or initiative.

Separate log frame has also been developed defining the indicators means of verification and assumptions for achievements. The work plan will further break the activities into task assigning specific responsibility time frame and the budget.

1. Reproductive and Child Health will be implemented in the three BDCS districts of Nanded, Latur and Osmanabad. The Women's Right to Life and Health project will be an essential component. Community, especially women's, mobilization and their active participation in the planning, implementation and monitoring of the programmes will be the focus. Strengthening of the delivery system through training and capacity building as well as through supply of critical items will be part of the programme.

2. Child Development and Nutrition: The focus will be to build on the MCHN initiative by facilitating better planning and coordination among the ICDS and Health sectors. The focus will be largely in the eight districts of Marathwada where malnutrition is a serious problem and a major initiative to tackle the problem has already been initiated.. Focus will be on empowering families and communities to adopt the right feeding and caring practices to ensure that children grow and develop to their full potential.

3. Child Environment will work very closely with the Health and CDN sectors addressing issues of water quality and promotion of personal, household and environmental hygiene and sanitation. Support to the Sector Reforms district project and the total sanitation campaign as well as the Gadge Baba Swachata Abhiyan will be a key component⁶⁾

Conclusion:-

The communication strategy adopted for information dissemination encompassed a range of communication media. These included mid-media such as stickers, hoardings and bus panels. UNICEF had IEC materials ready for use but in this Project, mid-media proved to be a more effective medium for community sensitization on child protection issues. Mass media was also involved in reporting cases of child marriage and child labour. It was found that theatre performances on child protection-related topics and promoting the importance of education were well-received by the community. Community-level information dissemination on the harmful effects of child labour and importance of education was used by Project implementing partners to establish and activate community-based organizations. Formation of VCPCs, and adolescent girls and boys groups, led to their mobilisation as active bodies spearheading community sensitization and addressing issues related to child labour/OOSC and cases of child marriage.

The databases have proven to be effective tools in monitoring cases of child labour/OOSC and child marriage. Microplanning has been an effective tool in providing data and proxy indicators to track OOSC. In some areas, villages are using microplanning data to keep track of out of school and working children. The standard format provided to all VCPCs in Project blocks for maintaining data on out of school and working children has the potential for being replicated across other districts of Maharashtra.

Majority NGOs expressed that they will require external support to sustain activities post-Project period related to empowering communities to take collective action for the protection and development of children. Alternately, some respondents considered that activities should be continued with the coordination of social organisations rather than through Government officials. It was opined that the latter approach would ensure a higher degree of community involvement and initiative on addressing social issues as opposed to Government-led programming.

References:-

1. Bhargava, 2003
2. Sinha, 1997.
3. Yadhav. 2003.
4. Constitution of India; Article 39
5. State plan operation Maharashtra, UNECEF 2003-2007, p- 3
6. I, bid PP/4,6..