

Toiling Souls



Campaign Against child Labour
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Interventions for the eradication of child labour,
focussing on domestic and hotel sectors

A Report

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Campaign Against child Labour

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Our Thanks

A major effort was made by CACL to understand and gauge the magnitude of the child labour problem in the domestic and hotel sectors through a series of consultations at the southern, eastern and western regions. Active involvement and interaction of the participants brought to the fore many aspects of the issue of child labour in the domestic and hotel sector. Case studies shared at the consultation shed light on the hidden toil of these underprivileged children, their vulnerability to abuse and exploitation.

We have made concerted efforts to bring out a document that will provide a factual and comprehensive coverage of the imminent and burning issue of child labour, particularly in the domestic and hotel sectors. We hope this compilation of all the three reports will prove to be an enlightening reading experience.

CACL is thankful to all the participants, resource persons, all state convenors and host organizations for their valuable contributions at the consultation without which this publication would have been impossible. We are also thankful to all our friends who helped us to compile this report.

Let us carry forward our struggle to get justice for these TOILING SOULS, ensure these children get their rights and live in dignity.

**Joy Maliekal & Team
CACL - Central Secretariat**

Context

Child Labour in the domestic work sector is hidden and invisible. In the past 3 years, CACL has been rudely confronted with case after case, where children in domestic work have been subjected to beating, biting (for sexual pleasure), sexual abuse, burn injuries, battering and killing. The children face a similar fate in the hotel and catering establishments too. They constitute the other half... that is simply invisible and unheard of, among our policy makers, legislators, bureaucrats, enforcement authorities and the general public. We believe there must be comprehensive review of the political, economic and sociological angles that allow children to be brutally beaten up and even killed in this inhuman manner.

Though Child Labour in agriculture and home sectors not being covered by the CLPR Act has been highlighted on many occasions, the work hazards in domestic and hotel sectors have not been perceived to its full extent. It was in this context that CACL decided to hold three regional consultations in the southern, western and eastern regions, so that a more comprehensive picture of the extent and nature of child in domestic and hotel sectors would emerge. These consultations were held as follows:

- 1) Southern Regional Consultation at Kochi, Kerala - 29 & 30 January 2001
- 2) Eastern Regional Consultation at Bhubneswar, Orissa - 17 & 18 February 2001
- 3) Western Regional Consultation at Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh - 16 & 17 March 2001

The consultations focussed on the problems, alternative approaches, Government policy review and public action. These consultations helped to build a good strategic action-plan and helped in developing actions to the government, to include the hotel and domestic sectors in the list of hazardous occupations and the immediate implementation of All India Service Rules amendment i.e. Government to prohibit the employment of children below the age of 14 years as domestic servants by any government employee.

NGO representatives, Government officials, lawyers, academics and like-minded citizens were invited for each consultation. The outcome of these consultations helped further develop specific action-plans for CACL to evolve a nation-wide strategy.

The objectives of the two-day consultations were:

- To facilitate experience sharing on interventions by grassroots organizations
- To identify lacunae in policies and legislation pertaining to above sectors
- To recommend policy changes and legislative reforms
- To pressurize for a national policy on child labour in hotel and domestic sectors
- To develop common regional mass education, mobilization programme

The history of Child labour in the country was traced and some perspectives shared:

1. In ancient times, slaves who were from the so-called lower castes, the Sudras, chiefly performed domestic work. They lived by serving the so-called upper castes, the Varnas, helping them maintain their ritual purity [Indian social institute (Daws, 1995)]. Later Indian society, stratified by caste and class, organized personal services including domestic help through the "jajman" system (Widge, ISI) [it was a common practice for royalty to purchase domestic workers]. For instance, the Peshwas,

erstwhile rulers of Maharashtra who were eventually defeated by the British, bought Kunbi women to wash clothes and utensils (Pawar, 1994)].

2. Industrialization brought changes in the lifestyles of people, especially in the urban areas which led to the increase in demand for domestic workers with many women from the middle-class taking up jobs outside the home to supplement their income, domestic help is an main table necessity. However, the stigma attached to this occupation because of the menial nature of work as well as its association with traditionally undervalued responsibilities of women, ensure that it falls to the lot of poor, historically victimized backward sections of society.

3. The low social and economic status of domestic work has an adverse impact on the women's marital prospects. Women who return to their villages after working as domestics in the city of Indore, Madhya Pradesh report that they are looked at with suspicion and marriage proposals for them are turned down. Domestic labour is the only avenue of employment for these women, because unlike men, they do not have friends who can vouch for them.

4. The overwhelming majority of domestic workers are women, there were 6.8 lakh female workers (Shramshakti, 1988). A 1980 National survey by the Catholic Bishops Conference of India (hereinafter referred to as CBCI survey) found that 78% of domestic workers in 12 towns/cities across 12 districts in 8 states were female (Pereira, 1984). A 1988 survey estimated that there were approximately 3 ½ lakhs in the domestic work sector (Government of Maharashtra, 1998). A significant number of this female labour force consists of single women.

5. Child Labour: An invisible part of the domestic work force is children. The CBCI survey revealed that overall one-sixth of workers were

children with Karnataka having the highest percentage (30.48%) and Calcutta, Kerala and Ranchi, Bihar, the lowest percentage (16%). In Mangalore alone, 43% of male domestics were boys below 15 years. The 1997 Government survey estimated that 105 of the domestic work force in Maharashtra comprised children. A 1994 survey of 200 domestics in Anna Nagar, Madras, found little girls doing the work (Mrinalini, 1990). Another study revealed that in Delhi, 10-year-old girl begins domestic work independently and by the age of fourteen is working in at least four homes (Widge, 1990). The age of the child makes him/her utterly dependent on the employer as they also back support structures outside the workplace. They are often surrendered by parents to agents and employers, to whom they offer obedient, uncomplaining service. In return, they are subjected to abuse and harassment and denied wages on the specious claim that they have been 'adopted' by the employer concerned.

6. Unorganized workers: The National Commission of Labour (1969) described unorganized labour as those who have not been able to organize in pursuit of a common objective because of constraints such as:

- (a) Casual nature of employment
- (b) Ignorance and illiteracy
- (c) Small size of establishment with low capital investment per person employed
- (d) Scattered nature of establishments and
- (e) Superior strength of the employer operating singly or in combination

7. Domestic workers vis-à-vis the law: Domestic workers do not fall within the purview of the following legislation:

- Workmen's Compensation Act, 1923
- Payment of Wages Act, 1936
- The Provision of Minimum Wages Act, 1948
- Weekly Holiday Act, 1942
- Maternity Benefit Act, 1942
- Personal Injury compensation Act, 1963
- Gratuity Act, 1978

Child domestic workers are excluded from Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act, 1986. In this background, CACL's position on related issues are summarized below:

1. A child is any person below the age of 18 years.

2. CACL is against all manifestations of child labour in any occupation or process, hazardous or non-hazardous, with or without wages, within or outside family. Child labour includes children prematurely leading adult lives, working with or without wages, under conditions damaging to their physical, mental, spiritual & emotional development, denying them their basic rights to education, health and development.

3. Any child out of school is a potential child labour

4. Child labour has several causes. While poverty is a major cause, it is not the only one. In fact child labour causes poverty.

5. There are several other factors such as non implementation of land reforms, inequitable distribution of resources, No Right to work [to address adult unemployment], lack of provision for minimum living wages for adults, debt driven monetary/fiscal policies, pro-nuclear-anti poor policies of the government, profit motive of employers, complete absence of enforcement of child labour laws, etc.

6. Multiple causes must be addressed at multiple levels with multiple strategies. Law alone can do nothing. It is essential for a people's movement to spearhead the eradication of child labour.

7. Child labour in India is a problem to be addressed within India. International interest in the problem must be directed towards extending solidarity to the movement against child labour. All efforts to impose trade-based sanctions on India linked to (child) labour standards must be opposed & discouraged.

8. The Government must come up with a concrete pro-poor and pro-agriculture growth policy to encourage retention of people in villages & discourage mass migration due to unbridled urbanization.

CACL's experiences in direct intervention

India has witnessed a number of horrifying cases of torture of child domestic labourers. Either of hypotheses may be true;

- a) There has been sudden increase in the incidents of child domestic workers being tortured, battered, sexually abused and killed.
- b) This phenomenon is not new; only media reports on such cases have increased considerably.

Whatever may be the situation, the truth is that employers are going scot-free despite evidence that can potentially be vital proof of their guilt. Often, it has been our experience that collection of hard/corroborated facts & evidence is extremely crucial. Activists intending to intervene must not restrict themselves to merely rescuing the child - though that is primary. There must be a comprehensive mix of interventions. To illustrate this, one needs to look at cases that we have taken up in the recent past.

CASE STUDIES

Case Study I

Sumitra employed in Former Minister's House

Ten-year-old Sumitra was sent to the house of then Karnataka Minister of State for Women & Child Welfare, Smt. Vimalabai Deshmukh, as a housemaid by the city-based organization, Sumangali Sevashrama. Sumitra was going to school at village Bakkasandra of Channapatna taluk in Bangalore rural district. She lost both her parents at a tender age. An elder cousin, Shivanamma brought her to the Sumangali Sevashrama on 12 July 1999 where it was hoped that she could be fed and taught to read and write. But when Shivanamma returned to the city to meet Sumitra a few days later, she was not in the Ashram. Shivanamma contacted CACL, Karnataka chapter through VIKASA, a Bangalore-based NGO. CACL members visited the Sevashram and found that Sumitra had been sent to the former Minister's house in Bijapur of North Karnataka.

Upon pressure from CACL, Sevashrama authorities brought back Sumitra and handed her over to Shivanamma on 25 September 1999. When asked what she did in the Minister's house, Sumitra said that she would get up at 5 a.m. everyday and wash vessels, sweep and swab the entire house. Sumitra was working in two houses (another of a relative of the Minister) in these two months. Though she was interested in reading and playing, she was not allowed to do so.

The head of the Sevashrama, Susheelamma acknowledges that she had sent Sumitra to the former Minister's house in the belief that she would be adopted by Smt. Vimalabai Deshmukh and that Sumitra's relatives were aware of it. But Shivanamma denied that.

CACL's inquiries and investigations revealed that Sumitra was supposed to have been "adopted" by the former Minister. On further enquiry, the Ashrama authorities failed to produce documentary evidence to support adoption hypothesis. The Women and Child Welfare Department has ordered an internal investigation into the incident. At present, Sumitra is at a shelter run by APSA, a member organization of CACL, where she is pursuing her education.

The former Minister has slapped a legal notice upon CACL for making false allegations and attempting to malign her reputation. The notice also warns of legal action against CACL for making baseless charges against her.

Yet CACL continues its efforts to bring the former minister to justice and strategies are being worked out accordingly. In October 1999 CACL filed a P.I.L in collaboration with P.U.C.L-K. The following have been demanded:

1. An impartial investigation into the activities of Sumangali Sevashrama specially its role in facilitating adoption of children.
2. Ms. Vimalabai Deshmukh's alleged actions are inquired into and action be taken, according to law.
3. If the guilt of Sumangali Sevashrama and Ms. Vimalabai Deshmukh are proved, they have to be booked, to undergo the process of law.
4. Adequate compensation to be paid by the Minister and the Ashram to the guardians of Sumitra, to enable her education and rehabilitation as an immediate step.
5. The Government of Karnataka shall immediately issue an order prohibiting

employment of children below 14 years as domestic servants in the residence of government employees right from Ministers to the last grade employee - providing for disciplinary action against those who violate the same.

Case Study II

Mysterious death of Geeta Ganapathi Gowda

On 24 May 1999, a 12-year-old girl, Geeta Ganapathi Gowda, a housemaid died at Karwar, North Karnataka under mysterious circumstances. Geeta was working at the house of Mr. Somnath Kamat (employee of Ballarpur industries, Binaga, Uttara Karnataka) and Sudha Kamat (employee of State Bank of India) for 1 ½ years. On the fateful day, it was reported that Geeta's body was found hanging in the bathroom of her employer's house. She was reported to have committed suicide.

Our investigations found that Geeta was subjected to harassment and torture by her employers. The employers allegedly suspected her after the theft of jewellery from the house. It was also found that there was no police complaint lodged regarding the theft of the jewellery. This clearly indicates that the maid was falsely accused of stealing jewellery.

Police booked a case of unnatural death and arrested the couple on the charges of abetting suicide of a child. The couple was remanded to judicial custody. But Ms. Sudha Kamat was released on bail soon after since she had to feed her baby. Later it was found that Ms. Sudha Kamat lied to the police just to get bail. The baby is three years old.

The fact-finding team after making an in-depth investigation found that:
As per the police complaint, the girl hanged herself in the bathroom. But when the bathroom

was inspected it was found that the bathroom was very small (5ft x 3ft) and the pipe to which Geeta hanged herself (as reported) was at a height of 6 ft 8 inches and protruded to a length of only 1 ½ inches from the wall.

At the reported time of incident parents, sisters, and the brother-in-law of Mr. Kamat were present in the house. In spite of so many persons being in the house, no one tried to save the girl. This raises doubts about the authenticity of suicide. The body of Geeta was removed from the rope before the arrival of police at the place of incident.

According to eyewitness and the father of the deceased Mr. Ganapathi Gowda, the body had finger marks on the neck region confirming strangulation. This proves that she was killed and to give a twist to the case, she was hanged.

Geeta's father also disclosed to the members of the fact-finding team that Geeta was ill-treated and harassed after she was accused of stealing jewellery. She was tortured, physically abused and was not allowed to meet her parents, he added.

To demand justice to the parents of the girl who died and punish all those responsible for the death of 12-year old Geeta, CACL submitted representations to the Chief Minister, Home Minister, Superintendent of police, Deputy Commissioner of the District, local political leaders, seeking fair and impartial enquiry of the incident and justice to the victim's family. CACL also sent representations to RBI, SBI and to the Ballarpur industries.

To build awareness and wide publicity to the incident in order to get justice, book the culprits and evoke a response from the community and the Government, a Press Conference was held in Karwar, which was attended by the national and local news papers.

Case Study III

Radha - Suicide or Murder?

Radha, a 12-year old girl was an orphan child brought to Mulund, Mumbai by her employers from Bihar as domestic help. Nothing much is known beyond this data. She died after she fell from the 8th floor of her employers residential apartment complex at Mulund on 23-12-1998.

Her employer, Mr.V.C.Sharma is an employee of the Customs Department, Government of India. Mr. Sharma has a wife and two children.

Facts: Radha fell from the 8th floor at around 10.26 pm though Mr. Sharma stays on the 4th floor. Mr. Atul Sharma heard a 'thud' but could not actually see what had happened. But he could recognize that a body was lying outside. He saw a body lying and realized what had happened.

No blood stains, no yelling: Mr. Atul Sharma testified to the fact that at the site of Radha's dead body, there were no external blood stains from her body. Additionally he expressed surprise at the fact that though he clearly heard the body fall with a thud, there was no scream or cry that he heard just before the fall.

Police's response: The Saki Naka police have registered this as an accident case, based on the statement of a four-year-old son of the Mr.Sharma.

Munni before Radha: Mr. and Mrs. V.C Sharma had employed another girl Munni (age not known). The Sharmas used to put out mattress outside their house, where Munni used to sleep.

Mrs. Sharma beat them regularly: The liftman and the asfi kamgaar stated before the Task Force that Mrs. Kumkum Sharma was the perpetrator of the wounds and injuries suffered

by both Munni and Radha. During her statement given to the Task Force, the safai kamgaar used the term "murder" on all the three occasions while referring to Radha's death.

Munni and Radha's plight: The liftman, Mr.Tukaram Mungal, is also a witness to burn wounds on Munni's arms, cheeks and neck. Similarly, one day, Radha was sitting on the fourth floor stairs and was seen crying.

Radha never went to the eighth floor: Another interesting statement was made by the liftman, that (during his presence/duty) Radha never went to the eighth floor in the past.

A curious fact: Another fact seems un-related but is significant. Mr. and Mrs. Sharma, reside in Flat No.401. Flat No.402, which lies opposite, is the only flat in the whole colony, where one room window did not have a grill. The flat consisted of an open window, though all the other houses were fixed with grills. Another fact highlighted by two residents and the liftman is that soon after Radha's death, the resident at Flat no.402 called for a workman the next day and fixed the grill on the window.

A factual inconsistency: The statement taken by the police says Radha fell off the eighth floor. This is basically inconsistent with the Post Mortem Report that states the "height of fall" is 30 to 35 feet.

The Post Mortem Report speculates that Radha might have died before having dinner. In connection with this is another fact that Radha's time of death is confirmed by witnesses to 10.27 p.m. what needs to be probed is why Radha was on an empty stomach at that time in the night. More importantly, a probing on whether Radha really died at 10.27 p.m. is essential.

This session included strong inputs in the form of slide photos of the children, evidences in

the form of FIR, PMRs, Birth/age certificates, coroner's reports, proof of child's residence, proof of wages earned/accumulated by the child, etc.

Case studies from each region were also discussed in the respective regional workshops to highlight the specific problems of the region and find possible ways to overcome them.

Also included was a theoretical input on the framework in which CACL intervenes in such instances.

A brief note on each of the Regional consultations and the participants' recommendations follow.

Level of Intervention

By CACL	Tasks by the coordinators/investigating team	Remark (Time frame)
Direct intervention	Visit place of incidents, interact with employer/child, contact police, rescue child	Must be a crisis response-within ½ day
Community mobilization	Inform community through meetings, facilitate discussion, motivate leaders to take position, take action, organize dharmas, protest meetings, etc.	Must be a short-term plan for ½ week
Lobbying & Advocacy	Document the process from day one, prepare fact-sheet, publish a fact finding report, petitions to NHRC, the Government (local/ state/ central) address the president/ PM/ CM/ Labour Minister/ address press/ prepare press kits, etc.	Must start from day one, continue for 3/6 months till justice is achieved.
Networking	Inform other NGOs, lawyers, set up a team for investigation, document the process, link with NGOs which run shelters, place the children in such shelters for long term rehabilitation.	Must be both short and long term to strengthen the campaign process

THE SOUTHERN REGIONAL CONSULTATION

In the Southern Regional Consultation held at Kochi on January 29 & 30 2001, Mr. Baby Paul, state convener of CACL, Kerala lamented on the alarming increase of child labour in Kerala, a state that is considered a role model of development.

Mr. Joy Maliekal, National Convener of CACL briefed about CACL and its activities in the country. He said that 5000 members were actively working in 16 states towards eradicating child labour. Many cases of violence have been reported in the Hotel and Domestic sectors. Employers have their own justifications and through loopholes in the law manage to escape from punishment. For the last four years, we have been able to file cases and as a result, culprits in some cases have been punished. But unfortunately there is no law with regard to hotel and domestic sectors and therefore, we are not able to take action. Mr. Maliekal said that 75% of the child labour force is in the agro-based sector. These children are forced to work at employers' houses looking after cattle, caring for children, running errands and so on. Similarly, children in the hotel sector are forced to work in the employer's house after the work in the hotel is over. Hotel and Domestic sectors are very large in India, where lakhs of children toil without any rest and security. Their labour is invisible.

Mr. Maliekal pointed out the constitutional provisions and Supreme Court judgment regarding child labour. Though there are clear instructions, there is still a steady increase in child labour. Kerala government may deny the presence of child labour in the state, but there is a remarkable presence of child labour in Kerala, especially in the Hotel and Domestic sectors. The children who work as labourers may not necessarily be locals. Children are brought to work from Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. No child should be

brought to any state to work as a child labourer. Child is a child irrespective of his/ her language, he stressed.

Mr. Maliekal pointed out that children in the domestic sector were low paid. This was noticed by the ILO convention in 1999. Children in the Hotel and Domestic sectors are the worst affected. They undergo day to day torture and humiliation not known to the outside world. Therefore we say work in the Hotel and Domestic sectors are hazardous. There is an urgent need to look into these sectors more seriously and ensure the guilty get punished.

He ridiculed the integrity of government officials in dealing with child issues. An example of a senior official in the education department keeping a seven-year old girl child as domestic help was enumerated. He urged the government to ban child labour in both hotel and domestic sectors with immediate effect. He said that now CACL has started focussing on these sectors. The presentations of case studies on these sectors may help understand the gravity of child labour in both sectors, he hoped.

Subsequently, Mr. K.N.Mohanan, Regional Joint Labour Commissioner of Kerala inaugurated the Consultation by writing "Children have the right to get love, affection and education" on the black board. The child labourers, Sumithra and Kumar, who shared the dais, expressed their feelings on the board.

Mr. Mohanan, in his inaugural address, underlined the importance of education that has to be provided to all children, irrespective of their origin. Poverty is one of the reasons for child labour. In the first decade of post independent India, child labour was common in Kerala, especially in fisheries, coir industry, tyre industry etc. There have been reports that

child labour is still prevalent in Kerala. As part of the ILO convention, we had a thorough search in Kerala for child labourers, but could not find any. He said that since the employers wanted to make more margins, they use child labourers who never speak for their rights or ask for more wages. Here the relatives bring the children from various parts of the country by giving some advance to their parents. In the domestic sector, the government has no jurisdiction. Therefore interference in that sector is difficult. However, he stressed that it is essential to have an action plan jointly with the voluntary sector to create awareness among the public about the child labour.

Later, Fr. Chacko Narimattom, director of Pastoral Orientation Centre (POC) who presided over the inaugural function, released the Dossier on Child Labour prepared by the Central Secretariat of CACL. While addressing the gathering, Fr. Narimattom pointed out that the church has always condemned child labour as detrimental to a child's full growth as a person. It denies the personhood of the child. The Church has always advocated freedom of children. He concluded that he had been part of the campaign to eradicate child labour.

Mr. Mathews Philip of CACL Advocacy Unit, Bangalore while proposing a vote of thanks, expressed deep anguish over the alarming growth of child labour as the byproduct of globalisation and tourism in Kerala. Mr. Raghavendra of CACL-CS facilitated the programme.

Sessions

Mr. Sony George, Co-ordinator, Child Rights Resource Centre (CRRC), Bangalore while speaking about child labour and the CACL position, outlined the origin and development of Child labour laws and the role of the state. He said that despite the first declaration on child in 1959, a convention in this regard to formulate principles and regulations was held only in

1989. India ratified the convention on 11 December 1992. Poland was the pioneer to introduce the convention of this kind. In the convention, there are Preamble and Articles that give directions to the signatories about the implementation of its directives and regulations. While Preamble deals with intention and state of affairs, the Articles outline the rights of child such as survival, protection, promotion and participation. Articles 43 to 54 clearly specify what should be done to stop child abuses. The convention clearly states the responsibility of the state to protect the child. The NGOs can be of help in the process of stopping child abuses at three levels if intervention such as 1) child rights restitution activity, 2) creation of awareness about child rights and 3) Policy influencing.

Mr. Sony George described the legislations regarding child labour and child abuse such as Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act (CLPRA), Juvenile Justice Act etc. All laws talk about different age groups of children. There is no unifying act regarding child's age. Indian Penal Code says it is under 7 years. Juvenile Justice Act is the only act that comes to our aid. Protection and care of children are state responsibilities. A legal campaign like CACL could intervene effectively in different ways to stop child abuse, he concluded.

Mr. Thomas Jayaraj, state convenor of CACL, Tamil Nadu, chaired the session on presentations. Two case studies were presented from Hotel and Domestic sectors. The case study by the Bangalore group done in the Hotel sector in and around Bangalore revealed the sorry and cruel situation of children in hotels. The other case study was on domestic girl children done in Mysore city by Mrs. Usha P.A. The study threw light on the plight of girl children of the city in the domestic sector. Both studies had coincidental similarities as to their working hours, abuse, harassment and health problems.

Mr. Niranjan of National Law School of India University (NLSIU), Bangalore subsequently presented the strategies to eliminate child labour. He said every child outside the school in a potential child labourer. If children are in the school upto 14 years, there will be no question of child labour, according to the Constitution. He suggested some strategies to eradicate child labour such as;

- Identifying children who are outside the school
- Withdraw the children from work place
- Enroll children of in the age group of 5 - 7 years
- Conduct necessary bridge courses
- Retain them till 10th standard.

Mr. Niranjan also suggested improvement of infrastructure, quality of education, contact between teachers and children, school betterment committee to be restructured and reorganized. It is necessary to ensure that parents of the students are in the committee, he concluded.

While presenting her views, Ms. Geetha G. Menon, Advocate, Bangalore told participants to prepare the case in conformity with the existing laws and said loopholes should be closed to prevent the chance of escape by the culprit. She made it clear that an emotional appeal in the court could not find place, therefore only legal appeal must be made. The medical reports of the children who are affected carry value and similarly the statements of the children in the court. Ms. Menon suggested that all the basic groundwork be done before approaching the press. She also stressed the urgent need of sensitization of judges in this regard.

Sr. Mary Joseph of Vatsalya Bhavan, a trust of Sneha Bhavan Kochi presented stories of two domestic girl children in Kochi. The children, Ramya, 12 years and Thulasi, 14 years who were present on the dais explained their own stories of harassment during the course of their domestic work. The girl children are now living

in Vatsalya Bhavan, learning classic dance and going to school. An agent brought them from Andhra Pradesh for domestic help. Later they were released from bondage by the Vatsalya Bhavan.

On the second day, there were presentations from Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala. Mr. Antony of Rajagiri College of Social Work presented his study on child labour done in parts of Ernakulam district of Kerala. The presentation of studies have thrown light on the following aspects.

Exploitation of child labourers in the Hotel Sector:

The major aspects of the exploitation may be summarized as:

- Long hours of work - 90% of them work from 5 am to 11 pm, everyday.
- Low wages or no wages paid. (60% receive wages less than Rs. 200/- per month). A new phenomenon observed has been the removal of children after one month of work in any hotel/ restaurant by the middlemen. The middlemen take Rs 50 to Rs 250 per child being provided to the hotel owner and through this rotation of children he is able to make money.
- No facilities for rest and leisure provided to the child workers.
- No adequate places for sleep and hence exposed to sexual abuse by the owners and other workers.
- Lack of hygiene at the work place and the related health hazards.
- 60% of children stated to have been physically abused.
- The cleaning operations and constant contact with water and detergents lead to many dermatological problems.

There have been cases of bonded labour as well since the parents or guardians were paid some advance, which acts like loan bondage for the child.

Exploitation of Domestic Child Labourers:

The nature of exploitation varies with the nature of employment. The employment of children as domestic aid could be classified in to Live-in-maids/servants and visiting servants. In the first case, the child lives with the family. In the case of the visiting maids, the child goes to a house only for a period of one or two hours and completes the prescribed job in that time frame. The child may visit 2 to 6 houses in a day. While the first is a widely practiced mode of functioning, the conditions of work and nature of exploitation is never visible to the public eye. The studies done in most of the cities point to the fact that 90% of the children employed in the domestic sector in the urban areas are girls. The exploitation of the children happen in the forms described below:

- Long hours of work. (6 am to 10 pm in 70% of the cases).
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Lack of Rest and leisure

CACL has compiled 18 cases of death of domestic child labourers in the last 5 years. These cases are those, which have been reported in the media and hence could only be a very small fraction of the cases. This points to the very hazardous nature of domestic labour.

The extent of the problem:

Various studies presented at the consultation point to very high incidence of child labour in the domestic and hotel sector.

Hotel Sector:

The employment of children in the hotel sector is very high in the states of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. Kerala has

reported a very high incidence of child labour in the sweets and confectionery industry concentrated in the northern districts of the state. Recently the Kerala Police at Trivandrum released a group of 12 children in the age group of 6 to 12 years, being trafficked to Palakkad from Tirunelveli in Tamil Nadu to be employed in the sweet industry. The owners had paid money to the parents of the children. The incidence of child labour in the sweet industry has also been reported from Bijapur, North Karnataka. Here also the children have come from Tamil Nadu.

The failure of agriculture and loss of job opportunities in this sector and the failure of the traditional cottage industries have forced many to migrate to cities in search of jobs. These migrants are forced to send their children for employment.

The number of children running away from homes to the glamour of metropolitan cities has also increased. Once they reach the cities they are whisked away by middlemen who supply child labourers to the hotels. These middlemen take Rs 50 to Rs.250 per child supplied to the hotel. The number of children employed in hotels across the four southern states could be anywhere between one to three lakhs.

Domestic Sector:

The rising demand for domestic help in urban centers has led to an increasing number of children being pushed into domestic labour. There are two kinds of domestic child labourers, the residential and the non-residential domestic helpers. The scenario in rural areas is also the same especially within the state of Kerala. The increasing number of families with children working away from home and the older parents staying alone, demand the presence of some help in the family. Unscrupulous middlemen take advantage of this by giving promises to the parents of poor children and lure them away for employment. It is estimated that there are

over 50,000 such children employed in Kerala alone. Most of these children come from Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. In the last one year many cases of children running away from their homes of employment and police cases being registered have happened.

The non-resident domestic help comes from the urban slums and in most cases the women who do this job introduce their children also for the same kind of work. The studies done by Arunodaya in Chennai points to this mode of operation. However the trend in Kerala is seemingly different. The poor parents prefer to send their children as residential domestic help. The case studies presented in the consultation by Snehalaya point to this direction.

The money earned in domestic work usually does not reach the hands of the children as the parents collect these amounts.

The case studies presented in the consultation consisted mostly of children who were in domestic labour. However the case studies from Andhra Pradesh prove the extreme violence leading to the death of children employed in the hotel sector. Similar cases have been reported in Karnataka and the state chapter of the Campaign had sent fact-finding missions to study the details and take necessary steps.

Current Intervention Strategies

A number of participants in the consultation had been directly involved in developmental activities for the children in domestic and hotel sectors. The work with the children currently in domestic sector consists of providing them education and recreation facilities. Life skills education is also being imparted.

The experiments in organizing domestic workers have been going on for over a decade in the country. Delhi, Chennai, Mumbai have

made significant progress in these aspects. The Domestic Workers Forum set up in these cities are expanding to other cities as well. This is a noteworthy progress as this will lead to lesser number of children getting into the domestic labour sector.

The recent incidence of killings of many old couples in the cities of Delhi and Bangalore could be seen as an opportunity to press for the registration of the name, age and address of the employees in each household. This option could be used to get an approximate number of children employed in the domestic sector.

The strategy used by Arunodaya in Chennai, to reach out to children in the domestic sector through the maids is also reported to be successful. The study done by them has been published and the details may be had from there.

Ms. Geetha G. Menon and Ms. Rosy George, Advocates from Bangalore reviewed the presentations of case studies and extensively spoke about the experiences with regard to Domestic and Hotel sectors. Mr. Mathews Philip of CACL-Advocacy Unit chaired the session. The excerpts of their views are as follows:

Legal Remedies

The laws governing child labour in India are dismal and the existing laws make it impossible to ensure legal remedies for the exploited child domestic labourer. This is mainly due to the fact that the existing laws concentrate on child labour in various industries and establishments and do not include domestic work.

To enforce the laws the following will be helpful:

1. Identification: A method using the indicators prescribed by the IPEC to identify the child domestic labour has to be applied to identify the areas where concerted action can be taken

for protecting the child domestic labour namely:

- Incidence and magnitude
- Child Labourers (Number both paid and unpaid)
- Work by employer, payment status
- Work by location of employment status (i.e. who work at home Vs. away from home)
- Work by sector of employment
- Average hours worked per week
- Distribution of hours worked per week
- Average months worked per year
- Net school enrolment ratio
- Never attended school and school drop out rate
- Labourer students, student labourers
- Child labour by family size, gender of household, socio - economic status
- Reason for child labour

2. Legal remedies: The biggest drawback for enforcement of any law including the latest amendment to the Central Civil Service Rules is the inability to prove the employment of child domestic labour. The absence of any agreement in writing and the reluctance of the parents of such children to come forward due to poverty and other economic reasons make it difficult to come to the rescue of the child domestic worker. The cases would have to be brought within the existing framework of laws to ensure non-exploitation of this invisible worker.

Amendments required for the CLPRA, 1986:

Mr. Thomas Jayaraj, Convenor, CACL, Tamil Nadu spoke about the loopholes and the changes to be made in the CLPR Act, 1986. A major challenge is to strengthen the campaign, advocacy and lobbying for amending the 1986 Act. The following are the main changes required as per a consensus statement of a seminar organized by Tamil Nadu NGOs, in which many Government officials also participated.

1. The preamble of the Child Labour Act should detail the rights of children enshrined in the UN Convention including the right to Education and other Constitutional guarantees for the promotion of a statute prohibiting employment of all children below 14 years.

2. The statute should guarantee that all children below 14 years of age should be prohibited from employment. For this, there is sufficient sanction in the constitutional provisions and Supreme Court Judgements.

3. The employment of young persons between 15-18 years only must be regulated. A separate part detailing the rights of young persons in employment should form part of the Act. These sections of children have special childhood and development needs, are often victims of abuse and exploitation and need special protection. Besides this, all rights of adult workers should apply to them. The right to education and welfare shall be given paramount importance.

4. There should be no exemption for household based employment of children. An establishment has to be redefined to include household based labour. This will be applicable even for establishments employing young persons.

5. The onus of proof regarding proof of age of the child should be shifted on the occupier as contained in the Factories Act. It should be mandatory for all occupiers to have a birth certificate and maintain registers. This is applicable to both prohibited and regulatory sections. The need for a medical authority to certify should be dispensed with.

6. Definition of 'hazardous' should not be industry based but child based.

7. 'Child Labour' and 'Child Work' should be clearly defined.

8. Joint Task Force at District level consisting of eminent citizens, social workers and concerned officials of the Labour Department should monitor the effective enforcement of the Act.

The group discussions conducted concentrated on the aspects of possible direct intervention by the voluntary sector and the possibilities of action as a network. The two groups formed on a random basis discussed the aspects for domestic workers and children employed in the hotels. The lists prepared by both groups were then synthesized into a smaller set of areas where the network could directly intervene. The abridged points of action are as follows:

DOMESTIC SECTOR

1. Research
2. Community Awareness
3. Resource mapping
4. Special cell for domestic workers
5. Working towards strong child friendly policies, legislations and enforcement
6. Promoting lawyers collectives.
7. Inter state co-ordination.

HOTEL SECTOR

1. Through Forum, Police and Judiciary
2. Community Awareness
3. Training

4. Legal Intervention
5. Inclusion of Hotel Sector in CLPRA
6. Using Legal Fora
7. Research
8. Networking
9. Research at National Level
10. Regional Commissions
11. World Tourism
12. UN
13. Hoteliers Association.

At the end of the Consultation, the participants made a few recommendations as follows:

1. Immediate ban of Child Labour in domestic and hotel sectors
2. Include Hotel and Domestic sectors in the CLPR Act 1986 as hazardous.
3. All India Services Rule that prevents children's employment in officials' houses everywhere should be strictly enforced. Enquiries into officials' houses should be conducted and action taken against erring officials.
4. Make changes in All India Services Rule
5. Include the elected representatives also under the All India Services Rule.

The Consultation concluded with a note of special thanks to the CACL - Kerala chapter for coordinating the event.

THE EASTERN REGIONAL CONSULTATION

The Eastern Regional Consultation was held at Bhubaneswar on February 17 & 18, 2001. The Consultation was inaugurated by the eminent trade union leader and MP, Mr. Ramachandra Kuntia. Regional Labour Commissioner, Government of India and Director of State Institute of Family and Health Welfare were the chief guests.

Mr. Ramachandra Kuntia expressed the opinion that eradication of child labour was possible only if the NGOs, Government and trade union activists formed an alliance and worked together towards this goal. He also said that child labour in domestic and hotel sectors was hidden and said that awareness should be created among the employers and also the public. The Government was taking steps to eradicate child labour and would be successful only with the cooperation of all the departments and child rights groups.

The Regional Labour Commissioner spoke of the laws relating to child rights and child labour and pointed out the loopholes.

After the inaugural address, the CACL group initiated discussions on CACL networking strategies, issue of child labour and children in hotel and domestic sectors.

A Case Study

Child Labour in Kolkata / Howrah Region

There has been a big debate the world over on the subject of child labour. While the Western world and the international agencies like the International Labour Organization (ILO) have been demanding abolition of child labour, the problem still exists in the Third World countries. There is widespread existence of child labour

in highly populated countries like India mainly because of poverty where the whole family has to work for survival.

According to the ILO estimate, published in June 1996, 44.6 million children between 10 and 14 years, which accounted for around 13 percent of the region's child population were working in Asia. In its 1995 State of the Children Report, UNICEF said that there were 14 million child labourers in India, an estimate that is considered to be on the lower side. Whereas the government's estimate is 18 million, the commission on Labour Standards (headed by Dr. Subramaniam Swamy) put the figure at 25 million. According to the Commission, this figure is increasing at the rate of the 25 per cent annum and as presently estimated to be around 40 million.

A significant proportion of the children (above 6-7 years) are part of the labour force. They are paid very low wages and usually work under very poor and sub-human working conditions. A survey carried out by AMDA-CMDA in the year 1994 on child labour came to the following conclusions:

1. On an average, children contribute only 14% of the total family income. However, amongst the poorest, the low levels of household income imply that the marginal liability of children is very high.
2. Low bargaining power of children leads to very low wages and long working hours. Small hotels and restaurants in the informal sector often employ them for as long as 10 hours a day for a monthly income of around Rs.300/-.
3. Typical jobs for children are in areas of rag picking, domestic work, waiters, traditional craft (zari work) etc.

It can be seen that about 28% of the total population constitute the labour force belonging to the age group of 5-14 years. About 35.2% of the child labourers are found to be girls. The highest participation of female child labour may be explained by the fact that the female children are preferred as domestic helping hands because of their low wages.

Though no proper survey has yet been undertaken, there are a lot of girls in Kolkatta and other metropolises who are involved in the sex trade. These girls are likely to be affected by HIV and other communicable diseases and their whole life may be spoiled.

A survey was carried out by the Calcutta NGO Forum in some parts of Howrah where it was found that employment of child labourers is mostly concentrated in small shops and restaurants. Among the 100 child labourers interviewed, about 70 percent were found to be working in small shops and hotels. After serving more than 14-16 hours a day, they only get a meager salary of Rs.10/- Rs.20/- per day.

Some of them (1%-2%), however go to street children education centers at night. The survey also revealed that due to their small pay packets, some of the child labourers involved themselves in various types of illegal work. The girl children mostly engaged themselves in domestic work as maidservants. After putting in work for around 10 to 20 hours and sometimes more, they get a salary varying between Rs.70 to Rs.200. It would be significant here to mention that these child labourers have migrated from the rural areas of West Bengal and Bihar and have come to the city in search of employment.

Keeping in view the fact that child labour is a reality, there is an imperative need to tackle the problem both at the central and the state levels through a coordinated plan of action. However, it is apparent that most State Governments are completely negligent and

callous towards the problem of child labour and allow poor children to be exploited in all forms.

This has to change and for this the NGOs and CBOs have to play a crucial role in pressurizing the Government to implement labour laws and look after the welfare of the child.

CLPRA of 1986 - A critique

By Prof. Pradeep Sarkar

Prof. Pradeep Sarkar, Head of Post Graduate Department of Law, Utkal University, Orissa, gave a detailed presentation on the loopholes of the CLPRA. He stressed that the Act differentiates between hazardous and non hazardous sectors which leaves almost 60% of child labourers outside the purview of this law. Even when cases are booked under this Act, the employers are not prosecuted because of lack of proof and witnesses. Group discussion was held on the basis of this presentation.

State Action And Child Labour In Orissa

By Mr. Prafulla Ku.Dhala

Mr.Prafulla Ku.Dhal of CACL Orissa made a presentation on the State action and child labour in Orissa. The first major issue to be raised is whether child labour is declining in the state since the Government is propagating a myth about elimination of child labour, especially through NCLP. The recent controversy of the so-called reduction of poverty to below 26% of the population is also well known and this kind of white washing by the Government must be received guardedly. Impoverishment of people, added to a very poor response from the Government has had a detrimental impact on the children.

In this light the counter balance of the Government is seen in a schematic fashion which is piecemeal and sporadic. These

schemes include DPEP, NCLP & ongoing missions such as enforcement of the Child Labour Act.

A significant measure of the Government includes the empowerment of several officials and functionaries of the Government at state/district/taluk & village level, as enforcers of the Child Labour Act [under section 18 of the act]. This measure was however for a temporary phase when in 1996-97 the survey for Supreme Court directive was being undertaken.

This measure indicates the need for more sustained steps to ensure that all related Government departments [not only labour] be involved in the mission to eradicate child labour. This then also ensures a higher level of participation and performance of the Government in tackling child labour - at least in the administrative sense.

Speaking on various other interventions of the state Government, he noted that four levels were so far being addressed.

1. Awareness campaigns
2. Setting up special schools
3. Identification and enrollment of child labour into special schools
4. Training and sensitization programmes

Presently various such programmes are being implemented through the participation and involvement of various Government agencies. These include Ministries of Labour, Rural Development, Education, Finance, Textiles, Health & Family Welfare, Information and Broadcasting, Social Welfare, etc.

On the second day, Ms. Bisakha Bhanj, activist and consultant for DIFD, Orissa detailed the aspects regarding social mobilization by organizing domestic workers. She said that the efforts of NGOs should be focused towards working out alternate strategies for social mobilization. She also said that advocacy and

lobbying should be systematic and cases should be substantiated with correct data and documents.

NGO Interventions:

The case of CINI ASHA - its approach, experience & learning

CINI - ASHA, the urban unit of Child in Need Institute working in Kolkatta shared their experience. A brief description of their activities was given. Their mission is improving the quality of life of the urban disadvantaged children through education and social mobilization. Street children, child labourers living in slums and squatter colonies and children of sex workers are their target groups. Their intervention strategies were based on rights of the child, viz., right to survival, right to growth and development, right to protection and right to participation. CINI ASHA runs drop-in centers, night shelters, sick-bay, counseling centers, special coaching and bridge courses for street children. It also has a theatre group for cultural activities. A vocational training unit for girls and an adolescent resource center is also managed by CINI - ASHA.

The participants constituted three small groups. The objective was to develop strategies and plan activities for short and long term. The levels of intervention included direct intervention, community awareness, legal interventions, advocacy and networking. Based on their group work, a set of recommendations was developed for the Government and policy makers, as enumerated below:

- 1) The constitution review committee must include education as fundamental right and ensure review of all child related laws in the light of UN convention on Rights of the child.
- 2) The artificial division of Child Labour into hazardous and non-hazardous must end.
- 3) There must be a blanket prohibition of all sectors of child labour.
- 4) Child labour in domestic and hotel sectors

is hazardous and these sectors must be brought into the list of hazardous occupations of Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act.

- 5) Parents of all child labourers must be included in Below Poverty Line (BPL) list.
- 6) Education must be made free and compulsory upto STD X. Government should ensure quality and relevant education.
- 7) All labour laws and Constitution must define age of child as 18 years in the light of India having ratified the UN convention on Rights of the Child.
- 8) NGOs and Voluntary organisations must be empowered as inspectors under CLPRA.
- 9) In cases pertaining to abuse of child labour and children in hotel sectors, the burden of proof must lie with the accused.
- 10) Indian Penal Code (IPC) should be revised. Burden of proof must be on the accused, not on the abused child.
- 11) NGOs must be legally empowered to intervene in cases of child abuse/exploitation.
- 12) Cases of abuse/exploitation must be quickly completed. Time frame of one year must be put on each case.
- 13) In 2011 census, enumeration of child labour must be done.
- 14) Child labour eradication should be placed in manifesto of political parties.
- 15) Commission on child at national and state level should be set up with sufficient powers.
- 16) Child labour, child rights sensitization through university/colleges/schools, especially law students should be mandatory.
- 17) Enumeration of child labour in hazardous sectors - rehabilitation package must be provided.
- 18) Supreme Court directives should be strictly followed up if District level committees are to function effectively.

The Labour Minister, Mr. Bimadhar Kuanr, while addressing the participants in the Consultation narrated certain trends in History. Centuries ago, when the Konarak Temple was being built, labourers were contracted for its completion. The then emperor commanded that the temple

be completed before an auspicious day, failing which all labourers would be put to death. The day being unrealistically near, the architects realized it was almost impossible to follow the emperor's diktat. So they inducted more than 200 children to enhance the labour force and ensured quick and timely completion of the construction thereby saving the lives of thousands of contract labourers. The narrative by the Hon. Minister conveyed the significance of vested interests in employing/exploiting children since several centuries. Modern, post-industrial society has not changed radically in its views and this is reflected in children being used for labour in this day. The Hon. Minister outlined the response of government to the situation. The survey based on Supreme Court directive has been the most accurate [2.5 lakh child labour in Orissa] compared to other states. Ironically, Orissa became a controversial state because the All India Survey showed nearly 5 lakh, meaning 50% of the child labour force is in Orissa. The Minister shared his department's difficulties in implementing the other measures issued by the Supreme Court namely

1. Imposition of fines on all employers
2. Creation of welfare fund to collect and channelise fine collection to the child/parent
3. Find alternate employment for one of the parents of the child
4. Enrol the child in a formal school

This set of directives is being partially implemented owing to lack of human resources, financial resources & other difficulties such as collection of evidence against each employer.

The ex-Minister for Labour shared similar sentiments while also speaking of the positive role played by NGOs/CACL in the survey of child labour in Orissa. He attributed the credit of accurate information collection to the thorough process of NGO involvement in training, orientation, developing survey forms, pilot surveys, data collection and data

compilation.

He stressed on the importance of NGO-Government collaboration to further the effort to eradicate child labour, which is not going to be solved through mere legalistic or

administrative measures.

The Consultation ended with a note of special thanks to the CACL - Orissa unit, PECUC staff and volunteers for making it successful.

THE WESTERN REGIONAL CONSULTATION

The Western Regional Consultation was held at Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh on March 16-17, 2001. Dr. Vijay Gupta, Director, Centre for Integrated Development (CID), Gwalior gave a presentation on the child labour scenario in domestic and hotel sectors.

This was followed by a conceptual presentation on CACL networking process and child labour, especially in domestic and hotel sectors.

During the consultation, the delegates divided into 3 groups to assess the scenario and develop clarity on grassroot realities, supplemented with the macro situation in terms of response from society, role of Government, parliament, media and voluntary organisations. The groups then met and a collective note on issues and concerns put forth by them was summarized as follows:

- Abuse and exploitation take place but is hidden
- Employers and neighbours are primarily involved in abusing the child
- No legal protection
- Prolonged Court cases
- How to sustain follow up on court cases
- Rehabilitation of the child - how is it being done?
- Counselling support to encourage parents and Children to fight legal cases against employer/ abuser
- Sexual abuse is as high as 95%
- What is the definition of child labour in domestic work?
- The cases can be taken up with the Juvenile

Welfare Board (JWB), under the JJ Act, [short-term directives]

- Use media based pressure for influencing the JWB.
- Sexual abuse : problems in approaching the police
- Novel methods in witness mechanisms
- Use interim orders as a tool
- Discourage self-publicity in media
- Lobby with Government for recognition of NGO to fight cases on behalf of the child.
- How to handle cases where witness turns hostile.
- How to respond to parental exploitation of children, what alternatives can be evolved, what legal instruments can be used to protect children.
- Media ethics in highlighting cases of child sexual abuse.
- NGO networking on issues must be intensified and other professionals like advocates must be involved.

The input sessions highlighted the overall scenario, causative factors, law, policy enforcement, social dimensions, etc. The international dimensions and their impact were highlighted. Input sessions also helped clarify CACL position or related issues as well as explain functioning of the network.

Issues pertaining to child labour in domestic and hotel sectors were also highlighted with bench marking cases of violation. Intervention based experiences were shared with the participants who drew inferences to similar cases in their experiences. Demonstrative

strategies were explained to throw light on a multiple approach to rescue and rehabilitate the children.

The participants moved into smaller groups to discuss individual and field experience pertaining to domestic sector and hotel and catering establishments. A summary of their discussions was drawn, in terms of broad thematic understanding and challenges for collective action.

The Child Labour Act

Advocate Apama Bhat, Lawyer, Supreme Court gave her inputs in the Session on the Child Labour Act. She initiated the sessions with an overview of the Child Labour [Prohibition & Regulation] Act 1986. The Act defines a child as any individual below 14 years. The Act has defined work into two categories of "hazardous" and "non-hazardous", where the Act prohibits child labour in the former and seeks to regulate Child Labour in the "non-hazardous" occupations and processes. The Act, through the Central Rules empowers the factory and labour inspectors of the Labour department as officers for enforcement of Rules pertaining to the regulative aspects of the Act.

The Act has a rather narrow definition of the term 'establishment' in which a child may be employed. This definition is drawn from other labour laws, from an industrial perspective of organized sector of labour. While only 13% of child labourers come under this definition, the remaining 87% fall outside the scope of the definition. The Act is therefore rendered absolutely weak & toothless in addressing the majority of child labour in the informal, un-organized sector.

Ms. Bhat also shared the dismal record of the enforcement machinery, which in the past 16 years has merely managed to implicate not more than a dozen employers for violation of

the Act. The Act also unfortunately contains very archaic system of submission procedures where the burden of proof now lies with the child, which tends to render the justice system extremely insensitive to children.

She cautioned the NGOs and voluntary organizations to carefully assess the pros and cons before adopting legal strategies in particular cases of child exploitation or child abuse. The consultation has shown a major trend of sexual abuse of children in the two sectors. In such a scenario fighting cases in the courts must be taken up with caution. Sometimes the court of inquiry may further victimize the child psychologically and sometimes the witness may also turn hostile to the procedures as well as develop an antagonistic attitude to the NGO. These social dynamics must be understood before deciding whether the case must be contested in the court with the child as the main witness. The merits of the case may prompt us to go to court. In such instances the relevant psycho-social support must be continuously extended to the child and her relatives/family/guardian.

This input session was followed by an open house discussion on law, enforcement and field experiences. The participants' views are summarized as follows:

1. Court proceedings are very long winding
2. Collection of evidence against employers is very difficult, subject to his cooperation
3. Witnesses are rare to come by and constant follow up with them is essential for maintaining confidence.
4. Some labour inspectors are very mischievous, also corrupt and tend to favour employers
5. Some labour inspectors who genuinely fight cases in courts are disillusioned when punishment with very dismally low fine amounts for Rs. 50 to Rs. 300/- is awarded against employers.
6. The children and parents demand alternate

employment and NGOs do not have resources to comply with such demands.

7. NGOs do not have the time to attend long winding cases in courts and end up feeling frustrated over delay in the judicial proceedings.

8. We must recommend that cases be made time bound.

9. There is a need for comprehensive training and inputs on legislation for field activists.

The House Workers [Conditions & Services Bill] 1999

A paper on the House Workers Bill prepared by Raju Bhise, YUVA, Mumbai was presented by Rushila Rebello, SETU, Mumbai. The major observations of the paper are as follows :

1. Domestic work is an age-old industry in our country. However the quality of life of workers involved in this work is appalling. They have no security of employment. They are paid very low wages. They have no educational, housing, medical or other social welfare facilities. No safety measures are enforced or any compensation paid to victims of accidents.

2. Unlike the organized industrial sector, there is no fixed employment relationship in this industry. The peculiar nature of this industry is its changing employer relationship. The workers work for different principal employers.

3. Labour laws to protect labourers like minimum wages etc, are not made available to Domestic workers. Social security laws such as ESI, PF, payment of gratuity etc. are not extended to domestic workers.

4. The major contributing causes to this state of affairs are the changing employee-employer relationship, inadequacy of labour law administration, lack of political will, inability of the existing unions to organize domestic labour, lack of records pertaining to details of employment.

5. Over the last decade we have seen the following classes of workers taken out of the purview of central/state labour laws.

1. Contract labour
2. Child labour
3. Mathadi workers
4. Security guards

6. At present by taking special classes of workers out of the purview of general law, the immediate effect has been that the benefits of existing legislation have been denied to them on the illusory promise that a new legislation would more than adequately compensate them.

7. Further legislations pertaining to domestic labour should directly be brought under the purview of the High Courts, which are under the constitution the most powerful bodies in the state.

8. While creating a new legislation it is necessary to concentrate on the main thrust so that one is not lost discussing minor details.

9. The proposed law intends to incorporate the following features based on the above stated peculiar nature of employment i.e., domestic labour:

1. Domestic workers to be included in the category of workers.
2. Compulsory registration of employer and the workers.
3. Extension of provision of all existing labour legislations and social security legislations to a domestic labourer. Eg. Minimum wages Act: Domestic workers should be included in the schedule to
 - The full time domestic
 - Part time domestic
 - Piece rated domestic
 - Time rated domestic

4. Prohibition of domestic work by employers without registration under the law.

5. Rotational booking of workers.

6. Restriction on employment in the industry to only these workers registered under the law.

7. Protection of child domestic workers - shorter

work hours, educational facilities etc.

8. Damages to be paid to domestic worker in case of sexual harassment.

9. Participation of workers in the functioning of the said legislating body.

This bill was an outcome of peoples' participation initiated by a few voluntary organizations in Mumbai, such as Bombay House Workers Solidarity, SETU and YUVA. The organisations have come together under a banner of Domestic Workers Campaign initiated in 1997. The campaign's objectives:

1. To form Domestic workers Union.
2. To work towards improvement in their livelihood conditions.
3. To ensure the enactment of a comprehensive law related to domestic workers.

The input session was utilized to develop a framework for the groups. Four broad levels of intervention were identified:

1. Direct intervention
2. Community awareness
3. Legal intervention
4. Advocacy and networking

These activities under levels were to be defined based on the challenges that prevail in the situation. The groups' presentation of their discussions were as follows:

The child labour in domestic sector in rural areas, occurs as a phenomenon due to following problems:-

1. Lack of resources to ensure minimum wages for adults
2. Lack of awareness and sensitization
3. Lack of adequate availability of health & education
4. Under employment and unemployment
5. Long-hours of work

6. Gender-discrimination and sexual abuse

7. The poor are economically bound to the resource-rich in the village

8. Traditional values attached to work/ education, skill transfer, etc

9. No legislation and lack of enforcement where law is present

10. Lack of entertainment/leisure activities for children [to prevent their entry into the labour force].

Major concerns related to child labour in hotels & dhabas in cities & urban townships

Problems

- Low or no wages
- Lack of accommodation/rest
- Poor conditions of living and no adequate food forced to eat left over food
- Unhygienic living conditions, no proper & clean clothing
- No health facilities
- No education - access to education
- Subject to exploitation and torture/physical beating
- Forced into addiction of various kinds.

The challenges in the above situation were summarized as;

- Migration of the children, which makes it almost impossible to maintain contact and intervene in short/long term for their rehabilitation and development
- The parents do not have scope for full/adequate employment, which breeds insecurity and migration
- Globalization results in marginalization of the already dispossessed & impoverished communities
- Lack of tolerance in general, leading to civil war, communal tensions and social divide
- Lack of enforcement of legislation which has made employers fearless of law
- Lack of proper access to government schemes available for people below poverty line
- No awareness of child rights

Challenges	Suggested Alternatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Excessive dependence on government ● Lack of adequate resources 	Land reforms and equitable re-distribution of land Promotion and protection of rural economy/employment opportunity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lack of education ● Economic inequality 	Awareness campaign, education campaign Empowering Grama Sabha, Awareness about legislation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● State administration is inactive and non-responsive 	Promoting citizens committees and enhance their capacities to monitor state functioning at village level
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Poverty and related structural causes of poverty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Need to generate awareness about social inequalities ● Promote solidarity and mobilize people's movement.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Social evils like casteism, communalism, etc. 	Mobilize people towards universal principles of secular practices & human rights
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lack of resources ● Inequitable distribution of resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Promote and sustain traditional cultural programmes ● Develop village level cadre
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Corruption ● Local power-lobbies with vested interests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop community - based pressure groups to pressurize the government/ administration.

Suggested Alternatives

1. Ensuring right to free, compulsory, quality and relevant education.
2. Generating awareness among the communities.
3. Availability of secure sources of income for adults in their own villages.
4. Effective distribution of government schemes for the poor.
5. Ensure that the panchayats and local

government address the issues of child labour on priority.

6. Social awareness to prohibit/discourage child labour and encourage the protection and promotion of child rights.
7. To build broad alliance - Coalition of government agencies, voluntary organisations, concerned citizens, peoples' representatives, and the like for the protection & promotion of child rights.

Policy recommendations

A set of recommendations was drawn up and addressed to the government and policy makers as follows:

Recommendations

1. Include hotel and domestic sectors in hazardous part of Child Labour Act.
2. Immediate "ban" on Child Labour in domestic & hotel sector.
3. Implementation of Civil Service Code.
4. Include elected representatives in the Service Code.

In addition, the following were also put forth:

1. Accurate enumeration of child labour through reform in case collection methods.
2. Reform of Child Labour Act and stricter enforcement.
3. Organize district level public hearings on child

labour and declare the practice as anti-human.
4. To increase the penal fee imposed on employers

5. The Amendment to Civil Service Rules prohibiting state/central government employees from employing children in domestic work is a welcome move. This measure must be strictly enforced. This clause must be effectively made applicable to legislators and ministers.

6. District administration must promote child care/child protection institutions

7. Media must address this issue on a long-term basis and not only in the form of 'hot news' in short term.

The participants agreed to meet in respective state level groups in next 3 months to develop on all areas of the action plan. It was recommended that the group meet once again in next 6-8 months to assess the developments on decisions taken. The consultation concluded with a vote of thanks, especially to the staff members & volunteers of CID and M.P Janadhikaar Manch, for hosting the programme.

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