

WORKING CHILDREN IN INDIA AN ANALYSIS STATE-WISE

Subhasree Chakraborty

*Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Berhampore Girls' College,
Berhampore, Murshidabad, W.B, India. Pin-742101*

Abstract: Childhood is an important and impressionable stage of human development as it holds the potential to the future development of any society. Perishing childhood and getting education are basic human rights of children. However, under extreme economic distress, children are often forced to forego educational opportunities and take up jobs which are mostly exploitative in nature. Further, child workers are invariably underpaid as compared to adult workers; they are exposed to long working hours; denied compensation for overtime; and are deprived of social security.

India is the largest habitat of child labour in the world. . Despite several proactive legislations and policies in India such as the National Child Labour Policy, 1987, and child labour related provisions in various other labour laws, child labour still persists. The country has achieved some success in combating child labour at the macro level in the 21st century, but relative performance varies across States. While few states perform fairly well in managing child labour, in some states the ratio of child labour to total population is significantly higher than the national average. Moreover, a majority of the child labour is concentrated in few states.

Keywords: Working Children, Child Labour, Distribution of Child Labour, Regional Disparity.

Introduction: Childhood is the most important stage of human development. An enabling environment conducive to children's intellectual, physical and social health helps to build responsible and productive human resource for the nation. Perishing childhood and getting education are basic human rights of children. However, under extreme economic distress, children are often forced to forego educational opportunities and take up jobs which are mostly exploitative in nature. Further, child workers are invariably underpaid as compared to adult workers; they are exposed to long working hours; denied compensation for overtime; and are deprived of social security.

Child labour is visible in every part of the world, predominantly in developing countries. There is a vicious circle between poverty, and child labour. While extreme poverty is considered as the main cause of child labour, widespread prevalence of child labour in developing countries perpetuates poverty by hampering the growth. It does so by not only reducing the individual's educational achievement but also through its existence reduce the effect and quality of the education system as such.¹ Further, there is a close relation between education and child labour. Research experiences reveal that increased education opportunities and increased welfare reduces child labour. However the casualty also goes the other way. Reduction of child labour may help both improving children's education achievements including the efficiency and capacity of the education system and help reduce poverty. Child labour restricts the right of children to access and benefit from education and denies the fundamental opportunity to attend school. Child labour, thus, prejudices children's education and adversely affects their health and safety². Further, child labour has redistribution effects on the labour market. It is common in households where poverty is inherited from one generation to another. Hence, the fight against child labour has gained an international momentum during the last two decades and became a major challenge for the Millennium Development Goals (MDG).

India has taken various measures to combat child labour and achieve the targets of MDGs. But child labour in India is a serious and extensive problem: with a credible estimates ranging from 60 to 115 million, India has the highest number of working children in the world (Kumuda, 2014). In India, many children under the age of fourteen works in carpet making factories, mining industry, glass blowing

units, agricultural field, construction, fireworks etc. They are engaged as domestic servants and live a dreadful life. Poverty, illiteracy, absence of educational opportunity, and growth of informal economy are considered as the important causes of child labour in India.

Objectives: The following objectives has undertaken for the study:

1. To understand the forms of child labour.
2. To focus on the trend of working children in India over the Census period.
3. To analyse the state-wise prevalence of working children in India.

Data Source and Methodology: This study is based on secondary data. Census data and reports of Planning Commission of India, Ministry of Labour and Employment are mainly used for the analysis. Different graph and charts have been constructed to represent the data and systematic analyses of data have been made for the study.

Forms of Working Children: The term Child Labour is often used synonymously with employed children or working child. But a distinction is to be made between children in work or working children and child labour (Gurupadaswamy Committee, 1979). Basically, children carry out a very wide range of tasks and activities when they work. Participation of children in work that does not affect their health and personal development or interfere with their schooling and thus contribute to children's development and to the welfare of their families; increase their skills and experience, and help to prepare them to be productive members of society during their adult life are regarded as something positive. In contrast, child labour is often defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development.

ILO (2012)³ has made a clear distinction between children in employment or working children, child labour and children in hazardous work. According to ILO (2012), children in employment or working children are those engaged in any economic activity for at least one hour during the reference period. Economic activity covers all market production and certain types of non-market production (principally the production of goods and services for own use). It includes forms of work in both the formal and informal economies; inside and outside family settings; work for pay or profit (in cash or in kind, part-time or full-time), or as a domestic worker outside the child's own household for an employer (with or without pay).

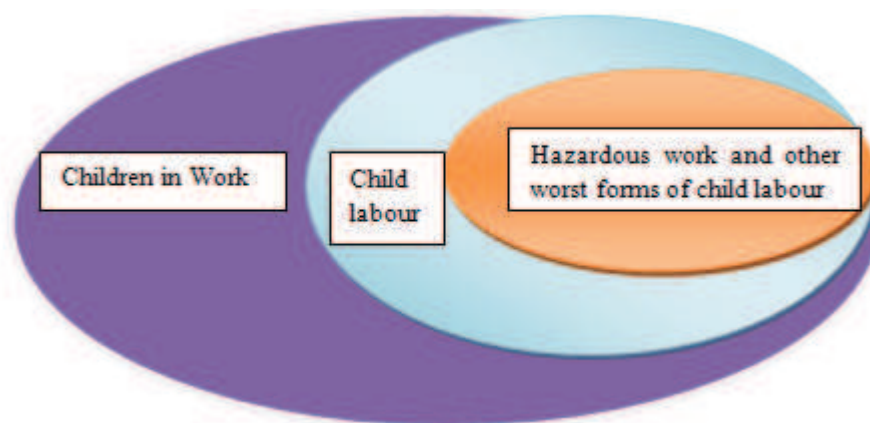


Figure 1: Relation between Children in Work, Child Labour & Hazardous Work

On the other hand, children in child labour are a subset of children in employment. They include those in the worst forms of child labour and children in employment below the minimum age, excluding children in permissible light work, if applicable. Child labour is therefore a narrower concept than “children in employment”; child labour excludes those children who are working only a few hours a week in permitted light work and those above the minimum age whose work is not classified as a worst form of child labour, including “hazardous work” in particular. Similarly, child labour in hazardous work⁴ is defined as any activity or occupation that, by its nature or type, has or leads to adverse effects

on the child's safety, health and moral development. Clearly, hazardous work is a subcategory of child labour, which is in turn, a subcategory of children in employment.

Trends of Child Labour in India: A report on “Children in India 2012- A statistical Appraisal” released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), revealed that India is the country with largest number of child labourers in the world in the age group of 5-14 years. Actually India has faced ups and downs in the number of working children over the decades. The number of working children in India was around 10.75 million in 1971 which increased sharply to 13.64 million in 1981 showing a 27% increase in child labour. It again reduced by more than 2 million in 1991 and stood at 11.28 million and further to 12.66 million in 2001. During the period 1971 – 2001 the number of working children was always above 10 million.

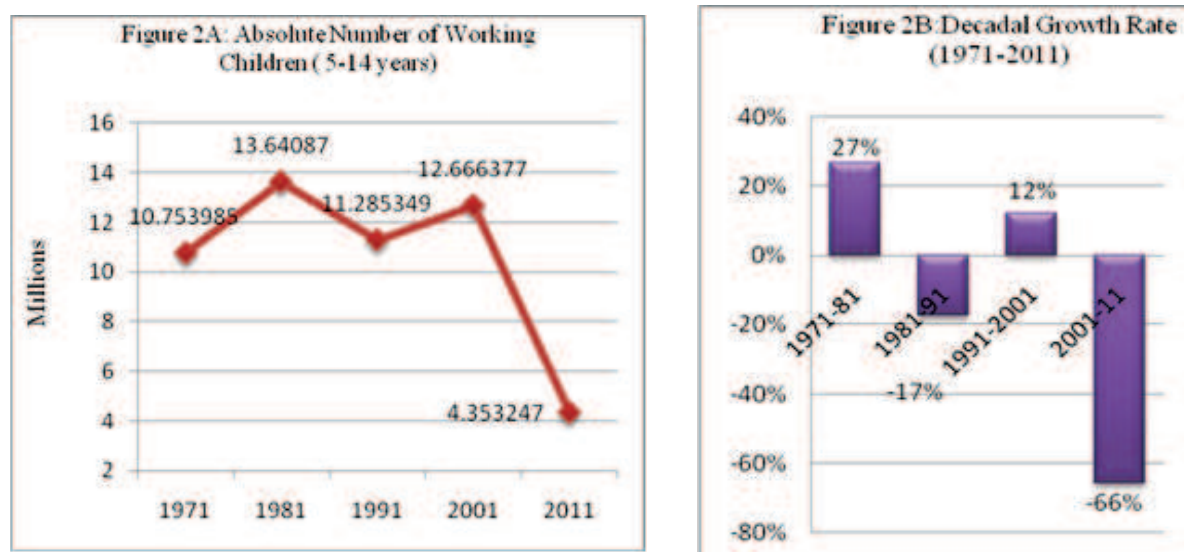
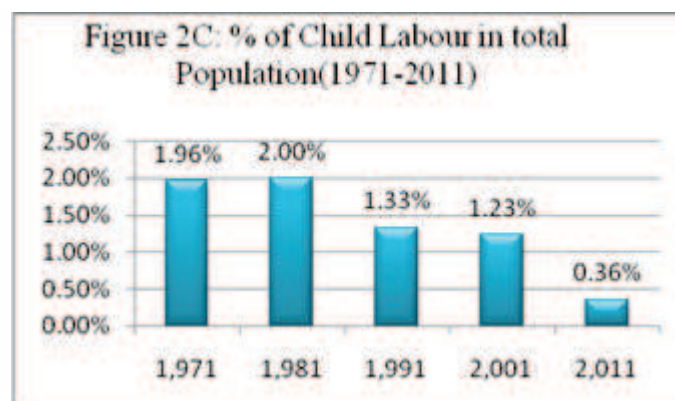


Figure 2: Working Children in India (in the age of 5-14 yr)
Source: Census data

Success with regard to controlling child labour in India is achieved in the 21st century when the number of working children has reduced by 66% during the period 2001-2011. During this period the absolute number of working children has reduced by more than 8 million as it fallen from a high of 12.6 million in 2001 to 4.37 million in 2011(figure 2A).



In relative term the share of working child in total population was 1.96% in 1971. It increased marginally to 2% in 1981 and thereafter child labour as a percentage of total population reduced continuously from 1.33% in 1991 to 1.23% in 2001 to only 0.36% in 2011(figure2C). The sharp fall in the share of child labour

in total population is attributable to proactive role played by the government and different non-government agencies towards making child labour free India.

6: State-wise Distribution of Working Children in the age group 5-14 years

State-wise distribution of working children shows that the prevalence of child labour is not uniform across the Indian states. A major share of child worker is observed in the states like Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and West Bengal. On the other hand, the observance of child labour is quite less in Union territories and north-east part of India except Assam.

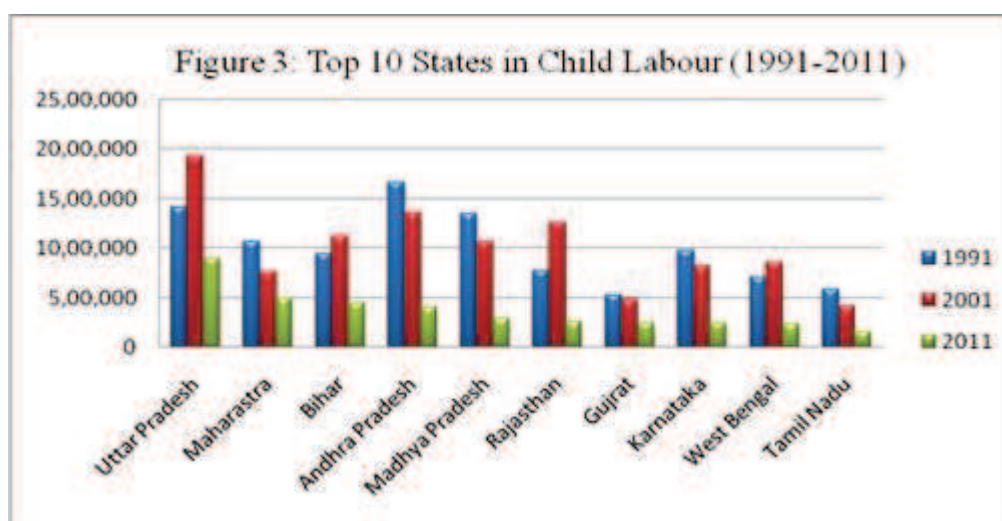
Table1: State-wise Distribution of Working Children According to
1991 - 2011 Census in the age group 5-14 years

Sl. No.	Name of the State/UT	Number of Working Children			(% change in working children)	
		1991	2001	2011	1991-2001	2001-2011
1	Andaman & Nicobar Island	1,265	1,960	999	54.94%	-49.03%
2	Andhra Pradesh	16,61,940	13,63,339	4,04,851	-17.97%	-70.30%
3	Arunachal Pradesh	12,395	18,482	5,766	49.11%	-68.80%
4	Assam	3,27,598	3,51,416	99,512	7.27%	-71.68%
5	Bihar	9,42,245	11,17,500	4,51,590	18.60%	-59.59%
6	Chandigarh	1,870	3,779	3,135	102.09%	-17.04%
7	Chattisgarh		3,64,572	63,884		-82.48%
8	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	4,416	4,274	1,054	-3.22%	-75.34%
9	Daman & Diu	941	729	774	-22.53%	6.17%
10	Delhi	27,351	41,899	26,473	53.19%	-36.82%
11	Goa	4,656	4,138	6,920	-11.13%	67.23%
12	Gujarat	5,23,585	4,85,530	2,50,318	-7.27%	-48.44%
13	Haryana	1,09,691	2,53,491	53,492	131.10%	-78.90%
14	Himachal Pradesh	56,438	1,07,774	15,001	90.96%	-86.08%
15	Jammu & Kashmir		1,75,630	25,528		-85.46%
16	Jharkhand		4,07,200	90,996		-77.65%
17	Karnataka	9,76,247	8,22,615	2,49,432	-15.74%	-69.68%
18	Kerala	34,800	26,156	21,757	-24.84%	-16.82%
19	Lakshadweep	34	27	28	-20.59%	3.70%
20	Madhya Pradesh	13,52,563	10,65,259	2,86,310	-21.24%	-73.12%
21	Maharashtra	10,68,427	7,64,075	4,96,916	-28.49%	-34.97%
22	Manipur	16,493	28,836	11,805	74.84%	-59.06%
23	Meghalaya	34,633	53,940	18,839	55.75%	-65.07%
24	Mizoram	16,411	26,265	2,793	60.05%	-89.37%
25	Nagaland	16,467	45,874	11,062	178.58%	-75.89%
26	Orissa	4,52,394	3,77,594	92,087	-16.53%	-75.61%
27	Pandicherry	2,680	1,904	1,421	-28.96%	-25.37%
28	Punjab	1,42,868	1,77,268	90,353	24.08%	-49.03%
29	Rajasthan	7,74,199	12,62,570	2,52,338	63.08%	-80.01%
30	Sikkim	5,598	16,457	2,704	193.98%	-83.57%

31	Tamil Nadu	5,78,889	4,18,801	1,51,437	-27.65%	-63.84%
32	Tripura	16,478	21,756	4,998	32.03%	-77.03%
33	Uttar Pradesh	14,10,086	19,27,997	8,96,301	36.73%	-53.51%
34	Uttaranchal		70,183	28,098		-59.96%
35	West Bengal	7,11,691	8,57,087	2,34,275	20.43%	-72.67%
	Total	112,85,349	126,66,377	43,53,247	12.24%	-65.63%

Source: Census Data

Concentration of child is defined as the ratio between the working children in a state to total child labour. State-wise analysis of concentration of child labour during the census period 1991 -2011 does not show any monotonic trend. For example, as per census 1991 concentration of child labour was highest in Andhra Pradesh (14.72%) followed by Uttar Pradesh (12.49%), Madhya Pradesh (11.99%) and Maharashtra (9.47%). But as per census 2001, Uttar Pradesh (15.22%) recorded the highest share of child labour in the country, followed by Andhra Pradesh (10.76%), Rajasthan (9.97%), Bihar (8.82%), Madhya Pradesh (8.41%), and West Bengal (6.77%). According to Census 2011, Uttar Pradesh again recorded highest share of child labour to total child labour in the country and the share increased to more than 20%. The last three census record (1991,2001 &2011) reveal that in the states like Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar, West Bengal, Karnataka and Maharashtra, the concentration of child labour is more than 5%. It is also found that top 10 States in child labour are Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Karnataka, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu (figure 3). More than 80% of working children are concentrated in the above 10 states.



Source: Compiled from Table 1

Analysis of the census data further reveals that while the number of working children increased by 12.24% during the census period 1991 -2001, north- eastern states (except Assam) and Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Chattisgarh, Bihar, West Bengal, Haryana, Uttaranchal, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab and Delhi experienced increase in the absolute number of child labour more than national average during this period (figure 4). It also reveals that in some states, percentage increase in child labour during the period 1991-2001 was abnormally high.

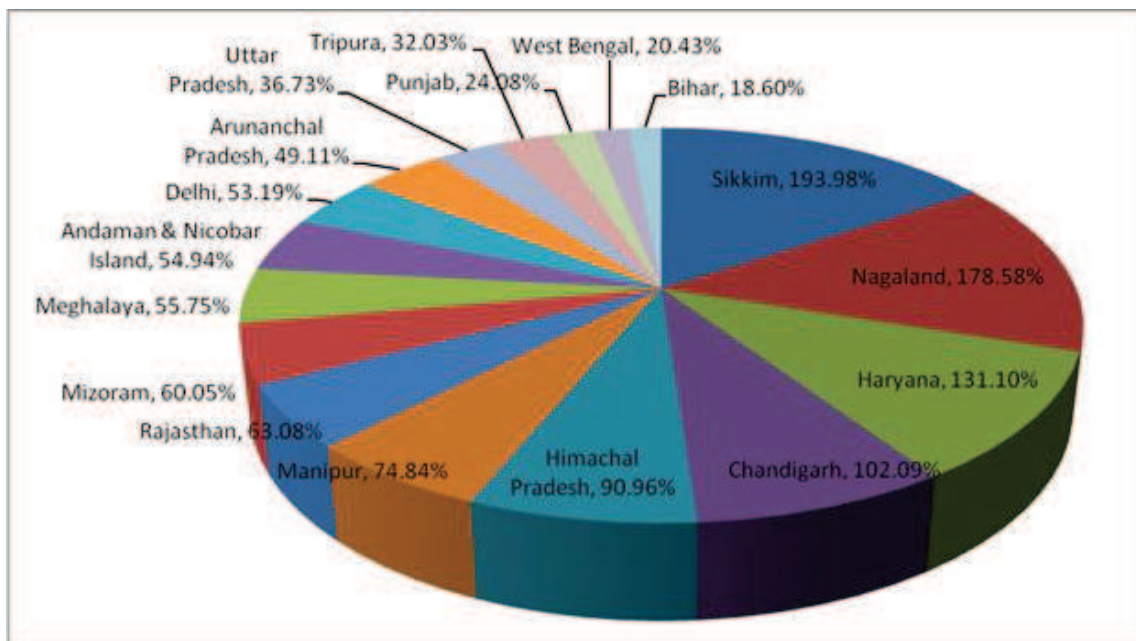


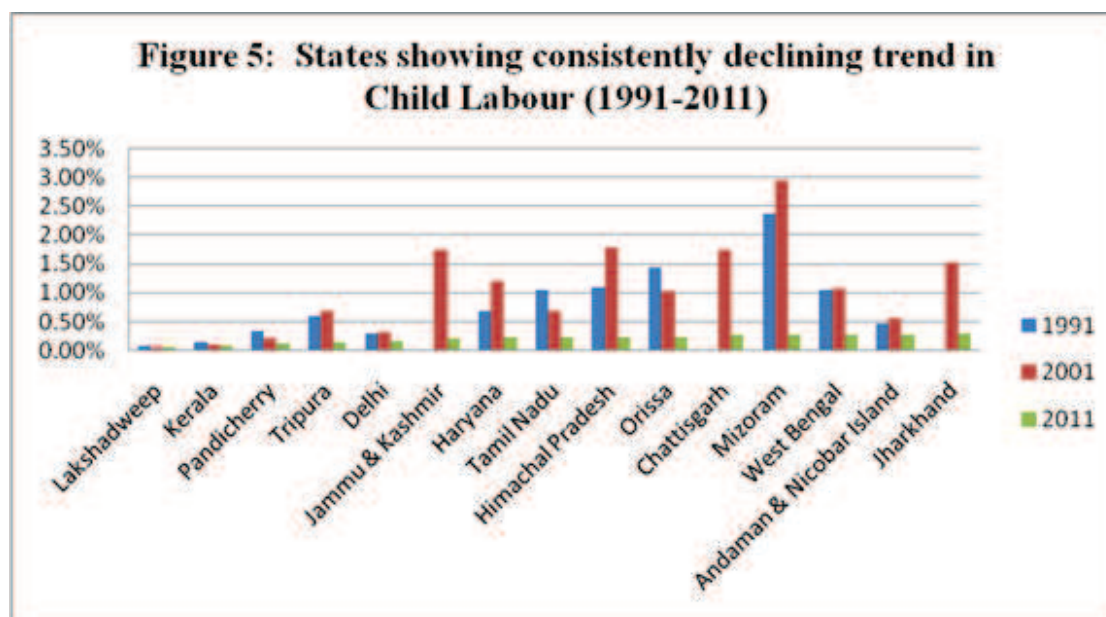
Figure 4: States representing Increase in Child Labour more than National Avg. (1991-2001)

Source: Compiled from Table 1

On the other hand, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Orissa, Gujarat and Kerala have shown significant decline in the number of child labour.

It also revealed that during 2001-2011, few states performed much better in reducing child labour compared to national standard. In 18 states the percentage decline in child labour was above the national average of 65.63%. It ranges between 68.00% in Arunachal Pradesh to as high as 89.37% in Mizoram. Only three Union Territories (Lakshadweep, Daman & Diu and Goa) has experienced increase in child worker in the last decade. There may be several socio-economic reasons behind the skewed pattern of child labour across the states.

State-wise Analysis of Child Labour as a ratio of Population: Ratio of working children to state's total population is another important indicator of child labour problem. As mentioned earlier, ratio of child labour to total population of India is gradually declining from 1991 census. However, ratio of working children to state's total population shows ups and downs over the reference period. Comparative analysis of the ratio of working children to state population revealed that only 14 states have shown consistently declining trend in child labour over the last three census period i.e., 1991, 2001 and 2011 (figure 5). But it is pertinent to mention that the share of child labour as a percentage of population has reduced for all the states (except Goa and Lakshadweep) between the census period 2001 and 2011.



Looking at the Census data 2011, it is found that in 21 states/UTs share of child labour to population is below the national average as per census 2011. All the UTs and newly formed states fall under this category. The states in which share of child labour to population exceed national average are the North-eastern states (except Assam, Tripura and Mizoram), Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Goa and Andhra Pradesh. It also reveals that ratio of child labour to population is more than 0.5 in Nagaland, Meghalaya and Andhra Pradesh which is quite alarming for the development of the state.

Conclusion: Child labour is a major impediment for the development of the nation. It is a pressing problem for India as the country possesses the highest number of child labour in the world. The Central government, state governments and NGO in collaboration with international agencies are trying hard to fight against child labour. Success to this end has also been achieved as it is observed from the census records.

However, the state-wise analysis of child labour reveals that the gravity of the child labour problem is not similar in all the states. More populous states have higher number of working children. In some states, share of child labour to total child labour is significantly higher than the national level. More than 80% of working children are concentrated in few states including Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Karnataka, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu. It is also observed that newly formed states are doing fairly well to cope up with the problem of child labour. Moreover, in UTs the problem of child labour is relatively less. Migration of child labour from less developed to relatively developed states is also a problem that needs special attention of respective state governments.

References:

1. Grimsrud. B., Millennium Development Goals and Child Labour, Understanding Children's Work Project Working Paper Series, October 2003.
2. Government of India, Planning Commission, Working Group for Social inclusion of Vulnerable Group like Child Labour and Bonded and Migrant Labour in the 12th Five Year Plan (2012-17)
3. Marking progress against child labour: Global estimates and trends 2000-2012, ILO.
4. Examples of hazardous work are night work and long hours of work; exposure to physical, psychological or sexual abuse; work underground, under water, at dangerous heights or in confined spaces; work with dangerous machinery, equipment and tools, or which involves the manual

handling or transport of heavy loads; and work in an unhealthy environment which may, for example, expose children hazardous substances, agents or processes, or to temperatures, noise levels, or vibrations damaging their health.

5. Census data on Child Labour, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India, Website.
6. Children in India 2012 – A Statistical Appraisal, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India, New Delhi 2012 .
7. Grimsrud, B.(2003), Millennium Development Goals and Child Labour, UNICEF.
8. Government of India, Planning Commission, Working Group for Social inclusion of Vulnerable Group like Child Labour and Bonded and Migrant Labour in the 12th Five Year Plan (2012-17)
9. Kumuda, D. (2014) Child Labour in India- Present Scenario. IOSR Journal of Economics and Finance, Vol-5, Issue-1, pp. 33-36.
10. Marking progress against child labour: Global estimates and trends 2000-2012, ILO.
11. Statistics on Children in India Handbook 2012. National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development.
