

# Magnitude of Child Labour in India

## An Analysis of Official Sources of Data (Draft)

### 1. Introduction

Child labour is a concrete manifestation of violations of a range of rights of children and is recognised as a serious and enormously complex social problem in India. Working children are denied their right to survival and development, education, leisure and play, and adequate standard of living, opportunity for developing personality, talents, mental and physical abilities, and protection from abuse and neglect. Notwithstanding the increase in the enrolment of children in elementary schools and increase in literacy rates since 1980s, child labour continues to be a significant phenomenon in India.

Irrespective of what is shown in the official statistics, we say that the phenomenon of child labour is significant because, the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 is a legislation to address hazardous industrial child labour in a limited way as the purview of the Act covers only the organized sectors of production. As it is inbuilt in the law, this Act has excluded a vast section of toiling children in the unorganized sectors, as over 90 percent of the labour force in India is accounted for by the unorganised sectors of production. The political weight behind the initiatives towards government legal intervention has been very dissimilar across states of India. Generally under the era of globalization and liberalization policies, the underlying attitude of the government is not to strictly impose labour laws that will disturb the production process. With regard to other forms of intervention, the flag ship programme of the Government of India is the National Child Labour Project (NCLP). The NCLP Scheme started in 1988, has so far covered 400,200 working children. About 3.08 lakh children have been mainstreamed into formal education system so far. The Scheme is running in 250 districts in 14 states. Even after discounting for the inherent problems in the NCLP scheme the coverage is very low compared to the magnitude of the problem (12 million according to 2001 population census) even by the official statistics. In fact the magnitude of child labour has increased in absolute terms by about one million between 1991 and 2001.

This paper is a modest attempt in critically look at the official sources of information on the magnitude of child labour in India. The analysis is presented in the background of the present socio economic context in India which has direct impact on the lives of children, and in turn the magnitude of child labour.

## **2. Background**

Indian economy is booming at a record 8-9% GDP growth for the fourth successive year but the tottering Indian agriculture where 60 percent of the workforce depends is struggling to achieve even an average 2% annual growth! The average annual growth rate of food grains production in the country during the last 13 years (from 1994-05 to 2006-07) works out to a meager 1.49 per cent. The growth rate of non-food grains is 1.46 per cent per annum in this period. There is no need to stress the implication of the fact that this is lesser than the growth rate of the population. Interestingly, this entire period is, by strange coincidence, supposed to be the greatest and unprecedented boom period for the overall economy and the total GDP of the country. But the agrarian sector is facing a crisis that led to suicides of many farmers in the country. This crisis is affecting most of the rural poor. Studies in Andhra Pradesh show that the families of suicide victims are withdrawing their children from schools and putting them to work<sup>1</sup>.

It is often said by leading economists in India that the most significant failure of post-independence Indian economic development is that the proportion of the workforce dependent on agriculture has declined much less than expected. India as a whole the share of labour force engaged in agriculture still remains at around 60 percent compared to 70 percent during 1951. Over the years the contribution of agriculture and allied activities to the national income has been steadily falling, currently to a level of about 20 percent (Abhijit Sen, 2002). This trend has been differently impacting on the labour and livelihoods of people living in rural areas. The changes are also influenced by the development and growth of non-farm economy and social development policy regime (in terms of education, infrastructure, industrial policies and so on). While there is a deceleration in the growth of employment in India, an analysis of NSSO data with regard to changes in rural casual labourers, wages and poverty between 1983 to 2000 (Sheila Bhalla et al 2005) shows that in Rural India, casual labourers have been identified as the largest occupational group characterized by chronic poverty. This casual labour workforce is growing both in terms of absolute numbers and in terms of its share in the rural workforce. It is also found that one of the most important features of this large casual labour workforce is that substantial subsets of its members do more than one kind of work (pp.143). As

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<sup>1</sup> Vidyasagar. R. and Suman Chandra. K., 2003, Farmers Suicide in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, National Institute of Rural Development, Hyderabad and Dheeraja, 2007, A study on coping mechanism for the families of suicide victims in Anantapur district” NIRD, Hyderabad.

per the NSS data, during 1990s, the reform period the share of agricultural labourers in officially defined total rural poor increased from 41 to 47 per cent and almost every aspect of their well-being was seriously dented (Praveen Jha, 2007)

According to Praveen Jha, the more disturbing development is a considerable weakening of school attendance of children from agricultural labour households. The proportion of children from such households attending school in 1987-88, at the all-India level, was just over 30 per cent but it saw a very substantial jump of over 22 per cent points to reach 52.9 per cent in 1993-94. But, the rate of progress decelerated dramatically as in 1999-00 only 59.8 per cent children attended school. As the table shows the all India picture holds true for most states, and the worst performing ones are the so called BIMARU states. It may not be unwarranted to suggest that growing economic vulnerability of agricultural labour households is part of the explanation for the observed deceleration in the expansion of school attendance<sup>2</sup>. Despite definitional problem, Census data shows an increasing trend in the magnitude of child labour in most of the major states in India.

The above socio-economic context in India provides the backdrop for critically looking at the official data on the magnitude of child labour in the country.

### **3. Child Population in India**

As per 2001 Population Census, children in the age group of 0-14 constituted about 360 million and accounted for 35.3 percent of total population. Children in the 5-14 age group constituted about 251 million and accounted for 24.6 percent of the population. Though there is an increase in the absolute number of children, the proportion of children in the total population is declining between 1991 and 2001. By Census of India projections, the proportion of children (0 to 14) has further come down to 32.1 percent during 2006. Elementary school age children (5 to 14) in the total population constituted 241.7 million accounting for 21.7 percent of the total population (Table 1). The reduction in the proportion of children is attributed to drastic reduction in the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) in many of the major states, especially in Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Gujarat. On the other hand TFR remains high in some of the major states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. Thus the segment of child population varies across states depending on the TFR. It is seen

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<sup>2</sup> Praveen Jha, Keynote paper on the theme "Agrarian Crisis and Rural Labour" Some Aspects of the Well-Being of India's Agricultural Labour in the Context of Contemporary Agrarian Crisis

that the Proportion of children in the population has implications for the incidence of child labour. Number of empirical studies on child labour has associated large family size with high incidence of child labour (VVGNLI, 1999)<sup>3</sup>. The demographic approach to child work has provoked a lively debate on the causal relationship between high fertility and the utility of children for the rural household<sup>4</sup>. Fertility behaviour is also related to various social and cultural factors. The results of these debates have so far been inconclusive. In India for example, the States that have experienced rapid decline in TFR have witnessed decline in the intensity of child labour. In contrast to this the states in Northern India where the trends in fertility decline have been rather slow the incidence of child labour has in fact increased between 1991 and 2001. Within India, Kerala State, where the fertility rate is lowest, has achieved highest literacy rates in the country and the incidence of child labour is negligible. Thus, the changes in the demographic structure in many states provide a positive ground towards elimination of child labour.

**Table 1 Percentage of children in total population**

Age group	1991	2001	2006*
0-4	12.0	10.7	10.4
5-9	13.2	12.5	10.7
10-14	11.9	12.1	11.0
5 to 14	25.1	24.6	21.7
0-14	37.2	35.3	32.1

Note: 1991 Population Census figures excluded J & K State and for comparative purposes we have excluded figures for J & K for 2001 Source: Population Census 1991 and 2001 and Population Projections, Based on 2001 Census of India, (2006) including J & K

#### **4. 'Child labour'- as defined in official statistics**

The decennial Census and the National Sample Survey are the two major official sources of data on child employment. However these two sources have no specific definition on child labour. The figures for 'child labour' are derived from

<sup>3</sup> VV Giri National Labour Institute, 2000, "Child Labour in Home Based Industries in the Wake of Legislation" (reports of Child Labour in nine different hazardous industries in India).

<sup>4</sup> For example Vlassoff Michael, 1991 and Dyson Tim, 1997. The debate on linkage between fertility behaviour and child labour is summarised in Grootaert and Kanbur, 1995. Christian GROOTAERT and Ravi KANBUR, "CHILD LABOUR: AN ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE", International Labour Review, Vol.134, 1995, No.2

using age-wise distribution of workers. Workers are defined as “those who engage in economic activities”; and ‘economic activity’ is defined as “any activity resulting in production of goods and services that add value to national product”. The major exclusions are ‘own account’ processing of primary products. Similarly, activities relating to the production of primary goods for ‘own consumption’ are restricted to only the agriculture sector and do not include mining and quarrying activities. Further, “activities like prostitution, begging, smuggling etc., which though fetched earnings, are, by convention, not considered as economic activities”<sup>5</sup>. Work has been defined in the Census 2001 as ‘participation in any economically productive activity with or without compensation, wages or profit.’ Such participation could be physical and/or mental in nature. This work includes supervisory work as well as direct participation in the work. All persons engaged in ‘work’ as defined in the Census are considered workers. Main workers are defined as those who have worked for the major part of the reference period, which is 6 months or more. And marginal workers are those who have not worked for the major part of the reference period. All those workers who are not cultivators or agricultural labourers or engaged in household industry are categorized as ‘Other Workers’.

Thus, working children are counted as workers only if they contribute towards the national product based on economic accounting model. This definition of labour is narrow, as it is modeled in respect to monetary contribution to national product, so far as analysis of child labour is concerned. This may not include all work related activities performed by children that hinder their protection and development as defined in CRC. This approach of the official sources view child labour only as an economic entity and what is missing is a right based approach. Child labour is not just an economic issue but an issue of human rights. The following section discusses the magnitude of child labour as presented by the official sources followed by a discussion on the real magnitude.

## **5. Magnitude of Child Labour in India:**

According to Census of India, 2001, there were 12.26 million working children in the age group of 5-14 years as compared to 11.3 million in 1991 revealing an increasing trend in absolute numbers though the work participation rates of children (5-14) has come down from 5.4 percent during 1991 to 5 percent during 2001. The recent round of the National Sample Survey (NSSO) estimates suggests that the child labour in the country is around 8.9 million in 2004/2005 with a

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<sup>5</sup> NSSO, 2000 “Theories and Concepts”

workforce participation rate of 3.4 per cent (NSSO 2004/05). Due to definitional problems, as discussed in this paper, a substantial proportion of child labour may remain uncounted.

*Census data shows that there is a decline in the absolute number as well the percentage of Main workers of children (5-14 to total population in that age group, from 4.3 percent in 1991 to 2.3 percent in 2001. But there was a substantial increase in marginal workers in every category of worker irrespective of sex and residence.* As a result, despite the number of main workers declining from 9.08 million in 1991 to 5.78 million in 2001, the total number of children in the work force increased. A large part of the increase was accounted for by the increase in marginal workers, which increased from 2.2 million in 1991 to 6.89 million in 2001. Main and Marginal workers put together, the work participation rate (WPR) of children in the 5-14 age group has declined from 5.4 percent during 1991 to 5 percent in 2001. The trends between 1991 and 2001 of declining main child workers along with increasing marginal workers may indicate the changing nature of work done by children. (Detailed tables of main and marginal workers by residence and sex for the age-group 5-9 and 10-14 for 1991 and 2001 are at Annexure I). There is a general trend of marginalization of labour force in the country and this is also reflected in the Census figures. This is to be seen in the context of decelerating employment growth in general in the economy during the last decade that is characterized as an era of globalization.

<b>All India</b>	<b>1991</b>			<b>2001</b>		
	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>	<b>All Children</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>	<b>All Children</b>
5 to 9	0.9	0.9	0.9	1.5	1.4	1.4
10 to 14	10.9	9.9	10.4	8.8	8.5	8.7
5 to 14	5.7	5.1	5.4	5.1	4.9	5.0

## **6. Age group wise Work Participation Rate (WPR)**

However, if we look at the WPR for different age groups among children, the trend is different. The WPR for children in 5 to 9 age group has marginally increased from less than 1 percent during 1991 to 1.4 percent during 2001. In the case of 10-14 years age group children the decline is only marginal - from 10.4

percent during 1991 to 8.7 percent during 2001. This indicates that a substantial number of children in the 10 to 14 age group are in the labour force despite the decline in the proportion of children in the total population. Latest available estimates on WPR children are from the 61<sup>st</sup> Round of NSSO (2004-05). According to NSSO estimates WPR for children in the 5-9 age group is negligible and for children in the age group of 10-14, it still continues to be significant though declining (Table 3). NSSO data being based on a sample survey, this reflects the current economic situation with regard to general employment in the economy. Decline in child labour has to be seen in the context of general decline in employment growth. The current economic process has rendered many more children vulnerable to labour related exploitation, though many of them are classified as out of school children but not in work.

**Table 3 Magnitude of child labour and out of school children**

Distribution of Children	2001 Population Census <sup>6</sup>	2006 Population Projection and estimates <sup>7</sup>	% of Children to Population	
			2001	2006
<b>Population</b>				
Male	132367710	125485000		
Female	120795938	116274000		
Total	253163648	241759000		
<b>Child Labour (10-14)</b>				
Male	6804336	4276744	8.8	6.7
Female	5862041	3894131	8.5	6.3
Total	12666377	8082954	8.7	6.6

<sup>6</sup> Census of India, 2001.

<sup>7</sup> Population of children in 2006 is based on the projections of the Report of the technical group on population projections constituted by the National Commission on Population, Population Projections for India and States 2001 -2026 (Revised December 2006), Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India. Estimates for working children and out of school children are based on NSSO 61<sup>st</sup> Round, Report Number 515 (61/10/1), "Employment and Unemployment Situation in India" 2004-05, Part I, Table (19): Per 1000 distribution of persons by usual activity category taking also into consideration the subsidiary economic status of persons categorized 'not working' in the principal status for each age-group.

<b>Children out of school</b>				
Male	36428634	19199205	27.5	15.3
Female	45878836	24184992	38.0	20.8
Total	87126075	43274861	34.4	17.9

## **7. Magnitude of child labour across major states in India**

### **7.1 Census Data**

As per the census data, the trend on the magnitude of child labour is not uniform across the country. There is across the board decline in the incidence of child labour in the Southern and Western Indian States and UTs between 1991 and 2001. However, there has been an increasing trend in the Eastern and North Indian States and UTs (Table 4). There is an increase in the absolute magnitude of child labour between 1991 and 2001 in the states of UP, Bihar, Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. If we combine the bifurcated states from MP, UP and Bihar the increase in magnitude is much more than what is seen in the divided states (Table 4). While the Kerala and Tamil Nadu stories are well known, it is heartening to see that the state of Andhra Pradesh, that had a dubious distinction of having the largest child labour force in the country, shows reduction in magnitude of child labour and work participation rates along with a dramatic increase in the enrollment of children in school. However, Andhra Pradesh is the second largest state in terms of magnitude by 2001 Census.

As for as the percentage share of child labour across the states, Uttar Pradesh account for a larger share of about 15 percent all child workforces in India followed by Andhra Pradesh, with 10.8 percent. Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar respectively garnered 10, 8.8 and eight percent of India's child employment. The share of Uttar Pradesh has shot up from less than 13 per cent during 1991 to 15.2 per cent in 2001, which is a cause for serious concern (Table 4). Over 53 percent of the child labour in India was accounted for by the five states namely UP, AP, Rajasthan, MP and Bihar during 2001. Karnataka, Maharashtra and West Bengal together had about 20 percent of the child labourers in India during 2001. It is also to be noted here that there is a general increasing trend in the magnitude of child labour in the north east region of the country. Surprising is the case of Himachal Pradesh, which has shown significant



increases in school attendance and in literacy levels<sup>8</sup>. However, there is a dramatic increase in the percentage of children in the age-group 5-14 years who are classified as workers, both main and marginal. In Himachal Pradesh, the percentage of child workers has gone up from 5.5 percent in 1991 to 8.6 percent in 2001. This is a reflection of the emerging crisis of poorer segments of the population like in many other states. The growth of child labour across states and UTs in India between 1991 and 2001 are presented in Table 5.

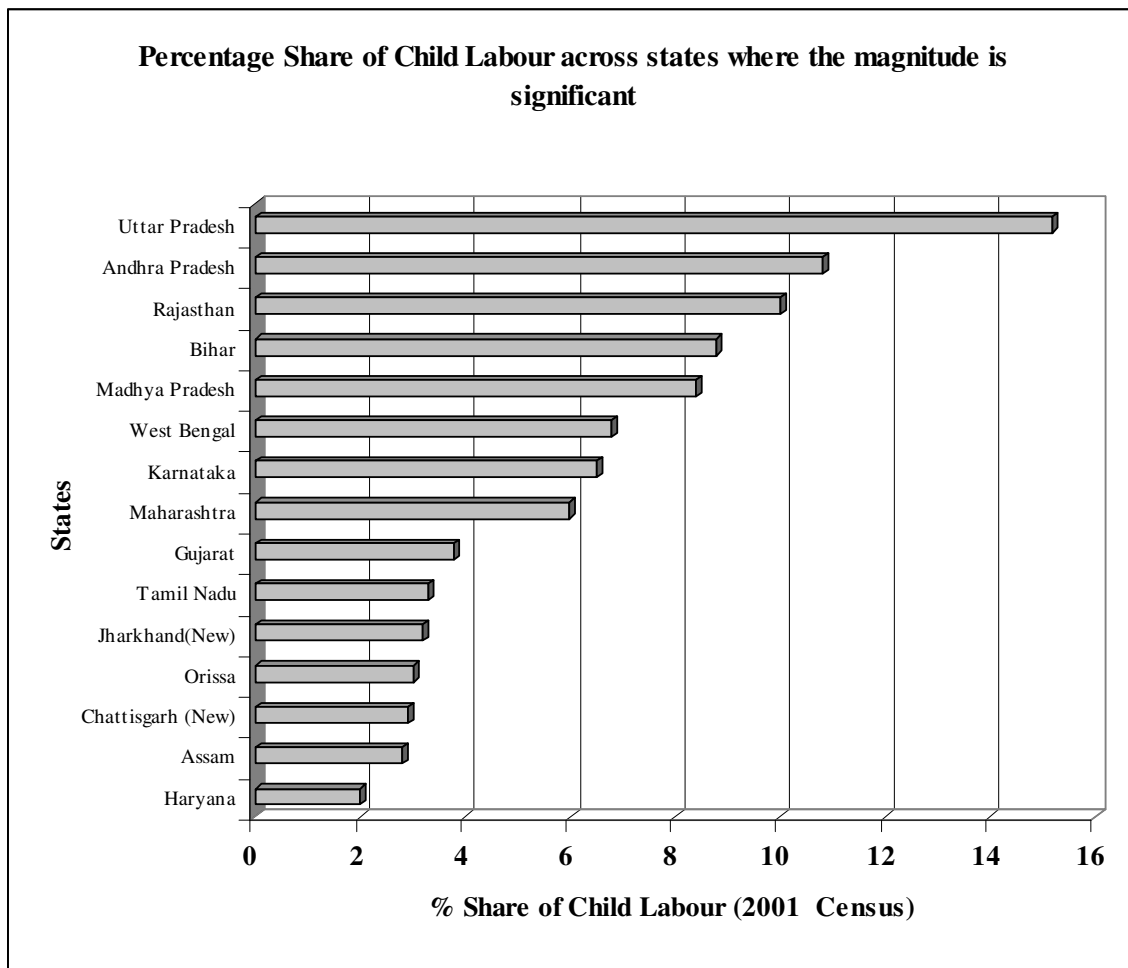
**Table 4 Changes in the magnitude of child labour and WPR between 1991 and 2001 (Children in the age group of 5-14)**

States	Child Workers 1991	Child Workers 2001	Work Participation rates		Percentage Share of Child labour in the State	
			1991	2001	1991	2001
Andhra Pradesh	1661940	1363339	9.98	7.7	14.7	10.8
Arunachal Pradesh	12395	18482	5.65	6.06	0.1	0.1
Assam	327598	351416	5.46	5.07	2.9	2.8
Bihar	942245	1117500	3.99	4.68	8.3	8.8
Chattisgarh (New)		364572		6.96	0.0	2.9
Delhi	27351	41899	1.27	1.35	0.2	0.3
Goa	4656	4138	1.95	1.82	0.0	0.0
Gujarat	523585	485530	5.26	4.28	4.6	3.8
Haryana	109691	253491	2.55	4.78	1.0	2.0
Himachal Pradesh	56438	107774	4.55	8.14	0.5	0.9
Jammu & Kashmir		175630		6.62	0.0	1.4
Jharkhand(New)		407200		5.47	0.0	3.2
Karnataka	976247	822665	8.81	6.91	8.7	6.5
Kerala	34800	26156	0.58	0.47	0.3	0.2
Madhya Pradesh	1352563	1065259	8.08	6.71	12.0	8.4
Maharashtra	1068418	764075	5.73	3.54	9.5	6.0
Orissa	452394	377594	5.87	4.37	4.0	3.0
Punjab	142868	177268	3.04	3.23	1.3	1.4
Rajasthan	774199	1262570	6.46	8.25	6.9	10.0

<sup>8</sup> The Himachal Pradesh story has been well documented by Anuradha De, Claire Noronha and Meera Samson in "Primary Education in Himachal Pradesh: Examining a Success Story" in R. Govinda (edited) (2002) **India Education Report**, op.cited, pp.297-311

Sikkim	5598	16457	5.18	<b>12.04</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.1</b>
Tamil Nadu	578889	418801	4.83	<b>3.61</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>3.3</b>
Tripura	16478	21756	2.29	<b>2.79</b>	<b>0.1</b>	<b>0.2</b>
Uttar Pradesh	1410086	1927997	3.81	<b>4.04</b>	<b>12.5</b>	<b>15.2</b>
Uttranchal(New)		70183		<b>3.24</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.6</b>
West Bengal	711691	857087	4.16	<b>4.5</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>6.8</b>
<b>India</b>	<b>11285349</b>	<b>12666377</b>	<b>5.37</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

(Source: compiled from census of India 1991 and 2001)



### Work Participation Rate of children (5-14)

While Sikkim had the highest WPR in the country with 12.04 percent (child labourers among total children in the age group of 5-14), among major states Rajasthan had the highest WPR with 8.25 percent during 2001. Himachal Pradesh closely followed Rajasthan with 8.14 percent. The other states having

higher than the national average of 5 percent WPR for children are Andhra Pradesh (7.7%), Chattisgarh (6.96%), Karnataka (6.91%), Madhya Pradesh (6.71%), J&K, Arunachal Pradesh, Jharkhand and Assam (table 4).

**Table 5 Growth of child labour across States and UTs in India between 1991 and 2001**

State/UTs showing % decline in the incidence of child labour during 2001 as compared to 1991	State/UTs showing % increase in the incidence of child labour during 2001 as compared to 1991
Dadra & Nagar Haveli (-3.22), Gujarat (-7.27), Goa (-11.3), Karnataka (-15.74), Orissa (-16.53), Andhra Pradesh (-17.97), Lakshadweep (20.59), Daman & Diu (-22.53), Kerala (-24.84), Tamil Nadu (-27.65), Maharashtra (-28.49), and Pondicherry (26.96).	Madhya Pradesh (5.71), Assam (7.27), West Bengal (20.43), Punjab (24.08), Tripura (32.03), Uttar Pradesh (41.71), Arunachal Pradesh (49.11), Delhi (53.19), Andaman and Nicobar Islands (54.94), Meghalaya (55.75), Mizoram (60.05), Bihar (61.82), Rajasthan (63.08), Manipur (74.84), Himachal Pradesh (90.96), Chandigarh (102.09), Haryana (131.10), Nagaland (178.43) and Sikkim (193.98)

Note: Jharkhand, Uttarakhand and Chhattisgarh has been merged to Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh respectively for comparison)

Source: INDUS, Child Labour Project, 2007, Child Labour Facts and Figures: An analysis of Census 2001, ILO and Government of India.

## **7.2 NSSO Data Analysis on the magnitude of child labour:**

Compared to 2001 census data, the 61<sup>st</sup> round of NSSO data, 2004-05 reported that there were 9.07 million working persons of age group 5-14 years. While the Census is conducted during the beginning of every decade the NSSO is conducted twice in each decade. Thus NSSO data also provides the mid-decade trends of various aspects of the economy. The 61<sup>st</sup> round of NSSO (2004-05) shows a declining trend compared to two earlier rounds (table 6) in the magnitude of child labour. While it is heartening to see that the magnitude is declining, the figures are based on a very restrictive definition as discussed above. The children who are not in school and not in work are enormous even by the NSSO estimates. This issue is discussed below in this paper.

**Table 6 NSSO Estimate of the Magnitude of Child Labour in India, 1993-2004/05 (in millions)**

Year (Round)	Boys	Girls	All
1993-94 (50th Round)	7.35	6.51	13.86
1999-00 (55th Round)	5.37	4.76	10.13
2004-05 (61st Round)	4.76	4.31	9.07

Source: Derived from Respective Unit Level Records of NSS

NSSO data also shows that, Uttar Pradesh account for a larger share of close to one-fourth of all child workforces in India followed by Andhra Pradesh, with 13 percent. Similar to 2001 census figures, UP and AP states have captured the first and second place in terms of magnitude of child labour as revealed by NSSO (2004-05) data. Maharastra and West Bengal respectively garnered nine and eight percent of India's child employment. The share of Uttar Pradesh has dramatically shot up compared to 50<sup>th</sup> round of NSSO data (1993-94) from less than 13 per cent to close to 23 per cent in 2004-05, which is a cause for serious concern. On the other hand, the share of Andhra Pradesh seems to have declined quite considerably but remains significant (Table 7).

**Table 7: NSSO Estimate of Child Labour in Major Indian States, 2004-05 (in thousands)**

States	Rural	Urban	All	% share of child labour
A.P.	1052	140	1201	13.2
Assam	124	8	133	1.5
Bihar	333	30	364	4.0
Chhattishgarh	225	31	263	2.9
Delhi	0	10	9	0.1
Goa	3	2	6	0.1
Gujrat	220	77	302	3.3
Haryana	83	14	99	1.1
H.P.	36	1	37	0.4
Jharkhand	167	38	206	2.3
Karnataka	510	41	571	6.3
Kerala	7	4	11	0.1
M.P.	414	68	491	5.4
Maharastra	664	84	783	8.6
Orissa	413	22	440	4.8

Punjab	23	21	101	1.1
Rajasthan	714	110	821	9.0
Tamil Nadu	95	79	173	1.9
U.P.	1620	459	2074	22.9
Uttaranchal	59	3	64	0.7
West Bengal	488	217	690	7.6
India	7445	1525	9075	100.0

Source: Derived from Unit Level Records of NSS, 2004-05

### NSSO data on Work Participation rates of children:

NSSO data reveals that the work participation rates of children have been declining as shown by the census data. While the WPR is insignificant for the children in the age group of 5-9 during 2004-05, it is higher for the children in the age group of 10-14. This shows that enrollment of children in primary schools has improved all over the country since the launching of Sarva Shiksha Abiyan (SSA) since 2000. However, the drop out rates from schools seems to be higher at the middle school level showing higher WPR for children in the age group of 10-14. Secondly the WPR is higher in the rural areas than urban areas. The WPR for girl children is higher than boys in general and in rural areas (Table 8). While this is the picture that emerges at the all India level, there are states having much higher work participation rates for children.

**Table 8 Child Workforce Participation Rates in India, 1993-94 to 2004-05  
(in per cent)**

Year	Male			Female			All Children		
	5-9	10-14	5-14	5-9	10-14	5-14	5-9	10-14	5-14
Combined									
1993-94	0.99	12.08	6.35	1.21	11.64	6.12	1.09	11.88	6.24
1999-00	0.52	7.90	4.14	0.55	7.67	4.01	0.54	7.79	4.08
<b>2004-05</b>	<b>0.25</b>	<b>6.35</b>	<b>3.33</b>	<b>0.28</b>	<b>6.42</b>	<b>3.32</b>	<b>0.26</b>	<b>6.38</b>	<b>3.33</b>
Rural									
1993-94	1.16	13.85	7.20	1.43	14.10	7.26	1.29	13.96	7.23
1999-00	0.59	8.85	4.58	0.65	9.05	4.66	0.62	8.94	4.61
<b>2004-05</b>	<b>0.26</b>	<b>6.80</b>	<b>3.54</b>	<b>0.27</b>	<b>7.42</b>	<b>3.73</b>	<b>0.27</b>	<b>7.09</b>	<b>3.63</b>
Urban									
1993-94	0.47	6.63	3.58	0.48	4.51	2.52	0.48	5.63	3.08
1999-00	0.28	4.88	2.65	0.21	3.40	1.85	0.25	4.18	2.27
<b>2004-05</b>	<b>0.21</b>	<b>4.78</b>	<b>2.59</b>	<b>0.30</b>	<b>3.28</b>	<b>1.89</b>	<b>0.25</b>	<b>4.05</b>	<b>2.25</b>

Source: Derived from Respective Unit Level Records of NSS

NSSO data 2004-05 reveals that work participation rates for children in the age group of 5-9 is less than one percent in all the state However the WPR for children in the age group of 10-14 remains higher ranging from less than one percent in Kerala to 12.38 percent in Andhra Pradesh. WPR of children in the age group of 10-14 is significant in the states of A.P., Chattisgarh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, UP and West Bengal. In these states WPR for children (10-14) is higher than the National average of 6.38 percent. These figures are presented in Table 9.

**Table 9 Child Workforce Participation Rates in Major Indian States, 2004-05  
(in per cent)**

States	5-9	10-14	5-14	All populaton
A.P	0.56	12.38	6.61	50.48
Assam	0.19	3.44	1.82	38.55
Bihar	0.08	2.90	1.36	31.15
Chhattisgarh	0.35	8.70	4.58	48.65
Delhi	0.00	0.49	0.26	33.21
Goa	0.00	5.35	2.70	35.03
Gujrat	0.14	4.83	2.53	46.79
H.P	0.16	4.97	2.73	52.35
Haryana	0.00	3.28	1.71	40.11
Jharkhand	0.41	4.78	2.48	40.71
Karnataka	0.20	8.49	4.66	49.32
Kerala	0.00	0.39	0.20	39.33
M.P	0.14	5.74	2.82	43.30
Maharastra	0.22	6.27	3.42	46.63
Orissa	0.50	9.18	4.87	43.64
Punjab	0.05	3.16	1.73	41.65
Rajasthan	0.41	9.42	4.86	43.32
T.N.	0.00	2.83	1.51	48.58
U.P.	0.40	7.73	3.92	36.29
Uttaranchal	0.00	5.07	2.61	43.90
W.B.	0.32	6.45	3.47	38.04
Total	0.26	6.38	3.33	42.02

Source: Derived from Unit Level Records of NSS, 2004-05

Following is a discussion on the socio economic characters of the child labourers in the country as revealed by NSSO data.

## **8. Socio-economic background of Child Labour in India**

### **8.1 Rural-Urban Divide**

The important characteristic of child labour in India is that about 90 percent of the working children are concentrated in the rural areas. They not only work in farm sector but also in various non-farm activities in rural areas. The same trend is reflected in Census as well as NSSO data. This is also a reflection of narrow jurisdiction of the law which focuses only on visible forms of child labour in urban areas. Further they remain as reservoir of cheap labour supply to be migrated to urban areas along with their families in the event of any distress in rural areas. Thus, the problem of child labour in India is essentially a rural problem. As per 2004-05 NSSO data, out of 9.07 million child labourers, 12.16 million were in rural areas. Though there is a declining trend in the general magnitude of child labour in India, the concentration of child labourers in rural areas continue. Data on NSSO estimates on rural-urban magnitude of child labour is presented in Table 10.

**Table 10 Estimate of Trends in India's Child Labour by Rural-Urban, 1983-2004/05 (in millions)**

Year (Round)	5-9	10-14	5-14
Rural			
1993-94 (50th Round)	1.13	11.03	12.16
1999-00 (55th Round)	0.60	8.05	8.65
2004-05 (61st Round)	0.26	7.18	7.44
Urban			
1993-94 (50th Round)	0.12	1.52	1.64
1999-00 (55th Round)	0.07	1.32	1.39
2004-05 (61st Round)	0.08	1.44	1.52
Combined			
1993-94 (50th Round)	1.27	12.59	13.86
1999-00 (55th Round)	0.63	9.50	10.13
2004-05 (61st Round)	0.35	8.72	9.07

Source: Derived from Respective Unit Level Records of NSS

## **8.2 Social Character of Child Labour in India**

NSSO data on caste-wise break-up of workforce participation rates indicates that the children among lower castes are more vulnerable to labour related exploitation in India. It is clear from the table 11 that the higher the caste hierarchy, the lower the participation rates of children and vice versa. The NSSO data 2004-05 shows that the children among scheduled tribes are twice likely to be engaged in gainful economic activities than the 'others' essentially drawn from upper castes. Almost close to three per cent of children belonging to scheduled castes are engaged in some form of employment as against two percent of 'others' castes. When we take the children in the age group of 10-14, the WPR is highest for STs followed by SCs and other castes reflecting the caste hierarchy in the society. The data essentially shows that the children belonging to ST, SC and OBC are more vulnerable to child labour than the other castes.

**Table 11 Child Workforce Participation Rates in India by Caste  
1993-94 to 2004-05 (in per cent)**

Age Group	STs	SCs	OBCs	Others	All
1993-94					
5-9	2.85	1.13	N.A.	0.86	1.09
10-14	24.02	13.90	N.A.	10.06	11.88
5-14	12.32	6.97	N.A.	5.33	6.24
1999-00					
5-9	1.43	0.50	0.56	0.27	0.54
10-14	14.87	8.87	7.96	5.17	7.79
5-14	7.71	4.50	4.14	2.74	4.08
2004-05					
5-9	0.45	0.22	0.19	0.10	0.20
10-14	7.31	5.26	5.21	3.93	5.12
5-14	3.79	2.80	2.87	2.03	2.74

Source: Derived from Respective Unit Level Records of NSSO

If we look at the religious categories among working children, the WPR is higher among Minority religious communities than that of the children hailing from Hindu groups and others during 2004-05. During the same period, 6.5 percent of children in the age group 10-14 among Muslim children were engaged in gainful employment as against over 4.5 percent of Hindu children. The data presented in Table 12 also indicates that the decline in WPR among Muslim children is slower than other groups over a period of time. This is reflective of long-term



neglect and discrimination of minority religious groups in job market and educational opportunities.

**Table 12 Child Workforce Participation Rates by Religion, 1993-94 to 2004-05(in per cent)**

Age Group	Hindus	Muslims	Others	All
1993-94				
5-9	1.20	0.74	0.28	0.26
10-14	27.12	20.35	18.21	4.90
5-14	8.88	6.36	6.03	2.58
1999-00				
5-9	0.56	0.54	0.20	0.54
10-14	7.91	7.81	5.89	7.79
5-14	4.15	4.00	3.15	4.08
2004-05				
5-9	0.25	0.40	0.04	0.26
10-14	4.71	6.58	3.12	4.90
5-14	2.48	3.47	1.63	2.58

Source: Derived from Respective Unit Level Records of NSSO

### **8.3 Characteristics of Child Labour Households:**

#### **8.3.1 Economic conditions of child labour households**

Though poverty of parents cannot be an alibi for condoning child labour, there is definitely a positive correlation between incidence of child labour and household economic status. NSSO data on expenditure quintiles of households shows that the magnitude of child labour is significant among poorer sections than the richer sections. The incidence of child labour declines as the households goes up in the economic ladder (Table 13). Given the economic process that the country is undergoing now - where the gap between wealth and poverty is increasing - it is a matter of urgent concern that the people living in poverty are uplifted to address the issue of child labour.

#### **8.3.2 Literacy levels of head of child labour households**

Illiterate and semi illiterate parents who struggle to survive use their children as supplementary sources of income. Though the literacy levels are increasing in the country, the incidence of child labour seems to be high among the households where the head of the household is an illiterate. As revealed by NSSO data (Table

14) about 50 percent of all the child workers are found in the households whose head is illiterate. This is followed by the household's head whose education level is up to primary and secondary in which case roughly one-fourth of the child labourers are found. It is to be expected that the lowest share of child workers are found among households who are economically well-off.

**Table 13 Child Labour by Expenditure Quintiles in India, 1993-94 to 2004-05**

Age	Poorest	2nd Poorest	Middle	2nd Richest	Richest
1993-94					
5-9	35.37	24.04	16.91	14.21	9.47
10-14	29.58	23.62	19.13	15.80	11.86
5-14	30.11	23.66	18.93	15.66	11.64
1999-00					
5-9	36.40	25.18	21.63	11.00	5.79
10-14	33.91	25.85	19.39	14.00	6.85
5-14	34.08	25.81	19.54	13.79	6.78
All	22.25	21.96	20.98	18.74	16.09
2004-05					
5-9	45.09	24.52	15.10	13.27	2.02
10-14	35.21	28.35	19.46	12.27	4.72
5-14	35.60	28.19	19.29	12.31	4.61
All	30.38	23.00	18.34	15.37	12.91

Source: Derived from Respective Unit Level Records of NSSO

However, a clear shift is observed among various economic quintiles over the last one decade so far as child workforce is concerned. While the 1990s have witnessed enormous concentration of child employment among the poor households, during 2004-05 the child workers appear to be more and more spread among illiterates, and primary and secondary educated households. This is also a reflection of the declining employment growth in the country.

**Table 14 Household Head's Education and Child Labour in India  
1993-94 to 2004-05**

Age Group	Illiterates	Primary	Secondary	Graduate & Above
1993-94				
5-9	74.41	18.72	5.89	0.98
10-14	67.45	24.00	7.87	0.69
5-14	68.09	23.51	7.68	0.71
All	50.03	28.03	18.43	3.51
1999-00				
5-9	72.25	16.60	9.58	1.57
10-14	68.82	22.07	8.35	0.75
5-14	69.06	21.70	8.43	0.81
All	46.91	26.21	22.39	4.49
2004-05				
5-9	46.89	26.33	23.52	3.27
10-14	45.50	27.16	23.64	3.70
5-14	46.19	26.75	23.58	3.48
All	43.23	27.47	25.01	4.29

Source: Derived from Respective Unit Level Records of NSSO

#### **8.4 Sectoral Distribution of Child Labour in India**

What ever trend in the magnitude of child labour is shown in the official data, it is a common sight in India to see children engaged in various forms of work, whether paid or unpaid. Despite having legislation against child labour particularly in hazardous industries, children are continued to be engaged in significant numbers in hazardous and non-hazardous sectors.

Reflecting the overall trend in the workforce participation, most of the child employment is concentrated in agriculture and allied activities in India. As revealed by the NSSO data 2004-05, this sector alone account for over two thirds of the child employment. This sector is followed by followed by manufacturing sector which account for 16.55 percent of child employment. Trade, hotels and restaurant accounts for a significant share of child workers with 8.45 per cent of the total child labour force. Most of these children are employed in the informal sectors of the economy on a casual basis with low wages and long hours of work as revealed by many empirical studies on child labour in India.

**Table 15 Sectoral Distribution of India's Child Labour, 2004-05**

State	Agri.	Mining & Quar	Mfg.	Elec. Water	Cons.	Trade, Hotel	Trnsprt	Finance	Com., Soc.	Total
A.P.	68.96	0.96	9.70	0.00	3.20	9.02	1.05	0.00	7.11	1000
Assam	69.26	1.78	8.42	0.00	1.78	7.76	0.05	0.00	10.96	100
Bihar	71.84	0.00	11.16	0.00	0.00	15.49	0.07	0.38	1.05	100
Chhattisgarh	87.90	0.00	2.37	0.00	0.86	7.17	0.00	0.00	1.70	100
Delhi	0.00	0.00	11.08	0.00	0.00	57.83	0.00	0.00	31.09	100
Goa	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4.60	0.00	72.46	0.00	22.94	100
Gujrat	76.69	1.04	2.58	0.00	0.28	17.77	0.16	0.00	1.48	100
H.P.	87.42	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	6.71	1.21	0.00	4.66	100
Haryana	65.57	0.00	3.81	0.00	7.03	8.08	0.00	0.00	15.51	100
Jharkhand	65.28	0.00	14.63	0.00	4.25	12.08	0.66	0.26	2.84	100
Karnataka	82.60	0.22	9.27	0.00	1.19	5.73	0.70	0.00	0.30	100
Kerala	19.22	0.00	32.78	0.00	0.00	31.95	0.00	0.00	16.05	100
M.P.	82.89	0.00	9.93	0.00	1.50	4.33	0.00	0.00	1.34	100
Maharastra	82.62	0.00	5.34	0.00	1.92	5.75	0.13	0.14	4.09	100
Orissa	73.18	0.88	17.36	0.00	3.25	3.34	0.91	0.00	1.08	100
Punjab	67.91	0.00	12.71	0.00	1.16	7.21	2.59	0.00	8.43	100
Rajasthan	75.78	0.00	9.60	0.19	2.94	7.26	0.05	3.74	0.44	100
T.N.	39.49	0.00	44.55	0.00	5.91	5.68	1.54	0.16	2.68	100
U.P.	61.24	0.00	25.34	0.00	0.40	9.73	0.68	0.50	2.11	100
Uttaranchal	80.73	0.00	4.72	0.00	5.24	9.31	0.00	0.00	0.00	100
W.B.	34.57	0.00	43.93	0.00	3.27	9.66	1.19	0.80	6.59	100
Total	68.14	0.25	16.55	0.02	1.95	8.45	0.66	0.57	3.41	100

Source: Estimated from Unit Level Records of NSSO, 2004-05

Across states, the general pattern of sectoral distribution of workforce in the economy is observed in the case of child labour also, except in Tamil Nadu, Kerala and West Bengal where agricultural and allied sectors account for less than 40 percent of the total child labour force. In fact it is the lowest in Kerala. Tamil Nadu is the highly urbanized state according to 2001 census data and several non-farm occupations in the informal sector is developing and most of the rural population has been involved in more than one activity. Thus, children are also employed in different non-farm occupations in the state. Moreover certain new forms of child labour are developing in Tamil Nadu details of which are discussed elsewhere in this paper. Among manufacturing sector, Tamil Nadu

seems to have employed a higher share of its child workers (44.55 %) closely followed by West Bengal (43.93%).

It is noted that during 2004-05, over 87 percent of child labourers are located in farm activities in states like Himachal Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, while this accounted for 82 percent in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.

So far the magnitude and other aspects of child labour in India are analyzed to look at the changes that are taking place over a period of time. The following section devoted to look at what is missing in the official data with regard to child labour.

### **9. District level census data analysis on magnitude of Child Labour**

District level data on the magnitude of child labour is available only from the Census data. The other source from where the magnitude of child labour can be derived is the district level SSA. SSA conducts a survey on out of school children every year. But this data is not reliable as this is challenged by many civil society organizations. MV Foundation did an alternative survey in some of the districts in Andhra Pradesh and proved SSA data on out of school children to be grossly underestimated figures. In the absence of any other source of information Census data is useful in looking at the trends in the magnitude of child labour at a district level desegregation.

State level data on the magnitude of child labour shows declining trends in certain states and increasing trends in certain other states. This does not give us the trends within the state. Within the state there is regional variations in the trends on magnitude of child labour. For example Andhra Pradesh state as a whole shows declining trend in the magnitude of child labour between 1991 and 2001. However if we look at the district level data three of the top twelve districts having more than 80,000 child labourers are in Andhra Pradesh during 2001. In fact second and third rank goes to Mahbubnagar and Kurnool district with over 130000 child labourers in each of these districts during 2001. The top most district accounting for highest number of child labourers is Alwar district in Rajasthan with 140318 child labourers during 2001. These are the three districts having more than one lakh child labourers. There are 46 districts in the country having child labourers in the range of 50000 to 100000. Distribution of number of districts by range of magnitude of child labour is presented in Table 16.

Range of magnitude of child labour	Number of districts	Percentage to total number of districts in India.
Above 1 lakh	3	0.5
>75000 to 1lakh	8	1.4
>50000 to 75000	38	6.5
>25000 to 50000	142	24.3
>10000 to 25000	206	35.3
Below 10000	187	32.0
	584	100.0

Source: compiled from Census of India, 2001

Among the top 11 districts Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal account for 3 districts each, Rajasthan 2 districts, and Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka account for one district each (Table 17). Most of these districts are having NCLP programme since the 9<sup>th</sup> five year plan period. Ranking of all the 584 district with regard to magnitude of child labour is presented in Annexure II.

State	District	No. of CL
<b>RAJASTHAN</b>	ALWAR	140318
<b>ANDHRAPRADESH</b>	MAHBUBNAGAR	138475
<b>ANDHRAPRADESH</b>	KURNOOL	138326
<b>KARNATAKA</b>	GULBARGA	99914
<b>RAJASTHAN</b>	JALOR	99109
<b>MADHYAPRADESH</b>	JHABUA	96643
<b>WEST BENGAL</b>	MEDINAPUR	95739
<b>ANDHRAPRADESH</b>	GUNTUR	92075
<b>WEST BENGAL</b>	MALDAH	88556
<b>WEST BENGAL</b>	MURSHIDABAD	87968
<b>UTTAR PRADESH</b>	BULANDSHAHR	85296

Source: Compiled from 2001 Census data

### **Growth of child labour across districts and state in India**

Among major states in India, Jharkhand and Himachal Pradesh show an all round increase in the magnitude of child labour between 1991 and 2001 in all the districts in both the states. West Bengal, Haryana, Punjab, Bihar and Rajasthan there have been an increasing trend of magnitude of child labour in over 90 percent of the districts. Andhara Pradesh is the state where the increasing trend is observed only in 17 percent of the districts. Surprisingly Kerala also show increasing trend in 50 percent of the districts, though the increase is only marginal. Growth of child labour in major states by number of districts is presented in Table 18. District wise increase or decline in the magnitude of child labour between 1991 and 2001 is presented in Annexure III.

<b>Table 18 Growth of child labour across districts in India</b>					
States	districts where the magnitude has increased		districts where the magnitude has declined		Total number of districts
	Number of districts	% to total districts in the state	Number of districts	% to total districts in the state	
Uttarakhand	8	61.5	5	38.5	13
UP	61	88.4	8	11.6	69
WB	17	94.4	1	5.6	18
Orissa	20	66.7	10	33.3	30
MP	37	82.2	8	17.8	45
Chattisgarh	10	62.5	6	37.5	16
Gujarat	17	68.0	8	32.0	25
Maha	18	51.4	17	48.6	35
AP	4	17.4	19	82.6	23
Karnataka	12	44.4	15	55.6	27
Kerala	7	50.0	7	50.0	14
T.N.	11	36.7	19	63.3	30
Jharkhand	18	100.0	0	0.0	18
Assam	17	73.9	6	26.1	23
Haryana	18	94.7	1	5.3	19
HP	12	100.0	0	0.0	12
Punjab	15	88.2	2	11.8	17
Rajasthan	30	93.8	2	6.3	32
Bihar	35	94.6	2	5.4	37
India	367	72.96	136	27.04	503

The data presented above indicate that the magnitude of child labour has been increasing in over 70 percent of the districts in India. It would be useful to do a regional mapping of high incidence districts to focus policy interventions.

### **10. Missing child labour in the official data<sup>9</sup>:**

Though the official data on child labour shows a declining trend, it has not automatically resulted in bringing all children to school. There were 87 million Children (5-14) who were out of school during 2001 (not including the child labourers). NSSO (61<sup>st</sup> Round) estimates show that the magnitude of out of school children has declined to 43 million by 2004-05. This could be probably because of the efforts of SSA and other initiatives to stop child labour. However, the NSSO estimates show that about one fifth of the girl children in the 5 to 14 age group are not in school. There seems to be a persisting gender gap. While this is the picture that emerges for the country as a whole, there are wide variations across states. There are well performing states and states that are at the other extreme (see state level estimates of children in school across states based on NSSO estimates (2004-05) in Table 19).

NSS data also provides input on some other activities that children engage in. Each category of children is a mutually exclusive category, that is, no child is in more than one category, although in reality children may be performing more than one task. For example, those who attend schools, may be performing domestic duties as well, but are categorized as children attending schools. The priority is assigned based on the amount of time day spent by children on respective tasks.

**Table 19 State level estimates of children across states based on NSSO estimates (2004-05)**

Current Attendance Rates (per 1000) in educational institutions per 1000 persons of 5-14 age group (2004-05)									
	Rrual			Urban			All areas		
States	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Andhra Pradesh	902	824	865	911	911	911	905	846	876
Arunachal	720	667	695	886	914	898	742	696	721

<sup>9</sup> Materials presented in this section is partly drawn from the proceedings of the Operations Meeting on Child Labour Estimation Study March 26 and 27, 2007, Venue: New Delhi YMCA, Kashmir Room organized by CRY, Delhi.



Pradesh									
Assam	875	868	871	900	843	870	877	865	871
Bihar	691	574	639	805	764	785	700	593	652
Chattisgarh	854	750	801	890	867	879	858	764	810
Delhi	970	908	942	885	913	898	895	913	903
Goa	937	964	950	937	938	938	937	954	946
Gujarat	870	779	828	924	910	918	887	818	856
Haryana	905	812	861	923	878	905	910	827	872
Himachal Pradesh	961	936	949	980	936	959	962	936	950
Jammu Kashmir	909	827	869	978	860	920	926	835	881
Jharkhand	781	692	741	908	928	918	799	728	767
Karnataka	876	840	859	950	931	941	898	866	883
Kerala	962	983	972	987	993	990	968	985	976
Madhya Pradesh	803	699	755	908	874	892	825	736	784
Maharashtra	872	874	873	931	915	923	893	889	891
Manipur	922	911	917	978	963	971	937	925	932
Meghalaya	834	892	861	971	887	928	850	891	869
Mizoram	924	932	928	990	987	989	952	955	953
Nagaland	948	924	936	929	924	927	941	924	933
Orissa	827	753	791	882	875	879	834	768	802
Punjab	896	883	890	900	878	890	897	882	980
Rajasthan	853	681	771	824	803	813	847	710	780
Sikkim	929	966	948	923	825	879	929	954	941
Tamil Nadu	976	939	958	975	958	967	975	946	961
Tripura	856	910	882	868	911	890	857	910	882
Uttaranchal	889	850	869	914	882	900	895	856	876
Uttar Pradesh	806	730	771	789	803	796	803	743	775
West Bengal	831	814	822	848	871	860	834	824	829
A & N Islands	964	990	976	984	955	969	972	976	974
Chandigarh	841	917	870	959	938	950	942	935	939
Dadra Nagar Haveli	937	722	36	966	863	911	939	733	842
Daman and Diu	992	998	996	941	956	950	975	984	980
Lakshadweeps	902	892	897	991	960	977	945	927	937
Pondicherry	965	966	966	983	987	985	977	981	979
All India	835	767	803	890	879	885	847	792	821

Source: compiled from NSSO Report No.517/(61/10/3), "Status of Education and Vocational Training in India" 2004-05.

The most important category of children is “others”, which accounts for 43 million. They are not attending schools, and are neither at ‘work’ nor are categorized as those attending domestic duties. “These children are, as referred to by Rodger and Standing, those in “Idleness and unemployment”, which is different from ‘recreation and leisure’, in the sense it is “liable to be interspersed with marginal, irregular activities that provide a modicum of income” and the idleness is the “induced sense of passivity and anomie, if prolonged, cause unemployability for many forms of regular employment” (Rodgers and Standing 1981, p. 10). Such children, without schooling, lack education, and by being idle, lack essential skills, and when adults they are almost unemployable”<sup>10</sup>.

These children are also called variously as “Nowhere children”, “potential child labourers” and “reserve child labour force”. Many NGOs, Commissions, activists and scholars bracket them as “child labourers” as they are all deprived of ‘education’ (Second National Labour Commission Report, MV Foundation, Human Rights Watch, Shanta Sinha, Neera Burra etc). Hence it is often claimed that the number of ‘child labourers’ in the country is in the range of over 60 millions.

When the magnitude of ‘child labour’ is derived not on the children counted as children actually working, but on the basis of children not attending schools, although provides an essential link between the two issues of child labour and education, it also makes a presumption that reasons for children working are the same as the reasons for children not attending schools. The 61<sup>st</sup> round of NSSO data (2004-05) has reported a large scale increase in self employment of men and women. Nature of Self employment range from selling eatables at road side to doing petty business etc. In most cases children, who are categorised as ‘nowhere’ must be helping their parents in such activities. Thus the real magnitude of child labour is much more than what is reported in the census and NSS data. Some of the empirical studies conducted in different parts of India show the inadequacy in the way the child labour figures are derived in the official sources of data.

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<sup>10</sup> Pradeep Narayanan, 2006, Concept Paper on Child Labour in India, *CRY- Child Rights and You*, 2007, Mimeo

## Time-use survey<sup>11</sup>

A Time-use survey conducted by Government of India amply proved that over 32 percent of the children who are considered as 'nowhere' (neither in school nor in work) were actually working. The abstract of the study is as follows.

The Department of Statistics, Government of India, organized a pilot time use survey in six states of India between July, 1998, and June, 1999. The idea of undertaking such a study was, in part, to analyse the implication of paid and unpaid work among men, women and children in rural and urban areas. This study was conducted in Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Orissa, Tamil Nadu and Meghalaya. The total sample size was 18,628 households distributed among the states in proportion to the total number of estimated households as per the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) 1993-94 survey. The survey collected comprehensive information on how people, including children above six years, spend their time on different activities. The one-day recall method was used for data collection. Indira Hirway, analyzing the data, shows "that the most important economic activity for children in the age group, 6-14 years is animal husbandry. About 11.47 percent of boys and 10.69 percent of girls in this age group participated in this activity, particularly in animal grazing....These boys and girls spent 21.54 hours and 13.94 hours, respectively on this activity, implying on an average, a daily engagement of three and two hours respectively"<sup>12</sup> The next important economic activity for children is the collection of fuelwood, water, fodder, fruits, etc. About 4.51 percent of boys and 13.76 percent of girls in the age group 6-14 were engaged in this activity, which implies that this activity is more important for girls than for boys. Farming engages 6.23 percent of boys and 6.24 percent of girls. Petty services like informal sector activities engage 5.41 percent of boys and 4.72 percent of girls. Fishing and forestry and other manufacturing activities are also important from a children's work point of view.

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<sup>11</sup> This survey is quoted from the report of the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, 2007, Report and Recommendations for the Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012) towards abolition of child labour in India. The author of this paper was also involved in the preparation of the NCPCR report submitted to the Planning Commission of India.

<sup>12</sup> Indira Hirway (2002) "Understanding Children's Work in India: An Analysis Based on Time Use Data" in Nira Ramachandran and Lionel Massun (eds.) **Coming to Grip With Rural Child Work**, p. 84

Breaking up the data by age groups, Hirway says that in the 6-9 years age group, about 6.82 percent of boys and 6.37 percent of girls are engaged in animal husbandry, mainly grazing. Petty services employ 4.57 percent of boys and 4.40 percent of girls. Crop farming engages 3.51 percent of boys and 3.74 percent of girls. Further the data reveals that “children aged 6-14, who, participated in economic activities spent 21.46 hours a week (about three hours a day), on an average, on SNA (System of National Accounting)<sup>13</sup> work, which comes to 12.77 percent of their total weekly time. Boys spent 24.27 hours while girls spent 18.63 hours. The data show that boys engaged in mining, quarrying and digging spend maximum time on this work (34.5 hours), which implies that many of them are engaged in these activities on a full-time basis. This is followed by manufacturing work (32.70 hours), construction work (26.16 hours), animal grazing (21.54 hours) and crop farming (20.14 hours).

In the case of girls engaged in SNA activities, maximum time (37.34 hours a week) is spent by those who are engaged in mining, quarrying and digging. This is followed by girls engaged in manufacturing activities (27.57 hours), construction work (22.30 hours), crop farming (20.79 hours) and animal husbandry (18.02 hours). The time-use survey showed that while 67.13 percent of children are engaged in educational activities and about 17 percent in pure economic activities, the balance 15.87 percent were engaged either in extended SNA activities or in non-SNA activities. Extended SNA activities while not considered strictly economic activities fall in the ‘General Production Boundary’ and include activities such as household maintenance, management, care of siblings, sick, aged and disabled and other household activities. Care of siblings, the aged, the sick and the disabled take up a fair amount of the time of children. For example, girls in the age group 6-14 and 6-9 years spend 7.96 hours and 7.52 hours on the physical care of children respectively.

The time-use survey shows that boys and girls spend 21.46 hours a week on SNA activities, which is about 47 percent of the time spent by an adult on SNA activities. Girls (6-14) participate in extended SNA activities much more than participant men of all ages. Thus, while girls spend 13.01 hours on household management, 10.64 hours on community services and 11.17 hours on care

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<sup>13</sup> SNA is the System of National Accounts which refers to economic activities which are covered under national income accounts. Extended SNA activities are those which are not included in national accounts but are covered under General Production Boundary, and non-SNA activities or personal activities.

activities, the corresponding data on time spent by men are 6.76 hours, 7.99 hours and 6.12 hours respectively (Hirway, p.98)

As Hirway points out: “when one combines SNA and extended SNA work, one realizes that children’s contribution to this total work in the society is more than marginal, in terms of both number of participants as well as hours put in. The contribution of girls is greater than that of boys.” (p.103)

More significantly, she says that “more than 32 percent ‘nowhere’ children, who do not go to school, are largely engaged in economic or in extended economic activities. In the case of girls, their low attendance in school is not only due to their participation in economic activities but also due to the responsibilities borne by them in extended SNA activities.”

#### **A Micro level study from Tamil Nadu to re-define child labour:**

Another micro level survey conducted during 2001 in two villages, Achamangalam and Kadirampatti (Antonyraj, 2003) located in Tirupattur taluk of Vellore district in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu collected detailed account of time spent by a sample of children. Though a small sample survey this study is very important in the sense that it has provided methodology to capture the real nature of the out of school children who are not classified as workers in the official sources of data. Recorded information on children in this survey included *Self-employment activities* (which include activities such as working on one’s own farm, conducting one’s own business, tailoring at home, and so on); *Wage-employment activities* (which include activities such as construction work, road building, making incense sticks, agricultural labour, and so on, in exchange for a wage); *Domestic tasks* (which include washing, cleaning, cooking, child-care, fetching drinking water, shopping, making purchases at the fair-price shop, going to the rice mill, splitting wood, and so on); *Non-domestic, non-wage activities* (which include cattle-rearing, gathering of fuel, fodder and forest produce, guarding the field from birds and animals, kitchen gardening, marketing and post-harvest processing, making payments at or transacting with the electricity board and other government offices, working without payment on the family farm or other family enterprise, and so on); and *Other activities* (activities which are in the nature of socialization such as hospital visiting, calling on friends and relatives, attending marriages and funerals, work related to celebration of village festivals, attending village meetings, playing, and so on).

The study concluded that the so called 'nowhere' children on the whole are neither idle nor merely rendering 'some services'. Even according to restrictive definition used in the NSSO one fourth of the 'nowhere' children can be easily classified as workers. This study has suggested an expansive definition to capture the real magnitude of child labour.

According to Antonyraj, the least inclusive approaches are the ones adopted by the official data-generating agencies that include the first two categories of activities (self and wage employment) mentioned above. A less restrictive approach would include activities in the third category of 'domestic tasks'. An even less restrictive approach would expand the domain of 'work' to include activities in the fourth category of 'non-wage, non-domestic' tasks. A completely expansive approach would admit, additionally, the fifth category of 'other activities'. A child who has spent at least six hours a day—and this is a fairly stringent requirement—on those categories of activity considered relevant for counting as 'work' could be considered a 'worker'. The study showed that if the less restrictive approach is used about 48 percent of the nowhere children would be classified as child labourers and if even weak expansive approach is adopted 86.7 of the nowhere children would be counted as child labourers.

### **Survey to improve NSSO definition of child labour**

Another study conducted by the Centre for Studies in Economic Appraisal (CSEA), Kolkata in partnership with Child Rights and You (CRY), has critically analyzed the NSSO's definition of a worker (child) and showed the inadequacy of the NSSO data in estimating the magnitude of child labour, through an alternative sample survey<sup>14</sup>.

The sample study included children in selected Urban and Rural areas around Kolkata. The study identified that it is difficult for any study including NSSO to capture children who stay and work at frequently changing locations. Many of them could be engaged in illegal activities including smuggling, pilferage, etc. Although an estimation of such activities to National Income has been somehow attempted by the NSSO, but the children engaged in such activities have not been generally identified. Thus children not strictly belonging to NSSO

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<sup>14</sup> Mukherjee S.P., Ratan Khasnabis, Dipankar Coondoo, Pradip Maiti, Sharmistha Banerjee, 2006, A Study on Definitions and Methodologies, A project of Centre for Studies in Economic Appraisal (CSEA), Kolkata, In partnership with Child Rights and You (CRY), Mumbai, 2006.

households (who are relatively static in locations) are not reflected in NSSO findings. Further the study states that the following categories of children not captured by NSSO Definition.

1. Children who are engaged in non - remunerative but productive jobs. This may be due to the fact that they are working as trainees.
2. Children who perform only household chores, attending or missing schools (e.g. cooking, cleaning, taking care of siblings, etc) more or less regularly.
3. Children who are engaged in remunerative jobs not recognized as productive under the SNA category of work e.g. children engaged in illegal activities (smuggling, prostitution, child pornography etc).

The sample survey covered 216 children in 109 households. Out of them 94 attend school and 122 do not. All those who attend school are not considered to be child worker/labourer according to NSSO survey, their primary activity status being recorded as 'school attendance'. In case, they are also engaged in some productive and remunerative jobs, their secondary activity status would include them in the workforce. With reference to ILO guidelines<sup>15</sup> and NSSO definitions the study found out that a large percentage of the children surveyed are engaged in productive work besides household work. Among the 122 not school going children, 110 work beyond stipulated hours (in the age specific ILO guidelines) and hence are child labourers. Now considering the 122 children who do not attend school. NSSO segregates these children as worker or non worker depending upon their Weekly or Daily Activity Status. Considering the Daily Activity Status the child would be considered a full intensity worker if in the last day preceding the survey he had worked for more than 4 hours (Less than 4 hours work would make him half day intensity worker). Among these 122 children, 91 perform work for less than 4 hours a day. According to NSSO a person has to be a worker according to Daily Activity Status if he works for 4 hours or more on the day preceding the day of survey. So according to NSSO these 91 children cannot be termed as child labour. Considering the entire group of 216 school going and non-school going children, a total of 185 are economically active as per the ILO guideline, whereas only 30 of them would be considered workers as per NSSO rounds.

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<sup>15</sup> According to the ILO standards, all forms of work by children under the age 12 should be considered as 'child labour'. Children in the age group 12-14 years, engaged in work, productive or unproductive in System of National Accounting(SNA) sense, for 14 or more hours in a week, would be considered as child labour. Children in the age group 15-17 years, working more than 42 hours in a week would also be branded as 'child labour'.

The study has unpacked the limitations of the NSSO data and has recommended for a research on the estimation of 'child labour' and 'child worker' in India based on a proper methodology.

### 11 Children Enrolled in schools but working - New forms of Child Labour

In the context of globalization new forms of child labour are emerging in India. Children working in cotton seed farms are one such case in point. It is found that labour employed on advanced capitalist cotton seed farms in Andhra Pradesh – which is linked to national and multinational capital - involves the employment of labour which is mostly unfree and female and young (7-14 years) It is argued by Davuluri Venkateswaralu and Lucia Da Corta that in order to secure cheaper female child labour, employers segmented the female labour market via ideologies about the superiority of female children over adult females.<sup>16</sup> Currently BT cotton seed is cultivated in 60000 acres in India spread in Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Karnataka Madhya Pradesh and Punjab. The top states in cotton seed production are Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. The important character of cotton seed cultivation is that it is very labour intensive. Manual cross pollination has to be done for the entire field. This work has to be carried out without any break for about 100 days during the season. Multi National Seed Companies like Monsanto Corporation produce seeds using the local farmers through contract farming. Davuluri<sup>17</sup>, in a recent study has estimated that there are 415390 children below the age of 17 are working in cotton seed farms in Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Of these 223940 are children below the age of 14. While in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka over 85 percent of the children are drawn from the local area, in Gujarat and Tamil Nadu over 80 percent of them are migrant labourers who work as camp coolies. Over two thirds of the workers are girl children. It is stated that over 65 percent of the children are school drop outs. Many others are enrolled in schools but they hardly attend schools as they migrate out for more than four months every year. However, in the official statistics they would have been counted as school going children. With the spread of cotton seed and

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<sup>16</sup> DAVULURI VENKATESHWARLU AND LUCIA DA CORTA Transformations in the Age and Gender of Unfree Workers on Hybrid Cotton Seed Farms in Andhra Pradesh Journal of Peasant Studies, Vol. 28, No. 3, April 2001

<sup>17</sup> Venkateswarlu, Davuluri (2007), *Child bondage continues in India cotton supply chain` study* commissioned by India Committee of the Netherlands, ILRF, DWHH, OECD Watch (for full text see [www.indianet.nl/pdf/childbondagecotton.pdf](http://www.indianet.nl/pdf/childbondagecotton.pdf))



cotton cultivation in India the incidence of child labour is likely to increase. For a more detailed account see Davuluri (2007). Children in cotton seed cultivation and Sumangali Scheme in Tamil Nadu, part time bonded labourers in beedi, matches and fireworks.

### **School or work? – case of beedi children in Tamil Nadu:**

Tamil Nadu is one of the important state where beedi production is carried out in many districts. Vellore district was notoriously known for child bondage in beedi work. With lots of efforts from the district administration, NGOs and SSA most of these children are withdrawn from work and enrolled in schools during the last ten years. But a recent study by Vidyasagar<sup>18</sup> revealed that most of the children enrolled in schools are again pledged by their parents to beedi contractors for a cash advance. These children are forced to work for three hours in the morning and atleast another three hours in the evening after school hours. Thus, they work (forced to work) in an hazardous industry for more than six hours a day – qualified to be a worker under ILO guidelines and NSSO definitions. But they are not counted as workers as their work is hidden both by parents and the employers. There are thousands of such children who are in part time bondage and they hardly get any energy to devote for their education. While Tamil Nadu State show declining trends in the magnitude of child labour in the official statistics, such new forms of child labour in beedi industries is developing. This is the same case in match industry and fire works in Virudhunagar district.

### **Full time workers treated as ‘Trainees’ - girls working in Spinning Mills**

In Tamil Nadu, in the recent past, Spinning Mills in Coimbatore as well as in other parts of the state has introduced a new scheme of labour recruitment. This is called “*Sumangali*” Scheme (meaning marriage assistance scheme), under which young girls from 14 years of age are recruited to work in the spinning mills. They are considered as trainees but they work full time after a few days of training as the work requires no specific skills. *When they are treated as trainees they won’t be considered as workers by official sources.* This scheme has also spread to Knit wear industry in Tiruppur. This form of recruitment involves adolescent girls including girls below the age of 14. This scheme was introduced a decade ago. Apparently the scheme looks simple and attractive. A recent study (2006) on, “The New

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<sup>18</sup> Vidyasagar, Revisiting child bondage in Vellore, 2006, unpublished.

Developments in Tiruppur”<sup>19</sup> has reported that “Adolescent, unmarried young girls of 15 to 25 are preferred in the textile and garment industry for their efficiency in work output. Many girls are recruited under the “Sumangali Scheme or Mankalya Thittam”. They have to work as camp coolies for three years as scheme workers. During the period they will be provided with food and common accommodation. They will be also paid a Rupees 900 to 1000 per month but half of it deducted for food and accommodation. In return they will have to work for long hours of upto 12 hours. They will have very little rest and they will be squeezed off their maximum labour. They have no bonus, advance or any other payment but are promised an assured sum at the end of the scheme year. The workers do not fall under the purview of the ESI or the PF coverage. They invariably face exploitative working conditions like low wages, long hours of work, physical and verbal abuses. There are employment contracts but more often they are not followed. The most horrible exploitation is that they will be terminated under false allegation before they complete their tenure and they will be deprived of their complete payment for the entire term of work. Whatever may be Scheme name and justifications put forward by the employers association, it is an absolute form of forced labour”.

Seven girls working in a textile unit on Kangayam Road to Rakhilayam were rescued from such forced labour conditions during 2004 by the labour officers. The rescued girls had shocking tales to narrate about the physical and mental torture they had faced inside the factory. They were brought to the mill by an agent who visited their villages<sup>20</sup>. Another detailed on the scheme brought out by the Tirupur People’s Forum for Protection of Environment and Labour Rights<sup>21</sup>, highlighted that the girls are terrified inside the factories as they are even slapped by the supervisors for making mistakes. Verbal abuses has on the workers has been enormous. These girls were working for about 80 hours a week. The girls are not allowed to have outside contacts and their parents are allowed to visit them once a month or once in two months. They are taken out for shopping once in a month to the nearby market and these visits are accompanied by factory staff to keep a watch on the girls, so that they don’t run away. The report has stated that 90% of the workers in spinning mills comprise of such young girls.

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<sup>19</sup> “The New Developments in Tirupur”, Produced by FWF, with inputs from Mr. Angelis, Advocate, Mr. Prithiviraj, CARE, Mr. Narayanasamy of LRC – SAVE and E. Rajarethinam, GCT. October 2006, (adjusted by FWF January 2007)

<sup>20</sup> Sindhu Menon, (Date?), “Adolescent Dreams Shattered in the Lure of Marriage” Sumangali System - A New form of bondage in Tamil Nadu., Labour File, a bimonthly journal of labour and economic affairs,

<sup>21</sup> Tirupur People’s Forum for Protection of Environment and Labour Rights, June 2007, “Women Workers in a Cage” An investigative study on Sumangali, Hostel and Camp Labour Schemes for young workers in the Tirupur Garment Industries”.

A sample study has been carried out in the source areas from where the girls are migrating to work in textile mills, covering Tirunelveli, Virudhunagar, Theni, Sivaganga and Karur. This survey covered 1749 families, of girls who have gone to work in spinning mills, spread out in 399 villages from 17 Panchayat Unions spread in the five districts. This study has revealed that **nearly 18 percent of the girls were below 15 years of age** and 69 percent of them are below 18 years of age<sup>22</sup>.

SOCO Trust, Madurai has filed a petition before the National Human Rights Commission for their intervention to relieve the young girls from bondage<sup>23</sup>. In its petition, SOCO Trust has mentioned that mostly girls belonging to dalit and backward class communities from the drought prone districts of Ramanathapuram, Tirunelveli, Tutucorin, Virudhunagar, Dindigul and Theni migrate to textile districts like Coimbatore, Erode, Karur and Dindigul to work in the textiles mills as camp coolies. There are brokers who identify the girls who are finding it difficult to get married because of poverty, in the villages and lure their parents to send their girls to work in the mills. The textile mills pay a commission of Rs.500 per girl brought in such a way. These workers are denied all statutory benefits, like minimum wages, ESI, PF, bonus, registering the contracts and so on. It is further stated that the unmarried adolescent girls who are confined to the mill complexes and forced to work are also subjected to sexual harassment, and sexual torture. This report has brought to light suicide cases of such girls within the factory premises under suspicious circumstances. There are also cases in Coimbatore district where girls have scaled the compound wall of the factory s to escape from their miserable life.

The employment of girls in spinning mills under the Sumangali scheme that restricts individual workers' freedom is one of the worst forms of servitude. There are 815 spinning mills in Tamil Nadu which account for 52 percent of all spinning mills in India<sup>24</sup>. Most of them are in Coimbatore district.

The materials presented in this section show that child labour is emerging in new forms. This could be true in the case of other states also given the increasing informalisation of employment. The issue is that these children will not get representation even as lifeless numbers in the official statistics.

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<sup>22</sup> Kannan, 2007, Situation Study on the Adolescent Girls and Young Women Working in Textile Mills on Contract Schemes, Tirupur People's Forum for Protection of Environment and Labour Rights, Tirupur, July 2007.

<sup>23</sup> SOCO Trust, 2007, "Sumangali Thittam" – A Modern Form of Slavery, in Social Justice Monitor, March-April 2007.

<sup>24</sup> Department of Economics and Statistics, Chennai-6

## **Concluding Remark**

Magnitude of child labour as reported by official sources show a declining trend. Though this is a welcome trend, the problem is with the inadequacy of coverage in the official statistics. Given the context of globalization and declining employment growth in the country, the reduction in the magnitude of child labour shown in NSSO 61<sup>st</sup> round (2004-05) could be due to reduction in general employment. However, there is need for policy advocacy on properly defining child labour from a child rights perspective in the official sources of data. Already many suggestions are made towards improving the scope of defining child labour by academics. At the same time efforts to make education compulsory up to secondary level will go a long way in addressing the issue of older children who complete their elementary education but unable to access high school education.