

'Many child labourers working in tea gardens'

TNN | Jun 3, 2014, 11.16 AM IST

GUWAHATI: The Assam State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (ASPCR) on Monday said it had identified many children working in the state's tea gardens as labourers. Of 3.4% of child labourers in Assam, 1.58% work in tea gardens.

This was highlighted by ASPCR during the eastern region round table conference on 'Extend Social Protection: Combat Child Labour' here on Monday. Twelve states from the eastern region attended the conference organised by ASCPCR in partnership with National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), Unicef and International Labour Organisation (ILO).

The commission's report stated that in Assam, close to 88,000 out of school children could face exploitation due to lack of awareness. It also stated that in 2010, it had identified 64,000 child labourers in the state, a sharp increase from the 15,000 identified in 1997. ASCPCR stated that the state government was mulling a child tracking system with individual child records to determine how many children had dropped out of school. Lack of detailed study on child labour, presentation of different scenario by agencies, insufficient children homes, a nascent counselling status, lack of awareness, acceptance of child labour by few sections in the educated elite and other factors were considered as some of the biggest challenges in the fight against child labour.

"Data and information pertaining to child labour is an issue and there is the need to triangulate data from CID and child welfare technical support in tackling trafficking of children and combating child labour. We should have a robust support and understand the situation," said Tushar Rane, chief field officer (Unicef), Assam.

Representatives from Mizoram, Nagaland and Meghalaya have cited that lack of awareness as a deterrent in combating child labour. Most children out of 26,000 child labourers in Mizoram worked in restaurants, stores and stone-crushing units. Thirty per cent of non-school going students worked as house maids and 84 per cent of non-school going children consume hard intoxicants. Again, 21.17 per cent consume tobacco. "Forty-two cent is the school drop-out rate and is higher among girls. Mizoram is quite backward and there are no recreational activities for children. We need measures and recommendations to make the lives of less privileged children a bit better," said the representative from Mizoram.

In Nagaland, a survey conducted in three districts found 6,000 child labourers working in the domestic sector. One district has even been declared as child labour district.

"The objective of the conference is to review the progress and make recommendations which will be presented and finalised at the national conventions in New Delhi," said Runumi Gogoi, chairperson of ASPCR.

