

## **Press Release**

For Immediate Release

### **‘Impact on Overall Development of Children Working in Family Enterprises’**

**A Study By**

***ActionAid Association and People’s Participation***

**Consultation on 30<sup>th</sup> December, 2015, 10:30 am to 2:00 pm at ICMARD, Ultadanga, Kolkata  
And**

**Press Conference on 30<sup>th</sup> December, 2015, 4:00 pm to 5.00 pm at Press Club, Kolkata**

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Census 2011 reveals that India is the home for 43.53 lakh child labour in the age group of 5-14 years. The West Bengal State Plan of Action - 2003 report released by the State Government and supported by UNICEF, revealed the incidence of child labour at 4.4 per cent in West Bengal which was higher than the then national average of 4.2 per cent. Presently there are 2.3 lakh recognized child labours in West Bengal in accordance to Census 2011.

India has framed the Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act 1986, and its subsequent amendments which provide for the prohibition of employment of a child below 14 years of age in 18 specific occupations and 65 processes. It also seeks to regulate conditions of work for children in other occupations and processes. On 13<sup>th</sup> May, 2015, the Union Cabinet has approved amendments to the Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2012, which prohibits employment of children below 14 years in all occupations and processes and age of prohibition of employment linked to age under Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, but also makes an exemption, where the child helps his/her family or family enterprises, which is other than any hazardous occupations or processes set forth in the Schedule, after school hours or during vacations by excluding this category of children from the definition of Child Labour. Though the proposed amendment recognizes the children in 15-18 age group and prohibits their engagement in any kind of hazardous occupation but it has limited its scope by defining this age group as ‘Adolescents’ and not as Children and also put a regulation in their engagement in non-hazardous occupation instead of banning child labour completely.

#### ***Story of Ayesha***

*The life of Ayesha Khatun (name changed), a 12 years old girl in Titagarh Slum, is not as same as her friends in school. She finds it very difficult to make time for study after school hours. Though she is enrolled in a coaching class, she does not get time to do homework given at coaching centre or in school. Both of her parents are engaged in manufacturing kites in their home. When her mother is busy in making kites she has to take care of her infant brother or complete the domestic chore. Moreover she needs to spend one and half hour daily to complete her share of kite making. The more kites they make, the more money will come to their family. She gets very little time to sleep and feels very tired in school. Though she makes kites for other children, she never gets time to fly it.*

In the Backdrop of present legal safeguards and presence of Child Labours in West Bengal, ActionAid Association and its partner organization People’s Participation have undertaken a comparative study on the condition of children (6-14 years) in three categories, viz. Children who are out of school and working outside family, Children who go to school but also are working in enterprises owned by family or helping family in their economic venture, Children who do not work and go to school with an objective to explore the detrimental impact on overall development of children who work in family enterprise after school hours. The study has been conducted in 1 of Khardah Municipality and ward numbers 18 and 23 of Titagarh Municipality, in North 24 Parganas District.

The study revealed some important regarding the condition of children working in family enterprises or helping their family economically after school hours. These children are mostly engaged in Kite making, Dairy and allied enterprise

(making cow dung cakes), Candy making, Poultry related, Hotel / Dhaba, Rag Picking and waste segregation. Some of the key findings are listed below:

- **Less time available for studies:** It found that children working in family enterprises get significantly less amount of time (1.9 hrs) as compared to non-working students (3.1 hrs) to do studies after school hours. The combined pressure of juggling work and studies also makes them vulnerable to discontinue schooling.
- **Less time available for recreation and rest:** The study also revealed that the combined pressure of studies and work has reduced the time available for the working students to take rest (7.1hrs) which is even less than that available to child labours (8.3 hrs).
- **Negative impact on mental and physical health:** More number of working students reported symptoms like headache (83%), irritability (73%), and extreme fatigue (53%) than the control groups constituting non-working students and child labours. The condition of physical health was also a cause of concern as chronic ailments causing development deficits like malnutrition worm-infestation anemia, were found to be common among the children.
- **Problems in school:** Only 53.3% of the respondents from the group of working students said that their communication with teachers was satisfactory. The disadvantaged backgrounds of working students demand more empathy from teachers who must play an important role in ensuring that these children continue schooling. Interestingly, 53.3% of the children from the non-working group said that their interest to go to school overrides all other consideration – but this figure among working students was found to be 36.7%.

**With the proposed amendment, education, although legally mandated, run the risk of becoming an "option" and not a "compulsion", especially for girl children, among whom there is a relatively higher dropout rate in schools.**

- **Propensity to dropout:**The data explored through this study provide substantial evidence that in families where children discharge double roles of being students as well as labourers, the propensity among siblings to discontinue education before the age of 18 years is extremely high (63.3%). Thus these working children are also vulnerable to this risk of dropping out of school in case they face any problem with continuing the dual role.
- **The definition of family under this act:** During conduction of the study, the survey team also encountered another typical problem while identifying students working in family enterprises on the question of what is defined as a family. It was found that in many instances parents or legal guardians do not own the enterprise but is owned by a relative like uncle or a relation thorough inhabiting the same native village.

On 30<sup>th</sup> December, 2015 a consultation is organized on the Study on 'Impact on Overall Development of Children Working in Family Enterprises' by Action Aid Association and People's Participation at ICMARD, Ultadanga. Assistant Labour Commissioner, Ms. Dola Sen, Member of Parliament, Representative of West Bengal Commission for Protection of Child Rights, Representative of Child Line, Representatives of NGOs and Civil Society Organizations, Labour Unions and Employer's Committees have been invited to the consultation for sharing their views on the issue of Child Labour, existing legal framework and a way forward to combat the issue by a collaborative approach. The programme includes unveiling of the study report, speech from the guests and sharing of key finding of the study with the stakeholder.

The Consultation follows a press conference on the same day from 4 pm to 5 pm to share the key findings of the study and the feedback received on it from Key stakeholders and civil society.

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