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Child Labour & Inclusive Education in Backward Districts of India

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Abstract

India has five million working children which is more than two percent of the total child population in the age group of 5-14 years. Despite existence of legal prohibitions, several socio-economic situations ranging from dearth of poverty, over-fertility, non-responsive education system to poor access in financial services adversely affect a section of children and keep them in work field. This work burden not only prevents the children from getting the basic education, it is also highly detrimental to their health and ultimately leads to intellectual and physical stunting of their growth. At this backdrop, this paper measures the magnitude of child rights to education enjoyed by the child labour across the states of West Bengal. The paper identifies various reasons behind non-inclusiveness of a great portion of child labour in main-stream of education through empirical analysis in two backward districts of West Bengal. An analysis of NCLP activities based on evaluation surveys helps to trace the gap of work and lack of convergence mechanism with activities of Sarba Shiksha Mission. We recommend few measures to revamp the whole process, so that relationship between child labour and inclusive education activities can be revamped. NCLP and Sarba Shiksha Mission should work hand in hand to fulfill this objective. Complete implementation of Right to Education can help to solve many of these issues involved with child labour, as the act itself has an inclusive approach.

Keywords: *Child Labour, Inclusiveness, Right to Education, NCLP, Sarba Shiksha Mission*

1. Introduction

A child, who is in the age group of 5-14 years of age and is economically active, is classified as 'child labour'. According to International Labour Organization (ILO), a person will be treated as child labour when he/she is gainfully employed in work on a regular basis and receives remuneration against that. The latest available estimates from NSSO (2007-08) reveals that in India around five million children are economically active in the labour market and account for more than two percent of the total child population in the age group of 5-14 years. Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act, 1986 provides rights to every child to get a conducive and healthy environment to live happily with education and health care in the society. But several socio-economic situations ranging from dearth of poverty, over-fertility, non-responsive education system to poor access in financial services adversely affect a section of children and keep them in work field, thereby destroying their future (Human Development Report, 2011).. This work burden not only prevents the children from getting the basic education, it is also highly detrimental to their health and ultimately leads to intellectual and physical stunting of their growth. The Right to Education Act, 2009, which came into effect from April 1, 2010, has made the education free and compulsory to all the children of the age group between 6-14 years. This defensive measure is expected to curb the problems of child labour through its inclusive impact in the field of education.

At this backdrop, we intend to locate the magnitude of child rights to education enjoyed by the child labour across the states of West Bengal. For special reference, we have chosen two backward districts in the state of West Bengal, namely Uttar Dinajpur and Cooch Behar. Percentage of children working as main workers in West Bengal has declined from 3.5% to 2.0% during 1991-2001. One of the major strategies for eradication of child labour is to provide them with their educational, social and cultural rights through opening child labour schools, where several types of basic work-education is taught. To achieve that goal the Government of India had launched NCLP (National Child Labour Project) in 1988, where rehabilitation arrangement was performed after identifying the child labour in different child labour prone districts of India.

2. Literature Review

In literature, several empirical evidences have been found on the nature and determinants of child labour (see Grootaert and Kanbur (1995), Basu (1999), and Jatavey and Lahiri (2000) for surveys). While some of these studies (Knight 1980, Horn 1995) discussed mainly the qualitative features of the child labour, the recent literature has focused attention on the quantitative aspect of the data. Weiner (1996) held the previous policies of the government responsible for the rampant growth of child labour in India. There was no statutory protection for children in factories which employ fewer than ten people. The government policy for supporting the small scale sector indirectly promoted the employment of child labour in non-hazardous work. According to Weiner, the government took unethical standpoint through establishment of 'children training centre' as weavers for carpet industry. It is indeed an irony that child-labour helps to sustain otherwise uneconomic small scale industries and keeps the cost down so that carpet, gems and brassware industries can expand their exports. But exploiting these fragile /perverse advantage¹ the economy actually confronts Sophie's choice².

Satpathy et al. (2010) have shown that various types of work performed by the children are not taken into account by various Labour Surveys, done by Census of India and NSSO, as those are not covered by stipulated definition adopted by these surveys. Krishna (1996) had also pointed out this loophole in the definition by saying "*the argument that all*

work is not labour, unless it involves some degrees of exploitation is supported by many including the ILO, Government of India and Children Rights Activists.” According to her, the degrees of exploitation are only debated while the legislation itself prohibits even the unexploited nature of work too.

Some commentators opined that malaise of child labour and challenge of universal enrollment needs to be skillfully handled by the planners. Though there is no evidence in the literature (Bhatty, 1998; Ahmed, 1999; Lieten, 2000) explaining that poverty induce the household to withdraw their wards from the schools and employ them in work, but major households in India depend on child labour to compensate for income shocks and lift them out of poverty. Therefore, credit availability has been found to play a pivotal role in switching the children from labour market to schooling (Ranjan 2001, Jafarey and Lahiri, 2000). It was found that long hours spent on workplace by the children have detrimental effect on their schooling. Thus much of the current discussions in the literature hinges on the perception that there is a negative correlation between child labour and child schooling (Weiner, 1991). Krishna (1996) forcefully challenged this simplistic assumption by drawing the instance of the state like Maharashtra in India. She has shown that Maharashtra has high incidence of child labour and also high level of school attendance.

Biggeri et al. (2009) said that a vast amount of child labour force remain invisible to the policy makers, as they are within household labour force. Neither labour force survey can locate them, nor the Child Labour Prevention Act, 1986 was sufficient to segregate them, until very recently (since, 2006) the child labour law has encompassed them. Meherotra and Delmonica (2007) have shown that ‘social protection’ is more effective in employment intensive growth strategy. Therefore identification and registration of child labour have thought to be essential prerequisites for the promotion of child labour.

In India around 80 million children who have not been counted in the Government Child Labour Statistics, do not go to school. These children are neither found in the arena of schools nor in the workplace; Chauduri (1997) called them “nowhere-children” who are also a major concern for Indian planners. A major mission of Rights to Education is to bring these “out-of-school” (out of school= never enrolled + dropout) within the ambit of schools. Without simultaneous improvement in school quality and changes in economic structure of the household, children and their families may not be able to resist the pull factors that bring the children out of school.

3. Objective & Methodology

The basic objective of this paper is to trace out the relationship between ‘child labour’ and ‘inclusive education’ in West Bengal. The ‘Right to Education, 2009’ and the ‘Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act, 1986’ jointly have the potentials to bring all the children from work field to school campus. Our major intention in this paper is to mark out the compulsive reasons behind these children joining in workforce at the backdrop of their poor socio-economic situations of West Bengal. We have chosen two backward districts of West Bengal, namely Uttar Dinajpur and Cooch Behar for illustrating this relation. The rationale for choosing Uttar Dinajpur district is that the incidence of child labour is quite significant (i.e., 7.6%) in the district. On the other hand, the incidence of child labour in Cooch Behar is closer to the state average. Sarba Shiksha Mission in its ‘Framework For Implementation of RTE (2011)’ have emphasized on the inclusion of the children from the marginalized background and emphasized in identifying Special Focus Districts (SFDs) with higher SC, ST and Muslim Minorities. Uttar Dinajpur and Cooch Behar districts both are qualifying the stipulated parameters to be claimed as SFDs. We intend to make a situational analysis of

child labour and would try to shed some lights on the degrees of inclusive education generated among these child workers as a whole.

For Uttar Dinajpur district our analysis will be based on few secondary data we received from NCLP and DPO-SSM , Uttar Dinajpur. In Coach Behar, we have done some primary surveys in areas like *Pachagghar, Dangkhoba, Paschim Kather Bari of Mathavanga Block-I*. Based on that primary survey we will attempt to build econometric model for testing our hypothesis regarding linkage between work and education. On the basis of that econometric result we plan to suggest some policy restructure as a way ahead of the paper.

4. Child Labour & Educational Rights in West Bengal: A Situational Analysis

West Bengal contains 4.5% share of child-workers from the population aged between 5-14 years according to 2001 census, while all India average share of child workers are 5%. The male child workers in the country are 5.1%, while the female child workers are 3.9%. The incidence of child labour has shown a much higher trend in rural sector (i.e., 8.9%) than the urban sector (i.e., 3%). The share of workforce of the child-workers is 2.91% in the total workforce of West Bengal and among these workforces, around 45 % are main workers and 55% are marginal workers. According to 2001 census report, out of the main child workers in West Bengal, only 7.4 % are attending schools and remaining 92.6% are dropped out, which remain in the exclusion group of educational process. As a child worker, their future productivities are getting tormented including their expected longevity at the time of birth and moreover keeping them outside the periphery of school is a double whammy to them. In West Bengal, 34.7 % of the total child population is dropout according to 2001 census, of which child labour constitute 9.8 %. The district profile shows that Malda is having the highest incidence of child labour (9.53%), followed by Uttar Dinajpur (7.57%) and Bankura (6.95%).

Table: 1 Child Labour & NCLP Schools in West Bengal

Sl No	District	Child Population (5-14 years age)*	Child Labour (percentage at parentheses) *	Number of Schools operational under NCLP^	Years of operation^	Child Labours Enrolled^ (%)
1	Darjeeling	371091	10341 (2.8)	21	NA	1050(2.3)
2	Jalpaiguri	863702	31901 (3.7)	19	2007	914(1.96)
3	Cooch Behar	644098	26173 (4.1)	18	2007	900(1.9)
4	U/ Dinajpur	698892	52928 (7.6)	40	1995	2000(4.3)
5	D/ Dinajpur	377726	20364 (5.4)	40	1995	2000(4.3)
6	Malda	928902	88556 (9.5)	40	2005	2000(4.3)
7	Murshidabad	1637356	87968 (5.37)	140	1999	7000(15.1)
8	Birbhum	766542	39285 (5.1)	38	2005	1900(4.1)
9	Bardhaman	1563346	64233 (4.1)	46	1995	2300(4.9)
10	Nadia	1068865	38333 (3.6)	100	2007	5000(10.8)
11	24 Parganas (N)	1905879	55619 (2.9)	40	1995	2000(4.3)
12	Hoogly	1063045	34850 (3.3)	68	2006	3400(7.3)
13	Bankura	742496	51659 (6.9)	58	2007	2463(5.3)

14	Purulia	630803	41056(6.5)	90	2006	4500(9.7)
15	Medinipur	2333062	95739 (4.1)	31(E) +42(W)	1999	1582(E) +1768(W))=3350 (7.2)
16	Howrah	926037	31577 (3.4)	34	2007	1667(3.6)
17	Kolkata	742868	30810 (4.2)	40	2001	2000 (4.3)
18	24 Parganas (S)	1764434	55965 (3.2)	40	1995	1959 (4.2)
	West Bengal	19029144	857087 (4.5)	945		46,403

Source : *ILO(2007), Child Labour Facts & Figures: An Analysis of Census 2001, ILO-Geneva;
 ^ GOWB(2012) : Ministry of Labour (GOWBL), Labour in West Bengal, 2012, Kolkata;

4.1 Role of NCLP in Inclusive Education

Government of India has adopted a holistic multi-pronged project, namely NCLP (National Child Labour Project) to eliminate child labour in the country in phased manner since 1987. Based on the National Policy of Child Labour, 1987, the Government of India launched the NCLP in 1988. The primary objectives were to rehabilitate the working children after identifying them from child labour endemic districts in India. Working in these tender ages prevent these children from getting basic intellectual need, health need and ruining their future productivity at a time. NCLP spreads this message while mainstreaming these marginal deprived sections and thus act as a vehicle of implementation for the inclusive education too.

In West Bengal, NCLP started functioning since 1995. Initially the scheme covered six districts namely, Burdwan, South Dinajpur, North Dinajpur, both North & South 24 Parganas and then undivided Medinipur with a total of 246 special schools. The districts Murshidabad and Kolkata were included in the Ninth Five Year Plan. During the XIth and XIIth plan, NCLP was extended to other districts as well. Darjeeling district was added very recently within the ambit of special schools under NCLP. The share of existing child labour force per hundred child population is highest in Malda (9.5%), followed by Uttar Dinajpur (7.6%) and Bankura (6.9%) but NCLP can bring only 4.3 percent of the first two districts' and 5.3 percent of Bankura's working child force within the sphere of special schools (see table 1). On the other hand, NCLP is comparatively successful in its endeavours for the district like Murshidabad (15.1% share of state enrolment) followed by Nadia (10.8% share of state enrolment) and Purulia (9.7% share of state enrolment) where the approximate share of child labour force in those districts are 5.37%, 3.6% and 6.5% respectively. These variations indicate loose ends of policy implementations which accelerate the inherent pattern of regional bias in West Bengal. A substantial part of the needy sections, who are at the lowest rung of development, always remain outside the process of development which marks how the process of inclusive development fails to encompass them within its policy ambit.

The latest available statistics of Government of West Bengal (2012) indicates that about 945 special schools are in operation in West Bengal and most of these schools are in rural areas. The total enrolled students in these schools are 46,403 while seventeen times of these students remain outside the periphery of special school education. Among these NCLP students around 55 % were female students, as per the records of the Labour Commissioner (2007). Two evaluation surveys were done in NCLP. In the first NCLP evaluation survey

(2001), it was found that most of the sample schools in West Bengal were partially successful in terms of enrollment as well as supplying adequate nutritious food. However, the infrastructures of these schools have been found poor, without proper class rooms, toilet and drinking facilities and furniture. Attendance of the students in most of the classes was 75%. About fifty percent of the students were withdrawn from hazardous activities, which imply missing of target groups by 50 percent. Less than 20 percent of the NCLP were formally mainstreamed and convergence with Rural Development and Health Department were found inadequate.

The second NCLP survey⁴ in West Bengal was done in 2007. The survey revealed variations in terms of quality of physical infrastructure of the special schools through out the state. Most of the schools were found with one class-room, inadequate standard of electricity connection, poor sitting arrangement and almost no separate toilet facilities for boys and girls were available. It was also observed that most of the schools were located either in the buildings of local clubs, charitable institutions or at government premises.

5. Uttar Dinajpur District: Child Labour & Education Scenario

The National Child Labour Project was launched in Uttar Dinajpur in 1995-96 to rehabilitate children from different hazardous occupations, like Beedi making, Carpet – weaving, Automobile repairs, Brick making etc. Presently there are 40 special schools under NCLP of which 32 NCLP schools are in Karandighi, where incidence of child labour in beedi –making activity has been found at maximum rate. Five NCLP centers are at Kaliyaganj block. Total numbers of students in these forty NCLP Centers are 2000, of which 854 are boys and 1146 are girls. From its inception to May, 2012, total 6743 numbers of students are mainstreamed through this project.

All the NCLP schools are run in rented house and there is no provision to construct permanent kitchen –shed in the schools. NCLP, Uttar Dinajpur has decided to introduce the concept of Centralised Kitchen in order to implement the Mid-Day Meal successfully. All Mid Day Meals are prepared in centralized kitchen of Karandighi and Kaliyaganj to cater the need of 28 schools in Karandighi Block and 5 schools in Kaliyaganj Block. Three other NCLP schools in Raiganj Municipality, Goalpokhar-I Block and Islampur Municipality mid-day meals are prepared in their own arrangement. However, due to inadequate supply of food grains these child-labours failed to receive rice, dal and vegetable curry. In stead of that they get vegetable curry and bread.

The project has recently increased the stipend from Rs 100 to Rs 150 per month for making these child labours mainstreamed in formal schools. However, certain irregularities are observed in receiving this amount in time. One of the chief characteristics of these NCLP schools is to raise the potential employability of these children. The students under this NCLP schools are given training programme of different pre-vocational courses, like manufacturing cork products, tailoring, jute products and computers.

According to NCLP(2012), it was found that Karandighi Block is the worst sufferer block for the highest incidence of Child labour, followed by Itahar, Goalpokhar-II and Chopra, with 37%, 26%, 10.5% and 9.3% of the district share. Raiganj and Islampur depict comparatively better scenario than others so far as incidence of child labour is concerned. Hemtabad⁵ is known as the most educationally strong block in the district and the number of child labour is barely low ever here.

Table 2: Situation of Child Labour & Education in Uttar Dinajpur

Name of Block	Child Population	No. of Child	% of SC Enrolled	% of ST Enrolled	No.&% of Total	No. of Out of	Missing Child
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	(5-14)*	Labour [#]	in total enrolment (5-14yrs)	in total enrolment (5-14yrs)	Enrolment in child population (5-14yrs)	School [§]	(5-14yrs)
Chopra	93388	2983	17.9	5.9	75929 (81.30)	1583	15876
Islampur	98234	900	15.5	2.3	79769 (81.20)	2840	15625
Goalpokhar-I	84796	2413	17.9	4.4	64436 (75.98)	3356	17004
Goalpokhar-II	79339	3370	19.5	4.5	61930 (78.05)	2365	15044
Karandighi	104456	11925	32.6	7.2	79702 (76.30)	3588	21166
Raiganj	138141	436	40.8	6.1	98408 (71.23)	1607	38126
Hemtabad	41048	Nil	36.4	5.2	31512 (76.74)	90	9446
Kaliyaganj	72708	1625	58.3	5.8	52702 (72.48)	290	19716
Itahar	83315	8483	26.8	6.9	64236 (77.10)	672	18407

Source: NCLP(2012), Status Report, NCLP, U/Dinajpur; # Survey conducted by NCLP on April-June, 2011; § DISE (2011) SSM-UD . * Projected Child Population estimated by SSM-UD

Table-2 provides a comprehensive picture of the situations of child labour as well as child education in the district of Uttar Dinajpur. Percentage of total enrolment within the eligible child population is highest in Chopra and closely followed by Islampur, while Raiganj has shown the least level of enrolment. Again Karandighi Block has highest out of school, followed by Goalpokhar-I and Islampur (SSM-UD, 2011). The incidence of child labour is highest in Karandighi, followed by Itahar and Goalpokhar –II (NCLP- U/Dinajpur, 2012). However, reconciliation of these two levels of data actually exposed certain anomalies. We failed to synchronize these data in common platform. For instance from the recent available statistics, the total number of students enrolled in special schools are 2000. Therefore the numbers of child labourers who are outside the periphery of school education are 30,135 (NCLP, 2012). But DPO-SSM, Uttar Dinajpur declares that only 16,391 students are out of schools (DISE, 2011). This divergence in statistics cast doubt on reliability of statistics provided by both these institutions.

Barring that, incongruity also lies in the process of counting ‘out of school children’ and also in estimating the numbers of projected child population. Child Population statistics is perceived to be over-projected in the district. Sarba- Shiksha Mission relies on ‘child- registers’ maintained by Secretary, VEC (Village Education Committee) and cross-checking survey done by *shiksha-bandhhu* and therefore the ground reality is expected to be revealed in their statistics. But loophole lies in the ways of calculation, administrative intervention and perennial tendencies of the economically vulnerable and over burdened guardians to engage their wards in income earning activities at the cost of their school education. Due to cumulative impact of all these factors number of out of school can never be diagnosed properly.

‘Out of school’ contains both ‘never enrolled’ and ‘drop-out’ children. Cohort Study in Uttar Dinajpur (SSM-UD, 2005) have shown that average dropout in primary

school is 34.75%. The study was based on the survey conducted in the primary schools. It shows the highest dropout was in Chopra Block (64.43%), followed by Goalpokhar-I (53.22%) and Goalpokhar-II (44.13%). Islampur Block (including municipality) and Itahar are also having substantially larger dropout, i.e., 37.40% and 28.97%. Higher rates of dropouts are primary indicators of higher incidence of child labour. In certain cases children are migrated to distant states in search of economic opportunities for earning livelihood. District does not keep account of those children and they don't enter into the category of 'out of school' and naturally the 'missing children' subset expands. Incidences of child labour are highest in Karandighi block (i.e., 11925) followed by Itahar block (i.e., 8843), Goalpokhar-II (3370) and Chopra (2983). The lower level of dropout in Karandighi can be claimed as the successful intervention of NCLP. However, in Chopra Block a large section of female children are engaged in plantation work, while in Islampur economic impoverishment induces the household to send their children at work. In Karandighi beedi binding has been found to be handful returns generating options for the household and they involve in subcontract with different manufacturers and child labour is formed in the disguise of family worker. They can neither be detected nor can be rehabilitated. Raiganj being the district headquarter have the potency to offer several types of returns generating income for these tender aged groups, like at dhabas, tea-stalls, brick-manufacturing centers and in domestic double income earning nucleus household as maid servant or babysitter⁶. This is the reason why percentage of enrolment is lowest in the block and out of school is also significant.

6. Child Labour & their Education: A Survey based Analysis in Cooch Behar

Cooch Behar ranks 11th out of eighteen districts of West Bengal in terms of Human Development Index. The district has attained the status of 'Special Focused District' as SC, ST and Minority concentration in the total population are 50.1%, 0.58% and 23.24% respectively (Census, 2001). The incidence of child labour is 4.1 percent of the child population within 5-14 years of age. According to SSM-Cooch Behar (2010) the numbers of 'out-of-schools' are 4435.

CSSS, Calcutta⁷ has very recently done an extensive household study on the district (Minority Concentration District Project). Their household data on educational conditions offer a plethora of data regarding reasons for dropout across gender and communities. On average 30% to 60% dropout in the villages reveals that cost of remaining in school is quite high in the district. The research team opined that instead of raising the supply of schools emphasis should be on the provisions of supplementing resources that could keep the poor students in schools. Mid-day meal cannot alone solve the problem, because an ultimate choice becomes in between 'schooling' and 'working'. The only way the students could continue if an equivalent subsidy is provided to the students for foregoing his/her income while going to school. Sending school should be at least that much lucrative to these rural parents, who cannot perceive future returns of school education. To contextualize these issues let us review the reasons of drop-out as cited by the research team of CSSS.

Table 3 : Reasons of Droop-outs in schools of Cooch Behar

Sl No	Reasons of Dropout	Male Minorities	Female Minorities	Male Non-Minorities	Female Non-minorities
1	Distance	48.48	26.92	12.50	10.53
2	Improper Teaching	38.71	28.00	20.00	5.56
3	Unavailability of Water, Toilet, Classroom	16.13	12.00	12.50	5.56

4	Child Labour	30.00	28.00	64.29	42.11
5	Expensive	65.71	61.54	84.62	86.36

Source: CSSS (available at http://www.icssr.org/CoochBehar_MCD_Report_Final.pdf)

The table-3 reveals that non-minority child labours in Cooch Behar district are larger in percentages than minorities so far as drop-out is concerned.

6.1 Primary Survey

We undertake a survey to address various socio –economic issues related with child labour and its relationship with education. We have chosen the district Cooch Behar since the rate of child labour present in this district (i.e., 4.1%) is very close to state average (4.5%). Therefore the sample survey analysis of this particular district can be represented as the situation of the state. For the purpose of our sample survey, we have chosen those children whose ages fall between 5-14 years of age. At random we have chosen a district block, namely Mathhabhanga –I and again three villages namely Pachagharh, Danghkhoba and Paschim Katherbari are chosen at random from the block. Mathhabhanga block was found to be child labour endemic. Child workers are engaged in different work activities, like agricultural work, domestic work, wood and saw mill, sweet shop, tailoring shop, family labour, brick kiln field, family labour etc. We have interviewed in total 90 child labourers of which 49% belong to SC community and 47% belong to Minorities.

73% are the highest percentage of child-workforce in our sample surveys who are working outside residence and not attending schools, while 13.3 % labour force is working inside home and attending schools. We have observed that NCLP has started in this district in 2009 and only 900 child labourers were mainstreamed through this provision while 26,173 are the number of child labour in the district (according to 2001 census) . We have constructed an easy to answer questionnaire for these child labourers and asked the respondents regarding different socio economic perspective. The answers from the respondents helped us to tabulate the data and construct econometric model to test our hypothesis regarding few basic relationship between child rights to education and child labourers. Few distinguished features what we observed in Cooch Behar are that almost all 58 male child labours and 32 female child labours have expressed their willingness to carry out studies. All of them said that ‘mid-day-meal’ were main point of attraction in schools. None of the children are happy with their present work status and all of them felt poverty and sibling burden are the major reasons for their engagement as child labour. Almost all the child labour in our survey have started their schooling in local primary schools and have to leave school due to engagement with works. Very few of them, who are mainly family workers, can continue their jobs. No serious kind of physical abuse (e.g., beating , sexual assault or showing pornographic pictures⁸) have been experienced by these respondents while verbal abuse is too much common experienced by almost all child workers in the work place, including the family labour.

The degrees of variations in different types of socio economic responses have induced us to build a model on Child Labour, namely “Work Experience Model of Child Labour”. Work experience of the child labour has been counted in years. The maximum years of work experience which is possible is four years as the range of ages of our selected respondent vary between 10-14 years. Therefore zero work experience is ideal for eliminating child labour. We construct this model to find out the ensuing factors behind this incidence of child labour. That will help us to trace out the relationship between children’s motivation to work and educational at a time.

6.1.1 *Work-Experience Model of Child Labour*

In this model, we are assuming ‘years of work experienced by child labour’ as the dependent variable. The years of working experiences capture the impact of dearth of poverty and sibling burden in the rural household families, which compel all of them to send their offspring in work place. The socio-economic variables which send the children to the work field can be categorized as follows:

- (a) Distance of working place: We hypothesize that lower the distance from working places, higher would be the tendency of parents to send their children to work place. We need to verify this in our model.
- (b) Average years of education of parents: Low parental educational is hypothesized as lesser awareness about the consequences of sending children at work-place. Higher the education of parents lower we hypothesize would be the years of working experience of child labour.
- (c) Wage differences with adult: If wage differences rises that means relative wage of child labour falls, notional labour supply curve definition tells us that supply of child labour will be falling eventually.
- (d) Family Income (excluding mother’s income): If family income rises we can expect the parents would send their children in educational institution instead of working place. Therefore working experience would be lesser.
- (e) Mother’s Income: Mothers income is an important parameter for deciding her children’s future. It is often hypothesized that the spillover impact would be distributed to the holistic development for her family. Therefore inverse relation ship is expected between mother’s income and working experience of children, if the empowerment is in true sense.
- (f) Economic freedom enjoyed: Income earning capacity gives a children greater opportunity to purchase things on their own and on their own choice. Therefore higher economic freedom may expand their years of working experience.
- (g) Height of Child Labour (assumed as a proxy variable of child’s work-efficiency): We are assuming height of the children as proxy parameter of work efficiency for the child labour. If work efficiency rises, the chance of children getting involved in the work place raises as well the working experiences.

Running Ordinary Least Square method in the data set of 90 children we built up the model with above variables. F statistic (=7.195 with 87 degrees of freedom) is found to be significant which ensures goodness of fit of the model. R² of the model is 0.39, which implies that 39 percent variations of the model can be explained by the variations of the factors. Although this is not a very well explained model, but still a lot of significant points can be captured through this. The coefficient matrix table gives us the ideas about the factors of significance.

Table -4 Coefficients

Independent Variables	Coefficients (with standard error)
Distance of Work Place	0.105 (0.095)
Wage Difference with Adults	0.01506*(0.007)
Family Income	0.0001265 (0.00)
Mother’s Income	0.001172**(0.00)
Economic Freedom of Child- Labour	-0.00605 (0.013)
Work Efficiency (height of child)	0.14* (0.024)
Parental Education	0.270 (0.024)
Constant	- 4.731* (1.584)

Dependent Variable: Years of Working Experiences of Children; * significant at 0.01 level, ** significant at 0.05 level

$$\text{Work Exp(Child Labour)} = -4.731 + 0.015 * \text{Wage Diff_Adult} + 0.001 * \text{Mothers' Inc} + 0.14 * \text{Work-efficiency}$$

(1.58)
(0.007)
(0.00)
(0.024)

The above estimated equation gives us an idea about the significant variables which influence the years of work experience of child labour. Contrary to our hypothesis, we found wage differences with adult and mother's income is positively influencing the child labour. This means despite getting the sign of work exploitation, the long years of child experiences are found in this sector. Since, child himself is not a decision making agent regarding choice of his working place, parents keep their children in that working place expecting for his future assurance with that job skill. Differences in wages often act as a signaling factor of a prospective job for the adults. Therefore it positively influences the years of children in working place. The equation states if per-month wage difference rises by Rs.100.00, there would be rise in 1.5 years of experience by the child labour. In other words, if parents find the wage differences raised by Rs 100.00, they would send their children 1.5 years earlier to the work place, considering the future prospect of job.

Surprisingly mother's income has been found to influence the children's years of experience in positive way. To explain this we have to search deeper into the field. Mother always feels safe to keep their children along with her even in the working place. She can share some amount of her children's work in need. Therefore her income is expected to influence positively her children's work experience. Our estimated model shows that if mother's income is raised by Rs.1000 then the child's work experience is about to be raised by one year. Higher income also induces mother to share her work burden with her child and getting her children prepared for their future job.

Height of the children is assumed to be the proxy variable of his work efficiency. Good height always makes the employer bit secured to overstate the ages of his employees in case of vigilance. Moreover, productivity is also assumed to be linked with good body mass index of a child, where height is an important criterion. Our estimated model shows that rise in height of the children by 4 inches may raise the level of working experiences by 0.56 years (i.e., six months).

7. Conclusion

We have seen various reasons behind non-inclusiveness of a great portion of child labour in main-stream of education. Through empirical analysis in two backward districts of West Bengal, we derived few reasons which bind the child workers in work field. We have tried to make an analysis of NCLP activities based on evaluation surveys and traced a gap of work and lack of convergence mechanism with activities of Sarba Shiksha Mission. Here, we recommend few measures to revamp the whole process, so that relationship between child labour and inclusive education activities can be revamped. NCLP and Sarba Shiksha Mission should work hand in hand to fulfill this objective. Complete implementation of Right to Education can help to solve many of these issues involved with child labour, as the act itself has an inclusive approach. If the number of 'out of school' can be eliminated, the problem of child labour can be automatically controlled and for that to happen the perceived threat of the defaulters has to be magnified. Disastrous impact of child labour should be campaigned specially in the child labour endemic regions, so that the message can be transmitted to lowest strata where dearth of means of living and education compels the household to send their children in work place. Empowered and conscious woman can never accept misery of her children. Therefore empowerment itself can act as a step for raising her level of consciousness and the abolition of child labour. NCLP should be more cautious about disbursing regular monetary compensation to the child workers for foregoing his income.

Irregular payment may cause their guardian to withdraw their wards and send them to workplace. Family labours are often not visible in form of child-labour, while they are engaged in different types of domestic duties, starting from sibling care to agricultural work. If the local government is obliged to send all these children between 6-14 years of ages to school campus, the prevalence of child labour is expected to reduce, provided the governance mechanism is robust and effective. With all these hope in mind can we expect to reach the Millennium Development Goal of an educationally inclusive- child labour free regions in West Bengal within the mid of this decade?

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Notes

1. See the explanation of 'fragile/perverse advantage' from Sanyal K (1993), Economic and Political Weekly, June 19, 1993.
2. Sophie's choice implies the situation of a mother when she has to choose which of her children will die.
3. ILO categorized two intolerable forms of child labour- Unconditional Worst Forms (e.g., slave labour, prostitution, participants in armed conflicts, illicit traders); Hazardous Forms (work that exposes children to danger and jeopardizes their physical and moral health);
4. See Bhattacharya (2008): 'Education for Child Labour in West Bengal', Occasional Paper 15, IDSK
5. Hemtabad is the most literate block having 56.7% literacy rate (highest in blocks) with 45.7% female literacy (highest in blocks). (Uttar Dinajpur District Human Development Report, 2004).
6. For details of dropout problems in Uttar Dinajpur, see Roy (2012) in Roy & Barman (Eds) : "Right to Education : An Accelerator of Social Transformation & Economic Development" , NAP, Delhi.
7. See 'Minority Concentration District Development Project, Cooch Behar, West Bengal' sponsored by Ministry of Minority Affairs, Government of India and undertaken by Centre for Studies in Social Science, Calcutta (available at http://www.icssr.org/CoochBehar_MCD_Report_Final.pdf)
8. These yardsticks are considered as parameters of child abuse by Ministry of Women & Child Development. See "A Study on Child Abuse: India 2007".

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