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## World Day Against Child Labour 2020

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### Why in News

Recently the World Day Against Child Labour has been observed on **June 12<sup>th</sup> 2020**.

### Key Points

- The **theme** for the year 2020 is **Covid-19: Protect children from child labour, now more than ever** which focuses on the impact of **Covid-19** crisis on child labour.
- On 12<sup>th</sup> June 2002, the International Labour Organisation launched the **World Day Against Child Labour**.
- Since then, every year, the day is marked to highlight the plight of child labourers worldwide and also to take required measures to eliminate it.

### Child Labour

- The **International Labour Organisation (ILO)** defines **child labour as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity**, and that is harmful to their physical and mental development.
- In the least developed countries, slightly more than one in four children (ages 5 to 17) are engaged in labour that is considered detrimental to their health and development.
- The eradication of Child Labour is part of the **UN Sustainable Development Goal Target 8.7**.

- **International Laws on Child Labour**
  - **The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989:** It contains the idea that children are not just objects who belong to their parents and for whom decisions are made, or adults in training. Rather, they are human beings and individuals with their own rights.
  - **International Labour Organizations Conventions on the minimum age for admission to employment of the year 1973** (ILO convention 138) and on the **worst forms of child labour of the year 1999** (ILO convention 182).

## Data Across the World

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- **Absolute Numbers:** **152 million** children between the **ages of 5-17** were in child labour, almost half them, 73 million, in hazardous child labour.
- **Age Specific:** Almost half (48%) of the victims of child labour were aged 5-11, 28% were 12-14 years old, and 24% were 15-17 years old.
- **Sectors:** Child labour is concentrated **primarily in agriculture and allied activities (71%)**, 17% in services; and 12% in the industrial sector.

## India and the Child Labour

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- In the age group of 15-18 years, India has around 23 million working children. This means **one in eleven children** between the **ages of 5-18 years** in the country are working.
- Five states which are the India's biggest child labour employers- **Uttar Pradesh, Bihar Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.**
- **Constitutional Provisions:**
  - **Article 21A:** Right to Education
  - **Article 24:** Prohibition of employment of children (below the age fourteen years) in factories, etc.
  - **Article 39:** The State shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing the health and strength of workers, men and women, and the tender age of children are not abused and that citizens are not forced by economic necessity to enter avocations unsuited to their age or strength.

- **Initiatives by the Government of India:**

- **Gurupadswamy Committee: In 1979**, the central government formed the first statutory committee to analyse and research on the issue of child labour in India.
  - One of their major observations was that the problem of child labour is inextricably linked to poverty.
  - Taking into account the findings and recommendations of the committee, the Union Government enacted the **Child labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act in 1986**.
- **National Policy on Child Labour (1987)**: It focuses more on rehabilitation of children working in hazardous occupations and processes, rather than on prevention.
- **Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2000 (the JJ Act) and amendment of the JJ Act in 2006**: It includes the working child in the category of children in need of care and protection, without any limitation of age or type of occupation.
- **The Right to Education Act, 2009** has made it mandatory for the state to ensure that all children **aged 6 to 14 years** are in school and receive free education.
- Another landmark step was the enactment of the **Child labour (Prohibition and Prevention) Amendment Act, 2016**.
  - Initiatives **like Operation Smile, Operation Muskaan** to rescue and rehabilitation of childrens from an unorganised sector, manufacturing units and other factories.
  - Recently, India has ratified International **Labour Organizations Convention (ILO) no 138 (minimum age for employment)** and **Convention no 182 (worst forms of child labour)**.

## Impact of Covid-19

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- **In India**, the lockdown to curb the spread of the Covid-19 has left **child labourers** with no source of income, no means of protection against the disease.
- The lockdown has forced millions of migrant workers — facing long-term unemployment — to return to their villages without any jobs. Children of returnee migrants have been forced to become child labourers.

## Concerns

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- The issue of child labour is still prevalent in India, despite the presence of several laws.

- Child labour legislation to protect children has been inadequate and face the following challenges:
  - **Definitional issue:** One of the biggest challenges in eradicating child labour is the confusion around the definition of a child, in terms of age, in various laws dealing with child labour.
  - **Lack of identification:** Age identification of children is a difficult task in India due to the lack of identification documents E.g. Birth Certificates, School Certificates etc.
  - **Weak enforcement of law:** Due to lack of adequate deterrence and corruption it is difficult to eradicating child labour
- **Poverty and lack of school** are considered as the main causes of child labour.
- People from rural areas with little education often see no alternative but to take their children out of school and put them to work. The children grow up without education, health facilities and no knowledge of their rights.
- The extreme form of **child labour that is forced labour**, in which children suffer not only the impact of hazardous working conditions but lack of freedom.

## Way Forward

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- The **cycle of poverty and its implications** must be addressed properly, so families can find other means to survive.
- Many **NGOs like Bachpan Bachao Andolan, ChildFund, CARE India, Kailash Satyarthi Children Foundation** etc. have been working to eradicate child labour in India. Right kind of focus and orientation with state level authorities is also needed to avoid the practice of child labour.
- **Forced Child Labour** requires an urgent action from governments and the international communities.

**Source: DTE**