



## Children and Domestic Labour

**For Prelims:** [Child Labor](#), [International Labour Organization](#), [National Crime Records Bureau](#), [Child Labour \(Prohibition and Regulation\) Act, 1986](#).

**For Mains:** Vulnerabilities Faced by Child Labor in Domestic Work.

[Source: TH](#)

### Why in News?

Recently, an incident came into light where a couple was accused of hiring a 10-year-old girl as a **stay-at-home help to care for their 4-year-old son and was** subjected to physical and mental abuse on several occasions.

- This incident highlights the issue of [Child Labour](#) in **Domestic Work**.

### What is Child Labor?

- **Child Domestic Labour:**
  - Child domestic work is a **general reference to children's work in the domestic work** sector in the home of a third party or employer.
  - Child labor in domestic work refers to **situations where domestic work is performed by children below the relevant minimum** age (for light work, full-time non-hazardous work), in hazardous conditions or in a slavery-like situation.
- **Hazards of Child Domestic Work:**
  - The [ILO \(International Labour Organization\)](#) has identified a number of hazards to which **domestic workers are particularly vulnerable** some of the most common risks children face in domestic **service include**,
    - **Long and tiring working days**; use of toxic chemicals; carrying heavy loads; handling dangerous items such as knives and hot pans; insufficient or inadequate food and accommodation etc.
  - The **risks are compounded** when a child lives in the household where he or she works as a domestic worker.
- **Status of Child Labor in India:**
  - As per the [National Crime Records Bureau Report 2022](#), in 2021, around 982 cases were registered under the [Child Labour \(Prohibition and Regulation\) Act, 1986](#), with the **highest number of cases registered in Telangana, followed by Assam**.
  - According to a study by **Campaign Against Child Labour (CACL)**, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of working **children from 28.2% to 79.6% out of the 818 children** who were surveyed, mainly because of the [Covid-19](#) pandemic and closure of schools.
  - The states in India having highest child labour employers are - **Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra**.

## Why is Child Labor in Domestic Work Prevalence in India?

- **Social and Economic Conditions of Families:**
  - The prevalence of child labor in domestic work in India are the social and economic conditions of families, lack of effective policies ensuring sufficient wages to adult workers, and the burden **falling on children of impoverished households to supplement family** income.
  - This situation often leads to **kids being paid even less and forced to work beyond their physical** and mental capacity, resulting in a **systematic trap of slavery** in 24x7 house help employment.
- **Marginalized Communities are Easy Targets:**
  - Some communities and families have a **tradition of making their children work** in certain occupations, such as agriculture, carpet weaving, or domestic service. Some also believe that **education is not important** or suitable for girls.
  - Tribals and Dalits who migrate to big cities from the poorer regions of India such as West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Jharkhand are the easiest targets.
- **Poor School Infrastructure:**
  - Many schools in **India lack adequate facilities, teachers,** and quality education. Some schools also charge fees or other expenses that are unaffordable for poor families.
  - These factors **discourage parents from sending** their children to school and make them drop out.
- **Unprecedented Disruption/Losses:**
  - Natural disasters, conflicts, and **pandemics can disrupt the normal functioning** of society and increase the **vulnerability of children.**
  - Some children may lose their parents, homes, or access to basic services. They may be forced to work for survival or be exploited by traffickers and other perpetrators.

## What is the Socio-Economic Impact of Child Labour?

- **Reduced Human Capital Accumulation:**
  - Child labor diminishes **children's ability to accumulate skills** and knowledge, affecting their future productivity and income.
- **Perpetuation of Poverty and Child Labour:**
  - Child labor lowers **wages for unskilled work**, contributing to the cycle of poverty and continued child labor.
- **Impaired Technological Progress and Economic Growth:**
  - Child labor hampers **technological advancements** and innovation, slowing down long-term economic growth and development.
- **Deprivation of Rights and Opportunities:**
  - Child labor **deprives children of their rights to education,** health, protection, and participation, limiting their future opportunities and social mobility.
- **Undermined Social Development and Cohesion:**
  - Child labor weakens social development and cohesion within a country, impacting stability and democracy.
- **Negative Health Impacts:**
  - Child labor exposes children to hazards, **physical injuries,** diseases, abuse, and exploitation, adversely affecting their physical and mental well-being, mortality rates, and life expectancy.

## What are the Government Initiatives to Curb Child Labour in India?

- [Right to Education Act \(2009\)](#)
- [Article 24:](#)
  - Forbids employment of children under 14 years of age in dangerous jobs like factories and mines. However, it didn't prohibit their employment in any harmless or innocent work.
- **Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act (1986):**
  - Amended in 2016 as **Child & Adolescent Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986, completely prohibited employment of children** below 14 years of age in all

occupations and processes.

- **The Factories Act (1948)**
- **National Policy on Child Labour (1987)**
- **[Pencil Portal](#)**
- **Ratifying Conventions of the International Labour Organization:**
  - **[The Minimum Age Convention \(1973\) - No. 138](#)**
  - **[The Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention \(1999\) - No. 182](#)**

## Way Forward

- The government should enact and **amend laws that prohibit and regulate child labour**, in line with international standards and conventions.
- It should also ensure that the laws are effectively implemented and enforced, by allocating adequate resources, capacity, coordination, data, accountability and political will.
- The government should provide **comprehensive social protection** and economic support to poor and vulnerable families, to prevent them from resorting to child labour as a coping mechanism.
- The government should ensure that **all children have access to free and compulsory education up to the age of 14 years**, as per the **Right to Education Act 2009** and [Article 21A](#) of the Constitution.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

### **Prelims:**

**Q. International Labour Organization's Conventions 138 and 182 are related to (2018)**

- (a) Child Labour
- (b) Adaptation of agricultural practices to global climate change
- (c) Regulation of food prices and food security
- (d) Gender parity at the workplace

**Ans: (a)**

### **Mains:**

**Q. Examine the main provisions of the National Child Policy and throw light on the status of its implementation. (2016)**