UNIT 8: CHILD LABOUR AND CHILD ABUSE

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8.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to-

- Explain the meaning of child labour and child abuse.
- Discuss the different types of child labour and the sectors where children work.
- Explain various types of child abuse.
- Identify the causes behind the problems of child abuse and child labour.

- Understand various initiatives towards elimination of child labour

8.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit is concerned with familiarizing the learners with one of the most common social problems that most of the developing countries of the world including India are facing. This problem is child labour and child abuse. A child is defined by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) as "every human being below the age of 18 years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier." However, under different circumstances, the Convention allows to set the minimum age of child with the state's obligation to provide special protection. Accordingly, Indian legislation has defined the minimum ages under various laws related to the protection of child rights.

LET US KNOW



- International Labour Organisation (ILO) has worked towards the formulation of international legal framework regarding child labour since 1919.
- The ILO adopted the first international treaty on child labour: the Minimum Age Convention, 1919, which prohibited the work of children under the age of 14 in industrial establishments.
- ILO Convention No. 138, adopted in 1973, sets 15 as the minimum age for work in developed countries, but developing countries may fix it at 14. It is the most comprehensive and authoritative international definition of minimum age for admission for employment or work.

In this unit, we will discuss the problems and causes of child abuse and child labour in India.

8.3 PROBLEM OF CHILD LABOUR

8.3.1 Definition of child labour

According to sociologists, development workers and educationists,'child labour' is a derogatory term which translates into child exploitation and inhumanity. Not all work done by children can be called child labour. It depends on the child's age, the type, and hours of work performed the conditions under which the work is performed. Work that does not affect children's health or development or does not interfere with their education is generally regarded as being positive. So, when a child is engaged in part time work to learn practical skills that contribute to the welfare of the family and society it is not child labour. It becomes child labour when the child is fully involved in employment, earn money to support family without education. There is no universally accepted definition of child labour.

The term 'child labour' is often defined as work that deprives children of their childhood and that is harmful to physical and mental development. It refers to work that:

- Is physically, mentally, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and
- Interferes with their schooling by: depriving them of the opportunity to attend school; obliging them to leave school prematurely; or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work.

International Labour Organisation (ILO) Conventions 138 (1973) and 182 (1999) define child labours when all children younger than 12 years are working in any economic activities, children 12-

14 years old are engaged in more than light work, and all children are engaged in the worst form of child labour.

ILO Convention of 138 on the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment (1973)

Categories	The minimum age at which children can start work	Possible exception for developing countries
Basic Minimum age	15	14
Light work	13 - 15	12 - 14
Hazardous work	18 (16 under strict conditions)	18 (16 under strict conditions)

Child workers are engaged primarily in agriculture and allied activities in rural areas and in a variety of industries and informal sector activities in the urban areas. According to International Labour Organisation's Bureau of Statistics (1998), there are 250 million child labours in the age group of 5 - 14 in the developing countries. In 2000 the ILO reveals that 246 million child workers in the age group of 5-17 are involved in child labour of which 171 million are in hazardous occupations. While 8.4 million are engaged in the worst forms of child labour and million are in non hazardous occupations. The actual magnitude of child labour in India is hard to determine. According to Indian Census of 2001, child labourers in India are 11.29 millions under the age of 14, which constitutes 1.34 per cent of the total population of the country. A significant number of this labour is in the rural areas working in agricultural activities like farming, livestock rearing, etc. Among the North Eastern states of India, Assam has perhaps the highest percentage of child labour. It has 3, 51,416 child labour according to 2001 census. These child labourers are seen in a wide range of sectors like various factories, tea gardens, hotels, constructional sites, motor mechanic sheds, grocery shops, bonded labour in the households of rich landlords, agriculture, factories, etc.

8.3.2. Types of child labour

According to International Labour Organisation (ILO) we can divide child labour into three categories

- **Child labour in Non hazardous work :** This type of work often takes place on the streets as well as work performed at home It includes a whole range of activities such as shoe cleaning, begging, rag picking, rickshaw pulling, selling newspapers, agricultural labour, domestic work in someone else's house.
- **Child labour in Hazardous work :** The work that leads to adverse effects on the child's health. It includes all work which is hazardous either by the nature of the work or by because of because of the circumstances in which it is carried out. Hazardous circumstances would include long working hours (in excess of 43 hours per week), or work under poor lighting. Hazardous work includes carpet weaving, gemstone polishing, chemicals, glassware, fireworks, making garments, etc. These works expose the children to hazardous chemicals that lead to respiratory and skin diseases, damage eyesight and hearing, radiant heat and even death.
- **Unconditional Worst Forms of Child labour :** It includes those forms of child labour which are the most abusive, such as forced and bonded labour, trafficking, armed conflict involvements, use of children in prostitution, pornography and illicit activities.



Trafficking: Children are often forced to work by traffickers who take the children by kidnapping or persuasion and sell them to employers.



ACTIVITY 1

Make a list of the different types of child labour you have seen in your area.

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8.3.3 Major Sectors where children work

Children are found mainly in three sectors of economy, i.e. Agrarian sector, Manufacturing sector and Self employed children

- Agrarian sector: In rural areas, a lot of working children are found in agricultural and allied activities as paid or unpaid workers. The child workers include migrant labourer, invisible labourer and bonded labourer.
- Manufacturing sector: In developing countries, most of the children work in manufacturing industries. They produce garments, toys, chemicals, glassware, brassware, fireworks, matches and range of other products. Their work may be regular or casual, legal or illegal, and as part of the family or for an employer.
- Self employed children: This type of working children live in slum areas of large cities and towns. They work as domestic servant, as child minders for younger children inside the homes of others; working in restaurants, hotels and shops; in construction sites. They also work as vendors.



LET US KNOW

- The World Day Against Child labour is celebrated every year on 12 June.
- In 2002, the International Labour Organization launched the first World Day Against Child Labour, as a way to highlight the worldwide movement to eliminate child labour.

8.3.4 Causes of Child labour

Child labour is a complex issue and numerous factors have contributed to the problem of child labour. Some common causes of child labour are -

- Poverty,
- Parental illiteracy,

- Urbanization and over population,
- Non availability and non accessibility of schools,
- Parental ignorance regarding the bad effects of child labour,
- Inefficiency of child labour laws in terms of implementation,
- Exploitation of cheap and unorganized child labour.

8.3.5 Initiatives towards elimination of child labour

The problem of child labour continues to pose a challenge before the nation. Government of India has been taking various pro-active measures to tackle this problem. Several commissions appointed by the Government of India and the Sate Governments since independence have recommended ending of child labour. The many provisions of the Constitution which aim at protecting the children include one that categorically bans child labour, saying "No child below the age of 14 years shall be employed to work in any factory or mine or engaged in any other hazardous employment" (Article 23). Several acts were passed prohibiting the employment of children in plantations (The Plantation Labour Act, 1951), mines (The Mines Act, 1952), merchant shipping and the beedi and cigar industries (The Beedi and Cigar Workers' Act, 1966). The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986, prohibits employment of children in certain occupations and processes and regulates the conditions of work in others. The Act provides for the protection of working children by limiting the number of hours (one hour's rest for every three hours of work) and the number of days of employment (six days in week). Children are not permitted to work between 7 P.M. and 8 A.M. The International Labour Organisation launched the International Programme for Elimination of Child Labourers in 1991 and India was the first country to join the same in 1992. However, considering the magnitude of the problem and that it is essentially a socio-economic problem inextricably linked to poverty and illiteracy, it requires a holistic and concerted effort from all sections of the

society to bring about the desired results. The problem cannot be solved by legislation alone.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS - 1

Fill in the blanks

1. In the developing countries ..... years is the basic minimum age at which children can start work.
2. Rag picking and begging are …… work.
3. ……. includes trafficking and armed conflict involvements.

8.4 PROBLEM OF CHILD ABUSE

Scholars have developed different perspectives to understand the act of terrorism. Ram Ahuja identified four perspectives to understand terrorism and they are:

8.4.1 Meaning and Definition

The term 'Child Abuse' may have different meanings in different socio-economic situations. In general, child abuse is a state of emotional, physical, economic and sexual maltreatment of a child under the age of eighteen by a parent, caretaker or employer. According to World Health Organization, "Child abuse or maltreatment constitutes all forms of physical or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power." Child abuse is a violation of the basic human rights of a child and has serious physical and psycho-social consequences which affect the overall well-being of a child.

8.4.2 Types of Child abuse

Child abuse may be divided into four types:

- **Physical abuse :** The World Health Organization (WHO) defines physical abuse of a child as an incident resulting in actual or potential physical harm from an interaction or lack of interaction, which is reasonably within the control of a parent or person in a position of responsibility, power or trust. This may include burning, hitting, kicking, slapping, punishing through corporal punishment, beating by family members, caretakers, employer.
- **Sexual abuse :** According to World Health Organization, child sexual abuse is the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend or that violates the laws or social taboos of society. It includes fondling or touching of child's genitals, intercourse, incest, rape, sodomy, exhibitionism and sexual exploitation.
- **Emotional abuse :** Emotional abuse of children is very difficult to define. As defined by the World Health Organization, "Emotional abuse includes the failure to provide a developmentally appropriate, supportive environment, including the availability of a primary attachment figure, so that the child can develop a stable and full range of emotional and social competencies commensurate with her or his potential and in the context of the society in which the child dwells. Acts of emotional abuse include parents/caretakers using extreme forms of punishment, such as confinement in a closet or dark room or tying the child to a chair for long periods of time or threatening a child. Less severe acts are belittling or rejecting treatment, discriminating, using derogatory terms to describe the child, habitual tendency to blame the child".
- **Neglect :** It is the failure to provide for the all round development of the child. Neglect can be physical, educational, emotional or psychological. Physical neglect

includes denial of food, clothing, appropriate medical care or supervision and proper protection of weather. Educational neglect includes failure to provide appropriate schooling or special educational needs. Psychological neglect includes lack of any emotional support and love. This also includes aspects of gender discrimination.



LET US KNOW

- The UN Secretary General's Study on Violence against Children has estimated 150 million girls and 73 million boys under 18 have experienced forced sexual intercourse involving sexual contact.
- 44,476 children were reported missing in India, out of which 11,008 children have continued to remain untraced (Trafficking in women and children in India, 2005)

8.4.3 Causes of child abuse

There are many causes of child abuse. According to Kewalramani (1992) 'the major cause of child abuse is adaptational failure or environmental maladjustment (both in family and work-place) mostly on the part of the adult perpetrators (parents or employers) but to some extent on the part of adults responsible for family socialization as well'. Characteristics or circumstances of the abuser, the child, and the family may all contribute to the causes of child abuse. Broadly, the causes of child abuse may be parental causes, environmental causes, stress and child problems.

- **Parental causes**
  1. Lack of parenting skills;
  2. Quarrels between parents;
  3. Unwanted pregnancy;
  4. Social isolation of the family;
  5. Experiencing violence in childhood;

6. Inherent traits like irritable nature, rigidness.

- **Environmental causes:-**
  1. Poverty;
  2. Problems in the marriage;
  3. Abuse of substances.
- **Stresses:-**
  1. Unemployment;
  2. Dissatisfaction with job.
- **Child problems:-**
  1. Disobeying parents;
  2. Handicapped child;
  3. Weak bond between mother and child;
  4. Child not taking interest in studies or work



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS - 2

Fill in the blanks

1. Child abuse can be divided into ……. Types.
2. ……. neglect includes lack of any emotional support and love.
3. Sometimes ……. causes like poverty may be the causes of child abuse.

8.5 Conclusion

Therefore though families and communities have been taking the responsibilities for care and protection of children in our society, sometimes children are neglected by parents, caretakers or they are abused by their employers in the work place. The common causes of child labour are poverty and illiteracy. In a country like India more than 26 percent of the total populations live below poverty line (2001 Census). Many families with extreme poverty may rely upon their children in order to improve their chances of attaining basic necessities. Employers engage child labourers

in their factories because they can extract more work from them by giving less wage because child labourers are very cheap. Similarly, the causes of child abuse are parental causes, environmental causes, stress and various problems of children.

This type of problem of children is increasing in India and continues to pose a challenge before the nation. In order to combat child labour, the Government of India has been taking various pro-active policies. India has stood for constitutional, statutory and development measures to eliminate child labour. However, these measures are rarely adhered to due to practical difficulties.



8.6 LET US SUM UP

- The term 'child labour' is often defined as work that deprives children of their childhood and that is harmful to physical and mental development.
- The term 'child labour' is often defined as work that deprives children of their childhood and that is harmful to physical and mental development.
- Child workers are engaged primarily in agriculture and allied activities in rural areas and in a variety of industries and informal sector activities in the urban areas.
- A significant number of this labour is in the rural areas working in agricultural activities like farming, livestock rearing.
- Several commissions apointed by the Government of India and the State Governments since independence have recommended ending of child labour.
- The term 'Child Abuse' may have different meanings in different socio-economic situations.
- Though families and communities have been taking the responsibilities for care and protection of children in our society,

sometimes children are neglected by parents, caretakers or they are abused by their employers in the work place.

- The common causes of child labour are poverty and illiteracy.
- Many families with extreme poverty may rely upon their children in order to improve their chances of ataining basic necessities.
- In order to combat child labour, the Government of India has been taking various pro-active policies.



8.7 FURTHER READING

Hazarika, P. 2004. Child labour in India. Akash Publishing House, New Delhi.

Government of India. 2007. Study on Child Abuse: India 2007. Ministry of Women and Child Development.

ILO. 2002. International Programme on the Elimination of child labour. Geneva, ILO.

Sahoo, U.C. 1995. Child Labour in agrarian society. Rawat Publications, New Delhi.



8.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No.

Check your progress 1

1. 14., 2. Non-hazardous., 3. Unconditional worst forms of child labour.

Check your progress 2

1. 4. 2. Psychological. 3. Environmental



8.9 POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

A) Long Questions (Answer each question in about 300-500 words

Q.1. What do you understand by child labour?

Q.2. Write a note on different sectors where children work.

Q.3. What are the different types of child labour? Discuss the types of child labour found in India.

Q.4. What do you mean by child abuse? Discuss the different types of child abuse.

Q.5. Discuss the causes of child labour. Mention some of the initiatives taken by the Government to tackle the problem.

Q.6. What are the causes of child abuse?

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