

## Velpur Model of Eradication of Child Labour

*Mains – (GSII) Issues related to child labour and education*

### Why in News?

*On the occasion of World Day Against Child Labour (June 12), it is significant to study the remarkable success of Velpur Mandal in Telangana which was declared as a child-labour-free zone in 2001.*

### What is status of child labour crisis?

- **Global crisis of child labour** - According to International Labour Organization (ILO), 160 million children are involved in child labour globally.
- Around 9 out of 10 such children are from Africa, Asia, and the Pacific.
- COVID-19 exacerbated the crisis, pushing more children into labour due to school closures and economic stress.
- **Child labour in India** - As per Census 2011, India had 43.53 lakh child labourers (5-14 years).
- Common industries employing children: beedi, carpet-weaving, fireworks.

*According to ILO Child labour is defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental wellbeing.*

### Constitution provisions for eradication of child labour in India

- **Article 24** - It prohibits employment of children below **14 years** in factories, mines, or hazardous jobs.
- **Article 39(e & f)** - It directs the State to protect children from exploitation and ensure healthy childhood.
- **Article 45** - To provide free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14 years
- **Article 21A** - Right to free & compulsory education (6-14 years).

### Legal framework for eradication of child labour in India

- **Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986** - It prohibits employment of children below **14 years** in specified hazardous occupations and processes.
- It also regulates conditions of work for children in other occupations.
- **Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016** - It prohibits employment of children (<14 yrs) in all occupations, except if helping family after school hours.
- It prohibits adolescents (14-18 yrs) in hazardous occupations and makes child labour a **cognizable offence**.
- It introduces stricter penalties:
  - Employer - Rs 20,000-50,000 fine and/or imprisonment up to 2 years.
  - Repeat offence - Imprisonment up to 3 years.
- **Commission for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005** - It establishes National & State Commissions for Protection of Child Rights NCPCR & SCPCR).
- To protect children from abuse, exploitation, neglect, and ensure their rights to education, health, survival, and development.
- **Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (RTE Act)** - It ensures free and compulsory education for children aged 6-14 years.
- It helps to prevent child labour by keeping children in school.
- **Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015** - It treats working children as children in need of care and protection.
- It empowers Child Welfare Committees (CWCs) to rescue and rehabilitate working children.

### **Government measures for eradication of child labour in India**

- **National Child Labour Project (NCLP) Scheme** - Targeted intervention in **districts with high incidence of child labour**.
- **Launched in** - 1988
- Rescued children are:
  - Put into Special Training Centres (STCs).
  - Provided bridge education, stipend, healthcare, vocational training.
  - After preparation, they are mainstreamed into formal schools.
- **PENCIL Portal** (Platform for Effective Enforcement for No Child Labour) - It is launched in 2017 by Ministry of Labour & Employment.
- It is an online portal to:
  - Report instances of child labour.
  - Track rescue & rehabilitation.
  - Coordinate between stakeholders
- **Operation Smile (Also called as Operation Muskaan)** - Launched by Ministry of Home Affairs in 2014.
- It is special police drives to rescue missing and trafficked children including those in labour.
- India is a signatory to **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)**, 1989 which ensures child's right to education, protection, and development.

### **How Velpur mandal is able to become child labour free zone?**

- Velpur, once noted for child labour but on October 2, 2001, Velpur was declared child-labour-free.
- It is started with initiative of **100-day community-driven campaign** in June 2001.
- **Strong community involvement** - Village panchayats, parents, and local volunteers actively participated in identifying and rescuing child labourers.

- Local campaigns raised awareness on the importance of schooling over work.
- **Employer cooperation** - Debts of child labour families that were tied to bonded or child labour was waived by employers.
- This removed financial dependency that often forces families to send children to work.
- **School enrolment drives** - Special enrolment drives ensured every child was admitted to school.
- Dropouts and working children were tracked and reintegrated into the education system.
- **Convergence of Government Departments** - Coordinated efforts between education, labour, police, and revenue departments helped in enforcement.
- Regular inspections and surveys ensured compliance.
- **Support from NGOs** - They played a key role in mobilizing communities and providing bridge courses for child workers.
- Awareness programs and community dialogue sustained momentum.
- **Local governance leadership** - Mandal-level authorities showed strong political will and accountability.
- **Strict Enforcement and Follow-up** - Rescued children were monitored to prevent relapse into work.
- **Institutional support** - All village heads signed Memorandum of Understanding with the government under Andhra Pradesh Compulsory Primary Education Rules (1982).

*Even 24 years later, Velpur maintains 100% school retention and zero child labour.*

*Legal Backing + Social Push = Sustainable Reform – Synergy between law and grassroots participation yields better outcomes.*

### What lies ahead?

- Replicating the Velpur Model in other high-burden regions.
- Promoting awareness campaigns to counter social resistance by imparting the importance of education.
- Ensuring universal access to schools, especially in rural areas.

### Reference

[The Hindu| Velpur's story in ending child labour](#)