

# RGICS



RAJIV GANDHI INSTITUTE FOR CONTEMPORARY STUDIES  
JAWAHAR BHAWAN, DR. RAJENDRA PRASAD ROAD, NEW DELHI-110001

## RGICS LEGISLATIVE BRIEF

**(November, 2015)**

**Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation)  
Amendment Bill, 2012**

**Jeet Singh  
Social Cluster**

## Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2012

### PART-I INTRODUCTION

#### **Background and Context:**

The magnitude of child labour in India is grave. According to an estimate, every 17<sup>th</sup> working child in the world is in India. Using 2011 Census data, Child Right and You (CRY) calculated that one in eleven children (5-18 years) is working in India and hence deprived from their childhood (CRY, 2015). Despite, this persisting cruelty India has been reluctant to implement the ILO conventions on child labour. The two ILO conventions- numbers 138 (Minimum Age Convention, 1973) and 182 (Worst Form of Child Labour Convention, 1999) set some international standards in order to gradually abolish employment of children in all sectors. India has signed both of these conventions and assured the international community that it will incorporate all required progressive changes in its domestic child labour law.

India has the largest share of world child labourers, however it has not yet implemented the long pending internationally agreed international standards of child labour. The current legislation regulating child labour in India namely 'Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 (CLPR Act, 1986) is not in line with both of the ILO conventions mentioned earlier. The UPA government in 2010 initiated a process of amending this law in order to make it in line with the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 and ILO convention numbers 138 and 182. Accordingly, the 'Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2012' (CLPR Amendment Bill, 2012) was introduced in Rajya Sabha on 21 December 2012, which was then referred to Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour by the house for further deliberation.

The amendments brought in by the then UPA government were in line with international standards. The Bill had proposed to abolish all form of child labour below 14-year age and introduced stricter punishment for any violation of the law by employers. The Parliamentary Standing Committee later suggested some more progressive amendments in order to provide free and fair opportunity to every child to grow and develop. The NDA government in May 2015 added few more provisos in this Bill and approved it for introduction in the Parliament. Going against the progressive proposal of the previous government and recommendations of Parliamentary Standing Committee, the NDA government in its new Amendment Bill has backtracked from India's progressive development on this issue. Unfortunately, these added provisos by the NDA government have diluted the central objective of the Amendment Bill. The new Bill not only ignores India's international commitment to the ILO convention numbers 138 and 182, but also bypasses several Indian policies granting children their rights such as The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (RTE Act, 2009) and the National Policy for Children, 2013. New legislative changes proposed by the current government will not move towards modern and progressive ideas of child rights; rather it will promote a feudal socio-economic structure that denies basic human rights of children. This paper attempts to briefly describe the extent of child labour in India, International regulations and proposed child labour law of NDA government.

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### International Child Labour Standards and India's Commitment:

Among numbers of conventions adopted by International Labour Organization in past addressing issues of child labour, Convention number 138 and 182 are landmark initiatives to recognize apathy of child labour and pursue progressive coordinated mechanism to eliminate it. Brief description of these two conventions is as follows:

**Convention No. 138:** The General Conference of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) adopted 'Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) in its 58<sup>th</sup> Session on June 06, 1973. The convention seeks to gradually abolish child labour by regulating minimum age of admission to employment. It believes that the entry of young people in an employment must be consistent with their fullest physical and mental development. Therefore, the convention denies entry of children in employment before they are 15 years old. The article 2(3) of the convention reads, "The minimum age specified.... shall not be less than the age of completion of compulsory schooling and, in any case, shall not be less than 15 years." However, member nations with insufficiently developed administrative, economic and educational infrastructure can avail some relaxation while ratifying this convention. In the case of India, the RTE Act, 2009 guarantees the right to free and compulsory education to its children up to 14 years. It has also a full-fledged ministry and departments addressing issues of labour including child labour. These investments in education and administration make us eligible to ratify this convention without seeking any excuse.

**Convention No. 182:** The General Conference of International Labour Organization adopted 'the Worst form of Child Labour Convention, 1999' in its 87<sup>th</sup> Session on 1 June 1999. The convention seeks immediate and effective measures from member states to prohibit and eliminate worst form of child labour as a matter of urgency. Therefore, the convention attempts to regulate employment of children of age 15 to 18 years. ILO through this convention seeks prohibition of following worst form of child labour by member states.

Worst form of child labour as listed in the convention:

- All forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict;
- The use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances;
- The use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties;
- Work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.

India is a signatory in both of these ILO conventions but could not ratify them in last so many years. We are one among very few countries who has not ratified these two landmark conventions, as the domestic child labour prohibition law is not in line with these international standards.

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### Child Labour in India:

Employing children as labour is one of the most cruel and unjust practices of the 21<sup>st</sup> century world. Millions children are being exploited across the globe and especially in developing countries by forcing them to work which is beyond their capacity, denying all basic rights of survival, protection, development and participation. According to an estimate of ILO in 2010, around 215 million children worldwide are in child labour and 115 million of them are in worst form of child labour such as slavery, prostitution, forced labour, bonded labour and hazardous occupations. The act of employing a child for labour destroys his/her childhood and added to this it is very often accompanied by inhuman treatment of the child. Many cases of workload, mental and physical abuse, underpayment and depriving them from required food and nutrition have been reported and this hampers the growth of child and nullifies any possibilities of recovery in future. The 'National Policy for Children, 2013' recognizes children as an asset of the country; but the very existence of such cruel treatment to millions of children in this country mirrors the reality of our social and political commitment.

CRY has also calculated that India has 10.1 million child labourers in the age group of 5 to 14, which was 12.6 million in 2001. Despite, number of affirmative actions taken up by the governments in last few years, a marginal decrease (20%) in child labour has been recorded between 2001 and 2011. It reveals that the child labour has decreased at a mere 2.2% per year during last census decade. According to CRY, at this pace, it would take more than a century to get the existing working children out of labour. The magnitude of child labourers is even high in the adolescent age (15-18 years). As per Census 2011 data 22.87 million adolescents are part of India's workforce. The persisting problem of child labour in India is denying basic rights to these millions of children.

#### Child Labour in India: Some FACTs

- Every 11th child is working in India (5-18 years).
- 1 in 5 children in the 15-18 years age-group in India are working.
- Working children between 5-9 years increased by 37%.
- Urban Child labour has grown by more than 50%.
- 154% increase in the number of working boys (5-9 age group) in urban area.
- 240% increase in the number of working girls (5-9 age group) in urban area.
- 80% of child labourers work in rural areas.
- More than 50% children in labour are concentrated in five states – MP, UP, Bihar, Maharashtra, Rajasthan.
- 11 states recorded an increase in the number of working children over the decade. The major states among them are Kerala (74%), Uttarakhand (17%), Himachal Pradesh (17%) and Uttar Pradesh (13%).
- Only 13 out of 35 states and UTs performed above the national reduction of 20% in working children (2001-2011).

Source: CRY, 2015 (Compiled from Census data 2001 and 2011)

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Data reveals that the rural part of India recorded this marginal but important decrease in child labour, which still constitutes around 80% of total Indian working children. Three out of four of these children work in agriculture, as cultivators or in Household Industries, most of which are home-based employment. The urbanized part of the country that has been presented as symbol of country's development and growth has observed as high as 53% increase in child labour over 2001-2011. Reacting to this figure, the Policy and Research Director of CRY, Ms. Komal Gnotra says, "This is of utmost concern especially since enforcement machinery is primarily based in urban regions and the implementation of child protection structures is stronger in urban India." (CRY, 2015).

### Child Labour Situation in Five State with Highest Number of Child Labour

Sr.No	Name of State/ UT	Working Children (2001) (In Lakhs)	Working Children (2011)(In Lakhs)	% Change (2001-2011)
1.	UTTAR PRADESH	19.28	21.77	12.91
2.	BIHAR	11.18	10.89	-2.59
3.	RAJASTHAN	12.63	8.48	-32.86
4.	MAHARASHTRA	7.64	7.28	-4.71
5.	MADHYA PRADESH	10.65	7.0	-34.27

Source: CRY, 2015 (Compiled from Census data 2001 and 2011)

The reasons behind child labour in India are numerous, however, these reason can be broadly categorized in two sections. The first category of reasons is related to poverty, unemployment or underemployment of adults that forces them to ask their children to help in family income. The second category of reasons is related to high demand of cheap labour in market. Millions of children are working in industries and other hazardous occupation because there is a high demand for cheap labour in the market. Both of these broad reasons could not be addressed adequately in past because the governments and society failed to adopt a zero tolerance attitude towards it.

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### PART- II KEY ISSUES

#### **Provisions of New Amendment Bill and Challenges:**

The UPA government had proposed amendments in Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 in 2012 with an aim to incorporate globally accepted higher standards in our domestic law regulating affairs of child labour. Now the NDA government has made few more changes in this Bill, which has been approved by the union cabinet on May 12, 2015. The new amendments brought in by the NDA government have diluted all progressive changes suggested by the previous government. The current government has shifted the focus of amendments from complete abolition of child labour to maintaining social fabric of India. The union cabinet articulated social fabric of India in this case as a situation where employing children in family occupation is the accepted norm. The 2012 Bill had proposed complete prohibition of child labour below 14 years. Whereas, the new Bill proposed by the NDA government has inserted two major exceptions to this condition. First, it proposes to allow children below 14 years to work in family enterprises such as agriculture and small-scale industry after school hours and during vacations. Second, it permits children work as artist in commercial entertainment industry such as advertisement, film and television serials.

The Union Cabinet had explained the first exception in its press release on May 12, 2015. A section of explanation reads, *“while considering a total prohibition on the employment of child, it would be prudent to also keep in mind the country’s social fabric and socio-economic conditions. In a large number of families, children help their parents in their occupations like agriculture, artisanship etc. and while helping the parents, children also learn the basics of occupations. Therefore, striking a balance between the need for education for a child and the reality of the socio-economic condition and social fabric in the country, the Cabinet has approved that a child can help his family or family enterprise, which is other than any hazardous occupation or process, after his school hours or during vacation”* (PIB, 2015). Amendments with such intention legally allow million of children to continue live exploitive life. The Union Ministry of Labour and Employment in June 2014 had also justified above-mentioned first exception saying that the ILO convention no 138 under Article 5(3) allows member state to compromise with child labour standards (MoLE, 2014). As it is mentioned earlier in this article, the convention allows some exception for counties whose economic, administrative and educational infrastructure is insufficiently developed. Interestingly, the government of India in 2012 had accepted that its economic, administrative and educational infrastructure is sufficiently developed to ratify the ILO convention no. 138 in its true spirit. The NDA government has ignored this basic fact and in order to push these anti child amendments, the ministry is manipulating provisions of ILO convention.

With these two exceptions, the government has limited the scope of the child labour law. It has simply excluded around 75% of child labourer working in agriculture and home based enterprises. In fact, the proposed law will not even consider them child labourer. Child right activists have also argued that this exception will help corporates to cut costs by hiring child labourers through home based piece-rate work. In other words, the proposed law will supply child labourers at low costs to outsourced corporate production that will be carried out in piece-rate form. The government has not explained any reason behind its second exception where the proposed law allows children below 14 years to work in entertainment industry. It seems that this exception has been made to support corporate interest of entertainment industry. When the world is moving towards fullest physical and mental development of their children,

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India through this piece of legislation is moving backward. Moreover, it will legalize persisting exploitation of child labourers in sectors such as agriculture and un-organized enterprises. Child right activists including Nobel Peace Prize winner Kailash Satyarthi criticized the current format of the Bill saying that the move is retrogressive

### **PART- III**

## **THE CHILD LABOUR (PROHIBITION AND REGULATION) AMENDMENT BILL, 2012**

### **KEY FEATURES OF THE BILL**

The new amendments brought in by NDA government and approved by Union cabinet on May 12, 2015, focuses on maintaining social fabric of so-called Indian culture where children have been allowed to work in family occupations. Major amendments brought in by the NDA government are as follows:

- 1- Going against international norms related to complete prohibition of child labour below age of 15 years, the Bill proposes to allow child labour in audio-visual entertainment industry, including advertisement, films, television serials or any such other entertainment or sports activities. The bill also allows children below 14 years to work in family enterprises, which is other than any hazardous occupations or processes, after school hours or during vacations.
- 2- The Bill proposes prohibition of adolescent labours in hazardous occupations and process. It also lays down regulation for the working condition of child labour in entertainment industry and adolescent labours in non-hazardous occupations and processes. However, it does not regulate working condition of child labour providing their services in non-hazardous family enterprises after school hours and in vacations.
- 3- The Bill proposes employing any child or adolescent in contravention of the Act by an employer as cognizable offence. The Bill enhances the punishment for employing any child in an occupation. It also includes penalty for

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employing an adolescent in a hazardous occupation. The Bill proposes to increase the punishment for employing a child to imprisonment between 6 months and two years (from 3 months-one year) or a fine between Rs 20,000 to Rs 50,000 (from Rs 10,000-20,000) or both. The punishment for employing an adolescent in risky occupations is imprisonment between 6 months and two years or a fine of Rs 20,000 to Rs 50,000 or both.

- 4- In case of a second or subsequent offence of employing any child or adolescent in contravention of the Act, the minimum imprisonment would be one year which may extend to three years. Earlier penalty for second or subsequent offence of employing any child in contravention of the Act, was imprisonment for a minimum term of six months which may extend to two years.
- 5- The Bill proposes to do away with harsh punishment for parents or guardian for permitting a child to work in contravention of the Act. It proposes no punishment in case of a first offence by the parents/guardians and in case of second and subsequent offence; the penalty would be a fine, which may extend to Rs. 10,000.
- 6- The Bill also proposes constitution of 'Child and Adolescent Labour Rehabilitation Fund' for one or more districts for the rehabilitation of child or adolescent rescued.

### Comparison of Child Labour Standards- ILO, CLPR-1986, CLPR Amendment Bill of UPA and NDA

Issues and ILO Conventions on child Labour	The Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act (CLPR Act) 1986	Amendments moved by UPA government to CLPR Act 1986 (2012)	Amendments proposed by NDA government to CLPR Act 1986 (2015)
<p><b>Purpose of Child Labour Regulation:</b> The purpose of ILO convention No. 138 is effective abolition of child labour and to raise progressively the minimum age for admission to employment or work to a level consistent with the fullest physical and mental development of young persons. (Art. 1, Con. 138)</p>		<p>The Bill was proposed to complement the child labour law in with RTE Act, 2009 and to ratify ILO convention numbers 138 and 182. The Bill seeks this goal by incorporating nationally developed and agreed international standards on child labour. (Statement of objective, No. 3)</p>	<p>The Bill seeks to maintain narrowly defined social fabric of India. The cabinet press note of 13th May 2015 reads, " ...while considering a total prohibition on the employment of child, it would be prudent to also keep in mind the country's social fabric and socio-economic conditions."</p> <p><i>The current government has shifted the focus of amendments from complete abolition of child labour (as proposed by UPA government) to maintaining social fabric of India.</i></p>

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<p><b>Minimum Age for Admission to Employment:</b></p> <p>ILO convention no. 138 namely Minimum Age Convention, 1973 believes that the entry of young people in an employment must be consistent with their fullest physical and mental development. Therefore, the convention denies entry of children in employment before they are 15 years old. Article 2(3)</p>	<p>Children below 14 years are allowed to work in non-hazardous occupations</p>	<p>The Bill proposed complete abolition of child labour below 14 years. However, it allows children helping family in household activities during vacations and after school hours. But completely restrict any involvement of children in institutions where there is subordinate relationship of labour or work which are outsourced and carried out in home. (amendment proposed in section 3 of principle Act)</p>	<p>The Bill proposes prohibition of employment of children below 14 years with following two exceptions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1- Children can be employed in his/her family or family enterprises, which is other than any hazardous occupations or processes set forth in the Schedule, after his school hours or during vacations.</li> <li>2- Children are also allowed to work as an artist in an audio-visual entertainment industry, including advertisement, films, television serials or any such other entertainment or sports activities except the circus.</li> </ol> <p><i>The Bill allows children to work in occupations where there is subordinate relationship of labour. It also gives space to corporate for using child labour in their outsourced works that can be carried out in home.</i></p>
<p><b>Adolescent Labour:</b> the ILO Convention no. 182 seeks immediate and effective measures from member states to prohibit and eliminate worst form of child labour as a matter of urgency. Therefore, the convention attempts to regulate employment of children of age 15 to 18 years. The Convention attempts to prohibit employment of adolescent in hazardous occupations and processes.</p>	<p>The CLPR Act 1986 does not make distinction between children and adolescent</p>	<p>The Bill had proposed to abolish employment of adolescent (15-18 year) in all hazardous occupations and processes.</p>	<p>The new Bill kept this provision unchanged.</p>

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<p><b>Regulation on Child Labour:</b> The Article 9(3) of ILO convention 138 seeks strict regulation of child labour. The article reads, “national laws or regulations or the competent authority shall prescribe the registers or other documents which shall be kept and made available by the employer. such registers or documents shall contain the names and ages or dates of birth, duly certified wherever possible, of persons whom he employs or who work for him and who are less than 18 years of age.”</p>	<p>The section-III of the CLPR Act 1986 regulates, age, working hours, working conditions, leave, health, grievances and other developmental aspects of a child labour. Violation of regulation by employer is a punishable offence.</p>	<p>The Bill removes entire section on regulation of child labour because it intends to abolish all form of child labour below 14 year</p>	<p>The proposed Bill allows child labour in certain occupation and processes but has compromised with regulations. It proposes regulation of child labour in entertainment industry but there is no regulation proposed for children working in home based enterprises and occupations.</p> <p><i>This move does not only limits the scope of child labour law but also ignores to recognize around 75% of child labourers working in home based occupations and enterprises.</i></p>
<p><b>Offences and Punishment:</b></p>	<p>Penalty for employing any child in contravention of the Act, was imprisonment for term not less than three months but which may extend to one year, or with fine not less than Rs.10,000/-, but which may extend to Rs. 20,000/- or with both.</p>	<p>Whoever employs any child/adolescent or permits any child to work in contravention of the provisions of section 3 shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than six months but which may extend to two years’ or with fine which shall not be less than twenty thousand rupees but which may extend to fifty thousand rupees, or with both</p> <p>The Bill had proposed to make all these offences cognizable.</p>	<p>The new Bill kept this provision unchanged.</p>
<p><b>Penalty for subsequent violation of law:</b></p>	<p>Penalty for second or subsequent offence of employing any child in contravention of the Act, was imprisonment for a minimum term of six</p>	<p>In case of a second or subsequent offence of employing any child or adolescent in contravention of the Act, the minimum</p>	<p>The new Bill kept this provision unchanged.</p>

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	months which may extend to two years.	imprisonment would be one year, which may extend to three years.	
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### PART- IV

#### **STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Standing Committee on Labour and Employment (Chairman: Mr. Dara Singh Chauhan) presented its 40th report on the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2012 on December 13, 2013. Its recommendations are as follows:

- The Committee has pointed out that while one of the objectives of the Bill is to 'to regulate the conditions of services of adolescents', it contains no provisions towards that purpose. The Committee suggested that regulation of working conditions of the adolescents including the criteria for their wages and settlement of disputes with regard to age of the child be included in the Bill.
- The Committee has suggested that adolescents should be able to complete their elementary education before being allowed to be employed in any occupation.
- The Committee was concerned that various Acts have defined 'child' differently in terms of age. The Committee recommended that the proposed definitions be reviewed in view of the submission made by the Secretary, Department of School Education and Literacy and Secretary and the Ministry of Women and Child Development, by involving them in the consultation process. It also suggested that the provision allowing a child to help his/her family after school hours should be deleted.
- The Committee recommended that the definition of hazardous processes should be widened to include all processes that jeopardize health and safety of adolescents.
- The Bill has suggested increasing the penalty for employing a child and provides that parents/guardians of such a child shall not be liable for punishment unless they allow him/her to work for commercial purposes. The punishment for employing an adolescent in hazardous occupations is also proposed to be raised. The parents and guardians of such an adolescent shall be punished if they permit him/her to work in such occupations. While noting the government's initiatives to reduce parents' compulsion of putting their children to work, the Committee felt that benefits of such initiatives have not percolated adequately. The committee has recommended that the Bill should be amended to take a compassionate view of poor parents and those parents who were not able to benefit from such initiatives.

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- The Committee recommended that Vigilance and Monitoring Committees headed by local MPs be tasked with reviewing the implementation of the Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act instead of the District Magistrate (as provided in the Bill).
- The Bill proposes to empower the appropriate government to periodically inspect places where employment of children is prohibited and the hazardous processes are carried out. The Committee opined that this provision should cover any place where employment of children is suspected and employment of adolescents is prohibited.
- The Committee censured the Ministry of Labour and Employment for its casual reply on the issue of trafficking and street children. It recommended that all concerned ministries should evolve a comprehensive strategy to solve this problem.

The Committee noted that the Bill contains no provision for rescue and rehabilitation of children. It recommended that instead of entrusting various ministries with this task, the government should bring a New Child Labour Policy and the machinery to implement laws, policies and projects should be specified therein.

### PART-V

## CONCLUSION

The dilution of CLPR Amendment Bill, 2012 reflects a shallow and narrow understanding of NDA government on child labour. However, in current socio-economic situation, it aims to support corporate interest of low cost labour. While bringing anti child amendments in the proposed Bill, the NDA government has ignored number of progressive national and international child labour policies. The new provision inserted by the NDA government does not complement the landmark RTE Act, 2009, which provides free and compulsory education to children below 14 years. Similarly, it goes against ILO conventions on child labour and India's National Policy for Children. The National Policy for Children, 2013 works as guiding instrument for framing laws, policy, programme and plan affecting children. The guiding principle 3(x) of the National Policy reads, "Safety and security of all children is integral to their well-being and children are to be protected from all forms of harm, abuse, neglect, violence, maltreatment and exploitation in all settings including care institutions, schools, hospitals, crèches, families and communities." The new amendment in the proposed law goes against our own principles. Legalizing child labour through proposed Bill does not only bypass the national policy for children but also pushes vulnerable section of children into further deprivation.

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