

CHILD LABOUR IN THE AGE GROUP OF FIVE TO NINE HAS INCREASED BY 37 PER CENT

Childhood at stake

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Child labour in the age group of five to nine years has increased by 37 per cent in the country, according to a recent Child Rights and You (CRY) report.

The rate of decline in child labour, overall, over the last decade, based on census figures, is a dismal 2.2% per year, the report also notes. "Given this pace, it would take more than a century to take the existing working children out of the labour force. Over a crore children continue to be a part of the workforce," said Komal Ganotra, Director, Policy

and Research, CRY. Every 11th child in India is a child labourer.

In fact, there has been a whopping rise of child labour in the age group of five to nine years in the urban areas, as revealed by the study. The number of working boys grew by 154 per cent whereas the number of working girls grew by 240 per cent in the age group of five to nine in the urban areas. West Bengal also fares badly in this context. There has been a rise of 337 per cent in child labour amongst girls and 335 per cent rise amongst boys in the category of employment that lasts less than six months, in the urban areas. Main



workers, or children who work for more than six months, have also increased by 24 per cent for boys and 61 per cent for girls in the age group of five to nine years in the last decade in West Bengal. Child labour has

increased by 53 per cent in the urban areas over the last decade despite several campaigns against child labour in the urban areas.

Ms Ganotra said that despite the fact that enforcement machinery is based in the urban areas, the scenario in the urban areas is grim. She attributed the increase of child labour in the urban areas to increased migration. A majority of the child labourers, however, are based in rural areas and three out of four children are involved with agriculture or in household industries.

South 24-Parganas, Kolkata, North 24-Parganas, Burdwan and West

Midnapore are the five districts with highest number of working children. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) also reported that West Bengal accounts for five lakh fifty two thousand child labourers. As per National Child Labour Project (NCLP) data, 59026 inspections were done nationally in 2012 out of which only 435 cases resulted in convictions.

The magnitude of child labour in India is grave and all legislations, policies and enforcement machinery related to children should take into cognizance the enormity of the issue, said Ms Ganotra.