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INDIA
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**WORK ON ELIMINATING
CHILD LABOUR**

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



Dear Reader,

This report highlights our work on the issue of Child Labour across the three Indian states of UP, Assam, and West Bengal. Child labor is a local and civic problem that requires solutions at each level. In the intervention states, Caritas India works with local authorities, teachers, employers, parents, and children to create child-labor-free zones and work together to get children out of work and into school. As a result of our work, we have created child-labor-free zones and pockets in the districts of Darjeeling, Kalimpong, and Siliguri. Many of these child-labor-free zones are created in the tea gardens considered the traditional employer of children. As a part of the effort child right help desk and child-friendly police stations are also constituted across the intervention area. Caritas India believes in the prevention aspect more wherein the community is empowered and convinced that no child should be working: every child should be in school. These child-labor-free zones are successful and are continuing to spread to other areas. In cases, wherein prevention aspects are not able to rescue a child from labor especially in cases of bondage and trafficking legal routes are taken with the help and in coordinated action with child protection authorities

Caritas believes in the concept of meaningful childhood and thus invests time and effort significantly on the issue of child labor. Child labor is one of the oldest problems in our society and is still an ongoing challenge. During the time, child labor evolved from working in agriculture or small handicraft workshops to being forced into work in factories in the urban setting. Children are very profitable assets since their pay is very low, are less likely to strike, and are easy to be manipulated. Socioeconomic disparities and lack of access to education are among others contributing to the child labor and thus by no longer accepting it, not in streets, not on railway stations, not on fields, not in factories, not in domestic settings, and not in the products we buy, we can, and we should stop this menace.

Amidst this 'new normal' while we are still coping with the Pandemic, we hope that we built a collective synergy and concerted efforts towards new hope, peace, and rightful childhood for all children.

Rev Dr Paul Moonjely
Executive Director
Caritas India

MESSAGE



This short report is our consistent endeavour and pursuit to end the menace of child labour in society and especially in pockets wherein the vulnerability of children engaged in economic activities is high. Caritas India ensures that these children go to school instead of work, so they have a chance for a better future. The principle of effective abolition of child labour means ensuring that every child can develop to his or her full physical and mental potential.

However, as per the census more than 33 million children in India, between the ages of 6 and 18, work as child laborers in teahouses, factories, construction sites, and even as servants. They are not only deprived of the opportunity to go to school and pursue their dreams but are also vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. Poverty, discrimination, and exclusion are the main reasons for child labour. Children with poor backgrounds work because work is expected to contribute to the needs of the family and make the most of their time to prepare for the life they should lead.

Child labour thus leads to lower wages and higher unemployment among adults. Children who work and do not go to school will end up in low-paid jobs later, and so will their children – and so the vicious cycle of poverty is perpetuated.

Caritas India is working at multiple levels to address this problem. Caritas India promotes an integrated approach to eliminating child labour, from strengthening home-based initiatives through door-to-door counselling, improving access to the school by conducting enrolment drives, and strengthening social security schemes outreach through community meetings, to addressing harmful social norms that perpetuate child labour by working with child protection structures.

One of the key areas we invest in is to create child leaders and empowered children collectives. Wherein children themselves become the drivers of change. The other important area is to collaborate with government agencies and other like-minded actors on the issue of child labour. So far, the results are encouraging but there is a mile to walk. I hope this booklet will help other key grassroots workers to learn something from our approach and endeavour.

Rev Dr Jolly Puthenpura
Asst. Executive Director
Caritas India

CONTEXT

The International Labor Organisation defines child labor as any work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential, their dignity, and one that is harmful to the physical and mental development of the child. It includes work that is mentally, physically, socially, or morally dangerous to children.

In India, a "Child" as defined by the Child Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act of 2016 is a person who has not completed 14 years of age and is employed in economic activity.

India sadly is home to the largest number of child laborers in the world. There are cases of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse of child domestic workers. As per the 2011 Census, India is home to close to 82.2 lakh (More than 8 million) children under the age of 14 who have to work as child laborers.

REACH AND SCALE

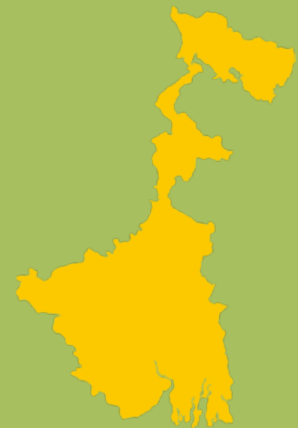
Uttar Pradesh



Assam



West Bengal



In 2020 to 2021 CARITAS INDIA's work in eliminating child labor has



Covered 225 Villages



Reached 350,000 children



Rescued 186 Children

OUR APPROACH



Ensuring Happy Childhood

Caritas India creates children collectives at the community level, and this is a forum where children from different Collectives and Child Rights Clubs (CRCs) from various implementing partners catchment areas meet in one place periodically to discuss child labor issues and children's rights in general.



Working With Underserved Communities

CARITAS INDIA began by, responding to the needs of children belonging to underserved communities like scheduled caste and scheduled tribes in the state of UP, Assam, and West Bengal, especially those children who were working and not in school like migrant and trafficked children



Developing Need-Based Partnership

CARITAS INDIA strategy includes direct work with children and families in vulnerable communities. Indirect work as a knowledge partner involved in the training of different stakeholders working in the field of child protection and meaningful coordination with necessary government departments and law enforcement agencies.



Working at the MACRO/MESO & MICRO level

Caritas India's work against child labour encompasses intervention at every level. The macro-level interventions influence our work at the policy level, the meso level represents practices at the district and sub-district level, and the micro-level highlights practices at the community level.



OPERATIONAL STRATEGY

CARITAS INDIA promotes an integrated approach to eliminating child labour in line with sustainable development goals. CARITAS INDIA's overall focus is on prevention, remediation, rehabilitation, policy advocacy, and documentation for evidence-based practice.



RESCUE

Caritas India starts the process of care and protection of children with the initial steps of rescuing children which includes transporting them out of the place of employment, producing them before the Child Welfare Committee (CWC), settling them in a shelter or at their parents' home



REHABILITATION

Caritas India is working with the CWC and other stakeholders to understand the gaps and presenting findings before the District Child Labor Task Force and follow-up to ensure action is taken to address the gaps. In this regard, child-friendly police stations are set up across various districts.



CREATING HELP DESK

Child Rights Help Desk is set up at various locations within the community to address the concerns of child rights and for local community members to seek redressal for the same. Child Rights Sessions are also conducted in schools as well as in the community to spread awareness on child protection concerns.



MAKING POLICE CHILD FRIENDLY

Caritas India initiated child-friendly police stations (Bal Mitra Thana) in partnership with law enforcement agencies across 8 districts in 3 states. Caritas India's aim is to provide a dedicated friendly space for children at Police Stations, where they can play, learn, and express themselves freely.

Towards 2030



Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8 builds on Article 32 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which requires governments to protect children from harmful and exploitative work. SDG 8 underpins the commitment to eliminate child labor with a key focus on the promotion of inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all by 2030. SDG 1 on poverty, SDG 4 on Education and SDG 5 on ending all forms of violence against women and girls, including harmful practices such as child marriage, and achieving gender equality





STRENGTHENING INVESTIGATION

Due to trauma caused by various factors children often provide, incorrect information that goes in FIR. CARITAS INDIA took initiative and drew the attention of the police department to sort out this problem. CARITAS INDIA is helping police to get the right information in first contact so that correct information can be recorded.



COUNSELING SUPPORT

Counseling to these children plays a vital role in the process of mainstreaming these children in the main society. In one-to-one counseling sessions, our counselor comes across their traumas, anxieties, dreams, and desires and helps them to find out the ways. Counselor follows the behavioral patterns, and other actions of the children.



CHILD RIGHTS ADVOCACY

While the focus has been on strengthening children and communities, CARITAS INDIA also has state-specific advocacy-level interventions, from establishing state coordination between various state governments to pushing the issue of child rights and protection to a higher priority.



THEATER IN EDUCATION

Supporting children with information, encouraging them to articulate their concerns, and introducing safe and accessible mechanisms for challenging violence and abuse are key strategies for providing effective protection. Theatre is one such medium which is having the potential to overcome these barriers.



RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Caritas India engages children in a range of activities to make the group vibrant and outspoken on the issue of child labor including exposure visits, picnic, outing (Mall visit, Dinner at Hotel), competitions, public performances, regular meetings of children groups.

RASMILA MARAK

Rasmila Marak, a 12-year-old minor girl from Hojai was rescued and restored to the family on 29th October 2020. She was 12 years when her maternal aunt took her to Nahoroni Sarupathar and had given her to one of the Assam Battalion families as a full-time domestic worker. Sadly, those days nobody in the family knew her whereabouts. She had served the family for 2 years and now she accidentally escaped with blessings in disguise, she is now 14 years old.

On 26th October 2020, Rasmila was found crying on the roadside around 6.30 pm. People who saw her asked why she was crying. She cried aloud and said that she is the domestic help in one of the battalion families, she continued that her owner is very angry with her as one of their reared hen was gone missing. She was asked to search and find the hen and if not, the owner abused rudely by stating, he would kill her, since she could not find it, she trembled with fear and somehow managed to move out from that house and escape.

The community in the vicinity are aware of Caritas India's initiatives in the area, so seeing this girl's situation, they immediately informed the field animator, and with the instruction from Project Coordinator, the Animator brought Rasmila to his home in Sarupathar, though it was improper; but to save and protect her.



CASE STUDIES

BACK TO SCHOOL FROM EMPLOYMENT IN BRICKLIN WORK



Rehman (Name changed) was 13 yrs old when he dropped out of school and started pushing the brick carts instead of carrying a school bag at his age.

In past two years after he dropped out of school, he had lost hope of being able to go back to school. Disheartened, he accepted the circumstances and continued to work in the Brick kiln and sometimes also drove tractors as well in the farm fields to contribute income to the family.

However, life gave him a second chance to go back to school when one day a Child Protection Worker (CPW) of the Caritas India project team visited his family to understand why Rehman is not going to school and involved in Child Labor. Rehman's mother said, "Rehman's father is the only earning member in the family. His earning is not enough to sustain the family. Rehman being our only son, has to be earning to be able to contribute to the family".

In order to convince Rehman's parents to send him to school, the CPW explained to them how he should be in school now to be able to earn better in the future. CPW further explained to them that it is important for Rehman to stay healthy now and it is time for him to live his childhood and play with friends rather than making bricks. To motivate and support the family, Caritas India Team also connected with the BDO (Block Development Officer) and Village Pradhan as well. As a result of continuous intervention and follow-ups, Rehman was re-enrolled in school in class 7th in October. He also goes for extra tuition-free of cost arranged by the Pradhan after school hours.

SUKURMONI MUNDA & VISHAL MUNDA

Sukurmoni Munda aged about 11 Years and Vishal Munda age 7 years a resident of Konapara grant under Kalain block of Silchar district, Assam was trafficked along with their father Dhiren Munda by a labor supply agent name Mongal Das. He lured them and their father with a promise of providing them with a good job in Punjab where they will earn more than 15000 thousand a month.

When they reached Punjab the supply agency had taken all their document and card and then took them to Himachal Pradesh where they realized that they were trafficked and sold to different owners for domestic works. Dhiren Munda and his son were given the work to look at the cows and buffalo whereas Sukurmoni was given to do household work. They had to wake up at 3 am in the morning and had to work till late at night. The family members with the help of SKS staff also filed FIR against the labor supply agents Mongal Das at Kalain police station. After a week Mongal Das was arrested by Kalain police and after investigation, the police came to know about the team who were involved in the trafficking and with the help of Himachal Pradesh police traced the location of those children and the children were rescued by joint operation of Himachal Pradesh police and Kalain police along with Caritas partners Seva Kendra Silchar and AHT team of Gorakhpur and Northeast and with the guidance of the Caritas India Delhi.



CASE STUDIES

TRAFFICKING IN NAME OF VOCATIONAL TRAINING & DECENT WORK

On 1st March 2021, the parents of 15 yrs. old girl child came to the office of Anugyalaya Diocesan Social Service Society, a partner organization of Caritas India to seek help regarding their daughter who was taken by an agent to Hyderabad for vocational training in Beauty Parlour.

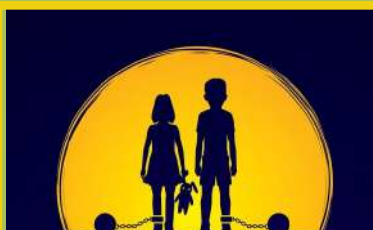
The family hails from one of the tea gardens of Darjeeling District, West Bengal. Due to the poor socio-economic background of the parents, the girl child dropped out of school after class 8th. Consequently, the girl child wanted to work and contribute financially to her family. She was interested and was pursuing a beautician vocational training course.

So, she joined the training and during the training course, she came across Kaaynath Hussain and Faisal owner of Beauty Parlour and Spa in Hyderabad.

The girl was lured by Kaaynath and Faisal in the name of a good job, a decent salary with luxurious facilities in Hyderabad. After a few days, Kaaynath convinced the girl's parents and assured them of a good salary offer and a bright future. The minor and parent fell into the trap laid by him.

After the parents came to ADDSSS and explained the situation, The Child Protection Officer (CPO) at ADDSSS immediately connected with another organization at Hyderabad and planned a rescue operation. Within a day, the child was rescued, and legal charges were pressed against the Employer under sections 75 and 79 of the JJ Act 2016.

The girl child has been reunited with her family. A regular follow-up is being done for the Child's safety by the program team and her family would be further linked with other social security schemes.



ANJALI

Sukurmoni Anjali (name changed) was a young girl of 13 years old who was from Assam, her parents work in tea Garden. Due to extreme poverty, Anjali was sold to a person from Seppa, in Arunachal Pradesh through an agent who was their neighbor. Her parent sold her for just Rs 10,000 out of which 1,000 was deducted for her transportation charge.

The victim's parent was told by the trafficker that they will provide her good education and proper care will be taken. But She was never given the care that they promised but forced her to do all the Household work and was forced to carry water from a far distance. She was deprived of education, adequate food, Sanitation, and medical needs, and disconnected from her family as the trafficker didn't allow her to make calls at home. So, after facing all these harassments attempted to run away, at first attempt she was caught by the Owner and was beaten up brutally and locked in a room as a punishment but she was desperate and wanted to set herself free from the harassment so tried for her second attempt after a month later.

On 24th Sept 2021, the team coordinator took her to her home, Sopai village close to Dekiajuli town in Assam. After reaching her home she embraced her mother and couldn't stop her crying. PPS team called the village people and had a meeting, they were told to look after their village and intimidated them not to sell any child from their village to any person as it is illegal.





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