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Q6(c)

What actionable measures would you suggest to curb the recurrent child labour menace in India?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2023 · Sociology GS 2 · 20 marks · Industrialization and Urbanisation in India

Industrialization and Urbanisation in India: Evolution of modern industry in India; Growth of urban settlements in India; Working class: structure, growth, class mobilization; Informal sector, child labour; Slums and deprivation in urban areas.

Core demand of the question

- Suggest actionable measures to curb recurrent child labour in India
- Tie measures to caste, poverty, schooling, and the law
- Keep the list sociological, not only a statute list

Revision summary

Child labour recurs because of household need, contractor chains and **caste-typed work**.

Enforcement must join child-labour law with RTE and joint liability of contractors.

Adult wages, meals, hostels and raid-linked social security replace the child's income.

Migrant-portable schooling and bridge courses keep rescued children in class.

Stigmatised caste occupations and girls' unpaid work need named targeting.

Introduction

Child labour in India returns because households need the wage, employers need cheap flexible hands, and caste still sorts who is 'available' as a child worker. Actionable measures must close the labour market to children and open a livable school-and-wage path to adults.

Body

Law that works on the ground

- Enforce the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016, and the Right to Education Act together: rescue without a seat in school is a round trip to the kiln.
- Treat trafficking corridors, brick kilns, cotton seed plots, domestic work, and roadside eateries as inspection priorities, not only registered factories.
- Make principal employers and contractors jointly liable, because A. R. Desai's class chain hides the child behind a labour contractor.
- Fast-track rehabilitation funds so a released child eats this week, not after a file moves.

Household economics

- Raise and actually pay adult minimum wages in the sectors that currently run on child hands.
- Expand reliable midday meals, hostels, and scholarships for first-generation learners, especially Dalit and Adivasi children who Srinivas's village still places at the well's edge.

- Link MGNREGA and social security to households identified in child-labour raids so the adult replaces the child's income.

School as a labour-market rival

- NEP-era foundational literacy only helps if the teacher is present and the child is not seasonal migrant; portable admissions for migrant children are an actionable device.
- Bridge courses for older children who have missed years, so age shame does not push them back to work.
- Community boards, including women's groups, to name missing children the way Operation Barga named unrecorded tenants: publicity plus record.

Caste, gender, and demand

- Target occupations historically tied to caste stigma, where children inherit work as destiny rather than as a short crisis.
- Treat girls' domestic and farm labour as labour, not as training for marriage.
- Ban and prosecute hazardous home-based piecework that uses children for export and domestic value chains.

Culture of enforcement

- Public names of repeat employers, as courts have sometimes done, change honour more than a quiet fine.
- Train panchayats and police against the idea that 'poor children must help'.
- Beteille's equality as a value has to reach the workshop, not only the textbook.

What not to do

- Do not romanticise 'family learning of craft' when it is full-time wage substitution.
- Do not make the child a criminal; the employer and the missing public school are the problem.

Flow diagram

Adult wages social security -> Child not needed as earner
 RTE bridge migrant seats -> Child not needed as earner
 Joint liability inspection -> Employer cannot hide child
 Child not needed as earner -> Curb recurrence
 Employer cannot hide child -> Curb recurrence

Conclusion

Recurrent child labour ends when adult wages, school seats, and inspector power meet at the same household. Statutes already exist. The actionable core is to make the legal child more expensive to hire than a paid adult, and safer to keep in school.

Facts & figures

CLPR Amendment 2016

Bans employment of children under 14 except some family work; restricts adolescents in hazardous work.

RTE Act 2009

Right to elementary education that must sit beside rescue, or rescue fails.

NCLP

National Child Labour Project model of special schools and rehabilitation, uneven in coverage.

Kiln and farm belts

Recurrent sites where migrant families work as units, including children.

Caste-typed work

Sanitation, weaving, brick and farm labour streams that reproduce child work by birth.

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