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Rag Picking Children – A Study in A City

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Abstract

Many of the street children who have run away from home have done so because they were beaten or sexually abused. Tragically, their homelessness can lead to further abuse through exploitative child labour and prostitution. Not only does abuse rob runaway children of their material security, it also leaves them emotionally scarred. Many of the abused children in India encounters are traumatised and some refuse to speak for months. To aggravate matters, children often feel guilty and blame themselves for their mistreatment. Such damage can take years to recover from in even the most loving of environments; on the streets it may never heal.

Keywords: Child Labour, Integrated child protection scheme, Rag Picking Children

Child Labour

Most Indian street children work. A common job is rag-picking, in which boys and girls as young as 6 years old sift through garbage in order to collect recyclable material. The children usually rise before dawn and carry their heavy load in a large bag over their shoulder. Rag-pickers can be seen alongside pigs and dogs searching through trash heaps on their hands and knees. Other common jobs are collecting firewood, tending to animals, street vending, dyeing cloth, begging, prostitution and domestic labour.

There are not many studies available on street children, except researches on this topic conducted by academics in universities and research institutions. A few NGOs have also published their works on street children in the form of reports.

Gurusamy. S. Street children who where? Why? Social Welfare, in 1950, 17% of the population of the developing world lived in urban areas. By 1955, that population was 32%, by 2000, it will be 40% and by 2000, 57% of the developing world population was live in cities. Janakiram. S survey on street children an urban problem needing speeds attention identities street children becoming on easy press in the hands of anti- social elements drug tracking, ideologing in prostitution, showing slogans in public processions, etc. And calls for co-ordinate efforts of social welfare officials, sociologist, social workers and NGOs engaged in the welfare of street children.

Role of Gos/Ngos in Prevention and Rehabilitation

In a welfare state it is the bounden duty of the government concerted to children employed in hazardous places etc..., considering the magnitude and volumes of problems faced by them the government could not above fulfill social defense commitments to these segments, who are in desire need of external assistance for well being.

Though governmental organisations like the department relief and rehabilitation the desired results were not forth coming in its letter and spirit.

The UNICEF programmes under convention on the children, elimination of child labour in hazardous place, prevention of child abuse etc., and financial assistance provided for undertaking relief and rehabilitation activities encouraged NGOS to serve effectively to reach these neglected segments. Taking advantage of the Governmental organization funding support, UNICEF and other funding agencies support many NGOs sprang up over the years in many part of our country to supplement the governmental organization attempts to warts relief and rehabilitation of street children. India is one of the nations to have ratified the UN convention in 1992 to protect the rights, of the children. It is generally assumed, that every child has four basic rights, such as survival Rights, Development Rights, Protection Rights and participation Rights. India's child population is estimation in 1998 as 430 million, who are under the age 18 years as the (child is defined in the article 1 of the UN convention on the Rights of the child). This Figure is equal to the combined total population of USA ant the Russian Federation.

If the child is brought up with care, discipline, support and nourishment, we have plenty of options for human development in the new millennium. We have come across myriad obstructions, to achieve the same because our country has half of the population with illiteracy, and the women's literacy is opacity despite of literacy programmes and policies in the last fifty years. In this context, the convention on Rights of the children is a cornerstone of a new moral ethos for children. It services to strengthen their respect and protect their rights which happen to be the starting point for integral development of the individual's potential in an atmosphere of freedom, dignity and justice. There are two important articles dealing with child rights; Article 24.1 refers the highest attainable standard of health and Article 28.1 emphasises the rights progressively have been included sensibly in the convention on Rights of the children.

Law Resource India

Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS)

Evaluation of the child protection schemes of the Ministry of Women & Child Development, including the scheme 'An Integrated Programme for Street Children', in 2007 revealed shortcomings and gaps in these schemes and their implementation. To bridge these gaps and to provide safe and secure environment for overall development of children in difficult circumstances, the Government of India in the Ministry of Women and Child Development, has introduced a new comprehensive Centrally Sponsored Scheme, namely, Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) w.e.f. 2009-10 by merging three erstwhile schemes, including the scheme 'An Integrated Programme for Street Children' with additional components. This Scheme is being implemented through State Governments/ UT Administrations.

Under this Scheme, there is provision for setting up of 'Open Shelters' for children in need of care and protection, including the street children, in urban and semi-urban areas. The programmes and activities of these Open Shelters inter alia include age-appropriate education, access to vocational training, recreation, bridge education, linkages to the National Open School Programme (NOSP), health care, counseling etc.

There is no proposal in the Ministry of Women and Child Development to conduct a specific study to ascertain the number of street children in the country; However, ICPS provides for setting up of District Child Protection Societies by the State Governments/ UT Administrations in every district of the State. The role and responsibility of the District Child Protection Society includes identifying families and children at risk to prevent destitution of children and carrying out a situational analysis of children in difficult circumstances, including street children.

Section 62 of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000 provides that every State Government/Union Territory Administration shall constitute Child Protection Units for every district. To facilitate the States/UTs in setting up such Units, financial assistance is being provided to them on a cost sharing basis (90 per cent for North Eastern

States and State of Jammu & Kashmir and 75 per cent for other States) through a Centrally Sponsored Scheme, namely Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS).

As ICPS has been introduced very recently, i.e. in 2009-10, and the States have just commenced the implementation the Units are being progressively established by them. During the current year, 18 States have submitted the financial proposals for release of grants under this Scheme. Funds have already been released to 7 States. State-wise number of Units established, and funds released to them are at Annex.

ICPS provides for establishment of institutional mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of ICPS, including performance of the DCPS. Such mechanisms include District Child Protection Committees (DCPCs) at District level and State Child Protection Committee (SCPC) at State level and Central Project Support Unit (CPSU) under the Government of India in the Ministry of Women and Child Development. As the Scheme is at the initial stage of implementation, it is early to undertake the annual appraisal.

Methods

Objectives:

1. To study the socio-economic conditions of child rag pickers in Madurai City.
2. To study the reasons for taking up this occupation by the respondents.
3. To know whether there is relationship between caste and Rag-picking.
4. To know about the relationship between the family members and the rag-pickers.

Working Definition

Child Rag-picker

A child below the age of 14 years and who is engaged in collection of rags and other waste materials like paper, plastic bags / polythene sheets, glasses / Bottles, iron scraps, etc.

Sampling and Data Collection

As the rag pickers are scattered all over the town, the researcher, to collect the information, selected some areas like bus-stand, road sides housing area

and bazaar where they can be seen often. Hence, the sampling here is convenience sampling. The number of respondents is 104. The researcher approached the respondents and they were informed about the study and its purpose. The data were collected by using a structured Interview-Schedule.

Findings

1. Majority of the respondents (80.77%) belong to scheduled caste and most of them were children of Corporation workers engaged in cleaning, scavenging, etc., and Rickshaw pullers.
2. Most of the respondents (73.08%) were illiterate and the remaining 26.92% have received their primary education.
3. 59.62% of the respondents were completely isolated from their family.
4. 71.15% of the respondents had more than four siblings.
5. Out of 104 respondents, 64 (61.54%) of their family income was in between Rs.300 and 400.
6. From the Study, it is very clear that the major causative factors that have made 48.08% of the respondents were poor economic conditions and family compulsion.
7. 71.15% of the respondents entered into this work due to the influence of their friends. The remaining were introduced by their parents or by their own prior knowledge of the work.
8. Majority of the respondents (69.23%) age at the time of entering this work ranges from 8-11 hours.
9. Exactly half of the respondents worked for 5-8 hours per day. 44.23% of them worked for 2-5 hours and the remaining 11.77% worked for 8-11 hours.
10. 73.08% (76) of the responded population was staying on the platform and Bus-stand where as 26.92% (14) were staying in their won house.
11. All the respondents, except one, were not at all affected by any serious diseases, disabilities or illness so far due to this unclean work.
12. Seeing movies and laying marbles Cards, etc, with their companions as their leisure time activities constituted 59.62% where as taking ganja 23.07% (12) and doing household work 17.31% . Among the 12 Ganja 5 of them 9-12 and only one respondent belong to the age group 7-9

13. Average daily income of the respondents was Rs. 15.20
14. All the respondents said that their work is much affected during the rainy season. In this period, 73.08% of them got advance from the shop owners and set their daily needs. The others (26.92%) worked assistants in Cooking tropes and as shoe- shine boys and earned their daily living.
15. 59.62% of the responded children were not sharing their daily income with their family where remaining 40.78% were sharing
16. From the interview, it came to know that 71.15% (74) of the respondents intended to carry on this work throughout the life and 28.85% (20) were seeking for other jobs.
17. None of the respondent's family was joint family.
18. No respondent had the habit of saving his/her income in any way.
19. The researcher could understand that the respondents did not have any information regarding personal details (like family, parents, living place, etc.,) of even their close companions.]

Suggestions

Based on these findings the researcher has suggested the following remedial measures so as to solve the problem of children doing rag picking in Madurai city. They are as follows:

1. It has been found out that majority (80.77%) of the children involved in rag-picking belong to Scheduled caste. Hence it is suggested that the government can seriously focus on such scheduled caste children and can provide other welfare measures so that in future those children can become good citizen of India.
2. The researcher has found out that in this study most of the children (73.08%) stay away from their family in the nights. Hence it is suggested that night shelters can be constructed either by the government or by the voluntary organizations in the cities like Madurai and they can accommodate the children.
3. Further , it has been found out that families of the rag-picking children have more numbers

- of children .Hence it is suggested that the government can intensify the family planning programme, Small family norm and family life education to the parents of the children. To start with, a systematic awareness creation programme by adopting participatory approach can be introduced. This programme can be implemented either through voluntary agency support or by the government itself.
4. It is interesting to know that when the researcher has conducted the study majority (98.08%) of the children do not face any serious health problems To be in more safer side, the government can take up serious steps in the health check-up, Health awareness campaign, Immunization schemes which can be conducted in these areas so that we can prevent the disease than curing.
 5. The researcher has found out that majority (73.08%) of the children do not go to school for their education .Further the researcher has observed that the parents of the children do not insist OR encourage their children to go at least for basic education . Hence it is suggested that the government can take serious steps by providing basic educational facilities in these in these areas. Further, apart from the education, to meet the economic needs of the children and family as well, vocational training can be imparted. The researcher would like to suggest some common suggestions based on the observations that he made when he was conducting the study.

6. The government can take adequate steps to enforce law covering the compulsory education to all the children and they can supply free books, uniforms, etc., to motivate the children to go for schooling. The voluntary organization can also impart moral education, Health education, Vocational Training, etc., to make the children as good citizens.

By providing all these facilities to the children we can full fill the dream of our late prime minister pundit Nehru.

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