

## Child Labour: An Analysis of Work Differential across Gender in India

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### ABSTRACT

A quality and wholesome childhood is a basic right of all children, irrespective of their place in society. However, a section of children continue to be deprived of their inalienable right. Although India has made significant progress in the way of universalization of basic education and eradication of dropout, yet a large section of children are deprived of care and work as labour. In this study, a critical analysis has been carried out to assess this burning issue with associated dimensions related to gender disparity in types of work engagement and education levels in the Indian context using various data sources. A debate on employed as well as potential child labour has been emphasized in the conceptualisation of child labour. In brief, the evidence of unaccounted contribution of child labour in the labour market has been observed. There exists a greater limitation in assessing the contribution of girls among child labourers primarily because they are employed in the informal domestic sphere. While there is lower employment of girl children in the job market, a higher level of potential girl child labour is observed and this is more prevalent in north than south India. Basic education renders the child more employable. The overall analysis is helpful in identifying the 'nowhere children'.

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### Introduction:

A society is expected to create a conducive environment and adequate educational opportunities for comprehensive development of all children. However, a large number, more specifically, girls and children from deprived communities in India, continue to stay out of school and most of them are engaged in different types of work (Lieten, 2000; Burra, 2001; Dev, 2004). The international community/organizations and numerous government initiatives have clearly expressed concerns through various conventions and declarations that child labour should be abolished (Aggarwal, 2004). Nevertheless, a large number of children are working as child labour (Self, 2011; Giri and Singh, 2016).

Child work and child labour are both different conceptually. While child work is a process of

socialization, child labour is detrimental to children's overall development and negatively effects their education (Lieten, 2000). It is necessary to mention that not all the work that a child does is treated as child labour. In order to clearly establish this difference, it is imperative to trace the nature of work performed by a child.

The official definition of 'child labour' is highly dependent on its social, cultural and economic contexts as well as missions, strategies and objectives of each working organization. The International Labour Organization's (ILO) adopted Convention No. 182 of 'Worst Form of Child Labour' has defined child labour as 'all cases in which children are exposed to harm at work, whether or not children are less than 14 years old...' (UNICEF, 2005). In short, the concept of child labour has been restricted to the production

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of services which hamper the normal development of children. This definition of child labour excludes a large section of children who are working in their own households as domestic helps and not attending school. To account for children who are excluded by such a definition, D.P. Choudhury (1997) coined a new category of 'nowhere children'. It includes all the children who are not registered as a 'worker' and also not attending school either. They are somewhere outside the concept of 'childhood' as well as outside the system of 'production' which makes them 'nowhere' statistically. Besides these definitions, Neera Burra (2005) promoted an idea '... that there should be no differentiation between child labour and child work and that all categories of children who are out of school should be considered as either child laborers or potential child laborers'. Mahendra Dev (2004), on the other hand, argued for a broader definition '... by defining child laborer as one who is deprived of the right to education and childhood'. Clearly, even among scholars, there exists no consensus regarding a comprehensive definition of either child labour or child work.

This is a comprehensive study on conceptualization, levels and magnitudes of child labour in India where various dimensions have been explored with reference to gender. A customized definition has been adopted with a view to achieve the objectives of this paper. The levels, status and disparity among child labourers across the gender line in the light of the nature of employment and educational qualifications are sought to be addressed here.

The analysis is divided into five sections. The first section deals with the formulation of the definition of child labour in the Indian context. Section two gives both, a world as well as country level picture of the child labour situation. From third section onwards, gender disparity across states by usual principal activity status (UPAS), employed as well as potential child labourers and completed education levels have been analyzed.

### Methodology and Database

Data collection agencies in India have defined 'labour' primarily for the purpose of enumeration and this applies to all children irrespective of age. The Census of India which falls under the purview of the Registrar General of India (RGI), Govt. of India (GoI), defines any person who participates in economically productive activity as a 'worker'. The National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) which comes under the jurisdiction of

the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), GoI, recognises any participation in economic activity, i. e., production of goods and services that adds value to national product as 'labour'. In both cases, the definition includes both paid and unpaid work and participation in households and enterprises, self-employed or outside the household working for the others. A limitation of this definition of labour is that it does not account for whether a particular type of work is detrimental to the overall development of a child or not. While interpreting estimates from the Employment-Unemployment Survey by NSSO, particular attention should be paid as this dataset "... does not fully capture the group of children combining school and work, resulting in substantial underestimates of children's overall involvement in child labour and employment." (Khan and Lyon, 2015)

A large number of children are not attending school in elementary education level (8.9 per cent according to National Sample Survey (NSS), 2009-10) in India. Staying out of school is suggestive of deprivation which hinders the normal development of children in education and their overall growth. Considering both, the definition of labour by enumeration agencies and the fundamental right of children to basic education, all children who are not attending any educational institutions as usual principal activity status of work (UPAS defines such work as one in which a person mostly stays engaged in a year) are being termed as child labour in this study.

Within the concept of child labour, however, not all activities can be clubbed under a homogenous category; some are hazardous and in public while others are performed inside the household or within the domestic sphere and may be termed as household enterprise. For this reason, child labour is further divided into two categories, 'employed child labour' and 'potential child labour'. Employed child labour consists of those who are defined as employed by NSSO. On the other hand, potential child labour comprises such children who are either performing domestic work or are available for work and not attending school as usual principal activity status of work. The categorization of work is stated in table 1.

In addition, the Census of India (2011) provides data of main and marginal work participation by age group. In this study, the total working child population (both main and marginal) has been treated as child labour for analyzing data provided by the Census of India.

**Table 1:** Categorisation of Child Labour

Usual Principal Activity Status of Work	Categories
Worked in household enterprise (self-employed) as own account worker	Employed Child Labour
Worked in household enterprise (self-employed) as employer	
Worked as helper in household enterprises (unpaid family worker)	
Worked as regular salaried/wage employee	
Worked as casual wage labour: in public works and in other types of work	
Did not work but was seeking and/or available for work	Potential Child Labour
Attended domestic duties only	
Attended domestic duties and was also engaged in free collection of goods (vegetables, roots, firewood, cattle-feed etc) sewing, tailing, weaving, etc. for hh. Use	
Rentiers, pensioners, remittance recipients, etc.	
Not able to work due to disability.	
Others (including begging, prostitution, etc.)	

Source: Classified based on UPAS categories from NSS-66.10 round schedule, NSSO, MoSPI, GoI.

A further difficulty in assessing child labour is the existence of differing opinions among scholars regarding the demarcation of age. Table 2 titled 'Age Limits of Child Labour according to International Conventions' by The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2003) has been proved to be useful in this regard as the table clubs various age groups for child labour by different international agencies. The Census of India defines child labour as any person under the age fourteen years engaged in one of the fifty nine occupations or process listed as hazardous under India's Child Labour Act of 1986. In this study, 5 to 14 years age limit has been used to demarcate the age of child labour. This

is more or less similar to the age limit (6 to 14 years age) mentioned by The Right of Child for Free and Compulsory Elementary Education Act, 2009 (RTE Act, 2009) which makes elementary education as a fundamental right for all children.

A pan India sample survey entitled 'Employment and Unemployment Survey' (66<sup>th</sup> round, 2009-10) conducted by NSSO and Census of India: 1991, 2001 and 2011 has been used. These two types of databases have been employed to make the survey reference period similar. The year 2009-10 had been a drought year which may influence labour statistics. Hence, another subsequent survey on employment and unemployment was carried out in 2011-12 (68<sup>th</sup> round)

**Table 2:** Age Limit of Child Labour According to International Conventions

Level	UN Conventions of the Rights of the Child	ILO Convention No. 138 on Minimum Age of Employment			ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst form of Child Labour
	General Definition	General Minimum Age	Light Work	Hazardous Work	General Definition
Normal Circumstances	18 Years <sup>a</sup>	15 Years <sup>b</sup>	13 Years	18 years	18 Years
Exceptions	-	14 years <sup>c</sup>	12 Years <sup>c</sup>	16 Years <sup>d</sup>	-

a) There is an exception to that age limit when national legislation considers that majority is attained earlier (Art. 1).

b) Not less than compulsory school age and, in any case, not less than 15 years of age.

c) When economic and educational facilities are insufficiently developed. d) Under certain strict conditions.

Source: OECD, Combating Child Labour- A Review of Policies, 2003

by the NSSO and the level of child labour from this 2011-12 survey has been used to make the analysis robust.

To measure gender disparity in a quantitative way, Modified Sopher's Disparity Index (Kundu and Rao, 1985) has been calculated.

Modified Sopher's Disparity Index =  $(\text{Log}(x_1/x_2)) + \text{Log}((200-x_2)/(200-x_1))$

Note: Here assumption is that  $x_1 > x_2$ ,

$x_1$  = Boy child labour,  $x_2$  = Girl child labour

Negative signs in the disparity value indicate that girl's level of child labour is higher than boys and vice-versa.

Following Saraswati Raju (2013), the equal class interval

### Analysis

In this section, the interpretation of results has been presented thematically. Based on the methodology and type of data sources used, the analysis of child labour differs across studies. Therefore, while interpreting the findings it is imperative that one pays particular attention to the underlying conceptualization/methodology. The analysis section is divided into few sub-sections: the global scenario and the comparative situation of India with

neighbours, detail level of child labour situation and gender disparity across types of works, potential and employed child labour and the educational status of child labour in India.

### Global and Indian Scenario: The Comparison

A total of 167 million (10.6 percent of the world's total) children were reported to have been employed in 2012. Across various regions, Sub African has the highest share of child labour (21.4 percent) followed by Asia and the Pacific region (9.3 percent). Involvement of children in hazardous work and employment is also highest in Sub African region (10.4 percent and 30.3 percent respectively). Across gender, share of boys in all three categories- children in employment, child labour and hazardous work, is relatively higher than girls (Table 3).

A comparison of child labour between India and its neighbours shows variation. Among neighbours of India, Nepal has the highest levels of child labour (28.6 percent) within the age group of 5 to 14 years (Table 4). The level of child labour in India has been shown to be significantly low (1.4 percent) as this estimate only considers the children engaged in designated hazardous industries and hazardous occupations (Khan and Lyon, 2015). Therefore, the estimation ignores a large chunk of child population engaged in domestic works and 'nowhere children' who are neither involved in work nor attending school (Choudhury, 1997). Almost the similar pattern of child labour incidence has been estimated among several south Asian countries (Table 4).

**Table 3:** Children in Different Works in Age Group 5 to 17 Years: 2012

	Children in Employment		Child Labour		Hazardous Work	
	('000)	%	('000)	%	('000)	%
World *	264,427	16.7	167,956	10.6	85,344	5.4
Asia and the Pacific *	129,358	15.5	77,723	9.3	33,860	4.1
Latin America and the Caribbean *	17,843	12.5	12,505	8.8	9,638	6.8
Sub Saharan Africa *	83,570	30.3	59,031	21.4	28,767	10.4
Middle East and North Africa *	13,307	12.1	9,244	8.4	5,224	4.7
Boys	148,327	18.1	99,766	12.2	55,048	6.7
Girls	116,100	15.2	68,190	8.9	30,296	4.0

\* The regional totals sum to less than the world totals because the latter include countries that are outside of the four main regions reported here

Source: ILO (2013)

**Table 4:** Levels (%) of Child Labour (%) (based on standard ILO global estimate methodology(a)), by countries

Country	(1) children aged 5-11 years in economic activity	(2) Children aged 12-14 years in economic activity excluding those in light work	(1) & (2) Children aged 5-14 years in child labour
	% of total children in the age group	% of total children in the age group	% of total children in the age group
Bangladesh (2005-06)	5.5	12.8	08
Bhutan (2010) (b)	25.0	2.5	17.8
India (2011-12) (c)	0.4	3.5	1.4
Maldives (2009) (d)	3.2	3.8	3.4
Nepal (2008)	21.8	43.3	28.6
Pakistan (2010-11) (e)	6.8	13.6	11.0
Sri Lanka (2008-09)	6.4	11.4	7.9

(a) Estimates provide an international statistical benchmark for comparisons and may not reflect on child labour defined by national legislation of each country;

(b) The Bhutan survey does not have information on industry or occupation, thereby not allowing the identification of hazardous industries and hazardous occupations. Children aged 12 to 14 years in light work and children within age cohort of 15 to 17 years in hazardous work are identified on the basis of working hours.;

(c) Information on working hours is not collected in the Indian survey. Therefore, children within age cohort of 12 to 14 years and 15 to 17 years are defined as child labour on the basis of their engagement in classified hazardous industries and hazardous occupations;

(d) The Maldives survey has information on employment up to the age of 14 years with limitations of not collecting information on industry and occupation. Children are classified in "light work" only on the basis of the working hours; and

(e) Employment information for those aged 10 years or old is collected in Pakistan. In the absence of detail data on occupation, ILO has not been able to identify hazardous occupations as per methodology adopted for global comparisons. Hazardous work is defined on the basis of the designated hazardous industries and long hours of work. Note: Calculations based on national household surveys.

Source: Khan and Lyon (2015)

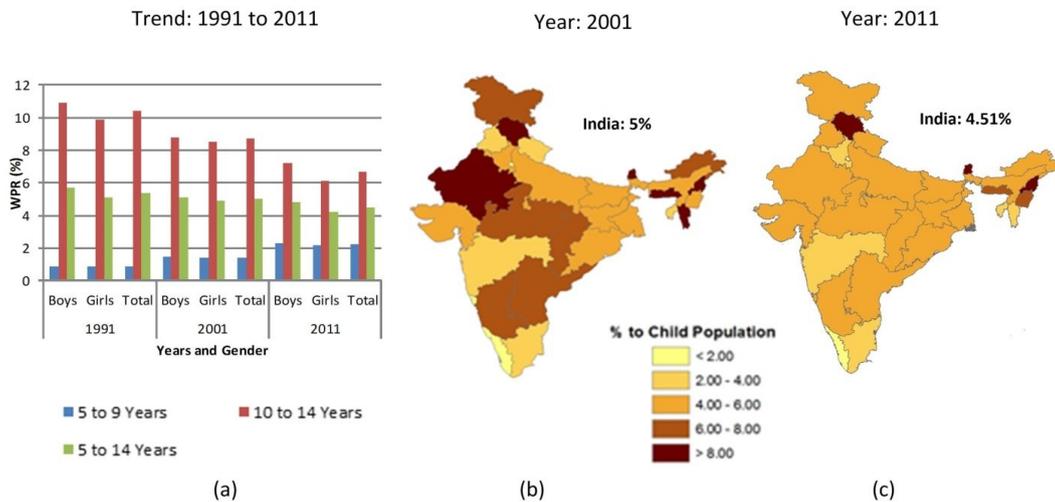
### The Indian Situation:

In India, the issue of child labour got public attention for the first time after 1985 (Aggarwal, 2004; Das and Das, 2009). With the implementation of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and RTE ACT, 2009; the access to education has been greatly improved, but a large section of children are still out of the ambit of schooling (Giri and Singh, 2016; Sikdar and Mukherjee, 2012). The latest population enumeration data in 2011 shows that 11.72 million (4.51 percent) child labourers are either working or seeking/available for work out of a total 259.64 million children within age group of 5 to 14 years age. Except the 5 to 9 years age group, in the 10-14 years age group and both genders, there is a decline in work participation rate (Figure 1(a)). Out of total 123.92 million girl children, 5.19 million (4.19%) were found to be working in 2011 which is lower than boys. This is a quite promising statistic/

trend for the betterment of girl children in a patriarchal society like India. However, the reality is that domestic work performed by girls is unaccounted for which significantly influences the count of child labourers.

State wise level of child work participation rate is also varied. Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Meghalaya, Uttar Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka have relatively high rate of child work participation in the age group of 5 to 14 years (Figure 1b & c). Developed states like Kerala and Goa have very low level of work participation from the same age cohort.

To incorporate 'nowhere children' (Choudhury, 1997) and the unaccounted work in domestic sphere (Aggarwal, 2004; Antony and Gayathri, 2002) in estimation of child labour, the 66<sup>th</sup> NSS (2009-10) and 68<sup>th</sup> NSS (2010-11) data has been used. Following these, all such children currently not attending school

**Figure 1: Share of Child Labour Within Age Group of 5 to 14 Years Age: India**

Note: WPR is Work Participation Rate. This combines main as well as marginal workers. Whereas, workers who are seeking or available for work under marginal worker head are excluded.

Source: Census of India: Respective years, RGI, Govt. of India

in the age group of 5 to 14 years are treated as child labour (details in methodology and database section). In 2011-12, the share of child labour was 9.44 percent which is not substantially different from the figure estimated for 2009-10 (10.93 percent). The adopted broad definition of child labour for the NSSO data has inflated the level of child labour in comparison with figures provided in the Census.

Across states, almost the same pattern of incidence in child labour has been reported in both the years, 2009-10 and 2010-11. More or less similar to the pattern from Census of India statistics, states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Arunachal Pradesh, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Orissa has relatively high level of child labour than other parts of India. Assam, Karnataka, Punjab, Uttarakhand and Tripura have reduced level of child labour over the years, but contrastingly, the level increased in Bihar to large extent (Table 5).

#### Gender Disparity among Child Labourers

The work done by a girl child at home mostly goes unreported as it is not treated as economic activities generally (Das and Das, 2009; Aggarwal, 2004; Giri and Singh, 2016). Over last three decades, the situation has improved in many states (Figure 2, 3). In 1991, the north Indian plain belt from Punjab to Assam had severe level of disparity which reduced over time

(Figure 2, 3). This region has lower level of girl work participation than boys which indicates the possibility of more unreported engagement of a girl child in the domestic sector (Dev, 2004; Burra, 2001).

In 2009-10, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh had higher level of girl child labour than boys demarcated by negative sign in the disparity index value (Figure 3). One contrasting fact is revealed when one compares both patterns from Census of India WPR and NSS rate of child labour. The disparity dimension between two genders has been changed in NSS estimation with reference to Census findings as and when the account of 'nowhere children' has been added in the count of child labour. The gender of a child determines the sphere as well as nature of work (Burra, 2001; Lieten, 2000; Rammoham, 2014)

#### Differentiation in Usual Principal Activity Status (UPAS)

As already mentioned, types of works done by all child labour is not same. Therefore, in this section, an analysis has been carried out to see the types of work among child labour. Overall, most child labourers (including 'nowhere children') are attending domestic duties (32 percent), followed by domestic duties with free collection of goods like vegetables, roots, fire

**Table 5:** Share(%) of Child Labour Within Age of 5 to 14 Years: India

States	2009-10				2010-11			
	Male	Female	All	N*	Male	Female	All	N*
Jammu & Kashmir	3.67	6.05	4.80	2610	4.53	8.44	6.39	3571
Himachal Pradesh	1.98	1.93	1.96	1654	.60	1.57	1.03	1492
Punjab	5.07	9.04	6.72	2587	4.30	4.87	4.57	2508
Uttaranchal	7.41	6.78	7.11	1802	4.77	2.82	3.90	1917
Haryana	5.37	7.34	6.26	2720	3.97	7.77	5.56	2498
Delhi	5.53	7.84	6.49	646	2.11	1.85	2.00	747
Rajasthan	9.87	18.71	13.97	5106	10.45	15.15	12.49	4523
Uttar Pradesh	13.68	17.86	15.61	12725	13.74	16.62	15.05	12505
Bihar	19.32	25.27	21.97	6719	15.38	15.81	15.58	6331
Sikkim	1.84	2.46	2.14	647	1.33	2.73	2.04	614
Arunachal Pradesh	12.94	11.79	12.38	2157	8.40	13.00	10.61	1972
Nagaland	2.22	.84	1.55	1119	1.75	1.87	1.80	984
Manipur	2.36	1.78	2.11	2797	1.16	3.26	2.13	2892
Mizoram	3.40	2.40	2.92	1556	3.34	3.71	3.52	1593
Tripura	7.10	6.71	6.91	1288	5.06	2.98	4.15	1342
Meghalaya	4.21	1.52	2.90	1463	1.87	1.83	1.85	1561
Assam	10.62	8.54	9.70	3528	4.44	8.05	6.03	3301
West Bengal	9.87	9.97	9.92	4575	10.14	10.40	10.26	4530
Jharkhand	12.65	13.22	12.92	3218	11.01	10.52	10.79	3070
Orissa	6.54	7.96	7.23	3307	5.89	8.34	7.08	3334
Chhattisgarh	4.67	8.67	6.65	2238	4.99	7.41	6.16	2200
Madhya Pradesh	10.34	11.39	10.83	5419	9.85	8.19	9.05	4848
Gujarat	9.11	14.77	11.45	3111	7.15	10.14	8.58	2962
Maharashtra	5.02	5.34	5.17	6193	4.69	6.07	5.31	6044
Andhra Pradesh	3.93	5.56	4.70	4834	2.71	6.30	4.45	4673
Karnataka	8.53	6.73	7.70	3137	5.77	6.17	5.97	3213
Goa	1.30	.70	1.01	268	4.05	5.97	4.96	296
Kerala	1.80	2.08	1.94	2949	.99	2.19	1.61	2865
Tamil Nadu	1.51	2.01	1.74	4018	1.41	1.42	1.42	3978
India	9.74	12.35	10.93	95818	8.74	10.25	9.44	93731

Note: UTs with less sample size has been ignored. N\*: Sample Size

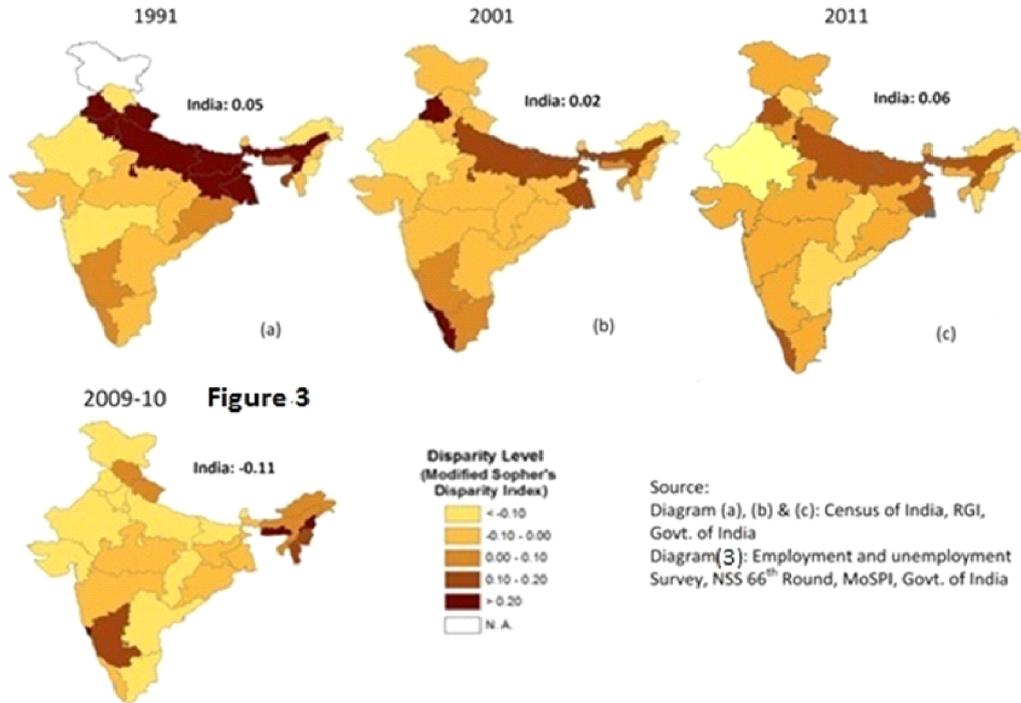
Source: Computed from unit level Employment and Unemployment Survey in India, NSS: 66th and 68th Round, MoSPI, GoI.

wood, cattle feed, etc. (21 percent), unpaid family work in household enterprise (20 percent) and casual labour (16 percent) (Figure 4a). Therefore, it is evident that a significant contribution of child labour in the labour market is unaccounted. The children are mostly engaged in day to day household (HH) maintenance activities so that elders can be engaged in the public

sphere work (Burra, 2004; Self, 2011; Rammohun, 2014).

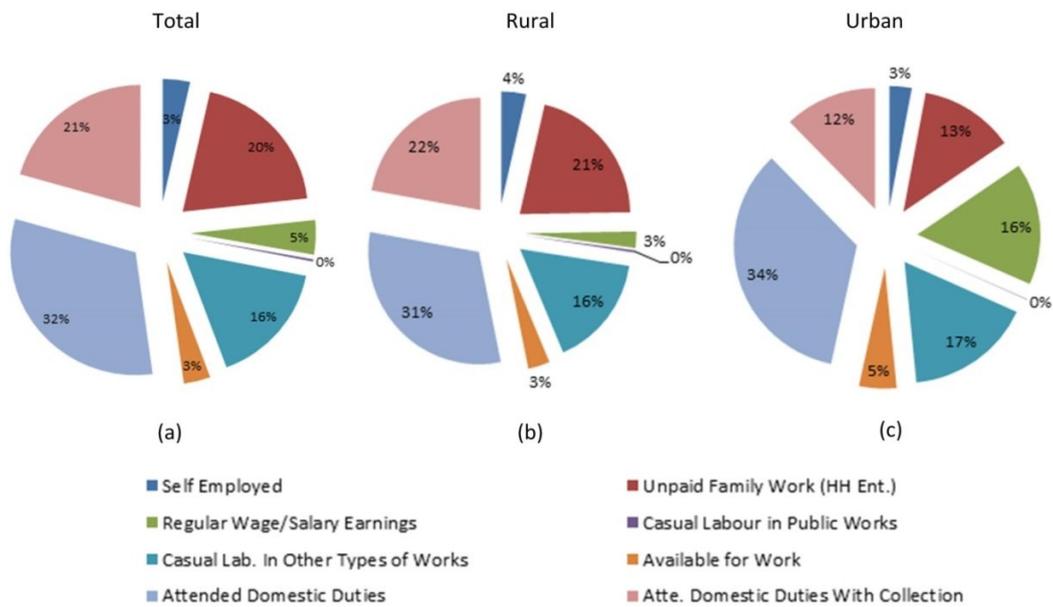
Furthermore, there exists a sharp difference in the type of work that child labourers are engaged in between rural and urban areas. In the rural areas, share in unpaid family work in HH enterprise is quite

**Figure 2: Gender Disparity Among Child Labourers Within Age Group of 5 to 14 Years: India**



**Figure 4**

**Usual Principal Activity Status of Child Labourers within Age Group of 5 to 14 Years: India: 2009-10**



Source: Computed from unit level Employment and Unemployment Survey, NSS 66<sup>th</sup> Round, MoSPI, GoI

high (21 percent); while in urban area, share of regular wage/salary earning is quite high (16 percent) in India (Figure 4b and 4c). The engagement in household agricultural work is the major reason for a greater share of child labour in unpaid family work in rural area, whereas availability of informal jobs in shops/restaurants or engagement as domestic helps is major scope of employment in urban areas.

The gender of a child has important bearings in determining the types of work (Burra, 2004; Self, 2011; Rammohon, 2014). Overall, the share of boys employed as workers is higher than girls. A majority of girl children are engaged in performing 'domestic duties' and 'domestic duties with free collection of goods' activities. The share of boys who are not doing any work is higher than their girl counterparts which indicates that boys may stay free without doing any activity but girls cannot. They are forced to engage in domestic duties. This reflects the differentiation in the location of workplace along gender line.

There is sharp differentiation in the usual principal activity status of child labour based on sector, rural and urban areas. Only 3 per cent child labourers are engaged as regular salary/wage earner in rural areas, whereas the share in urban areas is 16 per cent.

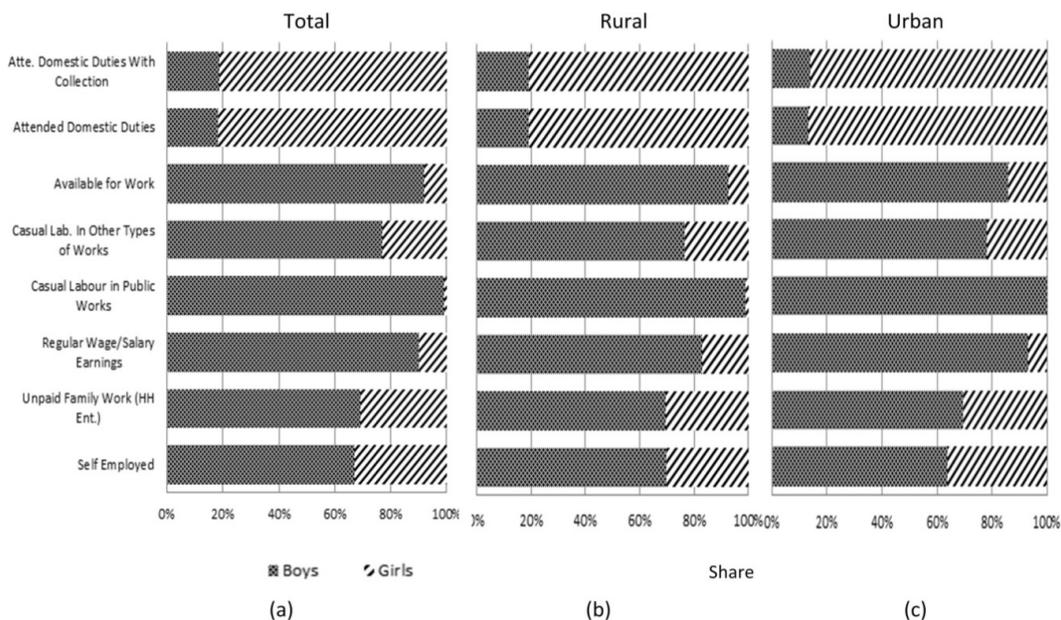
Furthermore, domestic duties with collection/gathering activities has a lower share in urban than rural areas. In urban areas, more girls are self-employed than in rural areas (Figure 5b). In case of casual labour in public works, there is little share of girls in rural areas, whereas no share in urban area. More girls are working in household domestic work in urban areas than in rural areas.

**Employed and Potential Child Labour**

Based on the statistics provided above, it is discernible that a large proportion of children are attending domestic duties where girls outnumber boys. In this paper, child labour is divided into two segments-employed child labour who is deemed employed according to NSSO definition and potential child labour comprises those who attends domestic duties and are available for work (details in methodology and database section).

The economic condition of a household (HH) is very important to access the vulnerability level of 'nowhere children'(Choudhury, 1997) in a broader term of potential child labour. For this reason, the monthly per capita consumption expenditure (MPCE) at household of all 'nowhere children' has been

**Figure 5**  
**Gender-wise Usual Principal Activity Status of Child Labourers Aged 5 to 14 Years: India: 2009-10**



Source: Computed from unit level Employment and Unemployment Survey, NSS 66<sup>th</sup> Round, MoSPI, GoI

examined as a proxy to assess the economic level of the households of respective 'nowhere children'. It is observed that the maximum share of 'nowhere children' is from relatively poorer economic household (Table 6).

economically poorer households and there is greater chance to become more vulnerable in any time.

At the all India level, there is difference between the level of employed and potential child labour. A larger

**Table 6:** Distribution (%) of 'Nowhere Children' Across MPCE Classes: India: 2009-10

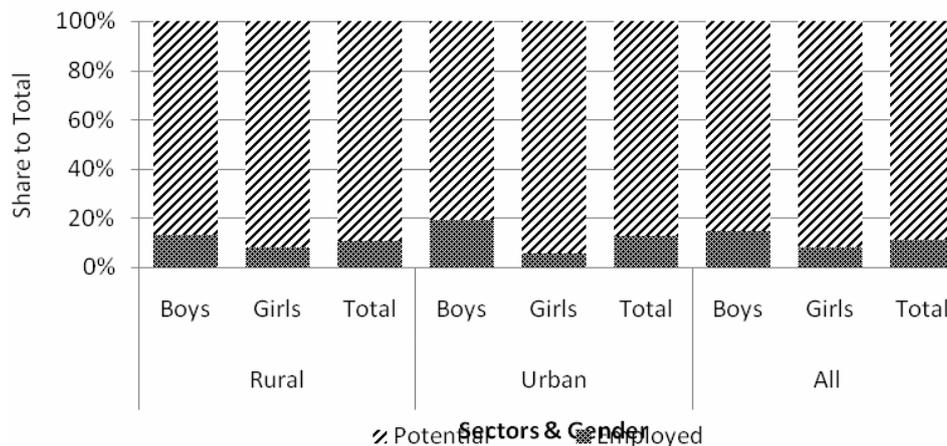
Sector	MPCE Classes (In Rs.)	Sex		Total
		Boys	Girls	
Rural	<573	34.0	79.6	39.9
	574-753	43.5	20.0	40.5
	754-973	20.0	00.0	17.4
	974-1412	01.6	00.0	01.4
	>1412	00.9	00.4	00.8
Urban	<573	52.1	36.8	49.8
	574-753	13.6	05.3	12.3
	754-973	22.3	37.2	24.5
	974-1412	09.9	20.7	11.6
	>1412	02.1	00.0	01.8

Source: Computed from unit level Employment and Unemployment Survey, NSS 66th Round, MoSPI, GoI.

There is also a gender division. In rural areas, all 'nowhere' girl children are from the two lowest MPCE categories (less than Rs. 573 and Rs. 574 to Rs. 753). On the other hand, in urban area, more than half of 'nowhere' girl children are from relatively upper MPCE classes (Rs. 754 to RS. 1412) (Table 6). Thus, it is clear that, 'nowhere children' can be treated as potential child labour as all of them is from relatively

proportion of children are potential labour where the share of girls is higher than boys (Figure 6). In case of employed, the case is reversed. There is a contrast between rural and urban sector: The share of employed child labour is higher in urban than in rural India. In the urban sector, the potential girl child labour is higher than rural areas. From the analysis above, it becomes clear that there exists an explicit gender

**Figure 6: Child Labour within 5 to 14 Years Aged Children India: 2009-10**



Source: Computed from unit level Employment and Unemployment Survey, NSS 66th Round, MoSPI, GoI.

disparity in the nature of work performed by a child. A majority of girls are engaged within the household whereas significant share of boys are working outside their homes.

### Spatial Distribution of Employed and Potential Child Labour

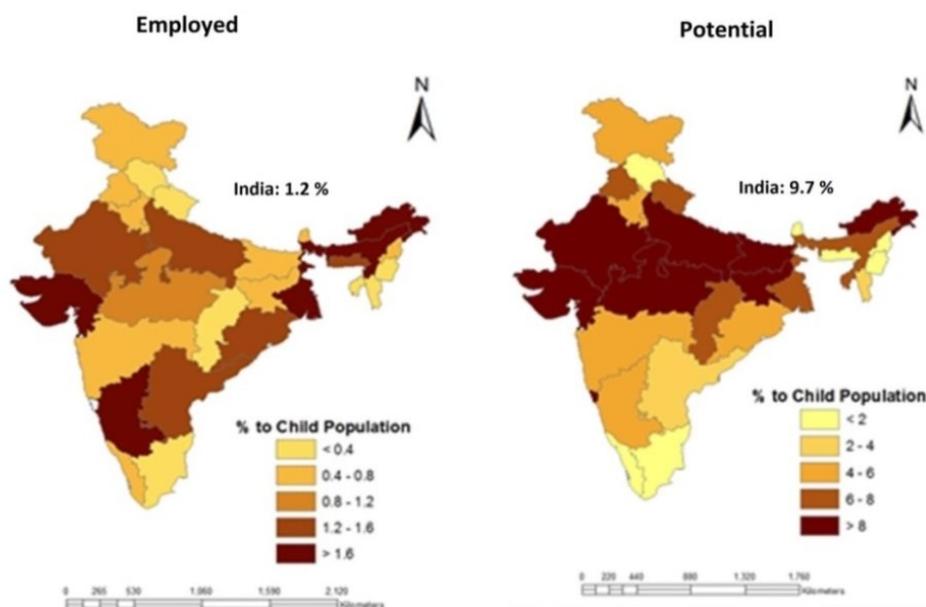
Across states, there is spatial variation in the level of employed and potential child labour. Gujarat, Karnataka, West Bengal, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh have relatively high level of employed child labour with a share of more than 1.6 per cent to total child population (Figure 7). Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh have moderate (relatively) level of child labour. Uttaranchal, Himachal Pradesh and Tamil Nadu have very low level of employed child labour.

### Spatial Gender Disparity among Employed and Potential Child Labour

In the case of gender disparity among employed child labour, there is, again a divide between north and south India (Figure 8a). If viewed collectively, north Indian states show relatively high level of disparity compared to south. Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Assam, Jharkhand have a higher level of disparity than other states. In all these states, the share of girl employed child labour is lower than boys.

This indicates the confinement of girl child within the household attending domestic duties. In south Indian states like Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, a relatively lower level of disparity is observed with higher share of employed

Figure 7: Share of Two Categories of Child Labour Within Age of 5 to 14 Years: India: 2009-10



Source: Computed from unit level Employment and Unemployment Survey, NSS 66th Round, MoSPI, GoI.

The level of potential child labour also demonstrates a clear north-south divide which is very important. With the exception of Jammu and Kashmir, Uttaranchal, Punjab, Haryana and Sikkim, all north Indian states have relatively higher level of potential child labour. On the other hand, Uttaranchal, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Tamil Nadu and Kerala have relatively low level of child labour.

girl child labour than boys. The location of a child is also very important in determining his or her potential to being employed. In the rural sector, the level of overall disparity in employed category is relatively lower than urban.

The spatial pattern of gender disparity among potential child labour is less diverse than among the employed and also the share of potential girl child

Figure 8

## Gender Disparity Among Employed Child Labourers Within Age of 5 to 14 Years in India: 2009-10

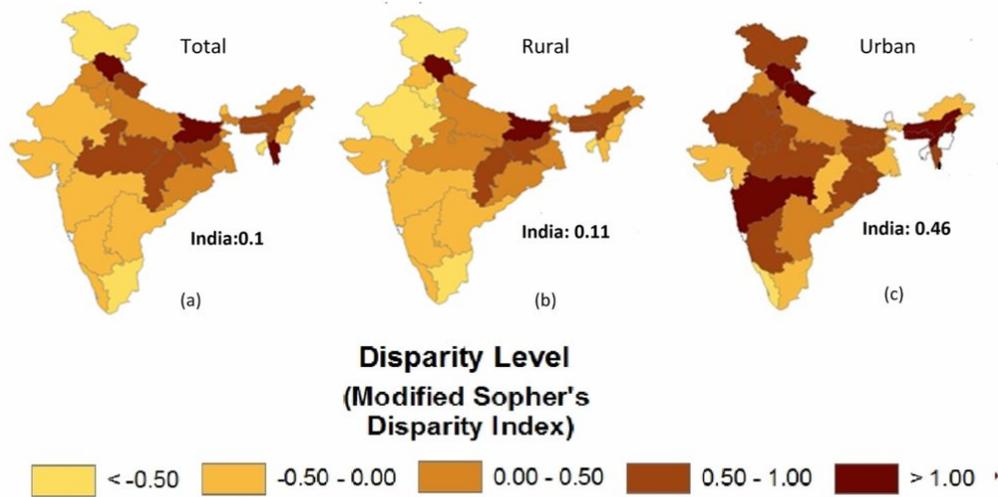
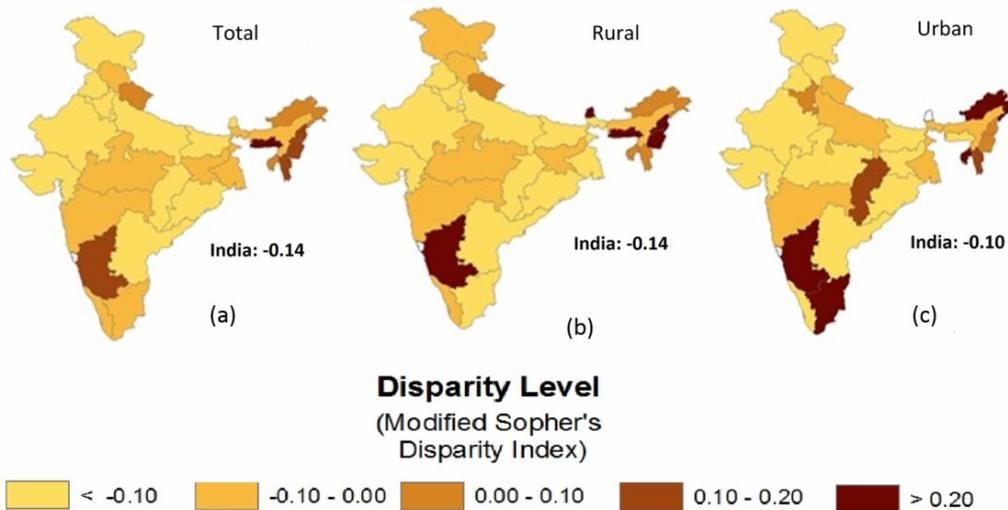


Figure 9

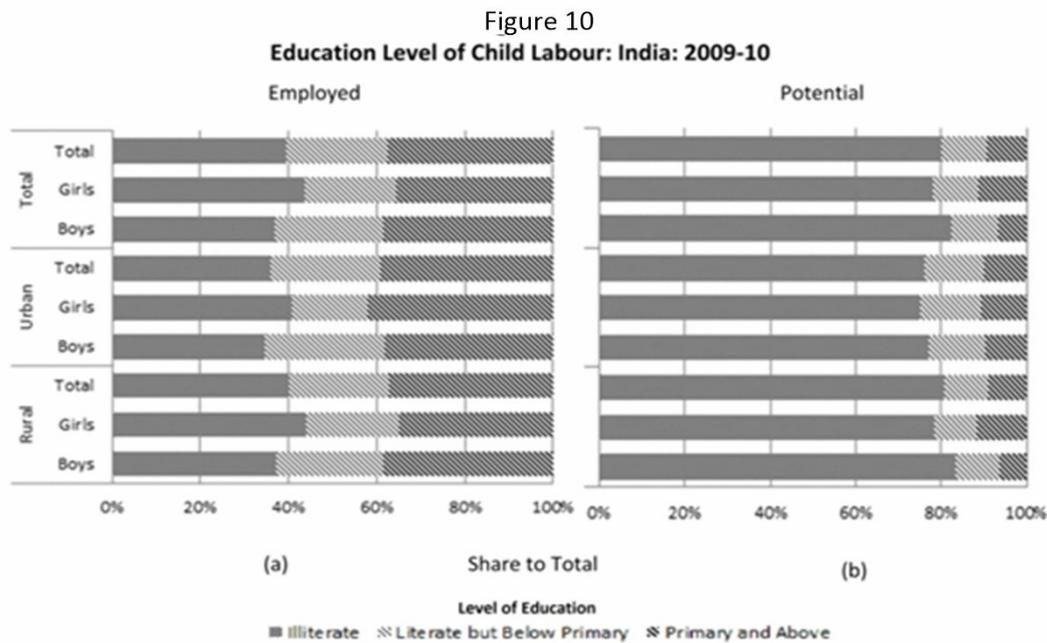
## Gender Disparity Among Potential Child Labourers Within Age of 5 to 14 Years in India: 2009-10



Source: Computed from unit level Employment and Unemployment Survey, NSS 66th Round, MoSPI, GoI.

labour is higher than boys. Unlike the pattern of disparity across states among employed child labour, Karnataka and Tami Nadu has emerged with higher gender disparity among potential child labour with higher share among boys (Figure 9a, b and c).

Contrastingly, the dimension of gender disparity changed between employed and potential child labour. States with higher share of boys among employed child labour have lower share of same gender among potential child labours (Figure 8 and 9).



Source: Computed from unit level Employment and Unemployment Survey, NSS 66<sup>th</sup> Round, MoSPI, GoI

### Educational Qualification

The education qualification of a child is an equally important determinant of his or her employability. Here, general education level of child labour is presented for both employed and potential child labour with their location. A majority of children that comprise the employed category are literate or have received primary and above level of education. On the other hand, the potential child labour category is populated primarily by illiterate children with no level of education. Across gender and location, there is little variation (Figure 10). This is indicative of the fact that children who have received some education are more easily employed and consequently have an employed status.

### Summary of Findings and Conclusion

The concept of child labour is debatable and the level of child labour depends on the way of conceptualisation across different countries as well as in India. The levels and magnitude of child labour differs greatly depending on the adopted conceptualisation/definition. Reported work participation as an indicator of child labour shows lower level of child labour in India. However, if child labour is understood as the deprivation of a child from his or her basic right to attend school, then the level of child labour in India

increases substantially. Similarly, if child labour is defined merely as children employed in hazardous activities/industries, the level of child labour in India, compared to its neighbours is significantly reduced. Therefore, 'nowhere children' who are neither working nor in school is an important category as this group holds a significant share among child labourers.

Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Arunachal Pradesh, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Orissa have relatively high level of child labour (including 'nowhere children') than other parts of India. Boys have higher level of work participation in most of the states while girls account for relatively more share in overall child labour. Across types of work, most child labourers are attending domestic duties followed by domestic duties with free collection of goods like vegetables, roots, firewood, cattle feed, etc.; unpaid family works in household enterprise and casual labourers. The share of boys who are not doing any work is higher than girls which indicates that boys may stay free without doing any work but girls cannot. They are forced to engage in domestic duties. Taken collectively, a majority of boys are engaged in work performed outside the house whereas a majority of girls work inside their homes. This makes higher share of boys as employed child labour and makes the higher share of girls as potential child labour.

It is observed that the maximum share of 'nowhere children' (which holds a large share among potential child labour) is from the relatively poorer economic household. Due to their weak household economic status, children belonging to such households are more vulnerable and consequently help in taking care of their homes while the elders are employed outside. Diversity as well as level in gender disparity in child labour across states is higher among the employed child labour category than among potential child labour. Boys hold higher share in employed segment than girls and vice-versa in potential which further makes clear the process of domestication of girls' work and marketization of boys' work. Even possessing certain level of basic education renders a child more employable than illiterate ones.

The overall findings of the paper provide useful facts for the purpose of policy formulation. It is very important to make the concept of child labour broad so that the vulnerabilities of a child becoming a labourer can be captured and also the intersectionalities of various associated dimensions can be traced. The domestic sphere is in need for proper attention as this section has significant influence on girl child labour and more attention should be given to relatively less developed states.

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