Panel Discussion

World Day Against Child Labour

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CHILD LABOUR CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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Profile of Child Labour

Children who are out of school:

- Herding cattle and goats work on farms, spraying insecticides, weeding, plucking seeds under the burning heat
- Working on brickkilns, stone quarries on construction sites, landfills, waste picking, head load carriers and 1000s of other occupations
- Girls burdened with domestic chores in addition to working for wages poverty

Children who are even school going, often irregular to school due to work and end up as full time labourers.

Is it Possible to End Child Labour?

- If the cause of child labour is understood only because of poverty, then there will be child labour until poverty is eliminated
- Poverty argument is now passé, poor parents do send their children to school; make enormous sacrifices to get their children educated; they do not require income-generating incentives or subsidies to sustain their children in schools; The best incentive is to make schools sensitive to the predicament of first generation learners and underserved children.
- Need to focus on non-economic factors that still sustain child labour

Factors Sustaining Child Labour

- Lack of a social and cultural environment in support of child rights and arguing against child labour
- Lack of adequate infrastructure in terms of teachers and classrooms
- Non seriousness of schools as institutions being sensitive to poor children
- Non-recognition of the fact that these families do not have the culture of literacy
- They are easily intimidated by a myriad of rules and procedures that govern the school

CHILD LABOUR AS PER

THE CHILD AND ADOLESCENT LABOUR (PROHIBITION AND REGULATION) ACT 2016

Child Labour as per CALPRA 2016

- Recognised that there is an inextricable link between abolition of child labour and children enjoying right to education.
- Total Prohibition from work for children below 14 years.
- All children out of school is child labour.
- Adolescents(15 to 18) prohibited to work in hazardous occupations and processes.

STRATEGIES TO ADOPT...

Strategies to adopt

Area based approach where every child is tracked, whether in school or out of school —in a gram panchayat or a urban ward-resulting in a social norm against child labour and for children's education and establishing a Child Labour Free Zone (CLFZ) with following interventions:

- Withdrawing child labour: Specific plans for each child to withdraw them from work and arrangements to integrate them into schools.
- Bridge Courses: Special training (bridge courses) for released as child laborer's who have had little or no previous school experience after admission into an age appropriate class.
- Follow up of school children: Ensuring that they are retained in school and continue to do so without any disruption lest they become part of labor force.

Strategies to adopt

- □ **Social Mobilisation:** involving gram panchayats, SMCs, women's groups, youth groups even employers in support of children's rights.
- **Engagement with Institutions:** Engaging with the schools and the education system at all levels, including functionaries of police, labour and other relevant departments.

A full time social worker in every panchayat or urban ward to facilitate tracking of children and above processes is necessary (like the anganwadi worker for children under six).

Challenges

- Inadequate budgetary allocations on schools as well as in addressing backlog of out of school children.
- Planning on centralised data of enrolment of children which is 99%. Having all names in the attendance register means nothing. Anywhere between 20-50% are irregular to schools and dropouts. They are not counted.
- Education system not designed to be sensitive to poor, marginalised and first generation learners.
- Lack of a concrete plan TO RETAIN all age children in schools till
 18 years of age.
- Recognising that the cost of inaction would cause irreversible damage for children and even the country's development and progress.

LOCKDOWN CHALLENGES

Lockdown Challenges

- Closure of schools rhythm of education totally disturbed.
- Multi-fold increase in child labour
- Girls vulnerability increases with gender discrimination and pressure of child marriage
- Increase in anxiety among children due to isolation, no friends, play and sports, pranks and fun, routine of going to school.
- No noon meal program increasing hunger and vulnerability

Role of Elected Representatives

- Stop Covid-19 from rolling back by a generation and even more, the gains made to protect children's right to education and end child labour.
- MP's and MLA's Quarterly to allocate at least one day in a quarter to review with district administration the action taken on ending child labour and status of relief measures for children
- Support decentralized planning. At the level of gram panchayats children are not statistics. Plans for each child can be drawn.
- Honor gram panchayat presidents and councilors who have declared CLFZ
- Interact with NGOs working on children to take feedback
- Evolve strategies for child labour free parliament and Assembly constituencies.

THANK YOU