

STATUS OF CHILDREN IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this research paper is to acquire information regarding the status of children in India. The journey in the life-cycle of the child involves crucial components, these include, child survival, child development and child protection. Child survival necessitates their basic right of being born in a safe, amiable, pleasant and non-discriminatory environment and their development through the formative years of life in a healthy and dignified manner. Provision of education, health care facilities, adequate diet and nutrition and amenities and facilities renders a significant contribution towards child development. Child protection is safeguarding children from all forms of abuse, mistreatment, exploitation and violence. The main areas that have been taken into account in this research paper include, demographic profile of children, different situations experienced by children, education, health status, nutritional status, child labour, crime against children, protection of children from abuse and neglect, and national policies and programs for children.

Keywords: Children, Education, Child Labour, Malnutrition, Health, Development

INTRODUCTION

India is home to 472 million children, who are below the age of 18 years, and comprise 39 percent of the country's total population. Out of the 128.5 million children residing in urban areas, close to 7.8 million children between the ages of 0 to six years still live in the conditions of poverty and backwardness in informal settlements, making it vital that one plans and builds sustainable and inclusive cities from their perspective (Status of Children in Urban India, 2016). In India, childhood is defined within the framework of legal and constitutional provisioning, primarily regarding the peculiarities and difficulties that children experience during their childhood stage. The various problems that they experience are neglect, abuse, illiteracy, malnutrition, child labour, child marriage and criminal acts. These factors are primarily responsible for leading to detrimental effects within their lives. In order to make their living worthwhile and to utilize their skills and abilities for the development of the country, it is necessary to make provision of progression opportunities.

Inadequate facilities and lack of proper social infrastructure lies not only in operative service delivery but in improved planning. Since the initial stage, it is vital to take into account the needs of the child. During the first three years of ones life, children need day care, health care, nutrition and a safe and healthy environment, which is accessible, equitable and affordable. Lack of provision of such services has an immediate effect upon the health outcomes of children (Status of Children in Urban India, 2016). When the child reaches the age of three, he should be provided with pre-school education that would render an effective contribution in the building of the foundation for effective growth and development. When

the child begins learning, then besides improving academic concepts, it is necessary to develop creative skills and abilities, these may include, artworks, handicrafts, sports, physical activities, music, dance and so forth. Focus upon development of academic skills and creative skills would contribute in making ones living conditions effectual.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF CHILDREN

The population of India is 1.21 billion people. It is the second most populous country in the world. India represents almost 17.31 percent of the world's population. Every year, an estimated 26 million children are born in the country. It is significant that while an absolute increase of 181 million in the country's population has been recorded during the decade 2001-2011. During this period, the reduction of 5.05 million in the population of children aged up to six years of age has taken place. The decline in the male children is 2.06 million and in female children is 2.99 million. The share of children, up to six years of age in the total population has showed a decline of 2.8 points in 2011, as compared to Census 2001. In 2011, the total number of children within the age group of zero to six years is reported as 158.79 million, which have decreased by 3.1% as compared to the child population in 2001 of the order of 163.84 million. The share of children, up to six years of age to the total population is 13.1% in 2011, whereas the corresponding figures for male children and female children are 13.3% and 12.9% respectively (Children in India, 2012).

Though, the overall sex ratio of the country is depicting a trend of improvement, the child sex ratio is showing a declining trend, which is a matter of concern. During the period 1991-2011, child sex ratio declined from 945 to 914, whereas the overall sex ratio showed an improvement from 927 to 940. Compared to 2001, only five States, Union Territories showed decline in overall sex ratio in 2011, while 27 States, Union Territories showed decline in child sex ratio during this period. This opposite direction in the movement of sex ratios of children up to the age of six years compared to the overall sex ratio suggests a shift in the demographic composition of the population. The decadal decline in child sex ratio i.e. number of girl children per 1000 male children in the age group of up to six years, however, is less steep from that of the previous decade, i.e. 1991 to 2001. In 1991, it was 945 and declined to 927 in 2001, a decline of 18 points accounted for 1.9%. In 2011, it declined to 914, a decline of 13 points accounted for 1.4% (Children in India, 2012).

DIFFERENT SITUATIONSEXPERIENCED BY CHILDREN

The children in India belong to different categories and backgrounds. Their situations and living conditions primarily depend upon the household in which they are born. The children, who are born in wealthy families, their parents make provision of all the basic requirements for them, they acquire good education, obtain adequate health care and nutrition and are able to satisfy all their needs and requirements. On the other hand, children belonging to poverty stricken, deprived, marginalized and socio-economically backward sections of the society, experience scarcity of resources, therefore, their families are usually unable to meet their requirements. The families within rural communities, who are residing in the conditions

of poverty and backwardness in some cases, get their children involved in hazardous occupations, which may include, agriculture, plantations, mines, industries, factories and so forth. In this way, they are deprived of the acquisition of education and various childhood activities and their main purpose is to contribute towards family income. The main areas that highlight the situations of children have been stated as follows:

Impact of Poverty on Children - Poverty exercises an adverse influence upon the health and nutritional status of children. Insufficient and unequal earnings have an effect upon the quantity and quality of food that a family can consume throughout the year, its standard of living, access and provision of healthcare. The conditions of poverty cause impediments within the course of provision of health care, adequate nutrition and improvement in the living conditions of the individuals. As a result of poverty, parents are not able to send their children to reputed schools, they do not have the resources to transfer from one place to another, the problem of malnutrition becomes prevalent, children get engaged into various types of employments or perform the household chores and their health conditions are not adequately taken care of. The impact of poverty on children is severe and deprives them of their childhood (Bhakhry, 2006).

Child Marriage –Child marriage is when marriage takes place, when girl is below the age of 18 years and the boy is below the age of 21 years. Childhood is the stage, when individuals are meant to learn, get enrolled in schools, acquire education, and take pleasure in various activities. Marriage imposes numerous responsibilities upon the individuals, especially girls. When girls are married off early, at a young age, they are obligated to take care of the needs and requirements of the family members, perform the household chores and are deprived of learning and recreational activities. There is legal recognition of the fact that children must not be married before they are physically and mentally prepared for it. The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929 (CMRA) prescribes the minimum age of 21 years for males and 18 years for females (Bhakhry, 2006).

Child Labour - The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act was enacted in 1986, to specifically address the situation of child labour. However, this law is inadequate, both in its understanding and the context that it provides for dealing with the problem of child labour. By differentiating between hazardous and non-hazardous forms of labour, and recognizing certain procedures and occupations, from which children are forbidden from working, it leaves out a large range of activities that children are engaged in and thus continue to be abused and exploited. In domestic households, children in most cases are, exploited and abused. They are engaged in occupations as, domestic helpers, workers in dhabas, restaurants, hotels, motels, tea shops, resorts, spas or other recreational centres. Bonded child labour and other exploitative forms of child labour include slavery, prostitution, trafficking, etc. The conditions of poverty are the primary causes that compel children to get engaged in various forms of labour. They are sent to urban areas, where they get employed in hotels, restaurants, tea stalls, domestic households, factories, industries etc. In these areas, they are sometimes mistreated and exploited. The major problem that they experience is, they get paid very less for the hard work and long hours that they put in (Bhakhry, 2006).

Child Malnutrition –Malnutrition is a serious problem among children and is regarded as unfavourable to one's existence. In India, one in four children, who are below five years of age experience malnutrition. The problem of malnutrition imposes problems in leading to effective growth and development of the children. There are two aspects of malnutrition, over-nutrition and under-nutrition. Over-nutrition is, when the individuals consume more than the required calories, which mainly causes obesity. On the other hand, under-nutrition is, when individuals do not intake adequate nutrients in their diet, which leads to undernourishment, and various kinds of health problems. Malnourished children are more prone to illnesses and health problems, therefore, measures have been implemented to ensure that children within the country are not malnourished.

Child Abuse – Child abuse is putting into practice an attitude that results in harm to the child. There are various forms of abuse and mistreatment that children experience, within home, as well as outside the home in schools, workplaces, public places and so forth. Abuse can be emotional, sexual and physical. It imposes detrimental effects upon the health and well-being of the children. Any child, who experiences abuse and mistreatment becomes depressed, withdrawn from the society, thinks of committing suicide or may get engaged into any forms of violent and criminal acts. The age of the children mainly determine the effects of abuse upon them. When the children at home are not given adequate attention by their parents, they feel neglected and in most cases, academic performance, health and mind-sets of the children get effected due to neglect on the part of their parents. Hence, neglect is also considered as a form of abuse.

Child Mortality – Child mortality is regarded as a significant factor that identify the medical and the public health conditions within the country and socio-economic progress of the country. Its weakening of child mortality is therefore not only vital but also an indicative of an improvement in wide-ranging living conditions. The history of childhood as a modern concept is deep-rooted in the account of the contemporary welfare state. Childhood is considered as an endangered and continued period of life to be obliged in its recognition to the prevalent struggles for the well-being, compensated by the working classes within the context of the widespread transformations brought into their lives by the industrial revolution during the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. In India, 2.1 million children die before they reach their fifth birthday. Half of these children die even before they are 28 days old, accounting for one-fourth world-wide infant deaths.

Child Trafficking –In India, there has been an increase in the number of children, who are trafficked not only for sex trade, but also for other forms of non-sex based exploitation that includes, enslavement of various kinds, such as domestic labour, industrial labour, bonded labour, agricultural labour, begging, organ trade and false marriage. Trafficking in children is on the rise, and nearly 60% of the victims of trafficking are below 18 years of age. Trafficking means recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, or abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or of receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the agreement of a person having control over other persons, for the purpose of mistreatment and exploitation. The children, who are trafficked undergo various

forms of abuse and violations. They are kept in bondage, are deprived of food and are beaten and tortured.

EDUCATION

Education is regarded as an imperative requirement for not only children, but for all the individuals within the country. There have been establishment of adult education centres, where adults get the opportunity to enhance their educational skills and abilities, those who have earlier remained deprived of acquisition of education. India has made progress in the field of education, since it has achieved its independence. Over subsequent years, several policies have been formulated by the Indian government to ensure that there is an increase in the literacy level with a close observing of the quality of education. Retention of children in schools was considered imperative, as dropping out of children from schools due to various causes, not only cause impediments within their acquisition of education and learning, but also in the functioning of the schools. With the implementation of educational reforms, policies and procedures, school drop-out rates have registered a decline with the gender gap of education also showing a declining figure (Ghosh, 2014).

Two major policies of the Indian government, the SarvaShikshaAbhiyan(SSA) in 2001 and the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 have viewed education priorities increase among households and catalysed improvements in the educational performance (Ghosh, 2014). These policies have rendered an imperative contribution in making the individuals recognize the significance of education. Education helps individuals to generate awareness regarding various areas, and is necessary to sustain their living conditions in an appropriate manner. The individuals belonging to rural communities either possess low literacy skills or no education at all. But in the present existence, they aim to send their children to schools and assist them in acquiring education. In rural and tribal communities, there are establishment of education and training centres, which the individuals get enrolled into. In some cases, individuals from rural areas migrate to urban areas to enhance their living conditions and to provide their children with better education, health care, nutrition and living standards.

There have been progressions made in the system of education and these in turn have led to increase in the enrolment of students. The progressions in the system of education have been with regards to teaching-learning methods, instructional strategies, provision of extra-curricular and creative activities, use of innovative methods and techniques and formation of a suitable and an amiable teaching and learning environment. The system of education can be enhanced, when exchange of information and ideas takes place in an effective manner. The teachers need to make use of lucidity and coherence in their communication with the students, make use of technology and innovative methods in their teaching, conduct class and homework assignments in an appropriate manner, implement proper evaluation techniques in order to identify the flaws and inconsistencies and make improvements and one of the most imperative areas is, they should create an amiable and a pleasant learning environment within the classroom. The teachers should be approachable in attitude, so that students should feel

comfortable in communicating with them. There should be establishment of proper terms and conditions between the teachers and students and among students themselves to facilitate learning.

HEALTH STATUS

Children are the future citizens of the country, this is the main reason to ensure the provision of proper health care services and nutritional intake for the children. An individual can be achievement oriented and can do well in his life, when he is in good health, hence, it is essential to take care of one's health care requirements. In the present world, it is universally acknowledged that investment in human resource development is a precondition for any nation. Early childhood, that is the first six years establishes the most crucial period in life, when the bases are put for cognitive, social and emotional language, physical, motor development and cumulative lifelong learning. The young child under the age of three years is most susceptible to the problems of malnutrition, disease, infection and resultant disability, all of which have an impact upon the present condition of a child at micro level and the future human resource development of the nation at the macro level. Thus the significance of the findings on the nutritional and mortality status of children cannot be over emphasized (Children in India, 2012).

In India, there has been an increase in the rate of child mortality. The problem has been given attention by the policy makers and researchers for several decades. The data collected and published by the Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India, show that although mortality rate among infants and under five children is declining over the years, but there are some states, where mortality rates are high. This depicts that despite the progressions made in the health sector in the recent decades in India, valuable young lives continue to be lost due to childbirth-related causes, inefficient care of the newborns and early childhood diseases. The mortality status of children in India reveals the intimidations in child health (Children in India, 2012).

Factors which affect foetal and neonatal deaths are mainly endogenous, while those which affect post neonatal deaths are mainly exogenous. The endogenous factors are related to the formation of the foetus in the womb and are therefore, mainly biological in nature. Among the biological factors affecting foetal and neonatal infant mortality rates, the important ones are the age of the mother, birth order, period of spacing between births, prematurity, weight at birth and mother's health. Social, cultural, economic and environmental factors are also found to affect infant mortality, especially during the post neonatal period. Post neonatal deaths are therefore, primarily due to various causes, such as communicable diseases, both of the digestive systems, such as diarrhoea and enteritis, and of the respiratory system, such as bronchitis and pneumonia, as well as faulty feeding practices, poor hygiene and malnutrition (Children in India, 2012).

NUTRITIONAL STATUS

The young child, below three years of age is most susceptible to the problem of malnutrition, and other health problems. The consequences of child malnutrition for child morbidity and mortality are massive and there is an adverse impact of malnutrition on productivity so that the failure to combat child malnutrition causes the decline of the potential economic growth at the macro level. At the micro level, malnutrition, both protein energy malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies directly affects children's physical and cognitive growth and increases vulnerability to infection and diseases. It is apparent that it is of utmost significance to put emphasis upon the nutritional and overall developmental needs of children. The interval for intervention is believed to be from pregnancy to two years of age, after which under-nutrition may cause irreparable damage to future development. Poor foetal growth or stunting in the first two years of life leads to irreversible damage. Insufficient cognitive or social stimulation in the first two to three years has lifelong negative impact on educational performance and psycho-social functioning (Children in India, 2012).

The problem of malnutrition is prevalent among children and is the major cause of child mortality. This problem arises, when the children do not acquire adequate diet and nutrition, which is imperative for their effective growth and development. Due to lack of proper nutrients in one's diet, the individuals are unable to obtain the needed energy that is required in order to perform various kinds of tasks and functions. The nutritional status of expecting and lactating mothers is regarded as significant and has an impact upon the nutritional status of children. Malnutrition among children is the highest, when the mothers are underweight. Therefore, it is vital for the expecting and lactating mothers to consume adequate diet, so that they are able to provide proper nutrients to their children. Another important factor that has an impact upon the nutritional status of the children is the economic status of the family. The economic status of the family determines, what kind of diet and nutrition, they can afford to provide their children. The problem of malnutrition is prevalent among the children, belonging to deprived and economically weaker sections of the society (Children in India, 2012).

Infant and young child feeding practices in particular continue to be a serious challenge to reduce malnutrition among children. In spite of unprecedented economic growth, progress in the nutritional status of children in India over the last decade has been slow. The status of various aspects of nutrition among children points towards the crucial need to take the call for awareness campaigns along with improved health care facilities with special privileges for the socio-economically weaker sections of the society (Children in India, 2012).

CHILD LABOUR

In accordance to the 2011 census, In India, there are 10.1 million working children, between the ages of five and fourteen. The residing of individuals in the conditions of poverty is the major cause of child labour. At young ages, children get compelled to contribute towards family income. Child labour is often defined as work that deprives the children from

getting engaged in childhood activities, their potential and their dignity. It is detrimental to their physical and psychological development. Child labour in India is mentally, socially, physically and morally adverse to the children. It interferes with the ability of the child to get enrolled in or participate in school activities. In some cases, they get compelled to discontinue their education, even before their educational skills are honed. In other cases, they have pressure upon them to carry out both studies and work simultaneously (Child Labour in India, n.d.).

There are many interlinked factors that give rise to child labour. Child labour is both a cause and consequence of poverty. The conditions of poverty of the households, forces the children into the labour market to earn money. Some children get engaged into child labour to supplement family income, while most of them get engaged in it to sustain their living conditions. They miss out on an opportunity to acquire education, further perpetuating household poverty across generations, leading to a decline in economic growth and social development. Child labour causes barriers within the course of acquisition of education and development of skills. Individuals need to have opportunities of decent work as adults. Disparity, lack of educational opportunities, slow demographic transition, principles, traditions and cultural expectations are some factors that contribute to the persistence of child labour. Age, gender, ethnicity, caste and deprivation affect the type and strength of work that children perform (Child Labour in India, n.d.). Agriculture, plantations, mines, industries, factories, domestic households, restaurants, tea stalls, hotels, grocery shops and other stores are the areas, where children get engaged in work.

Measures and policies are required to be put into practice in order to deal with child labour. The important measures include, stability in the economic growth of the country, respect for the labour standards, decent work, universal education, social protection, recognition of the needs and rights of the children, honesty, righteousness, truthfulness, and recognition of values, norms, principles and standards are considered important in preventing child labour. These measures have rendered a significant contribution in reducing child labour. It has decreased by 2.6 million between 2001 and 2011. The decline is more visible in rural areas, whereas in urban areas, there has been an increase, due to engagement of children in unskilled and minority jobs (Child Labour in India, n.d.).

CRIME AGAINST CHILDREN

Children get involved in the situations of crime, both as victims and as offenders. These are serious issues that demand the attention of the law makers, law enforcers, social activists and society as a whole. Collection and publication of data on crime against children and juvenile delinquency has been the base of administrative records in the national crime records bureau, under the Ministry of Home Affairs. Children are the most vulnerable section of the society, are easy to intimidate, threaten, coerce or daunt, and thus they become unfortunate victims of crime. There are numerous causes, which compel children into committing crime. These include, poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, lack of resources,

unawareness, difficult circumstances, drug and alcohol abuse, and feelings of anger, frustration, and depression (Children in India, 2012).

The offences that are committed against children or those offences, in which children become victims are stated to be crimes against children. Being subjected to crime and violence, deprives children of their childhood activities. The different kinds of crimes that are experienced by children include, verbal abuse, physical abuse, beating, rape, murder, acid violence, female foeticide, female infanticide, kidnapping and abduction, child trafficking and forcible child marriage. The children, who get involved into the commitment of criminal and violent acts have to undergo detrimental consequences. They have to face judicial penalties and forms a negative image within the society. On the other hand, children, who become victims of crime and violence, have to undergo immense physical and psychological suffering, depending upon the extent of crime that they have experienced. This is apparent that when a child experiences criminal and violent acts, his mind-set gets affected and he experiences problems in concentrating upon studies, playing, communicating with relatives and friends, going out into the social circle, getting engaged in creative activities and so forth.

It is alarming that, in 2011, the crimes against children reported a 24% increase from the previous year with a total of 33,098 cases of crimes against children reported in the country during 2011 as compared to 26,694 cases during 2010. The State of Uttar Pradesh accounted for 16.6% of total crimes against children at national level in 2011, followed by Madhya Pradesh (13.2%), Delhi (12.8%), Maharashtra (10.2%), Bihar (6.7%) and Andhra Pradesh (6.7%). In 2011, among the Indian Penal Code (IPC) crimes, an increase of 43% was registered in kidnapping and abduction, while rape cases were increased by 30%, procurement of minor girls recorded an increase of 27% and foeticide reported an increase of 19% over 2010. In 2011, buying of girls for prostitution showed a decline of 65%, and selling of girls for prostitution reported decline of 13% compared to 2010. Infanticide showed a decline of 37 points during this period (Children in India, 2012).

PROTECTION OF CHILDREN FROM ABUSE AND NEGLECT

In India, there has been an increase in the number of children, who need care and protection from abuse and neglect. Child protection is an integral part of program and strategies to protect children from child abuse, child labour, child marriage, child trafficking, violence in school, mistreatment and exploitation. Several well developed countries of the world have well established child protection systems, mainly focused at mandatory reporting, documentation and investigations of affected children, and often taking powerful action. The problem of high level of notices and investigations is not only upon the families, but also on the system, which has to increase its resources. In these frameworks, the problems of child protection in India, with large populations, and additional socio-economic restrictions, need thoughtful and widespread consideration. The provision of less care to the child during the early formative years is due to the problems of poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and large families (Seth, 2013). When there are more than three children in one nuclear family, then

poverty stricken and deprived households find it difficult to cater to the needs and requirements of all children.

The term “protection” readily relates to protection from all forms of violence, abuse, and exploitation. However, from India’s perspective, the Indian Child Abuse Neglect & Child Labour (ICANCL) group has strongly broadcasted the view that protection, must also include protection from disease, inadequate nutrition, and illiteracy, in addition to abuse and exploitation. The protection of the children should aim at striving for the achievement of child rights and building of the caring community for every child, free from violence and discrimination. It acclaimed and asserted the urgent need to integrate principles, standards and measures in the national planning process to avert and respond to violence against children (Seth, 2013). Family is regarded as the foundation from which the child generates awareness regarding cultures, norms, values, principles and standards. It is important that family members should treat the children in an appropriate manner and make provision of all the required aspects that are necessary for an appropriate upbringing.

In India, the State should ensure that all defenceless children have access to school, basic health care, nutrition, besides social welfare and juvenile justice systems. These child protection systems can contribute to break down cycle of inter-generational poverty and exploitation (Seth, 2013). The children, who belong to economically weaker sections of the society usually feel vulnerable in schools by the occurrence of violent acts or stringent attitude on the part of the teachers. In some cases, teachers are strict and even verbally and physically abuse the children upon issues, such as, not completing homework assignments, inappropriate class performances, not bringing the required stationary items to class, such as, books, pens, textbooks etc., not wearing proper uniforms and so forth. Therefore, it is vital for teachers to form an amiable and a pleasant attitude towards children. The children should be taught how to be regular, diligent and consistent in school, in the performance of assignments as well as in personal appearance. Disciplinary action is supposed to be taken in the case of wrongdoings, but they should not be mistreated. When children pursue their education or are engaged in some kind of employment, it is vital that they should be treated with kindness and courtesy. Encouragement of education, recreational activities, treating them with benevolence and consideration, effective communication and prevention of all forms of violent acts are important areas that would protect children from abuse and neglect.

NATIONAL POLICIES AND PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN

The national policies and programs for children are implementing a number of child centric policies, addressing the issues of child protection, child survival and child development. The important ones have been stated as follows: (Children in India, 2012).

National Policy for Children, 1974 –This is the first policy document concerning the needs and rights of children. The children are the future citizens of the country and this policy recognized children to be an enormously important asset to the country. The objective of the policy is to take the next step in ensuring the constitutional provisions for children and the United Nations Declaration of Rights are put into practice. It summaries services, the state

should provide for the complete development of the child, before and after birth and throughout the period of growth of the child for their complete physical, psychological and social development.

National Policy on Education, 1986 –This policy placed major emphasis upon the removal of differences and to make equal educational opportunities, especially for Indian women, Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Scheduled Castes communities (SC). To accomplish these, the policy called for intensifying scholarships, adult education, recruitment of more teachers from the SCs, motivations and encouragements for poverty stricken families to send their children to schools regularly, development of new institutions and providing housing, civic amenities and facilities. This policy called for a "child-centred approach" in primary education, and initiated the Operation Blackboard scheme to improve primary schools nationally.

National Policy on Child Labour, 1987 –This policy contains an action plan for dealing with the problem of child labour. It envisioned a legislative action plan aiming and convergence of general development programmes for the benefit of children. Project-based plan of action for initiating of projects for the welfare of working children in the areas of prevalence of child labour. The main aim of these projects is to ensure, children do not experience any detrimental effects, when they are engaged in any hazardous occupations. The children, who are below 14 years of age are prohibited from getting engaged in any hazardous occupations in industries or factories.

National Nutrition Policy, 1993 –This policy aimed to combat the problem of malnutrition and under-nutrition among children. It is vital to provide children adequate diet and nutrition for their effective growth and development. In schools, there has been provision of Mid-Day Meal scheme to provide nutritious meals to the children. Children need adequate diet and nutrition, not only to facilitate their growth and development, but also provide them with energy, so that they can concentrate well on their studies and get engaged in other activities, such as creative activities, physical activities etc. The policy aims to address this problem by utilizing direct, short term and indirect, long term interventions in the areas of food production and distribution, health and family welfare, education, rural and urban development, woman and child development etc.

National Population Policy, 2000 - The national population policy 2000 aims at enhancement in the status of Indian children. It put emphasis upon free and compulsory school education up to the age of 14 years, universal immunization of children against all vaccine preventable diseases, 100% registration of birth, death, marriage and pregnancy, substantial reduction in the infant mortality rate and maternal mortality ratio.

National Health Policy, 2002 - The main objective of this policy is to achieve a suitable standard of good health amongst the general population of the country. The approach is to increase access to the decentralized public health system by establishing new infrastructure in deprived areas, and by advancement of the infrastructure in the existing institutions. Dominant importance is given to ensuring a more justifiable access to health services across the social and geographical expanse of the country.

National Charter for Children (NCC), 2003 - This policy highlights the constitutional provisions towards the cause of the children and the role of civil society, communities and families and their responsibilities in satisfying children's basic needs. Well-being of special groups such as, children of below poverty line (BPL) families, street children, girl children, child care programmes, and educational programmes for prevention from exploitation find special mention in the NCC. It safeguards for every child the intrinsic right to be a child and appreciate a healthy and joyful childhood, to address the root causes that repudiate the healthy growth and development of children, and to arouse the integrity of the community in the comprehensive societal framework to protect children from all forms of abuse, while reinforcement of the family, society and the nation. The Charter provides that the State and community shall undertake all possible measures to ensure and protect the survival, life and liberty of all children. For empowerment of the adolescents, the Charter states that the State and community shall take all steps to provide the required education and skills to adolescent children so as to prepare them to become economically productive citizens.

National Plan of Action for Children (NPA), 2005 –This policy was adopted by the Government of India in the pursuit of well-being of the children. NPA has a significant number of key areas of drive, out of which the one's relating to child protection are, complete abolition of female foeticide, female infanticide and child marriage, ensuring the survival, development and protection of the girl child, addressing and upholding the rights of children in difficult circumstances, and securing for all children legal and social protection from all forms of abuse, exploitation and neglect.

CONCLUSION

The children, belonging to deprived, marginalized and socio-economically backward sections of the society have been made provision of opportunities to enhance their status. The status of children in India can be improved by making provision of good quality education to them, so that they can generate awareness, acquire knowledge and adequately sustain their living conditions. It is vital to treat children with kindness and courtesy and not impose any kind of harm upon them within homes as well as outside. The prevalence of the conditions of poverty, and illiteracy are the major factors that compel children to get engaged in hazardous and non-hazardous employment opportunities. Getting engaged in employment usually deprives them of their childhood activities.

Experiencing various forms of criminal and violent acts impedes the psychological approach of the children, hence, there have been formulation of laws that individuals, who get involved in violent and criminal acts against children have been subjected to severe judicial penalties. Inadequate nutrition affects the health of the children, hence, it is vital that in order to lead to effective growth and development of the children, they should be provided with adequate diet and nutrition. The Government of India is committed to promote the survival, protection, development and participation of children in a holistic manner and a series of measures cutting across the boundaries of gender, caste, race, ethnicity, religion, and

socio-economic background have been initiated in the past several years to realize the all-inclusive growth devoid of exclusion and discrimination.

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