

# National Consultation on Elimination of Child Labour amid COVID-19 Pandemic

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## Concept Note

Child labour affects the overall development of children and deprives them of basic rights of education, health and protection. Most children are forced to work in inhuman and degrading working conditions and their employers do whatever is necessary to make them completely invisible and are thus able to exercise an absolute control over them. The health and wellbeing of child labourers is always at risk, and they usually end up being trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty, ignorance and bondage.

Globally, 152 million children (ILO) and nationally 10.2 million children (Census 2011) are in labour putting their health, safety and development (physical, mental and moral) at huge risk. The recently published Sustainable Development Goal Report 2020 by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs stated that **“the global gains in reducing child labour are likely to be reversed for the first time in 20 years” due to the COVID 19 pandemic (herein after the pandemic).**

The Sustainable Development Goal 8.7 calls upon countries across the world to eradicate forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking and end child labour in all its forms by 2025. The year 2021 has also been declared as the International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour. The Indian Government has ratified the two ILO Conventions i.e. Convention 182 (worst forms of child labour) and convention 138 (minimum age) showing its commitment towards a child labour free society.

Regardless of the challenges posed by the pandemic in the last year, Bachpan Bachao Andolan (BBA) has provided medical aid and food relief to over 31,43,343 individuals across the country. BBA through its active presence in the field and in partnership with Government agencies has been able to rescue more than 7,000 children from various exploitative situations during this period of National and State lockdowns.

The second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic with millions being affected has been catastrophic and has put an enormous strain on the medical infrastructure of the country which has proved to be inadequate to handle the cases being reported daily. The medical experts have predicted that there may be a third wave of the pandemic. They have further predicted that the third wave of the COVID-19 may affect majorly children below 18 years of age. Under such circumstances, it has become absolutely necessary that health and safety of children are accorded greater attention immediately. The pandemic has also brought out in sharp focus the need for health care of citizens including the children being made a Fundamental Right by amending the Constitution of India.

In view of the above, there is an urgent need to re-introspect the strategies (in the new-normal condition of COVID -19 pandemic) for prevention and protection of children from exploitation of all forms and their holistic rehabilitation through access to education, health, statutory compensation and socio-economic welfare schemes. Accordingly, the Satyarthi Movement for Children led by Nobel Peace Laureate Shri Kailash Satyarthi is organizing a “National Consultation on Elimination of Child Labour amid COVID 19 Pandemic”. The Consultation shall be held on the eve of World Day Against Child Labour (observed on 12th June every year).

The National Consultation aims to bring together the various stakeholders responsible for child protection and child rights promotion to deliberate upon change in strategies required, if any, for fulfilment of Sustainable Development Goal 8.7 i.e. eradication of child labour in all its form by 2025. The objectives of the National Consultation are as follows:

- **To identify the hurdles in achievement of complete eradication of child labour and facilitate solution-focused dialogue to overcome them;**
- **To understand and assess the efficacy of the on-ground actions taken by the various State and non-State stakeholders to tackle the issue of child labour during the last one year of COVID-19 Pandemic; and**
- **To develop a National Action Plan to eliminate child labour as the way forward, apportioning responsibilities among the stakeholders for time bound action.**

