

A close-up, slightly blurred photograph of a young child's face, focusing on the eye and nose. The child has dark hair and is wearing a blue denim shirt. The background is dark and out of focus.

# **The National Child Labour Project Scheme in India**

## **An Overview**



KAILASH SATYARTHI CHILDREN'S FOUNDATION

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# 1. Introduction

Child labour is one of the worst forms of violence against children and a serious violation of Child Rights as well as Human Rights. It deprives children of their childhood, right to go to school and reinforces intergenerational cycles of poverty. As per Census 2011, the total child population in India in the age group (5-14) years is 259.6 million. Of these, 10.1 million (3.9% of total child population) are working or child labour<sup>1</sup>. In addition, more than 42.7 million children in India are out of school<sup>2</sup>. A study in February 2019 revealed that 10,826 cases of violations of the Child Labour Act were reported across the country in the preceding four years. Of these, only 56% of cases (6032) went to the stage of prosecution<sup>3</sup>.

Recognizing that child labour is the outcome of multiple causes and has multiple dimensions, Government of India enacted the Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act, 1986, which was amended as the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act (CLPRA), 2016. The national policy on child labour was prepared in 1987 to tackle the problem with a multi-pronged approach. Aimed at progressive elimination and rehabilitation of child labour in general and specifically in hazardous occupations, it led to initiation of NCLP in 1988 in areas of high concentration of child labour. Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE), 2009 has the other important milestone in dealing with the menace of child labour in India. While RTE entitles every child in the age group of 6-14 years for free and compulsory education, CLPRA prohibits engagement of children up to 14 years of age in all occupations.

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'child labour' and 'working children' have different connotations, but both the terms are used interchangeably on account of limitations of the available datasets.

<sup>2</sup> International Labour Organisation (2020), Child Labour in India, [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-new\\_delhi/documents/publication/wcms\\_557089.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---sro-new_delhi/documents/publication/wcms_557089.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> International Labour Organization (2019), Ending child labour, forced labour and human trafficking in global supply chains, [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_norm/---ipec/documents/publication/wcms\\_716930.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---ipec/documents/publication/wcms_716930.pdf)

## **1.1. The National Child Labour Project (NCLP) Scheme**

The National Child Labour Project (NCLP) Scheme has been a flagship programme for the identification, rehabilitation and mainstreaming of child labourers. It is being implemented by the Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India since 1988. Under the scheme, a survey is conducted of children engaged in work in a district or a specified area; then children in the age group of 9-14 years are withdrawn from work and put into NCLP Special Training Centres run by District Project Societies. In the NCLP Special Training Centres, these children are provided bridge education, vocational training, mid-day meal, stipend, health care and recreation etc. with the ultimate objective of preparing them to be mainstreamed into the formal system of education. The children in the age group of 5-8 years, however, are directly linked to the formal education system under the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan programme.

### **1.1.1. Objectives of NCLP Scheme**

The NCLP Scheme seeks to<sup>4</sup>:

- a) Eliminate all forms of child labour through identification and withdrawal of all children in the project area from child labour, preparing children withdrawn from work for mainstream education along with vocational training; and ensuring convergence of services provided by different government departments/agencies for the benefit of child and their family
- b) Contribute to the withdrawal of all adolescent workers from hazardous occupations / processes and their skilling and integration in appropriate occupations through Identification and withdrawal of all adolescent workers from hazardous occupations / processes and facilitating vocational training opportunities for such adolescents through existing scheme of skill developments.
- c) Raising awareness amongst stakeholders and target communities, and orientation of NCLP and other functionaries on the issues of 'child labour' and 'employment of adolescent workers in hazardous occupations/processes'; and
- d) Creation of a Child Labour Monitoring, Tracking and Reporting System

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<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Labour and Employment (2016), Revised NCLP Guidelines, 2016, Government of India



Elimination of child labour is the joint responsibility of the Central and State Governments. Therefore, the scheme is implemented in close coordination with State, District administration and Civil society. Other stakeholders, such as, local communities, civil society groups/ NGOs, academicians and enforcement agencies have also an important role to play, especially in rehabilitation of the rescued child labour. The entire project is implemented through District Project Society under the Chairmanship of administrative head of the district, namely; District Magistrate/Collector/Deputy Commissioner of the District. The V. V. Giri National Labour Institute (VVGNI), Noida, Uttar Pradesh, is the nodal agency working directly under the Ministry of Labour to guide and evaluate the NCLP on behalf of the ministry.

## **1.2. Objective, Data Source and Methodology**

The objective of this paper is to find out the current status of the NCLP scheme in terms of spread of sanctioned and operational districts; children rescued /withdrawn from work, rehabilitated and mainstreamed; Grants-in-Aid/ funds allocated, and Special Training Centers (STCs) operational across states.

This paper is based on analysis of the secondary data collected from various Lok Sabha questions & answers in recent years and uses a descriptive method to meet its objective.

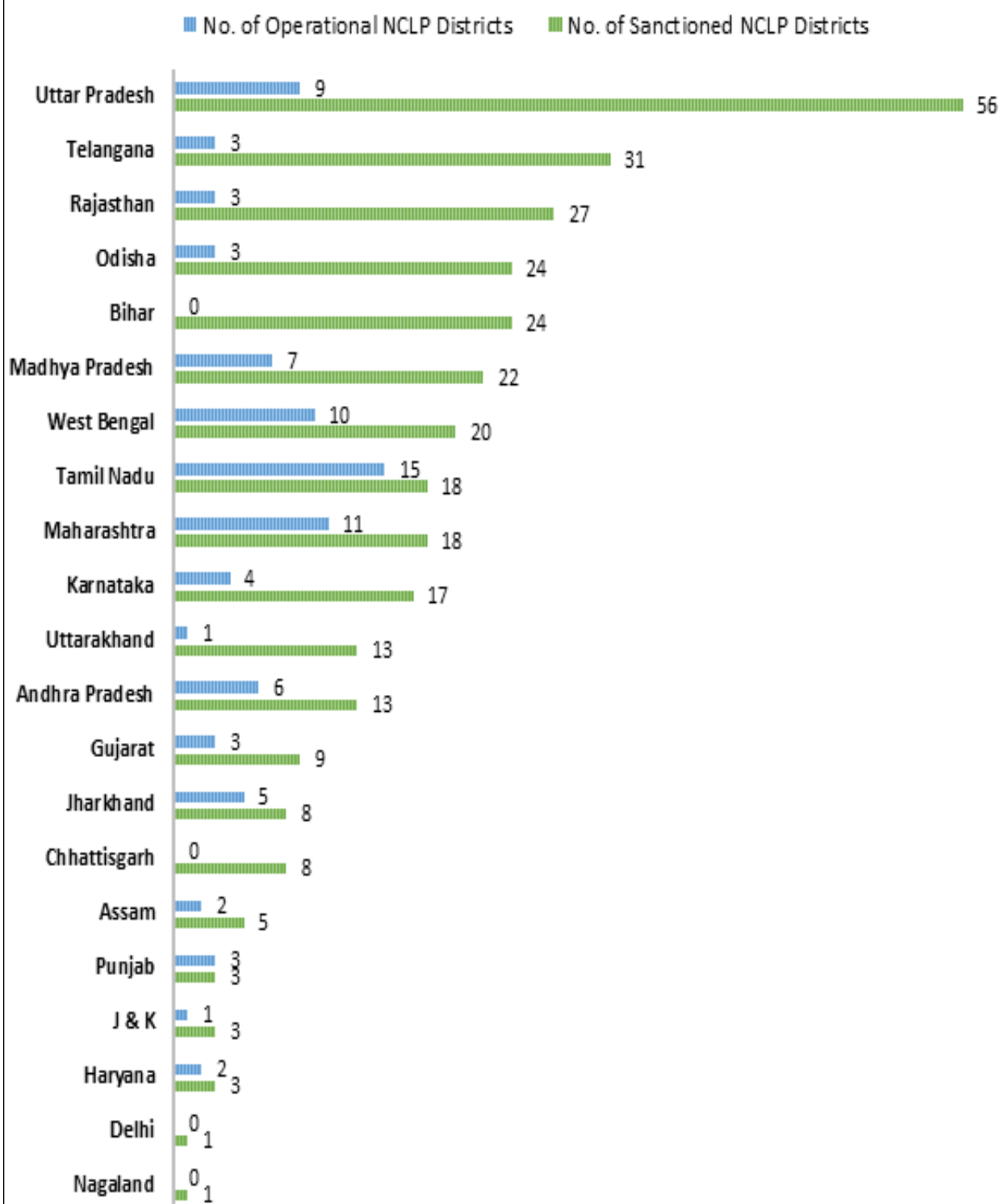
## **2. Spread of Sanctioned and Operational NCLP Districts**

First initiated in twelve (12) districts of India, currently the scheme has progressively expanded to cover 324 districts of India as on March 2, 2020 (Figure-1). Uttar Pradesh has the highest sanctioned NCLP covering districts (56), followed by Telangana (31), Rajasthan (27), Bihar and Odisha (24), Madhya Pradesh (22), and Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu (18).

However, there is still wide gap between the sanctioned and operational NCLP districts across various states of India, thereby indicating lapses in funding and implementation mechanisms, both at the central and government levels. Data shows that in March 2020 only 88 NCLP districts were operational out of 324 sanctioned NCLP districts. In terms of operational NCLP districts, Tamil Nadu with 15 districts has the highest coverage, followed by Maharashtra (11), West Bengal (10), Uttar Pradesh (9), Madhya Pradesh (7), and Andhra Pradesh (6). Surprisingly, Bihar, a high child labour incidence state, doesn't have a single operational NCLP district under its belt, yet.

Names of the sanctioned and operational NCLP districts by states are given in Annex-1.

**Figure-1: No. of Sanctioned & Operational NCLP Districts Across States in India**  
(As on March 2, 2020)



(Data Source: Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 1729, dated 2.3.2020)

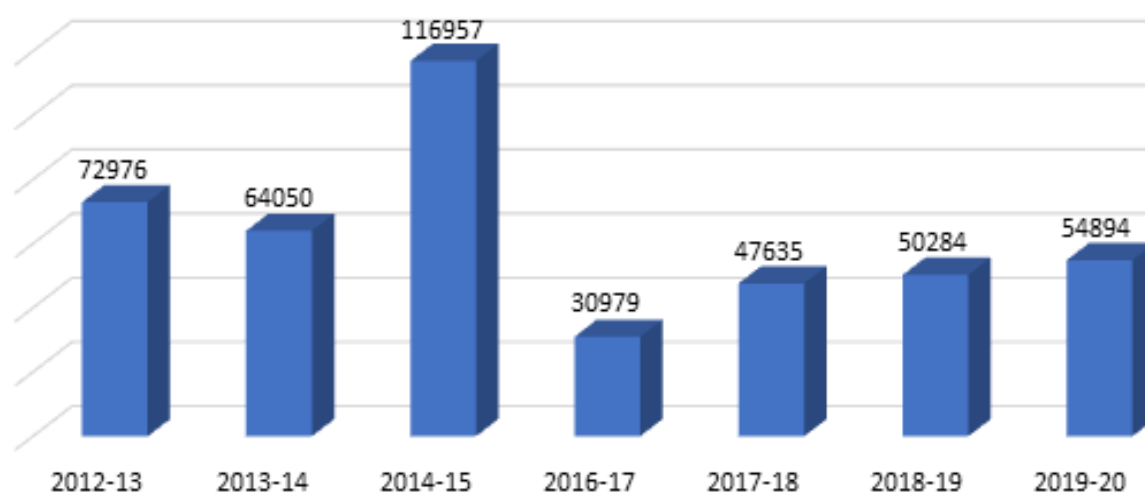
### 3. Rescue, Rehabilitation and Mainstreaming of Children

The status of total children rescued/withdrawn from work, rehabilitated and mainstreamed under the NCLP scheme during the period 2012-13 and 2019-20 is presented in Figure-1.

During the year 2012-13, the number of children withdrawn from work under the NCLP scheme were 72,976. But in the year 2014-15 these children went higher (1,16,957) and sharply dropped to 30,979 children in 2016-17. In subsequent years, numbers have steadily gone up, standing at 54,894 in 2019-20. With a total number of 88 operational NCLP districts in 2019-20, the average no. of children rescued, rehabilitated, and mainstreamed per operational NCLP district works out to be 624 during 2019-20. This also suggests that if all 324 NCLP districts are made operational, we could rescue at least 2,02,110 children every year.

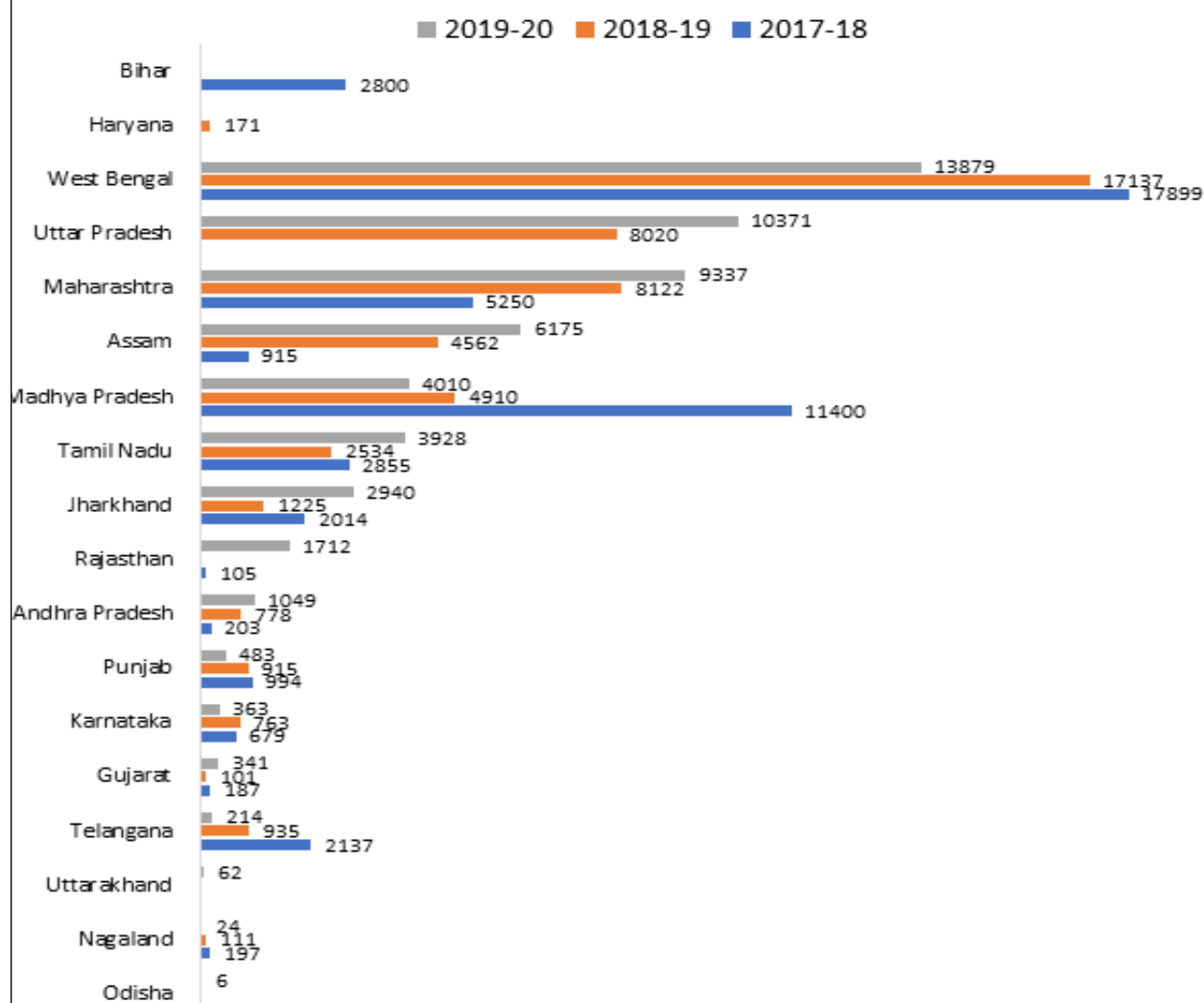
The details of state-wise number of children who were rescued/withdrawn from work, rehabilitated and mainstreamed under the NCLP project during the last three years are given in Figure-3.

In rescuing/withdrawing children from work, rehabilitating and mainstreaming them, performance of the NCLP scheme has been recorded best in West Bengal (13,879), followed by Uttar Pradesh (10,371) Maharashtra (9,337) and Assam (6,175) during 2019-20. However, some states have recorded a gradual reduction in the number of rescued, rehabilitated and mainstreamed children. For instance, the number of rescued, rehabilitated and mainstreamed children in West Bengal dropped from 17,899 in 2017-18 to 17,137 in 2018-19 and 13,879 in 2019-20, registering an overall decline of 22.5% between 2017-18 and 2019-20. Nevertheless, there are also exceptions to such declining trend, especially in states like Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra, where the number of such children has gone up during the reporting period. The number of rescued, rehabilitated and mainstreamed children under the NCLP scheme in Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra increased from 8,020 and 8,122 in 2018-19 to 10,371 and 9,337 in 2019-20, respectively.



(Data Source: Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No.170, dated on 30.11.2015, 1643, dated on 02.03.2020, and 4191, dated 22.03.2021)

**Figure-3: Rescued, Rehabilitated and Mainstreamed Children under NCLP Since 2017**



(Data Source: Lok Sabha unstarred question no.4191, dated 22.03.2021)



## 4. Special Training Centres (STCs)

Previously called NCLP schools<sup>5</sup>, Special Training Centers (STCs) under the NCLP scheme provide basic education to the rescued child labour, which is the fundamental right of every child. District Project Societies under the Chairmanship of District Collector/District Magistrate are mandated to establish STCs in the areas of high concentration of child labour<sup>6</sup>. Often run by some prominent NGOs and other implementing agencies, STCs impart education for a period of 3 months to a maximum period of 3 years depending upon the time the child requires to come on par with other children of the class. After this period, child labourers are mainstreamed or rehabilitated into formal education system<sup>7</sup>. They give vocational training and craft as appropriate to the age of children. Apart from education, children are also provided with a package of welfare inputs such as supplementary nutrition and health- care through special schools to meet their special needs. Now a stipend amount of Rs 150/ per month is deposited in the bank account of every child based on child having a minimum of 75% attendance in a month<sup>8</sup>.

As on December 24, 2018, the total number of Special Training Centers was 3,250 in the country. Considering that each of the STCs could It is mandatory for STCs to have a display board with all the basic information pertaining to the Centre, including a timetable, weekly work plan, number of children enrolled, weekly menu for the mid-day meals, list of volunteer staff, etc. There should be a minimum of 15 and a maximum of 50 children in each Special Training Center under the scheme<sup>9</sup>. With a total of 3,250 STCs, this means nearly 1.6 lakh children could have put up with STCs during 2018-19 in India. It also signifies why the government must focus on making more NCLP districts operational and rescue more children from labour situation. Figure-4 shows the number of Special Training Centers (STCs) operational in different states of India in 2018-19.

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<sup>5</sup> Revised nomenclature of EGS, AIE centres, NCLP schools to Special Training Centres (STCs) under Mid Day Meal Scheme - reg.(5-8-2014)

<sup>6</sup> Ministry of Labour and Employment (2016), Revised NCLP Guidelines, 2016, Government of India

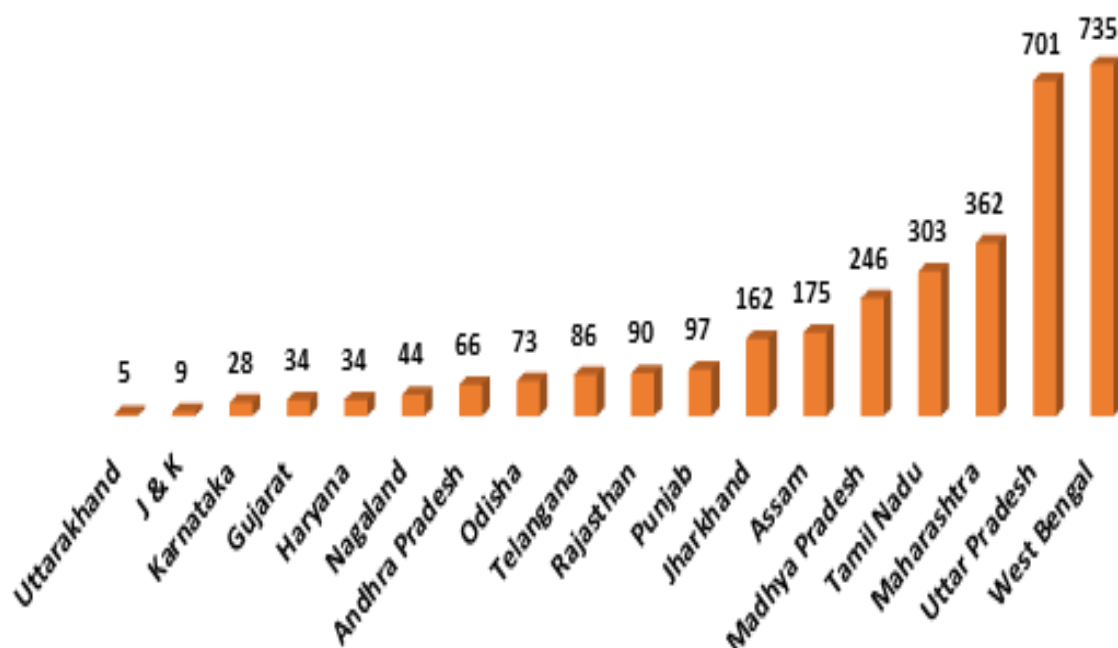
<sup>7</sup> ibid

<sup>8</sup> Korum L R (nd), How can child labour schemes help mainstream child labourers back to school? A case study of NCLP in Kolkata, Thesis, Lund University,

<http://lup.lub.lu.se/luur/download?func=downloadFile&recordId=8934326&fileId=8934327>

<sup>9</sup> Ministry of Labour and Employment (2016), Revised NCLP Guidelines, 2016, Government of India

**Figure-4: State-wise Number of Special Training Centres Operational in 2018-19**



(Data Source: Lok Sabha unstarred question no.2294, dated 24.12.2018)

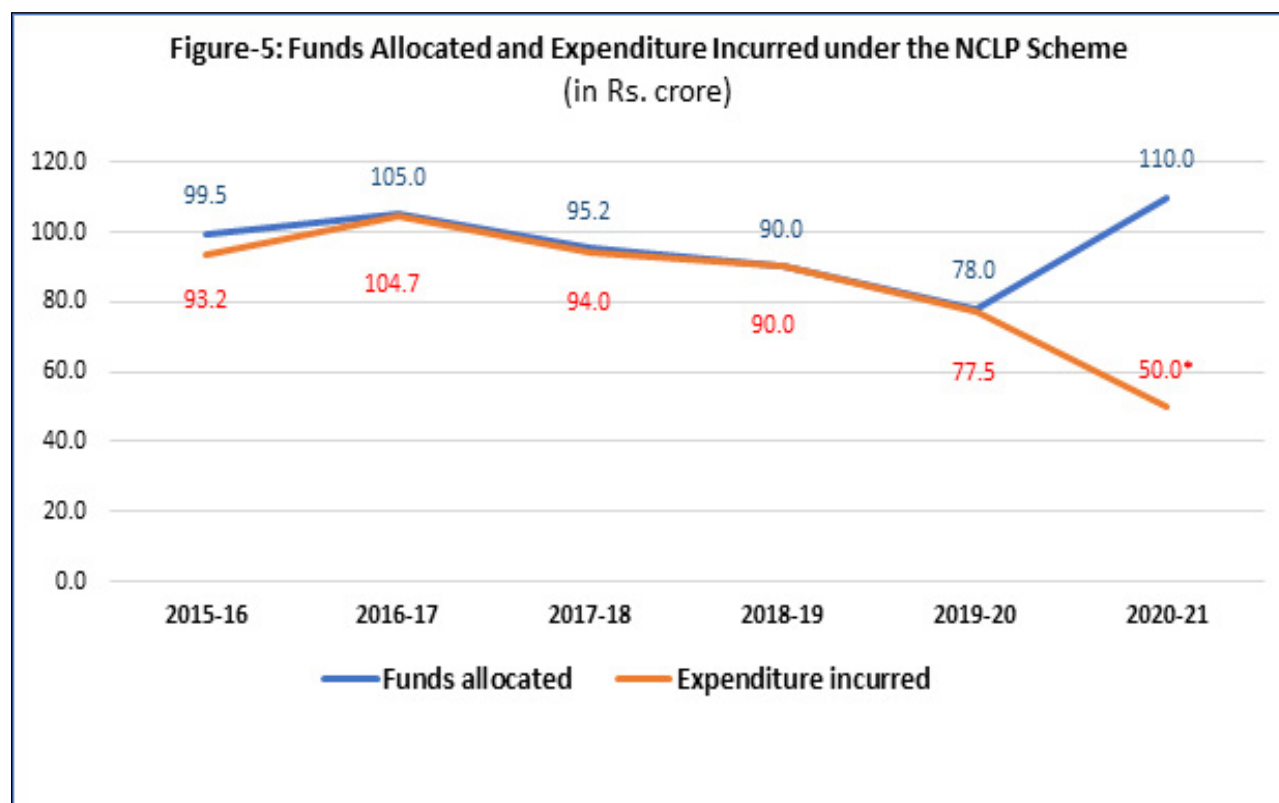
## 5. Funds Allocated and Amount Spent

The NCLP Scheme is a Central Sector Scheme, where 100% of the funding is provided by the Government of India through the Ministry of Labour and Employment. Funds are provided directly to the District Project Societies headed by District Magistrate/Collector/Deputy Commissioner who in turn allocates the funds to NGOs/Voluntary Agencies, etc. for running of Special Training Centres.

The year-wise allocation of funds/final grant and expenditure incurred/amount spent under the scheme during the last six years are presented in Figure-5.

Allocating more funds into NCLP and spending the amount efficiently are essential to ensure that all children rescued from work have access to education and are rehabilitated and mainstreamed. Unfortunately, except for the financial year 2020-21, fund allocations/ final grant made for this scheme has fallen by almost 27% between the financial years 2016-17 and 2019-20 (from Rs.105 Cr. In 2016-17 to Rs.78 Cr. In 2019-20). Fund allocation for this scheme increased by a massive 41%

in 2020-21 (from Rs.78 Cr. in 2019-20 to Rs.110 Cr. in 2020-21). But this happiness was short lived because expenditure incurred fell short by a whopping 57% during the same year. As a matter of fact, as the figures show, the Govt has continuously been unable to fully utilise the allocated funds under the NCLP scheme, thus highlighting the poor implementation plan and lack of attention paid to it.



It is important to note that that no state-wise fund allocation is made under this scheme<sup>10</sup>. Hence, data is not maintained centrally since the inception of the NCLP scheme. Nevertheless, based on the information received from District Project Societies, the quantum of funds/ grants released to states during 2014-15 to 2018-19 is given below in Table-1.

<sup>10</sup> Because funds are provided directly to the District Project Societies who in turn engage and allocate the funds to NGOs/Voluntary Agencies/ CSOs, etc. for running of STCs

**Table-1: State-wise Grant Released under NCLP Scheme (2014-15 to 2018-19)**  
(Rs. in lakh)

SN	State	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
1	West Bengal	2101	2269	1917	2227	1897
2	Uttar Pradesh	1104	430	1333	1176	1421
3	Assam	472	808	257	460	1109
4	Tamil Nadu	731	643	1015	750	879
5	Madhya Pradesh	769	701	879	687	514
6	Rajasthan	269	224	139	179	319
7	Andhra Pradesh	143	197	213	298	309
8	Punjab	350	257	325	322	257
9	Haryana	219	162	412	123	235
10	Telangana	522	547	476	323	205
11	Karnataka	205	212	132	101	184
12	Odisha	355	291	8	106	139
13	Maharashtra	830	1018	1193	1339	106
14	Gujarat	7	8	34	112	99
15	Jammu & Kashmir	63	47	61	0	56
16	Bihar	1072	948	169	0	0
17	Chhattisgarh	433	26	0	4	0
18	Jharkhand	407	376	544	280	0
19	Nagaland	151	131	193	74	0
20	Uttarakhand	9	4	12	37	0
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10210</b>	<b>9299</b>	<b>9311</b>	<b>8599</b>	<b>7730</b>

Source: Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No.4604, dated 22.07.2019

As evident from the Table, state-wise grant released under the NCLP scheme has progressively decreased from Rs.10210 lakhs in 2014-15 to Rs.7730 lakhs in 2018-19, thus recording an absolute decline of 24% between the five-year period. West Bengal (Rs.1896.90 lakh), Uttar Pradesh (Rs.1320.72 lakh), Assam (Rs.1109.45 lakh) and Tamil Nadu (Rs.878.53 lakh) received the highest quantum of grants under the scheme during 2018-19 mainly because of the existing number of operational NCLP districts and Special Training Centres (STCs) out there. On the other hand, states such as Bihar and Chhattisgarh without the existence of operational NCLP districts and STCs under the scheme could not avail any such grant during the same year.

## 6. Conclusion

Child labour is persistent in our country from a long time. The National Child Labour Project is an excellent window for the Central and State Governments of India to try rescue/ withdraw children from labour situation. It is a scheme where children are provided education through NCLP special training centers and given opportunities to get rehabilitated and mainstreamed. However, the dwindling number of operational NCLP districts and STCs in states with high incidences of child labour, especially their complete absence in states like Bihar, Jharkhand, and Chhattisgarh at present, is a matter of serious concern.

The decreasing fund allocations to the scheme and continuous underutilization of allocated funds point out to non- and/or poor implementation of some of the components of the scheme both at the central and state government levels. The Government needs to enhance its efforts considerably to utilise the fund allocations earmarked for the project. Long pending concerns like time-gap between the sanction and actual operation of projects in different districts, late release of funds from the Ministry, and fixed format of budgetary allocations across different districts<sup>11</sup>, need redressal, accordingly.

Complete and updated information from all the NCLP District Project Societies is still missing from PENCIL, the online portal envisaging, instant transmission of data pertaining to child labour under the aegis of NCLP. In the present 'digital age' that too for a sensitive scheme like NCLP, this is totally unacceptable. It is recommended that corrective steps and proactive measures be taken to ensure timely reporting of data from districts and other allied agencies so that reported cases of child labour may be acted upon promptly for timely rescue and rehabilitation.

The country has just witnessed migration of many labourers along with their family back to their village from big cities during the ongoing COVID pandemic and the possibility that the children of these workers/ labourers due to circumstances have slipped into being child labourers. It is incumbent on the part of all concerned State governments to ensure that all such children are immediately linked to education system and be prevented and pre-empted from being child labourers. While action needs to be taken as per the law against the employers, such children need to be immediately identified and arrangements be made for their rescue and rehabilitation. Further extension and strengthening of the NCLP scheme therefore assume lots of significance. If it is implemented as per guidelines of the scheme and closely monitored by government and concerned implementing agencies, the incidence of child labour in India is bound to gradually decline.

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<sup>11</sup> V.V. Giri National Labour Institute (2010), Rehabilitation of Child Labour in India: Lessons Learnt from the Evaluation of NCLPs, NOIDA



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# Annexure

**Annex-1: Names of Sanctioned & Operational NCLP Districts Across States in India  
(As on March 2, 2020)**

SN	State/UT	Name of District (Operational districts are in bold)
1	Andhra Pradesh	Anantapur, Chittoor, Kadapa, Guntur, Kurnool, Nellore, Prakasam, Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, Vishakhapatnam, West Godavari, East Godavari, and Krishna.
2	Assam	Nagaon, Kamrup, Bongaigaon, Nalbari and Lakhimpur
3	Bihar	Nalanda, Saharsa, Jamui, Katihar, Araria, Gaya, East Champaran, West Champaran, Madhepura, Patna, Supaul, Samastipur, Madhubani, Darbhanga, Muzaffarpur, Nawada, Khagaria, Sitamarhi, Kishanganj, Begusarai, Banka, Saran, Purnia and Bhagalpur
4	Chhattisgarh	Durg, Bilaspur, Rajnandgaon, Surguja, Raigarh, Raipur, Dantewada and Korba
5	Gujarat	Surat, Panchmahal, Kutch (Bhuj), Banaskantha, Dahod, Vadodara, Bhavnagar, Ahmedabad and Rajkot
6	Haryana	Gurgaon, Faridabad and Panipat
7	J & K	Srinagar, Jammu and Udhampur
8	Jharkhand	Garwha, Sahibganj, Dumka, Pakur, West Singhbhum (Chaibasa), Ranchi, Palamu, and Hazaribagh
9	Karnataka	Bijapur, Raichur, Dharwad, Bangalore Rural, Bangalore Urban, Belgaum, Koppal, Devangere, Mysore, Bagalkot, Chitradurga, Gulbarga, Bellary, Kolar, Mandya, Haveri and Tumkur.
10	Madhya Pradesh	Mandsaur, Gwalior, Ujjain, Barwani, Rewa, Dhar, East Nimar(Khandwa), Rajgarh, Chhindwara, Shivpuri, Sidhi, Guna, Shajapur, Ratlam, West Nimar(Khargon), Jabua, Damoh, Sagar, Jabalpur, Satna, Indore and Katni.
11	Maharashtra	Solapur, Thane, Sangli, Jalgaon, Nandurbar, Nanded, Nasik, Yavatmal, Dhule, Beed, Amravati, Jalna, Aurangabad, Gondia, Mumbai Suburban, Pune, Buldana and Parbhani
12	Nagaland	Dimapur
13	Odisha	Angul, Balasore, Bargarh, Bolangir, Cuttack, Deogarh, Gajapati (Udayagiri), Ganjam, Jharsuguda, Kalahandi, Koraput, Malkangiri, Mayurbhanj, Nabarangpur, Nuapada, Rayagada, Sambalpur, Sonepur, Jajpur, Keonjhar, Dhenkanal, Khurda, Nayagarh and Sundergarh.
14	Punjab	Jalandhar, Ludhiana and Amritsar
15	Rajasthan	Jaipur, Udaipur, Tonk, Jodhpur, Ajmer, Alwar, Jalore, Churu, Nagaur, Chittaurgarh, Banswara, Dhaulpur, Sikar, Dungarpur, Bharatpur, Bikaner, Jhunjhunu, Bundi, Jhalawar, Pali, Bhilwara, Sri Ganganagar, Barmer, Dausa, Hanumangarh, Kota and Baran
16	Tamil Nadu	Chidambaranar/Toothikudi (Tuticorin), Coimbatore, Dharmapuri, Vellore, Salem, Tiruchirapallii, Tirunelveli, Krishnagiri, Chennai, Erode, Dindigul, Theni. Kanchipuram, Thiruvannamalai, Tiruvallur, Pudukkottai, Nammakkal and Virudhunagar
17	Telangana	Hyderabad, Karimnagar, Khammam, Nizamabad, Rangareddy, Warangal, Nalgonda, Medak, Mehbubnagar, Adilabad, Mancheria, Nirmal, Komuram Bheem Asifabad, Jagtial, Warrangal (Urban), Jayashankar Bhupalpally, Jangaon, Sangareddy, Siddipet, Wanaparthi, Nagarkurnool, Jogulambab Gajwal, Suryapet, Medchal Malkajgiri, Vikarabad, Mahabubabad, Pedapally, Rajanna Sircilla, Bhadradi Kothagudem, Yadadri Bhuvanagiri and Kamareddy.
18	Uttar Pradesh	Varanasi, Mirzapur, Bhadohi (Sant Ravi Das Nagar), Bulandshahar, Saharanpur, Azamgarh, Bijnour, Gonda, Kheri, Bahraich, Balrampur, Hardoi, Barabanki, Sitapur, Faizabad, Badaun, Gorakhpur, Kushinagar, Kannauj, Shajahanpur, Rae Bareilly, Unnao, Sultanpur, Fatehpur, Shravasti, Pratapgarh, Basti, Sonbhadra, Mau, Kaushambi, Banda, Ghaziabad, Jaunpur, Rampur, Bareilly, Lucknow, Meerut, Etawah, Agra, Ghazipur, Mathura, Etah, Moradabad, Allahabad, Kanpur Nagar, Aligarh, Ferozabad, Ballia, Sambhal, Hapur, Mainpuri, Sant Kabir Nagar, Gautam Budh Nagar, Jhansi, Lalitpur and Maharajanagar.
19	Uttarakhand	Dehradun, Chamoli, Nainital, Champawat, Almora, Haridwar, Tehri Garhwal, Pauri Garhwal, Udham Singh Nagar, Pithoragarh, Rudrapur, Bageshwar and Uttarkashi.
20	West Bengal	Burdwan, North Dinajpur, Dakshin Dinajpur, North 24-Parganas, South 24-Parganas, Kolkata, Murshidabad, West Midnapore, Maldah, Bankura, Purulia, Birbhum, Nadia, Hoogli, Howrah, Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, East Midnapore, Alipurduar and Darjeeling.
21	Delhi	NCT of Delhi

Source: Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 1729, dated 2.3.2020

