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Topic : CHILD LABOUR: A NEGLECTED ISSUE

1. Introduction

While others go to school, millions of children wake up to factories, fields and streets — this is the reality of child labour. Child labour is the practice in which children are forced to work at an early age, often in unhealthy and unsafe conditions, risking their future and health. The issue of child labour is often neglected and is a serious social problem, that exists mainly due to poverty and lack of education resulting in long-term harm to children and society both. This essay explores the key reasons that is how child labour is a neglected issue and offers actionable reforms.

2- Background and Context

- a- Definition of Child Labour
- b- Overview of Child Labour
- c- Reference of ILO and UNICEF related to child labour

3- How child labour is a neglected issue?

- a- Occurrence of child labour in hidden sectors
- b- Acceptance of child labour as normal practice
- c- Poverty forces families to utilize child as labours
- d- weak law enforcement
- e- Lack of public awareness
- f- Limited or no media coverage of the issue.
- g- Government attention and resources often focused on other issues.

4- Way Forward: Policy and Reform Directions

- a- Strengthening laws and enforcement
- b- Increased access to Educational opportunity
- c- Economic Opportunities for families
- d- Awareness and Advocacy
- e- Monitoring and Evaluation

5- Case Studies

- a- Brazil's Bolsa Familia Program
- b- Ghana's Cocoa Industry initiative
- c- Bangladesh's Garment Industry reforms

6- Conclusion

Essay:

A child's place is in a classroom, not a workplace. While others go to classroom, millions of children wake up to factories, fields, and streets. Child labour refers to the practice in which children are forced to work at an early age, often in unsafe and unhealthy conditions, instead of attending schools and getting education. It mainly affects children in developing countries where poverty, unemployment and lack of access to education forces families to employ children. It can be found in different sectors such as factories, agriculture, workshops, domestic sectors and street vending. Child labour has existed for centuries, especially during pre-industrial and industrial periods. In the early agricultural society, children used to work with their families in the fields. Whereas the problem got reversed during the industrial revolution, in which factories, mines, workshops employed large number of children as labors. They were preferred because they could be paid low wages and were easier to control. According to UNICEF and ILO, there are 138 million children engaged in child labor (2024), with 54 million working in dangerous conditions. Pakistan has one of the highest rates of child labor in South Asia, with around 6.8% of children engaged in child labor.

Child labor remains a neglected issue despite being a serious violation of children's rights. Although laws and agreements regarding child labors exist, the problem remains to be un-noticed in many parts of the world.

One major reason of the child labour is that it occurs in hidden sectors like home, private offices, farms, workshops etc. These areas or settings are hard to regulate because they are outside the formal labor inspection systems, that makes the happening invisible to authorities. The authorities such as agencies, polices etc can't enter the private premises to look for the children employed as labours, leaving them unprotected from exploitation.

A second major reason is that the society accepts the practice of child labor as normal. This happens mostly in the poor communities and developing nations, partly due to socio-economic pressures. Families often consider it as pride and early-skill of the children, if the child works at early age. The child is ~~held~~ considered as intellectual and responsible citizen if he or she does child labor at early age.

Poverty is the third major factor/driver of child labor. This forces families to choose income over education and health. often families struggle to afford basic needs, they often rely on whatever additional

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income their family members including the children can bring in. Studies shows that children from the poorest households are more likely to work, and this often leads them to drop out of school and work at the early age.

Another factor is

Although many countries have laws and international agreements related to child labors, weak enforcement and implementation make these laws ineffective in practice. This situation allows employers and owners to exploit children brutally. Corruption, lack of trained inspectors, and limited government resources, the mean employers can exploit children without fear of punishment. Such is the case of Iqbal Masih, a child labor in Pakistan. When he thought to raise voice against the child labor and exploitation, the owner of the factory killed him. Since then nobody dared to ask what had happened because of the fear and of the owner. The owner got no punishment because of the corrupt system. Even where law exists, they often apply only to formal workplaces, leaving street-based or informal work child-labor outside legal framework.

Most of the people are unaware of the harms and legal limits associated with child labor. A lack of education and public campaign means communities do not

always recognize child labor as a serious rights violation. Without strong public awareness, even well-intended policies may remain ineffective. Thus the lack of awareness reduces the concern and action regarding the child labor.

Child-labor often remains under-reported in the media, especially in the hidden sectors of society. The lack of high profile reporting reduces public awareness and debate, making child labor easier to ignore. Sometimes the reporter gets threats for reporting the case as freedom of speech is controlled. Therefore addressing the daily realities of working children is often threatful.

The government attention and resources are often focused on other sectors or issues. Since the government itself is facing multiple socio-economic problems such as poverty, unemployment, health issues that may prioritise those issues over child labor.

Due to the limited budgets and resources, child labor receives insufficient funding and priority.

These are the factors due to which the child labor remains an ignored section. Now there here are the **way forward**, policy and reforms such as implementing strict laws, access to education and economic opportunities for families that can help eradicate child labor from the society.

Firstly, there is need to strengthen laws and enforcement. It can be done by enacting strict laws prohibiting child labor and increase in penalties and punishments for employers involved in violation of the law.

Secondly, there should be increase in education so to raise public awareness. It can be done by providing free and compulsory education to all.

Thirdly, there shall be economic opportunities for families. Since the poor families need resources, there shall be implementation of poverty alleviation programs and job training through small businesses.

Fourthly, the government can launch public awareness campaigns to raise awareness about the right of child and child labor. There can be engagement with organization, and communities and media to promote the change in mindset of people from child labour to skills and education.

Lastly, it can be controlled by robust monitoring system to track ^{child} labor cases. There shall be regular evaluation and promotion of policies and programs related to child labor in society.

There are different **case studies** regarding the child labor.

In Brazil, there established a cash transfer

Program ~~that~~ named as "Brazil's Bolsa Familia Program", that reduced risk of child labor by linking financial aid to school attendance.

The second one is the "Ghana's Cocoa Industry Initiative" that was the collaboration between government, NGOs and companies to eliminate child labor in cocoa production.

Third one is the popular "Bangladesh's Garment Industry Reforms" that was the safety initiatives and strict regulations that reduced child labor from working in different garment factories.

In Conclusion, child labour remains a serious neglected issue and social problem worldwide. Despite laws, it continues due to poverty, social acceptance, hidden sectors and lack of education. Weak implementation, limited government attention and low media coverage allowed the exploitation. To address this issue there required a stronger laws, better implementation, education, poverty reduction, and public awareness. Eliminating child labor is essential not only to protect child's right but also to ensure the long-term social and economic development of society.