

Child domestic workers need social justice



Comments 2



Daya Nath Singh 30 October 2010 28675 views

Despite child labor legislation enforced in the country, the children in domestic works are not treated as children at all. The domestic workers below the age of 18 years, who are employed within households to perform chores, can be as young as four or five years old. Children in domestic work are one of the most disturbing factor in our society. It is disturbing because these children are isolated and separated from their family. The high incidence of deceptive recruitment and trafficking characterizes it and exploitative nature of working condition makes the children vulnerable to sexual abuse.

The North Eastern Regional Domestic Workers Welfare Trust (NERDWWT), an NGO based in Guwahati, is dedicated to the service of the society and working for the welfare of child domestic workers through their different programmes. The organization is doing its campaigning in different manner and has brought awareness about the problems through its studies. Its study reveals the main reasons for the children engaged in domestic works

Children are employed to perform household task such as cooking, cleaning (dusting, sweeping, and mopping the house), washing cloths and utensils, ironing, marketing running errand, child care, care of the elderly and the disabled. They may be paid or unpaid. Domestic workers are one of the most exploited groups of the unorganized workers. The girls are most vulnerable to psychological, physical and sexual abuse. Many are beaten sometimes up to the point of death, since there is no specific law to regulate domestic work. Children in domestic work live in a condition close to that of slavery. As domestic workers are not recognized as workers and domestic work is not considered as hazardous work, the laws related to children failed to include the child domestic workers in the list of child labor.

Many children in domestic works are brought or trafficked from villages to work in large cities. Most children in domestic work are girls, because domestic work is considered to be a female responsibility. They generally belong to the backward and scheduled caste or tribe. Most of them do not get payment and in some cases the payment is taken by their parents. Most of them are illiterate and have to work for more than 18 hours a day. Even then they cannot finish the work and are scolded by their master. They are deprived of their self-identity and selfhood. They also lose their parental nurture and guidance. As they are deprived of their right to education, they are deprived to discover their potentials, develop talents and unprepared to face the challenges of life ahead. Their psychological and emotional development is affected.

Children in domestic work are popular with employers because they are docile and can be manipulated according to the needs of employers, they can be paid less and are less troublesome because of being unaware of and unable to demand their rights. Poverty and unemployment of the parents, death of the parents, lack of educational institutions in the vicinity, lack of political and parental will to recognize child right and economic failure through natural calamities and displacement are the causes of child domestic workers.

Children in domestic work are justified because the domestic work is a solution to poverty and the children are better off because they get food, shelter and the parents have one less mouth to feed. The domestic work is non-hazardous and the children are adopted and find a home.

It is essential to strengthen and extend the areas in identifying the child domestic workers and implement intervention programme. Through media and poster campaign this menace and related issues can be brought to the light and sensitize the employers not to employ children for work but make provision for their education. Children can be encouraged to participate in decision making and bringing out their problems to the visibility. Network between the sending regions and receiving regions can be strengthened.

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