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LABOR VERSUS LEARNING: EXPLAINING THE STATE-WISE VARIATION OF CHILD LABOR IN INDIA

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LABOR VERSUS LEARNING:
EXPLAINING THE STATE-WISE VARIATION OF CHILD LABOR IN INDIA

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of the University of Kentucky
In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

By
Priyam Saharia
Lexington, Kentucky
(April, 2014)

Co-Directors: Dr. Karen Mingst, Professor of Political Science
and Dr. Emily Beaulieu, Assistant Professor of Political Science

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

LABOR VERSUS LEARNING: EXPLAINING THE STATE-WISE VARIATION OF CHILD LABOR IN INDIA

What explains the variation of child labor rates across Indian states? This dissertation explores why certain states in India, which are not necessarily the wealthiest, have been able to reduce child labor significantly in the past few decades, while child labor continues to increase at alarming rates in other states. Previous economic and cultural explanations, which focus on household-level poverty or the hierarchical social stratification of Indian society fail to adequately explain variation in child labor rates across Indian states. This research project explores how systematic regional differences in bureaucratic performance and patterns of civic engagement have influenced child labor rates in Indian states. The dissertation articulates and tests several hypotheses about the efficacy of bureaucracy and civil society activity in implementing child labor and elementary education laws. This study employs a multi-level research design including a range of statistical and qualitative techniques of analysis to get at the social and institutional variables that influence parents' decision to send a child to work. It utilizes cross-state survey dataset for 28 Indian states for the year 2005 to run statistical analyses which confirm the theoretical hypotheses. Further, two case studies based on six months of fieldwork in the two Indian states of Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan provide further understanding of the theoretical mechanisms. This study finds that educational deprivation plays a key role in determining levels of child labor- even controlling for income, states that have focused on universal elementary education have been more successful at reducing child labor than states that have not prioritized elementary education.

KEYWORDS: Child labor in India, Education and Child labor, Bureaucracy and Child Labor, Civil Society and Child Labor, Within-state Variation

Priyam Saharia

April 16, 2014

LABOR VERSUS LEARNING:
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To
Ma and Bapi,
For giving me roots and wings.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AITFCR-All India Teachers' Forum for Child Rights
ASER-All India Status of Education Report
BBA-Bachpan Bachao Andolan
BEO-Block Education Officer
CLPRA-Child Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Act
CPI-Communist Party of India
CPI-M-Communist Party of India (Marxist)
CRPF-Child Rights Protection Forums
CSOs- Civil Society Organizations
CSP-Cottonseed production
CTS-Child Tracking Survey
DPEP-District Primary Education Program
DTF-District Task Force
CWC-Child Welfare Committee
DRMU-Dakshini Rajasthan Mazdoor Union
GDI-Gender Development Index
GDP-Gross Domestic Product
GoI-Government of India
IHDS-India Human Development Survey
ILO-International Labor Organization
IPEC-International Program for the Elimination of Child Labor
ISMWA-Inter-State Migrant Workers' Act
MDG-Millennium Development Goals
MEO-Mandal Education Officer
MHRD-Ministry of Human Resources Development
MKSS-Mazdoor Kisaan Shakti Sangathan
MNC-Multi-national Company
MoLE-Ministry of Labor and Employment
MRO-Mandal Revenue Officer
MVF-MV Foundation
NAC-National Advisory Council
NCAER-National Council of Applied Economic Research
NCLP-National Child Labor Program
NCPDR-National Commission for Protection of Child Rights
NFE-Non-Formal Education

NFHS-National Family Health Survey
NGO-Non Governmental Organization
NHHKS-Nanhe Haath Kalam ke Saath
NLI-National Labor Institute
NREGA-National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
NSSO-National Sample Survey Organization
PIL-Public Interest Litigation
PROBE-Public Report of Basic Education in India
PTR-Pupil-Teacher Ratio
PUCL-People's Union for Civil Liberties
RBCs-Residential Bridge Course Camps
RCPCR-Rajasthan Commission for Protection of Children's Rights
RTE-Right to Education Act
SC-Scheduled Caste
SCR- Students' for Child Rights
SEC-Student Education Center
SHG-Self-Help Group
SIDA- Swedish International Development Agency
SMC-School Monitoring Committees
SSA-Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
ST-Scheduled Tribe
TDF-Tribal Development Forum
TDP-Telugu Desam Party
TFCR-Teachers' Forum for Children's Rights
UCW-Understanding Children's Work
UEE-Universal Elementary Education
UN-United Nations
UNCRC-UN Child Rights Convention
UP-Uttar Pradesh
UNICEF-United Nations Children's Fund
VEC-Village Education Committee
WDP- Women's Development Program
WPR-Work Participation Rate

Glossary of Indian Terms

aangan pathshalas-courtyard schools

aanganwadis- day-care centers for children under the age of five years

arrack- locally brewed alcohol

auto rickshaw a three-wheeled cabin cycle that is a common mode of public transport in cities and towns in India

Bal Mitra Gram-child friendly village

Bal Panchayat-children's elected council at the village level

Bal Sansad-children's parliament

Bal Sangha-children's organization

Bhadralok -gentleman

bidi-thin Indian cigarette filled with tobacco in a tendu leaf and tied with a string on one end

dandoras- tom toms/ village crier

Gram Panchayats-elected council at the village level

Gram Sabha-village assembly

jagirdaar-landlord

Jat-traditionally a group of non elite pastoralists and tillers of Northern India

kala jathas-cultural processions

khaat andolan- (Hindi lit. 'Bed Revolution') Khaat is a bed used especially in India consisting of a frame strung with tapes or light rope.

Kisan sabha-peasant assembly

Kshatriya Mahasabha-Grand Assembly of the Khatriyas

Mahila Shikshan Vihars (Hindi *lit.* 'Women's Education Centers')

Mandal-revenue subdivision of a district

Dalits-traditionally the untouchables, also called Harijans.

padayatra- (Hindi *lit.* journey by foot) is a foot pilgrimage undertaken by a politician(s) and/or prominent citizen(s) to interact more closely with different parts of society, educate about issues concerning them, and galvanize his or her supporters

Pooja-worship

prehar pathshalas-night schools

Praja Vaddukku Palan- (Telugu *lit.* administration at the doorsteps of the people)

Sahaj Shiksha Kendras (Hindi *lit.* Accessible Education Centers)

sanghas-organizations

sarpanch-head of the village panchayat

sati

shiksha karmi-education worker

shiksha yatra-education rally

Shudra-Scheduled Castes

taluk-revenue subdivision of a district

zari-embroidery using golden or silver thread usually on silk or brocade fabric

Zilla parishad – District council

Chapter 1

Child Labor in India: The Puzzle of State-wise Variation

1.1 Introduction

In 2010, surveys by a Non-Government organization (NGO) estimated that the commercial cultivation of hybrid cottonseed has emerged as the single-largest sector employing child labor in India.¹ The deployment of hybrid cotton since its first commercial introduction in India in 2002 has generated colossal economic benefits for farmers, contributed to the doubling of cotton yield, and transformed India from a cotton importer to a major exporter of cotton.² However, the pursuit for greater profits has triggered a sharp increase in demand for child labor in the cottonseed sector. The cottonseed industry in Gujarat, one of the richest states in India, presents a powerful illustration of the diverging trends between economic growth and child labor. Between 2010 and 2011, Gujarat's agriculture sector, driven primarily by the surge in cotton cultivation, witnessed a growth of 16.6 percent – however, the state also became the focal point of national controversy for allegedly achieving this phenomenal growth at the cost of employing children.³

Police, labor department officials, and NGO activists have found themselves without legal recourse to stop child labor in the cottonseed industry despite protests by civil society activists regarding the ethical ramifications of employing children. This is because farmers are not prohibited by Indian law from employing children in agriculture. The Child Labor (Regulation and Prohibition) Act, 1986 (CLPRA) prohibits the employment of children below fourteen years in certain occupations defined as 'hazardous' by the Act and regulates the working conditions of child labor in other occupations. Despite regular reports of children being made to work for up to fifteen hours, or dying of pesticide exposure and snake-bites in the cottonseed fields, agriculture continues to be a non-hazardous occupation and therefore, exempted from the prohibition on child labor.

The predicament in the cottonseed industry captures changing trends in the nature of child labor in India, and alludes to the serious problems that have thwarted attempts to end this phenomenon. The 4,00,000 children employed in the cottonseed industry represent a tip of the iceberg – official estimates vary anywhere from eight million to thirty-two million children laborers below fourteen years of age in the Indian workforce, depending on which definition of child labor and which data source one chooses to believe.⁴ If we take into

¹ Venkateswarlu 2010

² Chaudhury and Gaur 2010

³ Dave 2010; Hawksley 2012

⁴ The National Sample Survey (NSS), 2004-05 counts 8.8 million 'economically productive' children while the National Family Health Survey (NFHS), 2005-06 which calculates children's unpaid work and household chores for more than 28 hours a week estimates 32 million working children

account NGO and United Nations (UN) agencies' allegation that official estimates only constitute twenty-five percent of the actual child-workforce, the enormity of the problem becomes even more apparent. And sheer numbers is not the only problem. What makes the issue of child labor even more disquieting are emerging trends of intra-state and cross-border child trafficking, employing children in commercial agriculture, and a rapidly mushrooming child sex industry. United States Department of Labor's statistics suggest that forty percent of women sex-workers in India enter prostitution before the age of eighteen and NGO data from district-level police records show that 96,000 children go missing each year.⁵ Newspaper reports point towards the recent recruitment of child soldiers by the Naxalite armies in Andhra and militant groups in Manipur.⁶

The rampant prevalence of child-trafficking, forced labor, and child-soldiering violates international conventions and national laws, especially the International Labor Organization's (ILO) Worst Forms of Child Labor Convention and CLPRA 1986. Even though India's child labor law prohibits the employment of children below fourteen years of age in hazardous occupations, the real impact of the law is feeble due to the "endemic corruption, insensitivity, and indifferent attitude of (government) agencies."⁷ India's Ministry of Labor and Employment (MoLE) reports that in the past twenty five years, only 4000 employers have been prosecuted under the CLPRA 1986 and even in those cases, the fines are so small as to have a limited disincentive effect.⁸ Bonded labor among children still exists even though it was made illegal in 1976. Little effort is expended to collect accurate data on child labor, to enact adequate rescue, rehabilitation, and transitional educational policies, or even to ensure that existing laws are adequately enforced. India is one of the few legislatures in the world that has not ratified ILO's Minimum Age Convention, 1976 and dragged its feet for decades before enacting a universal elementary education law in 2009. Such a state of affairs is reflective of the weak political discourse on child labor and universal education in the country.

The plight of child labor in hazardous industries is often the focus of media attention. But it eclipses an even bigger problem—that of children working in non-hazardous occupations such as agriculture, household enterprises, and as domestic labor that constitute ninety percent of the child-workforce in the country. But such children are not covered by any protective legislation.

The argument that poor families *need* the income of their children for survival has been used to justify the permissiveness towards child labor in India for centuries. This discourse also forms the underlying philosophy of the Indian government's policy on child

⁵ Brown 2010

⁶ Dixit 2012; Laithangbam 2012

⁷ Brown 2012, p. 53

⁸ *Annual Report 2012-13*. (New Delhi: Ministry of Labor and Employment, 2013)

labor. There has been little debate in policy circles as to why child labor continues in India despite an average growth of thirteen percent in per capita income, or why there are 9, 00, 000 children who don't go to school in a country that prides itself on its 5, 00, 000 software professionals, or why the Indian government cannot completely ban child labor when countries with much lower per capita income have been able to introduce compulsory education and ban child labor. So pervasive and powerful is the economic argument in favour of child labor, that even international agencies like the ILO have accepted the Indian government's strategy of "progressive elimination" of child labor.

In fact the economic argument is so powerful that though India finally passed the Right to Education Act 2009 (RTE) guaranteeing free education to all children in the age-group of five to fourteen years, the Indian legislature is still dithering to completely abolish child labor in all occupations. Studies show that children who work are twice as likely to not attend school as children who don't work; also, children who work are less likely to learn in school than children who don't work.⁹ There is clear evidence corroborating the incompatibility of work and education. However, the assumption in policy circles is that enacting a universal education law will miraculously motivate employers to stop employing child laborers, or inspire parents to send their working children to school.

Both research and policy has focused on household poverty as the prism through which the issue of child labor is addressed. Policies have focused on poverty alleviation schemes, agricultural subsidies, ration schemes etc. to alleviate household poverty. On the other hand, research has focused on economic and demographic characteristics of the household that cause child labor. Strangely though, the role of state governments in India in implementing education policy and its link to child labor has not been explored. India's federal structure devolves the responsibility upon state governments to implement child labor and elementary education policies. Yet with the focus sharply being on improving the economic status of households, the role of state governments in tackling the problem of child labor and improving access to education has largely remained unexplored.

1.2 The Puzzle

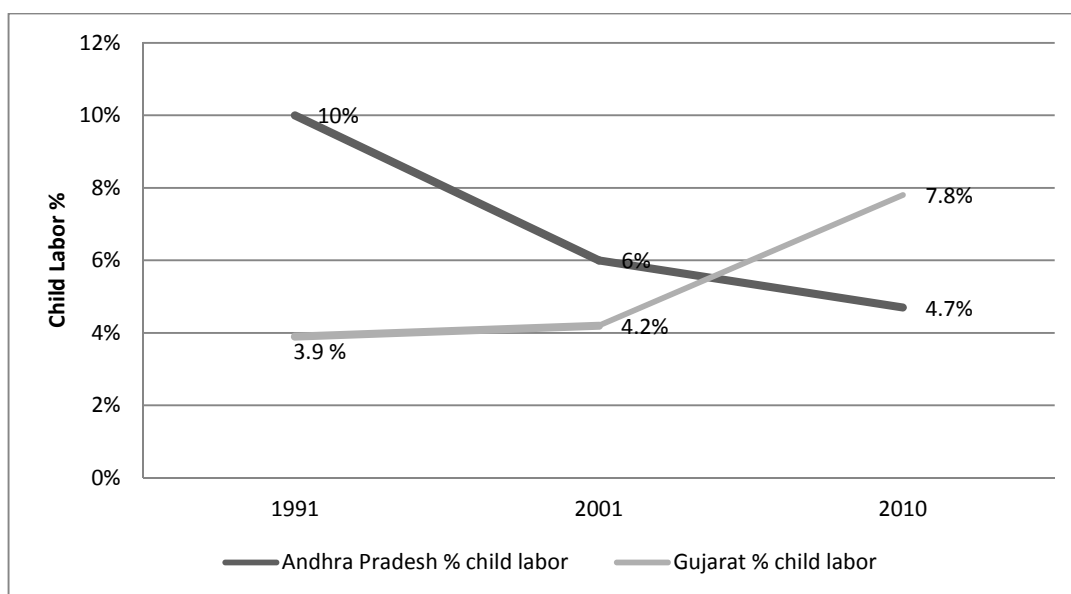
The overpowering discourse on poverty overlooks a puzzle which has encompassed the child labor problem in India: the puzzle of state-wise variation in levels of child labor. With studies focused on the country-level or household-level analysis, the state-wise variation of child labor has been overlooked in child labor research.

A state-wise analysis on child labor in the cottonseed industry itself helps to flesh out the puzzle: between 2001 and 2010, the overall child labor rate in the Gujarat, one of India's richest states, has risen from 3.8 percent to 7.8 percent, while the child labor rate has declined

⁹ Brown 2010.

from 10.8 percent to 4.7 percent in Andhra Pradesh (Figure 1.1).¹⁰ What makes this comparison even more compelling is that compared to Andhra, Gujarat has had much higher per capita income than Andhra.¹¹ Table 1.1 compares income statistics in the two states: the per capita annual income in Gujarat in 2009-10 was USD 756 compared to USD 570 in Andhra Pradesh.¹² The decadal growth rate of per capita income in Gujarat was 14.9 percent compared to 9 percent in Andhra. Between 2005 and 2011, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the agricultural sector grew almost similarly in both states: in Gujarat it grew by 4.2 percent compared to 4.7 percent in Andhra. A study in income inequality across Indian states found that Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh have essentially the same levels of rural income inequality.¹³ Gini coefficient for rural economy found to be 0.27 for Andhra and 0.28 for Gujarat in 2009-10. The comparative change in the rates of child labor in Andhra and Gujarat challenges the unquestioned axiom that poverty causes child labor and therefore, logically, long-term economic growth must be the panacea to child labor.

Figure 1.1: Variation in Child Labor Rates in Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat (2001-10)



Source: Census of India and NSSO, various years.

¹⁰ Census of India 2001; Employment and Unemployment Situation in India 2009-10.

¹¹ In 2005, Andhra's per capita GDP is \$1430 compared to \$3853 for the state of Gujarat – yet in the last two decades, Gujarat has witnessed a rise in rates of child labor from 3.9% in 1991 to 4.3% in 2001 and to 7.8% in 2010. Compiled from Directorate of Economics and Statistics of respective State Governments.

¹² “State-wise : Population, GSDP, Per Capita Income and Growth Rate 2009-10,” (New Delhi: Planning Commission of India)

¹³ “Gini Coefficient of Distribution of Consumption : 1973-74 to 2009-10,” (New Delhi: Planning Commission of India)

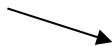


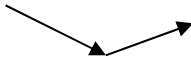

Table 1.1 : Comparison of Income Statistics between Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh

	Annual per capita income in 2010	Average rate of decadal growth of per capita income %	Growth in agricultural sector (2005-11) (%)
Gujarat	USD 756	14.9	4.22
Andhra Pradesh	USD 570	9	4.73

Source: "State-wise: Population, GSDP, Per Capita Income and Growth Rate 2009-10," (New Delhi: Planning Commission of India, 2010)

Across India, the story of high growth states showing higher levels of child labor compared to lower growth states is repeated - the Gujarat and Andhra comparison is only one such instance. I examine the trend of change in rates of child labor as a percentage of total population of children in the age group (5-14 years) using Census and NSSO data for the years 2001- 2010. I measure rate of child labor as working children as a percentage of total children (5-14) for the particular census year.¹⁴Based on my initial analysis of state-wise data between 1981 and 2001, there emerged 5 categories of states: i) *Improving*: States where child labor rates have continuously declined ii) *Not Improving*: States where child labor rates have continuously increased; iii) *Increasing, then declining*: States where child labor rates increased between 1981-1991 but declined between 1991 and 2001; iv) *Declining, then increasing*: States where child labor rates declined between 1981 and 1991 and increased between 1991-2001; and v) *Little variation*: States where child labor rates have varied very little between 1981-1991. These temporal trends are presented in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2 : Historical Trend in Child Labor Rates by State (1981-2001)

	Change in trend in rates of child labor(1981-2001)	States*
	Improving states: Continuously declining child labor	Andhra Pradesh (7.7), Kerala (0.5), Goa (1.8), Maharashtra (3.5), Orissa (4.4)
	Not improving states: Continuously increasing trend/ sharp rise in child labor in 1991-2001.	Rajasthan (8.2), Sikkim (12), Manipur (6.6), Mizoram (12.3), Nagaland (8.5)
	Diverging states: Increase between 1981-1991 but declining trend between 1991-2001	Arunachal (6.1), Karnataka (6.9), Tamil Nadu (4.6), UP (4.2), West Bengal (4.6)
	Diverging states: Decrease between 1981-1991 but increasing trend between 1991-2001.	Himachal Pradesh (8.1), Haryana (4.8), Gujarat (4.3), Bihar (4.7)
	Little variation in rates	Punjab (3.2), Tripura (2.6), Madhya Pradesh (6.7), Assam (5.1), Meghalaya (8.2)

Source: *Figures in brackets represent child labourers as a percentage of population in the (5-14) age group, according to Census 2001.

¹⁴ The weakness of this measure is that it does not account for changes in fertility rates in the states in every decade.

Within the same national border, there exists wide variation in work participation rates of children, ranging from a high of 12.3 percent in Mizoram to a low of 0.5 percent in Kerala.¹⁵ And these rates are independent of levels of per capita income, controlling for levels of inequality. Since the state and district level administrations are the primary units through which child labor policies are implemented in India, we would expect that there would be some variation across states and districts in the manner in which the child labor policies are implemented. What is puzzling though is the extent of variation. Given that a uniform national policy on child labor is operational across all states, what explains this variation in child labor levels across India? If economic growth does not lead to declines in rates of child labor, what then explains state-wise variation? This dissertation seeks to explore and find an answer to this puzzle of spatial and temporal variation of child labor rates across Indian states.

Since the state and district level administrations are the primary units through which child labor policies are implemented in India, we would expect that there would be some variation across states and districts in the manner in which the child labor policies are implemented. What is puzzling though is the extent of variation. Within the same national border, there exists wide variation in work participation rates of children, ranging from a high of 12.3 percent in Mizoram to a low of 0.5 percent in Kerala.¹⁶ And these rates are independent of levels of per capita income, controlling for levels of inequality. If economic growth does not lead to declines in rates of child labor, what then explains state-wise variation? Further, there is also variation in state governments' approach towards tackling child labor. For instance, Kerala, the state with the lowest child labor rates in India has not only taken concrete steps to implement the CLPRA, but it is also going a step further and enacting another legislation that will impose a blanket ban on child labor. On the other hand, Mizoram, which has the highest level of child labor in India, has only just adopted the CLPRA in 2010. Given that a uniform national policy on child labor is operational across all states, what explains this variation in child labor levels across India? This dissertation seeks to explore and find an answer to this puzzle of spatial and temporal variation of child labor rates across Indian states.

1.3 Why Study State-wise Variation?

It is important to ask why state-wise variation across states in levels of child labor matters? Why not stick with household studies or country-level analysis?

In prior household level analyses of child labor by economists and demographers, income constraints are cited as the most defining explanation for child labor.¹⁷ However,

¹⁵ Census Of India 2001

¹⁶ Census Of India 2001.

¹⁷ Grootaert and Kanbur 1995

these household studies fail to explain why child labor rates continue to rise in states with high economic growth, despite controlling for levels of inequality. They also fail to explain why poor parents in some states sometimes work double jobs to be able to send their children to school, while poor parents in other states send their children to work, or let them idle at home.

On the other hand, cultural arguments on child labor in India blame the child labor issue on a hierarchical culture associated with India's caste system. They blame the status-quoist attitude of policymakers for not allowing the poor social mobility by denying them access to basic education.¹⁸ The whole notion that culture is static is largely outmoded, and now culture is seen as something that is locally specific. These arguments provide a single-factor explanation to the complex child labor problem in India. Both studies at the household level and at the country level disguise the sharp spatial variation in levels of child labor across Indian states, and focus attention away from institutionalized interventions that have concretely mitigated child labor.

Studying state-wise variation in child labor is important for the following reasons: First, an analysis of country-wise trends creates an impression that India is performing well in reducing the levels of children in the workforce. For instance, the work participation rate of children has gone down from five percent in 2001 to three percent in 2004-05. This positive country-level trend subsumes the reality that the high decline in child labor in some states has been averaged out by the increase or very slow decline in child labor rates in other states. A state-wise analysis reveals why certain states that are not necessarily the wealthiest have been more successful at reducing child labor compared to others. If economic growth is not automatically translating into fewer working children, what are the other causal factors at work? A state-wise analysis also reveals which policy interventions have succeeded in reducing child labor, and whether these interventions can be replicated in other states. Unlike country or household-level studies which obliterate the role of state governments, this dissertation focuses on the role of the state interventions in eliminating child labor.

Second, the link between child labor and schooling quality is seldom acknowledged in the child labor literature. Even now debates center on "long-term economic growth" as the favoured route out of child labor. The economic argument disguises the role that quality of schooling has on children of the poor. In 2010, forty-two percent children in elementary schools were found to be dropping out.¹⁹ Studies have found that dropouts are the most vulnerable group to be drawn into the child workforce.²⁰ Yet there is little debate on the quality of education in government schools, or any well-thought out policies for transitioning

¹⁸ Weiner 1991

¹⁹ Reddy and Sinha 2010

²⁰ *Ibid.*

working children into the schooling system. India's flagship program on child labor, which only protects children in hazardous industries, is implemented in forty-five percent of India's districts and covers only about five percent of children in the workforce.²¹ Therefore, in order to explain variation in levels of child labor across states, it is more meaningful to focus on elementary education policy than child labor policy. I show how the variation of institutional factors like the state's implementation of elementary education policy impacts levels of child labor across states.

Third, studies that attribute child labor to culture assume that Indian states are uniform in their social and cultural ethos.²² The overpowering emphasis on poverty as the cause of child labor draws attention away from the unique cultural blueprint of each state. While the discrimination faced by children of certain castes in accessing the school system is documented in studies on educational participation, how such 'push-out' factors lead to child labor is not fleshed out in the child labor literature. This study focuses on the effect that cultural variation across states, founded on attitudes towards gender and caste-disparities, has on parental attitudes towards sending children to work or to school.

Finally, there is compelling evidence that the curtailed educational opportunities that come with child labor play a significant role in locking children into a life-time of low-pay and vulnerability, transmitting poverty across generations in the process.²³ Child labor, then is not only caused by poverty, but also causes it.²⁴ Seen from this perspective, increase in child labor in some states and decrease in others has the potential of exacerbating regional income inequalities over a period of time. Analyzing the trends and causes of state-wise variation in levels of child labor enables us to grapple with the problem of regional income inequalities. It would also help to design policy interventions that can be broadly implemented by state governments and replicated across states.

1.4 Contributions of this Study

1.4.1 Theoretical Contributions

This dissertation is an ambitious attempt to build on the substantive conclusions of past work on child labor, to improve the empirical limitations of prior studies, and to suggest concrete policy initiatives to tackle the problem of child labor. Theoretically, this study diverges from conventional studies which focus on how child labor leads to educational deprivation;²⁵ instead it analyzes the role of educational deprivation in causing child labor. It

²¹ According to official estimates, 10% of the child workforce is involved in hazardous occupations. But the Child Labor policy has not been extended so far as to cover all the children working in hazardous industries. It only covers about 5% of the total child workforce.

²² Weiner 1991

²³ Brown 2010

²⁴ Brown 2010; Majumdar 2001

²⁵ De and Dreze 1999

extends the exploration of the causal role of education in three ways by examining both the role of institutional and social factors that shape parental motivation to send a child to work or to school. First, the provision of educational facilities by state level bureaucracies positively motivates parents to send children to school. Second, cultural attitudes of parents, grounded in attitudes about gender and caste, which systematically varies by state, also have a defining influence on parental motivation. Third, cultural attitudes premised on gender and caste are not necessarily constant and frozen in time, rather they can be shaped positively by intervention of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).²⁶ CSOs that collaborate with the state bureaucracy are able to translate localized interventions into broader geographical area and create a positive ripple-effect at the state-level. Though both social and institutional factors have found mention in studies on child labor, they haven't been tied into a cohesive theoretical argument on the causal factors of child labor. This dissertation attempts to move beyond the income poverty argument to examine the social and institutional factors that affect variation in child labor.

My study builds on the theoretical literature on child labor in the following ways.

First, by focusing on educational deprivation as a key explanatory variable for child labor, I tie together the two strands of the literature on child labor and educational participation which have developed largely in isolation from one another. Since most studies on child labor are within the econometric literature which focuses overwhelmingly on income constraints, the absence of educational opportunities as a causal factor has been underemphasized.

Second, the two opposing roles of the state, centered around the demand and supply, has been the dominant focus in the literature on educational participation. Welfare economists have argued that state-provided educational opportunities should be driven by market forces - when there was a demand for skilled labor in the market, parents would automatically demand better education. State provision of schools was therefore pointless unless parents thought education was a profitable investment.²⁷ On the other hand, those on the supply side have argued that the benefits of education are too far-reaching for it to be dependent on parental whim or magnanimity. Therefore, state should intervene with compulsory education policies.²⁸ Instead of taking either the demand or supply side, I show that both the demand and supply of education matter for child labor: parents cannot be expected to send their children to school unless the state supplies schools that guarantee quality education; at the same time, parental demand for education is indispensable to ensure that the educational

²⁶ Though the term civil society has a range of meanings in contemporary usage, in this dissertation, I use Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to include the aggregate of non-government organizations and institutions like trade unions and people's movements that exist independently of the government.

²⁷ Leclercq 2001

²⁸ Banerji & Duflo 2011

system stays accountable. Both the demand and supply factors must be present for sustained decrease in levels of child labor.

Third, like prior studies on child labor in the econometric literature, this dissertation also centers on parental motivation as the central premise in the decision-making calculus of whether children should be sent to work or to school. However, it goes beyond traditional income constraints to analyze the social and institutional dimensions of parental motivation.

Fourth, this study shifts focus from structural factors like poverty and attitudinal factors to agency-level factors like the role of state-bureaucracies, and CSOs in reducing child labor. By doing so, it shifts attention away from factors that are difficult to change in the short-term to agency-level interventions that have been successful in reducing child labor.

1.4.2 Methodological Contributions

Methodologically, this study improves on past limitations on the study of child labor. Prior studies on child labor have focused heavily on four general methods in studying child labor. First, and most popular are anecdotal accounts of children suffering exploitation or working in extreme conditions like mining, bonded labor, or prostitution. Inevitably, these accounts also captivate media attention and are at the forefront of humanitarian reports on child labor.²⁹ However, such accounts represent the tip of the iceberg of the child labor phenomenon and only signify the beginning of the research process. They provide individual on-the-ground insight, but the concern over selection effects and their ability to generate generalizable theories is in doubt.

Second, are the in depth detailed case studies of the prevalence of child labor in particular industries.³⁰ Since the overwhelming policy focus in India has been on children working in hazardous occupations, such studies have been valuable in providing information on those industries where children are at maximum risk of exploitation. For instance, qualitative case studies on the fireworks industry in Sivakasi, Tamil Nadu, and the carpet industry in UP have drawn substantial government attention to the issue. However, statistics show that children working in hazardous occupations constitute only ten percent of the total child labor force in India.³¹ Though case studies provide a treasure trove of information about child labor in a particular industry, but their ability to generate a theory that would be applicable to the broader child-workforce is in doubt.

²⁹ For instance, child labor in coal mining in Meghalaya, or children working in garment factories, or making Christmas decorations.

³⁰ For instance, Burra 1986; Burra 1987; Burra 1987a

³¹ "Working Group for Social Inclusion of Vulnerable Group like Child Labour and Bonded and Migrant Labour in the 12th Five Year Plan (2012-17)." (New Delhi: Planning Commission, Government of India, 2012).

The third kind of study has been qualitative country level studies on child labor.³² Such studies have focused on single factor explanations like poverty or culture but such studies subsume important within-country variations. Also, focusing on a particular factor like culture that is unique to India limits the generalizability of such studies to other countries. The fourth kind of studies is large-n statistical analysis which has predominantly been conducted with the household as the unit of analysis.³³ These studies have identified a large number of factors related to poverty, household size, household composition, parental education etc. and are the most common quantitative studies on child labor. They have largely focused on household level factors to the detriment of contextual factors like institutional interventions and cultural attitudes, issues which are difficult to measure and quantify, and therefore have mostly been excluded from purely econometric models.

This dissertation makes the following methodological contribution: first, it adopts a broad definition of child labor by including children who are working without pay in agriculture or in the household (tending to cattle, collecting firewood or water). Studies show that eighty percent of the child laborers in India work in the agriculture sector;³⁴ another study shows that two-thirds of children in the workforce are involved in household work for more than twenty-eight hours a week.³⁵ A study on child labor in India that excludes the vast majority of children who don't go to school because they work in agricultural farms or perform household chores would have restricted explanatory power. The release of new countrywide datasets that collect data on hours spent by children working in agriculture and performing household chores has allowed me to adopt a broad measure of child labor for my quantitative analysis. Prior large-n quantitative studies on child labor have largely adopted census data which captures children's work in economically productive activities, but does not take into account the time-utilization of children in various activities, like household work. Prior studies on child labor measured child labor narrowly, and therefore, inadvertently excluded large sections of the child workforce. The release of a new dataset enables this study to correct the oversight of previous quantitative work on child labor by expanding the definition of who is a child labor.

Second, prior quantitative work on child labor has been criticised for ignoring attitudinal factors like the attitude of parents towards the education of girls. The release of data that includes village, school, and medical facility surveys, connections of the household to the wider community enables me to incorporate new variables into my analysis. Inclusion of institutional and community level factors helps to correct the omitted variable bias that has

³² Cunningham & Viazzo 1996

³³ Cigno *et al* 2001; Deb and Rosati 2004; Duraiswamy 2000

³⁴ Brown 2010

³⁵ NFHS 2005-06

confounded prior quantitative work on child labor which has largely overlooked contextual factors.

Third, there is considerable criticism against data collected by the government agencies on the ground that it underestimates the true extent of children's work in India. However, I use data collected by a non-profit, independent economic research institution. Using this independent source of data helps to circumvent some of the criticisms against using child work data collected by the government.

Fourth, this study complements the statistical analysis with data from fieldwork in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan. Studying one industry across two states allows controlling for a large numbers of confounding factors in the comparative analysis across states. The case studies are based on in depth archival research and extensive interviews. Insights from field research build on the statistical analysis and help to explore the causal links between educational interventions and child labor. Further, within-state and across-state comparisons show that my causal story is not unique only to a particular state but also applies at the sub-state level as well.

1.4.3 Contribution to the Broader Field of Comparative Politics

This project contributes to the broader academic discourse of comparative politics, by adding to the literature on institutional performance of democracies in three ways: First, it builds on current democratic theory by demonstrating how, in the context of democratic politics, an issue area that is not salient in the electoral domain may be addressed through the bureaucratic domain. It draws on the premise of 'institutional bifurcation'³⁶, used in the social movement literature, to argue that issues like child labor which have not been prioritized by political parties have been addressed through civil society's access to the bureaucracy. Though this argument was primarily used in the context of the women's movement and environmental movement in India, this dissertation extends it to the sphere of the slowly emerging child rights movement in India as well. Through a documentation of the emergence of the child rights movement in the civil society arena, this study draws attention to how in a democracy, the state is disaggregated into multiple points of access, and new political spaces can be carved out for issue-areas that don't find voice in the electoral domain.

Second, this dissertation shows how variations in the social context across Indian states condition the delivery of public services to shape varying outcomes for public policy. Though not studied extensively either in the fields of public administration or political science, a plethora of anecdotal evidence suggests that ethnic politics constitutes an important dimension of public affairs, pervading the environment in which public administration

³⁶ Katzenstein *et al* 2001

functions.³⁷ Studies have shown that access to public goods is not necessarily automatic or rule-bound and that group heterogeneity may play an important role in determining public good allocations.³⁸ Though Weberian concepts of rational neutral bureaucracy and the more contemporary concepts of ‘good government’ promote the impartial implementation of policies, but these formally objective criteria, market and merit, overlook the social and cultural composition of populations.³⁹ Even when laws, policies, and programs appear in a formal sense to be objective and impartial, they may be skewed in implementation by public administration to favor one set of ethnic claimants over others.⁴⁰ Studies have shown that while lower castes in India have attained equity in political representation, they are still lagging behind in terms of access to health and primary education.⁴¹ This dissertation contributes to the broader literature on how the social disparities and historical disadvantages based on gender and caste skew the rational implementation of public policies. It draws attention not only to the quality of infrastructure or teaching process in schools, but also to discrimination *within* the school system and at home, which can have overt and covert influence on parental motivation to send a child to school.

Third, it contributes to the new trend in the literature on ‘social capital’ that posits a close relationship between social capital and democratic performance. The concept of social capital, which is variously defined as “a glue that holds society together”, “embeddedness”, “norms, networks and shared relationships” has recently gained ascendancy in the field of development administration.⁴² Development practitioners have begun to understand the importance of the social context in the implementation of development initiatives. The most far reaching impact of social capital on institutional performance has been associated with Putnam (1993) where he showed through a comparison of northern and southern Italy, that membership in associations strengthens the performance of public institutions. Though the impact of social capital has been studied in economics, anthropology, sociology and political science, the findings of the studies can broadly be summarized into three kinds of impact of social capital: i) they share the belief that just like physical and human capital, social relationships affect economic outcomes; ii) they imply that desirable social relationships have positive externalities; iii) social relationships have the potential for improving development outcomes and that social norms help sustain regional and national institutions and give them a measure of stability.⁴³ Recent empirical studies have shown that social capital is a dynamic entity and the “design of institutions delivering local public goods can influence levels of

³⁷ Esman 1997

³⁸ Banerjee & Somanathan 2007, Besley *et al* 2004, Betancourt & Gleason 2000

³⁹ Schneider and Ingram 1993; Schneider and Ingram 1997

⁴⁰ Esman 1997

⁴¹ Weiner 1991

⁴² Dasgupta & Serageldin 1996

⁴³ Putnam 1993

social capital.”⁴⁴ This research contributes to the literature on the effect of social capital by examining how the strength of a normative consensus on education in the community conditions the delivery of education policy. Further, it also shows that social capital can be created by demonstrating through my case studies how civil society organizations can build a normative consensus on education.

1.4.4 Policy Implications

While child labor is a problem deeply embedded in underlying structures of poverty, powerlessness, and educational disadvantage, this research suggests that it is a malaise amenable to effective antidotes. This approach is important from a policy perspective because it demonstrates that the decline in child labor can be brought about by effective policy interventions without waiting interminably for poverty to disappear or attitudes to change. It demonstrates that when the state focuses on improving education and a norm about education emerges, then child labor is reduced as a (potentially unintended) consequence. However, this study challenges the belief that enacting a right to education law alone is sufficient to introduce universal education and abolish child labor. It demonstrates the urgency of stepping up investments in elementary education which have teetered around three percent of GDP despite the recommendations of government committees that investments need to be stepped up to around six percent of GDP for universal elementary education in India to become a reality.⁴⁵ This study takes a step forward to analyze the factors that will translate the goals of such a policy to real outcomes, in terms of abolition in child labor and universalization of elementary education.

Another policy innovation of this study is that it focuses on parental attitudes towards education. Prior research has argued that the attitude of policymakers that seeks to restrict social mobility of the poor is primarily responsible for the persistence of child labor and the non-enactment of a compulsory education law in India.⁴⁶ The attitude of poor parents towards education is even more critical than the attitudes of policy-makers. Anecdotal evidence of NGO interventions suggest that parents who are convinced about the value of education for their children have found imaginative ways to adjust for the loss of income.⁴⁷ This is not to say that the state shouldn't support poor parents with income assistance or employment generation schemes, but child labor studies suggest that not all families depend on children's income for survival – some send their children to work because of non-availability of schools, or because they want to get their children married off, or to use their children's income to

⁴⁴ Krishna (2007) showed the growth of social capital in villages in Rajasthan; Ostrom *et al* (1994) present similar conclusions about the design of user committees for irrigation systems.

⁴⁵ Ramachandran 1997

⁴⁶ Weiner 1991

⁴⁷ Wazir and Saith 2010

consume alcohol.⁴⁸ Focusing on parental attitudes is particularly important because there are no penal provisions forcing parents to send their children to school, or to prevent them from sending them to work. Parental support will further reinforce the state's educational interventions. Tapping into the potential presented by parental attitudes requires that education is made accessible, affordable and perceived by parents as relevant and valuable for all children.

Finally, this study suggests that instead of waiting on poverty to be eradicated or attitudes to change organically, groups in society can work to produce a social consensus when one does not already exist. Through my case studies, I demonstrate how CSOs can introduce a normative consensus against child labor and in favour of universal education.

1.5 Why Should We Care?

At its core, the issue of child protection is a human rights issue. Children, especially those who work are most vulnerable section of the population and by definition “lack peer advocates”.⁴⁹ This research is important because of the growing seriousness of the child labor issue, its economic implications for the future, and its repercussions for the human rights of children.

Current trends are a source of great concern. Child labor is falling, but overall numbers are coming down far more slowly than might have been anticipated in the light of the stronger economic growth performance of poor countries. A 2011 Report of the UN Envoy for Education predicts that there will be 170-190 million child laborers in 2020.⁵⁰ There are 152 million child laborers aged less than 15 years old – one-third of them involved in hazardous labor; and 91 million aged less than 12. Agriculture is by far the largest sector employing children, with unpaid family farm work dominating. Some sixty million children are involved in the agriculture sector. Detailed survey evidence from Latin America suggests that males entering the work force before the age of twelve earn twenty percent less and are eight per cent more likely to be in the poorest income quintile than comparable males entering the work force after the age of twelve. It follows that delaying entry to the work force has the potential to enable people to work their way out of poverty, to expand the tax base and to reduce the cost of future poverty reduction programs in the process.⁵¹

Several studies show that damage done to children that are pushed into the labor force very early in life makes them unemployable later. Besides, the so-called skills acquired in the process of child labor do not in any way augment the earning capacity of the children as most of the jobs done by them are highly monotonous, low skilled jobs that condemn them forever

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Carlsnaes *et al* 2002

⁵⁰ Brown 2010

⁵¹ Ilahi *et al* 2011

in low paying jobs. Clearly, the earnings foregone in adult life, due to disabilities or lack of training and education that could have been attained in childhood, are far greater than what is earned as a child in terms of money and skill. Income studies have shown without doubt that child labor itself causes poverty and is one of the primary causes that transmit poverty across generations. Therefore, research and active policy interventions to tackle child labor are one of the primary weapons to combat poverty.

Research has shown that there has been a shift in the nature of child labor in recent years in India. The UN Envoy for Education's Report (2011) says, "Nowhere is the intersection of forced labor and hazardous employment more visible than in India... In the midst of one of the world's fastest-growing economies, the country remains a source, transit point, and destination for children trafficked for sexual exploitation and forced labor in agriculture, manufacturing and begging."⁵² Earlier children were employed in small artisanal industries like carpet-weaving and silk, now insidious networks of traffickers recruit children from rural areas and engage them for work in factories in prostitution or in commercial agriculture. Globalization and the opening up of the Indian economy has perpetrated a race to the bottom among Indian states and state governments look askance when it comes to reforming labor policies to protect vulnerable groups like children. In this context, research on child labor acquires critical significance because it unearths the critical gaps in policy that must be met in order to tackle the phenomenon of child labor.

Above all, this study promotes a normative approach to the issue of child labor. Child labor has been defined as "the new slavery of our age."⁵³ The idea of children working in hazardous occupations is morally reprehensible. Even for children working in non-hazardous occupations, the cost of lost childhood, the lost opportunities of education, and the wastage of human potential cannot be calculated merely in terms of pecuniary losses. There is recognition in the international community that at its core, the issue of child protection is a human rights issue.⁵⁴

Earlier, the discourse on child labor was heavily dominated by the 'family strategy approach' which entails the subordination of the rights of the child to the question of survival of the family. However, there has been a recent shift in this approach with the 'human security' argument which argues that the acceptance of family priorities on the part of working children entails the subordination of the child's developmental needs. Child labor and the concomitant educational deprivation are seen as a huge loss of human potential. It is therefore essential to consider the deprivations and vulnerabilities in the lives of working

⁵² Brown 2010, p. 33

⁵³ Brown 2010

⁵⁴ Majumdar 1999

children as a separate problem of importance of its own, much as it is related to the problem of family poverty.

This dissertation contributes to the newly developing human security literature which looks upon children's work as a violation of the fundamental human rights of the child. The human rights approach to child protection underlies the UN Child Rights Convention (to which India is a signatory) that recognizes that the right to education and the right against exploitation are basic and inalienable rights of children. This study also comes at a time when there is a growing national and international trend to consider education, and not only economic growth as the most important weapon to tackle child labor. This study contributes positively to this trend because most studies attribute child labor as a cause of educational deprivation, but few studies have explored how denial of education leads to higher child labor.

1.6 Chapter Outline

Chapter 2 critically analyzes the literature on child labor, with particular attention to the poverty and cultural arguments highlighted in prior studies. It emphasizes the state's delivery of education, parental attitudes and the role of civil society as three dimensions which have found mention in studies on child labor and educational participation, but not integrated into theoretical arguments on child labor. Chapter 3 comprises of the theory which argues that the bureaucratic effectiveness in the delivery of education and the social consensus on education influence parental motivation to send children to work. I elaborate hypotheses designed to test this argument and specify the research design used to test this hypotheses. Chapter 4 presents descriptive data to show that the scope, reach and coverage of elementary education policy are much wider than child labor policy. Therefore, in order to explain state-wise variation of child labor rates, it is more helpful to focus on elementary education policy than on child labor policy. In Chapter 5, using a range of statistical analyses, I examine the primary hypotheses whether bureaucratic effectiveness and social consensus on education explains variation in child labor rates across Indian states. I use multiple regressions and a range of statistical analysis to test my hypotheses at both the state level and the individual level. Chapter 6 and 7 are the case study chapters. These two chapters present the findings from fieldwork in two states, Andhra and Rajasthan. These chapters primarily examine how CSOs can build a social consensus on education over time, and how that influences both bureaucratic effectiveness and parental motivation to send children to work. These chapters also substantiate the findings of Chapter 5 by showing the causal mechanisms of how bureaucratic effectiveness in the delivery of education has a mitigating effect on rates of child labor. In Chapter 8, I present the conclusion and the broader implications from the findings of this study.

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Chapter 2

A Critical Review of Child Labor Literature: The Latent Role of Educational Deprivation

2.1 Introduction

The phenomenon of child labor has been researched extensively in the fields of economics, demography, anthropology, history, and sociology. The economic and human rights value of the subject of child labor has spawned a large volume of studies both in academics and policy fields. In this chapter, I review and critically analyze these mainstream explanations for child labor. Two major explanations have been cited to explain rates of child labor: poverty and culture. Both these explanations do not provide a comprehensive theoretical explanation for the phenomenon of child labor. Instead, I draw on the school participation literature to argue that educational deprivation as a cause for child labor has been underemphasized in the mainstream literature of child labor.

A puzzling aspect of the voluminous literature on child labor is that it co-exists or runs parallel to the school participation literature with little cross-reference or discussion between the two.⁵⁵ One plausible explanation is that since child labor studies have been dominated by econometrics which favoured the household-poverty explanation, the school participation dimension hasn't received adequate attention. This dissertation brings together both the poverty and the school participation literatures to examine two aspects to the child labor phenomenon which have been under-emphasized in the literature on child labor—the state's supply of educational opportunities, and cultural norms towards universal education. It challenges the conventional understanding that child labor is a cause for educational deprivation. Instead, this study demonstrates that the scarcity of educational opportunities provides a key causal explanation for the persistence of child labor.

2.2 Poverty Explanation

2.2.1 Poverty as a Cause of Child Labor

The poverty explanation driven by a large volume of World Bank inspired research, adopts a neoclassical rational choice paradigm to examine the determinants and consequences of child labor.⁵⁶ A plethora of household-level studies within the welfare economics literature have identified poverty as the primary explanation for the supply of children in the labor market. The 'welfare economics' approach situates the analysis within the context of theories

⁵⁵ Burra, Neera, 1987.

⁵⁶ Basu 1999; Basu and Chau 2004; Basu and Van 1998; Chandrashekhar 1997; Chaudhuri 1997; Cigno *et al* 2001; Deb & Rosati 2002; Gilligan 2003; Grootaert and Kanbur 1995; Rodgers and Standing 1981; Wahba 2000

of investment in human capital and time allocation within the household.⁵⁷ A child's non-leisure time can be spent on schooling, home-based production or economic activity in the market. Thus, the two rival claimants of non-leisure time of children are work and school-attendance. Parents are seen as rational decision-makers, who look upon the time-utilization of their children as an economic investment. If the opportunity cost of sending a child to school is high, and there are no guarantees for returns in the short term, parents prefer to send their children to work. Child labor is therefore a consequence of a rational 'family strategy' if the marginal benefit from child labor (i.e. earnings, saved costs of schooling, household help) is higher than the marginal cost of sending a child to school (in terms of foregone return to capital investment). Children may work for paid wages or they may even work at home, thereby allowing parents more time and freedom for income-generating activities outside of the home. Further, work is seen as equipping children of the poor with practical skills which they can convert to income generating trades when they are adults.⁵⁸

Further, child labor is viewed as a strategy to minimize the risk of interruption of the income stream in the family.⁵⁹ The scarcity of opportunities in the labor market to provide insurance coverage to poor families in case of emergencies like loss of income, death, or crop loss has also been identified as contributing to child labor. This impact of a sudden loss of an income source is exacerbated in poor households, whose level of income is so low that any interruption can be life threatening, since they do not have liquid assets and the facility to borrow.⁶⁰ It was observed that when the variability of household income increased (measured by the decline in income from peak season to low season), children's school attendance declined. Small households suffer more from such shocks because the small number of children makes them less able to insure themselves.⁶¹ Child labor, then, is a rational behaviour of the family as part of the diversification strategy of their portfolio of income sources. Therefore, poor households send children to work not only to increase household income, but also in order to better *manage the income risks* they face⁶².

Since an increase in the number of children increases the potential supply of child labor, the implications of fertility rates are extensively analyzed in the demographic literature on child labor.⁶³ Like the welfare economics literature, a similar utilitarian approach is adopted to analyze the determinants of child labor. Some studies have found that increased *household size* has a positive effect on the supply of child labor.⁶⁴ In fact this correlation

⁵⁷ Majumdar 1999

⁵⁸ Leiten 2002

⁵⁹ Cain *et al* 1980

⁶⁰ Mendelievich 1979

⁶¹ Jacoby & Skoufias 1994

⁶² Majumdar 2001

⁶³ Cigno *et al* 2001; Dyson 1991; Maharatna 1997; Murthi *et al* 1995; Rosenzweig and Evenson 1977

⁶⁴ Jeebhoy 1993; Webbink *et al* 2012

between fertility rates and child labor has led some researchers to hypothesize that poor people have more children so that they can put them work.⁶⁵ However, more detailed studies on the nature of household composition assert that it is not merely household size, but *household composition* also that matters. In joint families, for example, where there are more adult hands in the family, children are less likely to work.⁶⁶ Increases in the number of siblings have been found to increase the likelihood of children being sent to work since household income is distributed more thinly when there are more children. For instance, the work participation rate is higher among older children compared to those of younger cohorts. This is because elder children are sent to work, while younger ones stay at home, or are sent to school.⁶⁷ *Gender composition of the household* is also considered as an important demographic factor that affects the likelihood of children being sent to work. Studies in India have consistently found that when mothers work, girls are more likely to be withdrawn from school than boys, so that they can take over household chores.⁶⁸

The above arguments within the welfare economics and the demographic paradigms, focused on the supply of child labor, can be incorporated within what is known as the ‘family strategy approach’. In the standard literature on child labor, there is a noticeable tendency to consider child welfare strictly through the prism of family welfare.⁶⁹ The lives of all members in a poor household are beset with deprivations and vulnerabilities. It is therefore argued that the vulnerability and poverty of the entire family is the right focus for analysis of deprivations and for seeking remedial policies. The rationale is that a child’s own survival and thriving depends to a large extent on the household’s survival and economic wherewithal. Within the family strategy approach, the right of survival of the poor family precedes the right of a child to education.⁷⁰

Another argument is that child labor is driven not only by the available supply but also by demand for child labor. On the demand side, the two important determinants identified are the *structure of the labor market* and the *prevailing production technology*. Children are preferred by employers because they can be paid much lower wages than adults, do not form unions, are less likely to change jobs quickly, and are more easily disciplined.⁷¹ The piece-rate system of remuneration, that is the norm with child labor, benefits employers.

⁶⁵ Dyson (1991) challenges this thesis linking fertility behavior with the perceived economic benefits of child labor. He argues “People don’t have children to make them work, they have to make them work because they have children.”

⁶⁶ Webbink *et al* 2012

⁶⁷ De and Dreze 1999; Wazir and Saith 2010

⁶⁸ Cigno *et al* 2001; Jeebhoy 1993

⁶⁹ The theoretical model underpinning most of the studies on family welfare can be traced back to Becker’s (1965) seminal paper on the allocation of time of household members (including children) to market work, household production and schooling.

⁷⁰ See Majumdar (2002) for an explanation of the family strategy approach and the emergence of a new rights-based approach of the child.

⁷¹ Burra 1995

In spite of difficulties in obtaining precise data on remuneration levels of children, Bequele and Boyden (1988) conclude that children's earnings are consistently lower than those of adults even where the two groups are engaged in the same tasks, thereby making children the preferable choice for cutting costs and increasing profit margins.⁷² In fact, the profits from employing children are so high that in certain labor-intensive industries like matchstick-making, employers prefer to stop production if children are not available for work, rather than employing adult labor.⁷³ Children are especially considered an asset in the export industry since the lower costs of employing children give exporters a competitive advantage in the international market. Children can be laid off easily without compensation if there is a slack in demand and are therefore ideal employees in an industry where demand can be volatile. In fact, it was argued that if children were not employed in the carpet industry, Indian carpets would become completely uncompetitive in the export markets.⁷⁴

Another demand-side explanation is the 'nimble fingers' argument. Children are supposed to be better than adults at tedious, mechanical jobs that require manual dexterity. They also have certain physical traits on account of their short height or 'nimble-fingers' which make them better suited for some tasks than adults. Examples of industries that find children to be more suitable employees than adults are in mines because the height of tunnels are too low for adults to crawl through, the use of boys as chimney sweeps, the use of girls to weed and pick cotton, and the use of children to weave carpets or to separate silk threads from cocoons in the silk industry.⁷⁵ The continuance of children in these industries is defended on the ground that children learn employable skills that they can use to earn a living when they are adults. However, research has shown that children are mostly employed in mechanical tasks that don't require real skill.⁷⁶ On the contrary, the early years of back-breaking, repetitive work affect their health and early education and reduce their employability and earning potential as adults.⁷⁷

Another aspect related to the demand side of child labor is the lack of statutory protections for working children in India which allows employers to employ children, even under exploitative conditions. Though the CLPRA, 1986 bans employment of children in hazardous industries, it exempts family units from the purview of this ban. It also bans employment of children only in factories using ten persons or more with power or twenty persons or more without power. As a result, child labor in the non-formal economy is rampant since the Act has led to the *informalization of production methods*, with formal enterprises

⁷² Jomo (1992) reaches the same conclusion based on several case studies in Malaysia.

⁷³ Burra 1995

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Grootaert and Kanbur 1995

⁷⁶ Burra 1995

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

breaking up into smaller units, or engaging in subcontracting with households or informal enterprises. This is done mainly to try to escape social legislation which adds to the cost of labor.⁷⁸ Demand for child labor in the formal economy is small, with the possible exceptions of plantations.⁷⁹

A related argument here is that child labor is related to the *forms of production*: it is more pronounced in industries with greater demand for tedious manual labor. By implication, changes in technology can have more profound implication for child labor. Rosenzweig (1981) found that the Green Revolution in India led to reduced child labor and increased school attendance.⁸⁰ However, this effect may work in the opposite way too. Some argue that in industrial countries, the abolition of child labor preceded the change in technology, instead of technological change heralding the end of child labor.⁸¹ For instance, in garment production, the advent of multi-function sewing machines is making home-production possible, and much manufacturing relies on subcontracting arrangements often leading to girls' work at home.⁸² Hence, further empirical assessments of the impact of technological change are required for the importance of technology relative to other demand factors can be assessed.

2.2.2 Poverty, Child labor and Schooling

An important dimension relevant to child labor vis-à-vis the poverty argument is the ability of poor parents to send their children to school. In fact, schooling and child labor (especially full-time) are considered as having an inverse relationship.⁸³ In India, the non-attendance rate of child laborers is twice the rate of children who don't work.⁸⁴ A recent study by the Understanding Children's Work (UCW) project found employment in economic activity increases the risk of being out of school even with just a few hours of work.⁸⁵

⁷⁸ Burra (1995) gives the example of the carpet industry where work is subcontracted out to small households since the Child Labor Act, 1986 provides exemptions to children engaged in household cottage industry. This legislation was passed to protect traditional cottage industries, but has been exploited indiscriminately by employers for their own benefit.

⁷⁹ Bonnett 1993 for Africa; Gooneskere 1993 for Sri Lanka; Burra 1986, 1987, 1995 for India

⁸⁰ The mechanization of Egyptian agriculture reduced the demand for child labor (Levy 1985) while the introduction of electricity limited the amount of home production by children in Philippines (De Graff *et al* 1993). In the quarries in Bogota, the introduction of wheelbarrows displaced children who previously carried rocks piece by piece (Salazar 1988). The reduction of child labor in the textile mills in Europe is credited to mechanization of spinning and weaving processes and this took place even prior to the introduction of legislative restrictions on child labor (Galbi 1997).

⁸¹ Weiner 1991

⁸² Grootaert and Kanbur 1995

⁸³ Weiner (1991); Majumdar (2001)

⁸⁴ For countries such as Pakistan and Bangladesh, child labourers are more than four times less likely to be in school. In Zambia, where an estimated 1.3 million children aged 5-14 are involved in child labor, children working by the age of 8 can expect to spend one year less in school; and at the age of 15 there is a 17 percent point gap in school attendance. Brown(2010)

⁸⁵ The Understanding Children's Work (UCW) programme is an inter-agency research cooperation initiative involving the International Labour Organisation (ILO), UNICEF and the World Bank. UCW is guided by the Roadmap adopted at The Hague Global Child Labour Conference 2010.

Increasing hours at work from twenty hours to forty hours more than doubles the risk of a child being out of school. In the case of household chores, the first eight hours in work have a limited effect. However, children working thirty-eight hours face a forty per cent higher risk of being out of school than those working less than five hours. The study also found that that the marginal effect of an extra hour in work is greater for employment in economic activity than for household chores.⁸⁶

The main explanation offered for sending children to work instead of school is that the opportunity cost of schooling is very high as children make valuable contributions to the household economy. In addition, if direct costs of education (books, stationery, uniforms, etc.) are also to be borne, then schooling becomes practically out of reach for the poor. Moreover, the quality of government schools is so poor that parents are not motivated to send their children to school, nor are children interested in attending.⁸⁷ Further, schools are seen as isolating children from the village economy and creating aspirations for white collar jobs that are hard to find. Instead, a common argument, especially among the middle class and elite is that children of the poor should learn vocational skills so that they can be employed in income-generating activities.⁸⁸ Child labor then results from a rational response to material poverty, coupled with a lack of proper educational facilities.

There exists indeed a strong argument that poverty is the greatest single force that creates the flow of children into the workforce and keeps them out of school. The foreclosing of child income, it is contended, will plunge families into deeper poverty and even threaten their survival. Opposition to elimination of child labor therefore comes "... from those who believe they are protecting the interests of the poor."⁸⁹ Only time and economic development are believed to have solutions to ending child labor and make universal education a reality.

However, the poverty argument glosses over some important points. Although it cannot be denied that child labor continues under poverty conditions, it is not obvious how worse off the families would be if children were sent to school instead of to work. How far are families dependent on the income of their children for survival? How much do children contribute to household income? Is children's labor so valuable as to be indispensable? Another aspect is the relation of child labor and educational deprivation. Is child work the main cause of educational non-participation? To answer this question, we have to know how much do children work? And does the time-allocation of children's work conflict with the timings to attend school? The 'till poverty fades away' line of argument needs closer review

⁸⁶ Hoop and Rosati 2012

⁸⁷ Bhatta 1996; Bhatta 1998

⁸⁸ De and Dreze 1999

⁸⁹ Weiner 1988, p. 17

before we make uncontested generalizations that poverty causes child labor and educational deprivation.

2.2.3 Questioning the Poverty Hypothesis

One strand of the literature contends that given adult underemployment, surplus adult labor and low productive assets of poorer families where children are employed, children's contribution to the economic well-being of the household is low.⁹⁰

Field studies in the agriculture sector raise caveats to the notion that poverty causes child labor. In Section 2.2.1, I discuss how the structure of the market creates a demand for child labor. This has been found to be particularly pertinent in the agriculture sector. Studies have shown that ownership of productive assets in the agriculture sector *increases* the demand for child work.⁹¹ In rural families, the size of the landholding mediates the effect of household size—rural families with large landholdings employ children in work, rather than sending them to school.⁹² Bashir (1994) finds that when higher income translates into ownership of more land and cattle, it is possible that it leads to greater demand for child labor. However, in the case of high income families in the non-agricultural sector, there is little demand for child labor either as substitution of adult labor or as wage labor; and therefore, the demand for child labor is low in the non-agriculture sector.

Further, studies have found that the demand for child labor as unpaid family help shows quite different patterns in land-owning and landless families. In land-owning families, it varies directly with the size of landholding up to a point where it becomes economical to substitute child labor with hired labor. Kanbargi and Kulkarni (1991) found that when land owned is more than ten acres, hired help is likely to be substituted for the child's. Children are more likely to be employed (as free family help) in productive work in households that own land than in those that don't own land.⁹³ In a survey of rural households in Maharashtra, Vlassoff (1979) found that richer households could provide “more opportunities for children to contribute productively...while poor villagers did not possess sufficient resources to take advantage of potential family labor.”⁹⁴ These findings raise questions about income of and asset ownership of households being directly correlated with rates of child labor.

These studies highlight the crucial role of agriculture in the rural economy and its relationship with the demand for child labor. The finding that increased asset-ownership in agricultural households leads to greater demand for child labor introduces a caveat to the

⁹⁰ Maharatna 1997

⁹¹ Kanbargi and Kulkarni 1991

⁹² Cigno *et al* 2001; Rosenzweig and Evenson 1977

⁹³ Bhatta 1998

⁹⁴ Vlassoff 1979, p. 424.

widespread assumption that poverty leads to child labor. This is especially important because eighty percent of India's child laborers are in the agriculture sector.

Other field studies in the non-agriculture sector show that per capita income of the household is not directly related to child work.⁹⁵ A study in Udaipur district of Rajasthan showed that while thirty-five percent of the households who sent their children to work were 'distress households' (i.e. they depended on children's work for survival), another sixty-five percent were families who were poor but employing children was a strategy to increase the income of the household; child labor was not necessary for survival.⁹⁶ Nasir Tyabji has found that "the amount added by the child to household income seems to be small."⁹⁷ Vidyaben Shah who has been working in this field for years finds that, in most cases, the money earned by children, far from sustaining the family, is used for conspicuous consumption (mostly alcohol) of the male members of the household.⁹⁸ A compilation of field reports (from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan) by Sinha and Sinha (1995) provides insights into the complex relationship between poverty and child labor. They found that in several villages despite high levels of poverty, there was practically no dependence on child labor. One such village was Kanji in Purnia (Bihar), where even the poorest scheduled caste community, the *musahars*, were found to not put their children to work. Interestingly, they did not send them to school either. In Salana and Saikot villages of Chamoli district (UP), on the other hand, while no child labor was reported, almost all the children were enrolled. They conclude that the "dependence on child labor varies a great deal between different villages, even at similar levels of poverty depending on the nature of the local economy."⁹⁹ A survey in urban Bangalore showed that one-third of working children had parents who were salaried, whereas another study in Mumbai revealed that over a quarter of children worked because they had nothing else to do and not on account of poverty.¹⁰⁰ A follow-up study of urban slum children in Kolkata, who had been withdrawn from work and were now attending school found that sixty-five per cent of these children had not handed over their income to parents when they were working. Instead, they spent it on films, sweets, clothes and even gambling.¹⁰¹

Further, studies have also shown that there is no way of knowing how fast economic development has to take place to make the abolition of child labor feasible.¹⁰² In fact the

⁹⁵ Weiner 1991, p.33

⁹⁶ Custer *et al* 2005

⁹⁷ Weiner 1991, p. 50

⁹⁸ Vidyaben Shah made these observations at a seminar organized by the ILO and the PHI Chamber of Commerce and Industry on combating child labour, in New Delhi in April 1995. Quoted from Bhatta 1996

⁹⁹ See Bhatta 1996

¹⁰⁰ See Boyden 1994

¹⁰¹ "Our Present Day Understanding of Child Labour Issues." (Kolkata: CINI-Asha, 1996)

¹⁰² Bequele and Boyden 1981

experience of many developed countries in abolishing child labor has shown that there is no consistent threshold for economic development which preceded the decline of child labor. Weiner (1991) argued that many countries had introduced compulsory education laws which acted as a precursor to the end of child labor much prior to attaining high levels of economic development. Countries with per capita incomes lower than India have succeeded in abolishing child labor and attaining mass literacy. For instance, Kenya and Kyrgyzstan are countries with per capita incomes lower than India. But the percent of child labor in Kenya is 6.4 percent¹⁰³ and 3.6 percent in Kyrgyzstan compared to 8.8 percent in India in 2004-05.¹⁰⁴ Despite lower per capita incomes compared to India, the literacy rate in Kenya is 94 percent and the literacy rate in Kyrgyzstan is 98.7 percent, higher than the 74 percent literacy rate of India.¹⁰⁵ Therefore, serious doubts emerge regarding the implied monotonic relationship between economic growth and decline of child labor.

Further, an examination of regional variations in the data on child labor and educational participation also highlights ambiguities in the presumed relationship between poverty, schooling, and child labor. A study of state-level macro-data shows that contrary to popular wisdom, economic growth actually increases rather than decreases child labor because it increases the demand for child workers.¹⁰⁶ For instance, the per capita income of Gujarat in 2005-06 was Rupees 37,780 (~USD 756), the third highest among all states in India, and the population below the poverty line in Gujarat was 16.8 percent. On the other hand, the per capita income in Kerala for the same year was Rupees 31,871 (~USD 637) and the population below the poverty line was 15 percent. In 2005-06, a National Family Health Survey (NFHS) found that 31.6 percent of the children in the 5-14 age-group in Gujarat were engaged in either paid/unpaid work compared to 3 percent in Kerala. The literacy rate in Gujarat is 79.3 percent compared to 93.9 percent in Kerala. Using inter-state data, Leiten (2002), has argued that there is no clear linear relationship between higher levels of income and lower incidence of child labor across Indian states. Thus, income constraint is an inadequate explanation of regional variations in child labor and educational achievements. The ambiguous link between poverty and child labor at the household level is also evident at the state level.

The available evidence suggests instead that the relationship is complex and multi-causal. Wazir (2002) argues that if economic expansion occurs within a neo-liberal market framework that creates and emphasises labor market 'flexibility', the incidence of child labor

¹⁰³ The reference year for Kenya's child labor data is 1998-1999. *Kenya: Child Labor Data Country Brief*. (Geneva: ILO-IPEC, 2002).

¹⁰⁴ "Employment and Unemployment Situation in India." In *National Sample Survey 68th Round July 2011- June 2012*, ed. National Sample Survey Organization. (New Delhi: Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation, Government of India, 2012).

¹⁰⁵ "World Economic Outlook Database. 2010-11," (Washington D.C.: International Monetary Fund, 2011).

¹⁰⁶ Kambhampati and Rajan 2006.

could rise rather than fall. She cites instances of the garment export sector in Asia and the plantation sector in West Africa as two illustrations of precisely such an effect. In the home-based sector as well, as the demand for family labor rises, through improvements in local market conditions or in the production capacity of the household, e.g. through micro-credit, the use of child labor could become intensified. In agriculture, certain forms of commercialisation and restructuring of rural labor like increased dependence on family contract labor from landless households have also been associated with a rise in the involvement of children. In recent years, there has been a tendency in agriculture towards an increased reliance on family contract labor from landless households. Since the relationship between growth and poverty reduction is itself contested, this further undermines the general validity of the proposition that growth will lead to a reduction of child labor through its impact on poverty. The above discussion suggests that whether we examine the 'poverty leads to child labor' proposition at the household level or the state level, the relationship is ambiguous. The relationship between poverty and child labor may hold in very rich or very poor countries, it has little strategic value in the complex policy environment of developing countries.

2.2.4 Does Child Labor Conflict with Schooling?

Questioning the poverty argument also leads one to question whether child labor is the cause for non-participation in education, a frequently cited explanation for poor educational achievements in the education literature.¹⁰⁷ Like the poverty argument, this claim also calls for further inquiry because of the close interrelationship between child work and schooling. Is it really true that children are not going to school because they have to work? To answer this question, we have to know how many hours do children work, and do the hours worked conflict with time to attend school. How far does child work free up parents to work outside their homes, and whether the work of children is so rigid and time-bound so as to forbid children from attending schools?

Time-utilization studies are critical in understanding the allocation of children's time to work. A large number of field-based time utilization studies show that unpaid household work is the most common and regular form of child labor, not exceeding four to five hours a day. The NFHS-3, 2005-06 survey data showed that nearly twelve percent children are involved in work. Eight percent children were involved in household chores (more than twenty-eight hours per week) or other family work including family farms, household business etc. and only around two percent were involved in paid work with a person who was not a member of the household. Unpaid household work has been found to take up to two

¹⁰⁷ De and Dreze 1999

hours a day for children—while boys in the five to seven age group have been found to work for up to two hours per day, boys in the eight to fourteen age group can work up to four hours a day in unpaid domestic work.¹⁰⁸ In terms of person days of work put in by the average child in a year, a study in rural Maharashtra estimated that up to the age of ten years, the average amount of time spent was nineteen days for boys and thirty-four days for girls. For the older age group of ten to fourteen years, it is about sixty days for boys and around hundred days for girls.¹⁰⁹ Also, up to the age of fifteen, children are involved in non-earning activities at home. It is only after the age of fifteen that children make income contribution to the household. Boys work for an average of four months, and girls for an average of six months.

What about children's time allocation for paid work? A field study in West Bengal found that male children in the five to nine age-group performed less than two hours of productive work in the peak agricultural season and even less in the non-peak season, while female children barely did any amount of productive work. This study found that domestic and productive work for both boys and girls do not take more than four hours a day in the peak agricultural season, and two hours a day on average in the slack period.¹¹⁰ Another study in Tamil Nadu found that while child workers constitute ten per cent of the household, the actual work done by them was only two per cent of actual labor time for agricultural and non-agricultural productivity.¹¹¹ A district-level field study in Uttar Pradesh reported less than two per cent children involved in paid work.¹¹² A field study in Dumka district of Bihar found that ten per cent of child workers worked for wages, while most worked up to two hours per day, a few worked up to eight hours per day. However, those who worked earned less than Rupees 10 (~USD 0.2) per day.¹¹³ The PROBE study (1999) recorded that on average, boys aged six to twelve years who are not attending school worked for around four hours on the day preceding the survey —about two hours more than school-going boys. In the case of out-of-school girls, work hours are a little longer: about five hours on average, again two hours more than school-going girls.

Maharatna (1997) found that the work of children did not relieve adults of household responsibilities, nor do his findings support the hypothesis that children's involvement in work allows adults to take up income-earning activities. Majumdar (1999), who studied child labor among five to fifteen year olds in Tamil Nadu observed: "Interestingly, despite the

¹⁰⁸ Bashir 1994; Kanbargi & Kulkarni 1991

¹⁰⁹ Jeejebhoy & Kulkarni 1989

¹¹⁰ Maharatna 1997

¹¹¹ Bhatta 1998

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ Jabbi & Rajyalakshmi 1997

absence of mandatory schooling laws, the opportunity costs of a child's time is not a major factor deterring school attendance at this level."¹¹⁴

The aforementioned studies show that children in the five to fourteen age group are involved in some work, they neither contribute substantial time nor does the nature of their income generate much income to the household. Further, given the few hours spent by children at work, especially for work within the household, there should be considerable flexibility in work timings to enable children to attend schools. The PROBE (1999) study observes that though domestic work is the most common and regular form of child work, it is hard to imagine that in a large proportion of rural households there is so much housework, rigidly time-bound, that children cannot be freed to attend a few hours of school a few days a week. This is especially because school hours in rural India are quite short—around four hours a day and that the actual number of teaching days per year is probably in the 150-180 range in most states.¹¹⁵ If most child laborers are doing household or productive work for only a few hours a day, have the flexibility to attend schools, and are not contributing significantly to the household-income, why then are they not going to schools?

2.3. Educational Deprivation

2.3.1 Schooling as a Determinant of Child Labor: Reversing the Causal Arrow

A large number of studies suggest that quality of education matters in pushing children into the labor force, but this dimension is buried under the overwhelming force of the poverty arguments. Banerji & Duflo (2011) explain the rationale for why poor parents might hesitate to send their children to school even though they consider schooling to be valuable. They argue that poor parents believe that education is only valuable when a child has acquired a higher level of education, like a degree that will enable him to secure a government job and substantially increase his income. They believe that the opportunity cost of sending a child to school for only five years of primary school (which is what is often available in the village) is much higher than the value of education gained in five years of schooling. The opportunity cost for the parent especially appears to be higher if the child is learning very little at school. In reality, evidence suggests that every year of education increases the potential of future income by twelve percent.¹¹⁶ However, the myth among parents that only a few years of education are inconsequential leads them to not insist on children's education, even if they value education in principle. The short term gains from the child's income are perceived to outweigh the benefits from long-term gains of sending the child to school. In fact, some studies show that families above the poverty line also send their children to work in order to

¹¹⁴ Majumdar 1999, p.11

¹¹⁵ Bhatta 1998.

¹¹⁶ Brown 2010.

maximise family earnings, or to prevent children from idling, as schools are rarely seen as an alternative, and not as a matter of survival.¹¹⁷ The experience of the ILO's International Program for Elimination of Child Labor (ILO-IPEC) program shows that even among impoverished families, parents are more than willing to send their children to a school that functions regularly even if not paid a compensatory stipend for removing the child from work.¹¹⁸ The perspective that quality of schooling affects school enrolment and labor force participation has not been widely explored in studies on child labor.

Another statistic that suggests that children work because they don't go to school rather than children not going to school because they have to work is dropout ratios and statistics of idle children. Studies suggest the possibility that children are often put to work as a deterrent to idling, rather than as an economic necessity. A field-based study in the states of Kerala, UP, and Himachal Pradesh notes that parents are often found to use the labor of their children, *ex post* following their dropping out of school, for reasons totally unconnected with opportunities for work. Work is a default option because children have dropped out of school. Hence evidence of their working does not by itself establish that poverty is the prime reason for their not attending school.¹¹⁹

Further, studies have also shown that a vast majority of non-school going children are idle, i.e. they are not involved in economic activity or even in household work. A study in the state of Karnataka found that nearly twenty percent of boys and twenty-six per cent of girls in Karnataka did not go to school nor did they contribute to household income.¹²⁰ In fact, sixty per cent of the boys and forty-three percent of the girls from this group did not even do household chores.¹²¹ Similarly, another study in the state of UP found that out of the children of school-going age not going to school, eighty per cent were reported as 'non-workers'.¹²²

The critical question then is—if parents are interested in educating their children, and if children are not even contributing significantly to household income or to household work, then why are parents not sending their children to school? The only plausible reason is because schools are either unavailable or of very poor quality. Dreze & Sen (1995) found that that most child laborers in the eleven to fourteen age group were illiterate, indicating that non-schooling was a causal antecedent to child labor rather than the other way round. In developed countries in the 20th century, most child labor in that age group had at least attended a few years of primary schooling.

¹¹⁷ Bhatta 1996; Custer *et al* 2005

¹¹⁸ Banerjee and Duflo 2011

¹¹⁹ Mehrotra 1995

¹²⁰ Dinesh 1988

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² Bhatta 1998

With a few important exceptions, the literature on the phenomenon of child labor has primarily discussed the problem as one in which lack of schooling is a consequence of child labor. It assumes that schools are available and impart quality education, but parents are either not interested in the education of their children or are unable to spare the time of their children for school since they depend heavily on the income of their children.¹²³ That reverse causation may enter the picture via a defective school system (permitting large seepages of children into the workforce) has not received similar scrutiny. This disconnect between the school participation literature and the child labor literature is surprising, given that a large volume of studies document the appalling state of infrastructure and teaching in India's rural government schools.

The PROBE study (1999) gives a vivid description of the decrepit school system in many parts of rural India:

“... the physical infrastructure is woefully inadequate. If all children were in school, as they are meant to be, school buildings would burst at the seams... In some villages, the building is used by the teachers for residential purposes. Elsewhere, the school premises are used as a store (Sarwana in Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh), police camp (Baruhi, Bhojpur, Bihar), to dry cowdung cakes (Mujahidpur, Muzaffarnagar, Uttar Pradesh), as cattle shed (Belri salehpur, Hardwar, Uttar Pradesh) and a public latrine (Vangaon, Saharsa, Bihar). These are extreme cases but even the ‘typical’ school boasts little more than two classrooms, a leaking roof, a couple of blackboards and a table and chair for the headmaster.”¹²⁴

Despite a large number of projects like District Primary Education Program (DPEP) and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) specifically focusing on improving school infrastructure, thirty-one percent of rural schools in India do not have a usable source of drinking water, fifty-three percent of schools in India do not have a usable toilet, seventy-three percent of schools do not have a boundary wall, thirty two percent of schools don't have a library—very basic requirements for children and teachers to have a minimum standard of teaching.¹²⁵

If education fails to provide relevant learning and a route to improve future income potential, parents are less likely to sustain the opportunity costs—and the real financial costs—associated with keeping children in school. The pre-eminent focus that has been given in the standard economic and demographic literatures has been on the poverty explanation to the relative exclusion of school supply constraints. This dissertation makes a case for considering the work and non-schooling of children as reflecting not only parental income constraints but also, more importantly, the paucity of publicly provided educational opportunities. Child labor is a product not just of parental utilitarian calculus but of deficiencies in public policy and social institutions.

¹²³ De and Dreze 1999

¹²⁴ De and Dreze 1999, p.44

¹²⁵ Mehta 2010

2.3.2 *The State's role in the Provision of Education*

The proposition that parents are utilitarian decision-makers who invest in education only if it promises real returns also leads to the belief that it is pointless for the state to provide education unless parents perceived some financial gain from sending their children to school.¹²⁶ The rationale is that quality of education is low because poor parents do not care enough about it, and they don't because they know that the 'returns to education' are low. If the economic returns to education go up, parents would automatically start sending children to school, without the state having to promote education. For instance, in 2002, the setting up of recruitment for business processing outsourcing centers in a rural villages in three Indian states saw a rise in the employment of girls in the nearby villages compared to other randomly chosen villages that had not seen any recruitment efforts. Interestingly, a study found that three years after the recruiting started, girls aged five to eleven years were five percent more likely to be enrolled in school in the villages where there was recruiting. They also weighed more, suggesting that parents were taking better care of them. They had discovered that educating girls had economic value, and they were happy to invest.¹²⁷ Since school enrolment is sensitive to the returns to education, instead of investing on education, the state should invest in business that demands an educated labor force. Once parents start to care about education, they will pressurize the state to supply quality education, or the demand for education will create a competitive market for private schools. This demand-side argument therefore argues that the best education policy is no education policy.¹²⁸

On the other hand, there are the supply proponents of child labor, who argue that the benefits of education are so far-reaching that it should not be left to the whims of the market, or the altruism of parents. The state should proactively intervene to take children out of the workforce and admit them in schools. They question the assumption that parents are utilitarian decision-makers and argue that when it comes to children's education, parents act altruistically as well. They may consider education as a gift to children rather than as an investment. Although the economic returns to education matter, other things are also significant, like parents' hopes for the future, their expectations from their children, and the pride they feel from their children's achievements—returns that do not necessarily have economic value.

Second, even if parents are utilitarian decision-makers, the benefits of education have been found to be too far-reaching to leave it to the whims of parents. Studies have shown that there exists a common myth among poor parents that education is only valuable if one can acquire degrees that will open the doors to either government jobs, or some kind of office

¹²⁶ Banerjee & Duflo 2011

¹²⁷ Jensen 2010

¹²⁸ See Banerjee & Duflo 2011 for explanation of the demand versus supply arguments.

job.¹²⁹ Even for people who don't get a formal sector job, education seems to help: for example, educated farmers were found to have earned more during India's Green Revolution compared to non-educated ones.¹³⁰ Given these far-reaching benefits of education, the decision of whether children should be sent to school or not should not be left to the magnanimity or the calculation of parents.

Third, waiting for an indefinite time till poverty fades out leads to a huge wastage of talent. If parental income plays such an important role in educational investment, a rich child will get more education even if she is not particularly talented compared to a talented poor child. The poor child will get less education than a rich child even if the potential income gains are the same for both. So, leaving it purely to the market will not allow every child the privilege to fully develop her potential. Until the differences in income are removed, intervention by the state that makes education cheaper and equitably accessible to the poor would be necessary to ensure that every child at least gets an equal chance.

The supply side argument for education draws attention away from the economic status of families to the state of publicly provided educational opportunities. It draws attention to the apathy of the bureaucracy and the policy-makers as rhetoric and reality continue to follow divergent paths.¹³¹ Commenting on the state of publicly provided educational facilities in India, Bhatta (1998) says:

“A misunderstanding of the real problems and a complete lack of commitment (on the part of the state) in tackling them is obvious from the fact that policy after policy and scheme after scheme, have failed to make any appreciable impact. What it indicates is a near total absence of responsibility in the system, in effect almost a refusal to take responsibility, for ensuring the provision of this basic service, or rather of guaranteeing a fundamental right.”¹³²

If we consider the failure of the education system to be a critical reason why children are going to work, the role of state governments becomes pertinent—in India, state governments provide the lions' share of funding for primary education and state bureaucracies are primarily responsible for the implementation of elementary education policies across states.¹³³ Unlike previous child labor studies that have focused on household level as the unit of analysis, the focus on the educational system as a cause of child labor draws attention to the need to analyse the systematic variation of levels of child labor across states, vis-à-vis the provision of educational opportunities by the state bureaucracies. (The variation in the provision of education by state bureaucracies is discussed in detail in Chapter 4).

¹²⁹ In Madagascar, parents of children from 640 schools were asked what they thought a child who had completed primary school, and another who had completed secondary school would do for a living. 70 percent thought a secondary school graduate would surely get a government job. In reality, only 33 percent get those jobs. Nguyen (2000)

¹³⁰ Foster and Rosenzweig (1996)

¹³¹ For more on state apathy towards education see, Dreze and Sen (1995); Dreze and Gazdar (1996); Ramachandran 2003

¹³² Bhatta 1998, p. 1739

¹³³ De and Endow 2008.

This dissertation makes the case that *both* the state's supply of educational opportunities and parental demand for education must complement each other for child labor to end and universal education to become a reality. In most rich countries, the state makes education compulsory: parents have no choice but to send children to school until a certain age, unless parents can prove that they are educating them at home. But in countries like India, where state capacity is more limited and compulsory education cannot be enforced, the role of parental demand for education becomes critical. In the next section, I show evidence that parental demand for education is not determined solely by economic factors, but also by prevailing cultural norms towards education predicated by perceptions towards gender and caste. In order to understand why parental demand for education is so important in case of India, it is necessary to first understand the cultural explanation for the persistence of child labor in India.

2.4 Cultural Argument

2.4.1. Culture as a Determinant of Child Labor

The cultural argument has been prominent in studies on child labor. In contrast to the econometric and demographic literature, the determinants of child labor in anthropological and sociological studies focus on the importance of traditions, processes of socialization, and social environment. Proponents of this approach argue that the work done by children on the farm, in the artisan's shop, or in petty trading serves as a form of apprenticeship, preparing them better than any formal or informal school system could, for income generating professions in adulthood.¹³⁴ Many of these studies that examine child work in Asia or Africa conclude that child work is part of a 'socialization process' rather than a necessarily exploitative activity. They suggest that cultural factors, and not necessarily international pressures and national legislation, must be understood in order to evaluate the practice of child labor. This argument was presented in the report of the US Department of Labor (1994), written after senators Tom Harkin and George Brown had introduced the Child Labor Deterrence Bill in the US Congress:

"The general perception in Asia is that children should work to develop a sense of responsibility and evolve a career. It is argued that child employment apparently teaches children of the poor to acquire moral and ethical attitudes and work habits at an early age."¹³⁵

International agencies like the ILO also subscribed to the cultural argument:

"It is necessary instead to review the place of children in society and to look into the culturally conceived obligations towards and expectations from them. ... Value judgments and evaluative standards rooted in and deriving from Western experience cannot always be meaningfully superimposed on the social realities of the developing countries."¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Leiten 2001

¹³⁵ Weiner 1991

¹³⁶ Dube 1981, p. 179-182

The same report refers to ancient Hindu scriptures and places the ancient idea of childhood involving labor in the context of modern society:

“The argument that a cultivator’s son who does not learn to handle the plough and other instruments at the appropriate age would find it difficult to handle them later, has sufficient strength. Once it is assumed by the parents that children are to live and function more or less in the same society as their own, it stands to reason that the tasks they have to perform should be learned at a proper age.”¹³⁷

The cultural argument is closely connected with the preserve of the caste system in India. The caste system in India assigns certain qualities to each caste. In the Bhagavad Gita¹³⁸, Lord Krishna prescribes that every object, animate or inanimate, has three *gunas* (qualities) in different proportion: Brahmins have *Satvaguna* (wisdom, intelligence, spiritual bent of mind), Kshatriyas have *Rajaguna* (chivalry, pride, valor) while Shudras have *Tamo guna* (materialistic qualities).¹³⁹ However, the Gita also lays down that these qualities are associated with one’s *karma* (action) and not *jati* (birth). In ancient India, there are numerous instances of mobility across castes. But over time, the caste-barriers became rigid and came to be associated with birth.¹⁴⁰ Caste morphed from an action-based identity to a birth-related identity: meaning that a priest’s son could go to school and become a priest, while a blacksmith’s son had to learn the profession of his father and become blacksmith. It became acceptable that higher castes by birth were suited to intellectual pursuits while lower castes were more suited to manual labor.

The practice of child work in India is therefore very old, traditionally practised mostly as a form of passing on a family trade from parents to children. However, over time, the nature of child work has changed. Traditionally, children were employed in family-run enterprises but in the post-independence period, children were employed in small scale enterprises in the informal economy. In the post-liberalization period, there is a trend to employ children in commercial agriculture, trafficking and child sex trade.¹⁴¹ However, proponents of children’s work in India continue to hold that it is a manifestation of ancient Indian culture.¹⁴² Therefore, banning child work to make education accessible for all would

¹³⁷ Dube 1981, p. 189

¹³⁸ The Bhagavad Gita is a 700-verse scripture that is part of the Mahabharata, one of the two major Sanskrit epics of Ancient India (written between 800 BC). The other epic is the Ramayana. The Bhagavad Gita contains a conversation between Pandava prince Arjuna and his guide Lord Krishna on a variety of theological and philosophical issues.

¹³⁹ “Genesis of Caste System in India,” February 22, 2011

¹⁴⁰ Sage Valmiki who composed the great epic Ramayana was from a hunter family. Sage Viswamitra was a Kshatriya by birth but was regarded as one of a brahma rishis (highest form of rishis). Sage parshara who was a famous law giver was born to a maid servant. Sage Veda Vyasa who was the composer of Mahabharata with 1.20 lakh slokas was born to Sage Parashara and fisherwomen by name Sathyavati. Vidura who was chief counselor to King Dhritrashtra and who was considered as a greatest thinker of his times was son of an ordinary domestic help. There is a medieval myth that women are not allowed to study and recite Vedas. But we can find outstanding women like Gargi and Maitreyee who composed Upanishads. We can also find people who are born in Brahmin families took professions meant for other varnas. Dronacharya, Krupacharya and Aswathama were all great warriors and took the professions of Kshatriyas.

¹⁴¹ Brown 2010

¹⁴² Leiten 2000

amount to transgressing India's cultural heritage. Weiner (1991) explains the traditional Indian belief that underlies the permissive attitude towards child labor:

“The Indian position rests on deeply held beliefs that there is a division between people who work with their minds and rule and people who work with their hands and are ruled, and that education should reinforce rather than break down this division. These beliefs are closely tied to religious notions and to the premises that underlie India's hierarchical caste system. ...Even those who profess to be secular and who reject the caste system are imbued with values of status that are deeply embedded in Indian culture...in India, education is seen largely as an instrument for differentiation by separating children according to social class. The result is one of the highest rates of child labor in the world, one of the lowest rates in school attendance, and a literacy rate that has fallen behind most of the third world.”¹⁴³

2.4.2 Compulsory Education as a Panacea for Child Labor

Opponents of child labor have argued that compulsory education is the only panacea to force employers to stop employing children, and to compel parents, notwithstanding their traditional beliefs, to send children to school. Education is too valuable to make it hostage to orthodox beliefs that create long-term deprivation of children.¹⁴⁴ Weiner (1991) argues that the persistence of child labor is rooted in the hierarchical caste system that resists social mobility of the poor and condones the absence of educational participation among children of the poor. He presents comparative cross-national evidence to show that even countries that had lower per capita income than India passed compulsory education laws as a pre-requisite to abolishing child labor. He argues that the derisory attitudes of policy makers, bureaucrats and the Indian middle class towards work and educational participation of poor children was the greatest barrier to enactment of compulsory education legislation and the abolition of child labor in India. In this context, Weiner's (1991) makes the most forceful argument in favour of introducing compulsory education to end child labor in India.

Weiner (1991) says that child labor in India will not be abolished, nor will compulsory education law be passed, unless there is a change in attitudes among policymakers. He argues: “Culture is a factor, not in the views of parents but in the attitudes of policymakers.”¹⁴⁵ His position is that the attitudes of parents are of less importance than the attitudes of the Indian middleclass and policy makers:

“Of particular importance, are the attitudes of the officialdom itself, especially officials of the state and central education and labor ministries. The desires of low income parents to send their children to work or to employ them at home, and of employers who seek low wage, pliable non-unionized labor is of secondary importance because elsewhere in the world a large proportion of parents and employers have also supported child labor and opposed compulsory education. It is the absence of strong support for governmental intervention from within the state apparatus itself and the absence of a political coalition outside the state apparatus pressing for government intervention that explains Indian policy.”¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ Weiner 1991, p.6

¹⁴⁴ Compulsory education has been found to have a significant positive effect on the schooling of both boys and girls, as well as on their employment prospects, especially for girls. The benefits of compulsory education legislation were not only monetary: in Taiwan, it had a large effect on child mortality. In Malawi and Kenya, it was found that girls who stayed in school because of a compulsory education program were less likely to become pregnant.

¹⁴⁵ Weiner 1996, p. 3008.

¹⁴⁶ Weiner 1991, p.15

He goes on to assert that change is only possible if there is a change in the attitudes of India's policymakers:

"If the impediment to change comes because of the attitudes of those who make, implement and influence policy, and if these attitudes are based on deeply held beliefs that are not easily shaken, is reform likely? Yes, but only if there is first a change in the way in which policymakers and those who influence them think about the problems."¹⁴⁷

2.4.3 Questioning the Cultural Argument

There are certain flaws both in the cultural argument and in the prescribed solution of compulsory education. It is not only the attitudes of policymakers but also the attitudes of parents that must be changed for child labor to end and for universal education to succeed in India. The assumption in Weiner's argument is that once the state supplies schools and makes enrolment compulsory, employers will stop employing children and parents will automatically withdraw their children from the workforce and send them to school. In the context of India, this assumption is problematic because unlike in other countries, universal education laws do not impose any legal duty on parents to send children to school. In fact, even the most recently adopted RTE Act 2009 guarantees the right to education to all children in the five to fourteen years age-group, but places the onus of providing education on the state. If compulsory education alone was the solution, we should have seen the RTE yielding stellar outcomes in school participation. That has not been the case so far. In 2006, three years before the RTE Act was passed, nine percent children in the five to fourteen years age-group were out of school.¹⁴⁸ In 2009, the year the RTE Act was passed, four percent children in India were out of school.¹⁴⁹ In 2012, three years after the RTE Act, the percentage of out of school children is nearly four percent.¹⁵⁰ This means that the drop in out of school children before the RTE Act was passed was much higher than the drop in out of school after the RTE Act was passed. Therefore, it cannot be said that enacting a law has made a significant difference in the decline of children who are out of school.

Another issue is that of compliance with laws, such as universal education. Weiner (1991) argues that historically, there has been a wide gap between the rhetoric and actual practice in implementing both child labor and elementary education policies in India. He cites Upendra Baxi, one of India's foremost legal scholars who says that in India, law has a symbolic value of setting norms, but there is little concern with law as a means of inducing compliance.¹⁵¹ Weiner (1991) writes, "Legislation and the arbitrary way in which laws are enforced or not enforced should be understood as a way in which bureaucrats engage in a

¹⁴⁷ Weiner 1991; p. 18

¹⁴⁸ "Annual Status of Education Report (Rural) 2006." (New Delhi: Pratham, 2007)

¹⁴⁹ "Annual Status of Education Report (Rural) 2010." (New Delhi: Pratham 2011)

¹⁵⁰ Annual Status of Education Report (Rural) 2012." (New Delhi: Pratham 2013)

¹⁵¹ Baxi 1982

form of harassment and augment their income.”¹⁵² If social legislations are seldom enforced, what then would prevent compulsory education law from being relegated into yet another toothless piece of legislation? Weiner does not answer this question. Though passing legislation may be a first step, the question to focus on is what motivates state bureaucracies to actually *implement* the legislation on the ground, and what motivates parents to withdraw children from the workforce and send their children to school.

2.4.4 Why Parental Attitudes Matter

In this context, the cultural attitudes of parents, and not only that of policymakers towards education matters. There is a large plethora of studies in the school participation literature that points towards cultural attitudes based on gender and caste as hampering enrolment and attendance of children in schools. Studies have found that the attitude of parents to the education of girls is not the same as the attitude towards the education of boys.¹⁵³ In the PROBE study (1999), the proportion of parents who stated that education is not important for girls is as high as ten per cent — compared with only one per cent in the case of boys. Similarly, responses to the question ‘How far would you like your son/daughter to study?’ clearly reveal that parents have much higher expectations for their sons than for their daughters.

Parental attitudes towards girls’ education and work are closely related to views about marriage.¹⁵⁴ Given that in many states, parents have to pay a dowry to the groom’s family, they find it a double burden to pay for both her education and her dowry.¹⁵⁵ Parents also think that an educated girl is choosier in finding a groom and they will have to pay higher dowry for an educated girl.¹⁵⁶ Therefore, returns to parents from daughter’s education are low since customarily don’t look after parents after their marriage. A common saying is that educating daughters is like ‘planting seeds in a neighbor’s field.’

On the other hand, parents expect that education of a son will increase his employment prospects; also in many states, the level of education proportionally increases the price a man can command in the dowry market. Further, studies have found that if the labor market rewards education of different groups differentially, this will affect the perceived economic benefits of education among different groups. Controlling for economic background, Indian women have significantly lower returns to education than men, suggesting that they face inferior economic incentives to invest in education than males.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵² Weiner 1991, p. 204

¹⁵³ Kingdon 1998; Rosenzweig & Schultz 1982

¹⁵⁴ De and Dreze 1999

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ Kingdon 1998; Kingdon and Unni 2001; Kambhampati and Rajan 2008

The NFHS survey, 2005-06 shows that 1.3 per cent girls dropped out of school because parents thought that further education was not necessary compared to 0.3 percent boys. The difference in parental motives towards the education of girls *vis-a-vis* boys leads many parents to give up on the daughter's education as soon as the expenditure or effort involved in sending a daughter to school rises above a low threshold.

Given the perceived disparity in returns for education, one would expect that parents would send sons to school and their daughters to work. However, in India, the patriarchal kinship system dictates that family honor depends on female sexual sanctity, leading to a curtailment of female mobility outside the home and early marriage.¹⁵⁸ Parents are therefore fearful of engaging girls outside homes in both education and employment. Therefore, girls are more likely to engage in household chores, and get married at a young age. This also leads to girls falling through the cracks of child labor and schooling statistics, since neither takes into account girls who are involved in household chores.

The data on children in the workforce confirms the gendered pattern of activities of children in rural India. Data from NFHS-3, 2005-06 shows that twelve percent boys and eleven percent girls in the five to fourteen age-group are working. However, five percent girls do household chores compared to two percent boys. In lower grades, seventy-three percent boys attend primary school compared to sixty-nine percent girls. In higher grades, fifty-five percent boys attend school compared to forty percent girls. The gender disparity between boys and girls increases for higher grades. Thus a higher proportion of boys are involved in 'outside activities', both school and work, and a higher proportion of girls do household work that keeps them within the confines of the home.

The above discussion suggests that parents keep their daughters at home, not only because of poverty, but also due to cultural norms that dictate a conservative attitude towards female autonomy, mobility, and education. For instance, studies have found that older girl siblings of younger male siblings are significantly less likely to go to school.¹⁵⁹ Or girls living in predominantly agricultural states are significantly less likely to go to school, and are more likely to be engaged in agricultural chores compared to boys.¹⁶⁰ The cultural attitudes of parents towards female education are not drawn into studies in the child labor literature.

Another cultural factor that significantly affects parental decision-making with regards to child work or school is caste. However, caste dynamic plays out differently than the gender dynamic. Studies have shown that parents of lower castes are equally aspirational

¹⁵⁸ Kishor 1993

¹⁵⁹ Ray 1988; De and Dreze 1999

¹⁶⁰ Kambhampaty and Rajan 2008

in educating their children, particularly boys.¹⁶¹ However, the inequities that exist within the schooling system affect the decision-making calculus of *Dalit* and *Adivasi* parents.¹⁶²

A large volume of qualitative research paints a stark picture of the indignities suffered by *Dalit* and *Adivasi* children within school.¹⁶³ Anecdotal accounts of *Dalit* children made to sit outside classrooms, bullied by upper caste students, having separate sources of drinking water, or humiliated by teachers have been recorded by qualitative research. *Adivasis* face a more challenging set of issues. They usually live in relatively inaccessible areas in small and sparsely populated habitations that lack infrastructural facilities like roads and schools. Tribal dialects and tribal way of life are rarely reflected in school curricula which are oriented towards urban students. This creates a sense of alienation among tribal students and hampering learning achievements in schools. Social prejudices of a teacher, usually from higher castes affect classroom interaction and hamper the cooperative rapport between parents and teachers.¹⁶⁴

References to a certain old-fashioned “sociological determinism” are rife in conversations involving education of poor children, especially if they are of a lower caste. The remark of a high-caste teacher quoted in the PROBE report (1999) hints at the condescending attitude of high-caste elites towards the ability of children of disadvantaged castes to learn:

“*Scheduled Caste bachchon ko padha ke kya phaida hai, bas unko band baaja sikha do, utna hi thik hai.* (What is the point of educating Scheduled Caste children? Teach them how to play in a band, that’s good enough”)¹⁶⁵

The relatively greater vulnerability of *Dalits* and *Adivasis* is reflected in the larger proportion of child workers in these communities as compared to ‘other’ social groups. As many as thirteen percent *Adivasi* and eight percent *Dalit* children were workers as compared to six percent belonging to ‘other’ social groups. *Dalit* and *Adivasi* children constitute forty-one percent among all working children, far in excess of their thirty-one percent representation in the total child population.¹⁶⁶ Further, the educational status of *Dalit* and *Adivasi* children lags behind compared to children from ‘other’ groups. For instance, thirty three percent of *Dalit* males are illiterate compared to seventeen percent for males for other groups. Fifty-eight percent *Dalit* females are illiterate compared to thirty-seven per cent for females of other groups. Thus, when caste and gender disadvantages overlap, the effect on

¹⁶¹ De and Dreze 1999

¹⁶² *Dalits* are the former untouchable castes, also known as Scheduled Castes. *Adivasis* are indigenous tribes also known as Scheduled Tribes.

¹⁶³ Desai and Kulkarni 2008; Jenkins and Barr 2006; Nambissan 1996; Sedwal and Kamat 2008

¹⁶⁴ Sedwal and Kamat 2008

¹⁶⁵ De and Dreze 1999, p. 10 (This is a condescending reference to the fact that lower caste children will grow up only to play in wedding bands).

¹⁶⁶ Thorat 1999

education is even more skewed. While income poverty is a significant reason for children going to work and an important deterrent to schooling of children, *Dalit* and *Adivasi* status compounds educational deprivation.

The above discussion points to the fact that independent of poverty, attitudes of poor parents play a role in the decision of whether children should be sent to work or to school. Since “social discriminations” overlap with poverty, the assumption is that it is not social discrimination, but rather poverty that keeps children of lower castes outside the schooling system. Child labor policies have therefore primarily focused on giving incentives to poor parents and children to bring them to school. The social identity of the child is not the focus of such policy. They are based on the argument: “don’t try to change the cultures, but do try to improve the economies.”¹⁶⁷ This is reflective of the general trend in the Indian state’s policies and plans which do not take social discrimination as the primary criteria – instead social identity is subsumed under universal categories like “small and marginal farmers”, “doubt prone areas,” “poor” – categories that gloss over the insidious forms of social discrimination that shape an individual’s access to formal and informal institutions.¹⁶⁸ By defining poverty in terms of material possession rather than in terms of social discrimination, the resulting focus of child labor policy is on providing universal benefits or “reaching the poor” rather than ensuring the social inclusion of the excluded.¹⁶⁹ These aspects of social discrimination are not clearly specified, nor have they been adequately accounted for in econometric models on child labor.

However, some recent studies have questioned the assumption that poverty and social marginalization is one and the same thing. For instance, Dreze and Kingdon (2001) found that even controlling for poverty, *Dalit* and *Adivasi* children are less likely to be enrolled in school. A recent study found substantial differences in learning outcomes between children from different caste, ethnic and religious backgrounds in India which persists even after controlling for parental socio-economic status.¹⁷⁰ A survey of 33,000 rural households across sixteen Indian states found that the size of the religion or caste effect depends on the non-community circumstances in which the children are placed. Under favorable circumstances (for example, when parents are literate), the size of the community effect is negligible. Under less favorable circumstances, the size of the community effect is considerable.¹⁷¹ These studies suggest that even within the poor, those who are socially marginalized have a harder time accessing the school system. Parental norms related to schooling and education of children is very pertinent in the decision of parents to send children to work. In the absence of

¹⁶⁷ Weiner 1996, p. 3008.

¹⁶⁸ Harris-White & Prakash

¹⁶⁹ Jenkins & Barr 2006

¹⁷⁰ Desai *et al* 2008

¹⁷¹ Barooah and Iyer 2005

any penal action in India against parents for sending their children to work, it is important for parents to voluntarily want to send their children to school.

2.4.5 Regional Variation of Norms towards Education

Focusing on a social norm on education draws attention to the variability of such a norm across states. Studies have shown that there is wide variability in the salience of gender-differences and caste-disparities across states. In the case of gender disparity, Dyson & Moore (1983) identified three distinct kinship systems in India-North Indian, South Indian and the East Indian, with very different approaches to female autonomy and freedom. Studies have found that relative to the north, daughters in southern families are seen as more valued, both economically and socially, owing to differences in marital systems and inheritance of property rights. Highly unequal gender relations in the north are reflected in female seclusion, low female labor force participation, large gender gap in literacy rates, restricted female property rights, and preference for boys in fertility decisions.¹⁷² Compared to the north, daughters in southern families are more likely to survive, to be educated, to work, to marry later and to marry closer to home, thus maintaining close ties with parents after marriage.¹⁷³ Even this broad North-South difference hides very significant inter-state differences. For instance, Kerala has a Gender Development Index (GDI) of 0.705, while Bihar's was 0.524.¹⁷⁴

Norms related to female autonomy in a state is very significant in determining women's role in the rural economy.¹⁷⁵ In states where females are more autonomous, they are more likely to be involved in 'outside' activities: both school and in the labor force. This suggests that the greater autonomy and status of women reflect the formation of norms so that regions in which women are normally literate are ones where it is the prevailing "norm" to educate girls. They found that socio-economic norms on female autonomy were stronger determinant of girls' schooling than economic growth: in fact, the probability of girls being sent to work was very high in high-growth agriculturally intensive regions.

Similarly, there is regional variation in the salience of caste across Indian states. States where caste-divisions are salient, higher caste elites consider education to be the exclusive preserve of high castes. The PROBE report (1999) found that where caste was salient, the "social distance" to schooling for lower castes was exacerbated. For instance, in Rajasthan, where hierarchical caste divisions are deeply entrenched, the high caste elites have

¹⁷² Dreze and Sen 1995.

¹⁷³ Kambhampati and Rajan 2008.

¹⁷⁴ Gendering Human Development Indices Report 2009 "Gendering Human Development Indices: Recasting the Gender Development Index and Gender Empowerment Measure for India." (New Delhi: Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, 2009).

¹⁷⁵ Kambhampati and Rajan 2008.

traditionally believed that it was “too dangerous” to extend education to the lower castes.¹⁷⁶ Unlike Weiner who assumes that the cultural attitudes towards education are uniform throughout India, attitudes towards education vary across states. In states where caste and gender disparities are salient, attitudes towards universal education are weaker than states where these cultural attitudes are less salient. I look upon the norm on education as being influenced by the community and argue that it varies across states in India.

2.5 The Role of Civil Society

If parental attitudes towards education are so important, the next question is whether such attitudes can be changed? Or are norms towards education of girls and lower caste children fixed? Weiner (1991) argues that unless attitudes change, child labor in India cannot be abolished. However, he does not suggest any active interventions that can positively change child labor in India. Unlike cultural studies that often treat attitudes as fixed, studies have shown that attitudes towards education can be positively influenced. The PROBE survey (1999) suggests that parental motivation can be influenced even through public interventions. Employment reservation policies, for instance, have clearly played a role in enhancing the educational aspirations of parents from disadvantaged castes. Similarly, studies have found much evidence that the provision of school meals or food rations, free textbooks and other incentives had an effect on the willingness of parents to send their children to school.¹⁷⁷ The PROBE report (1999) comments on attitudinal change towards education:

“Parents are much more concerned about their children’s education today than they were fifty or even ten years ago. Recent changes in parental attitudes towards female education are particularly encouraging. Not so long ago, negative views of female education were endemic among north Indian parents. . . . Today, most parents consider at least some education as an important part of a daughter’s upbringing, even if their ambitions in that respect continue to be modest.”¹⁷⁸

Historically, the role of civil society groups like missionaries in creating a social norm in favour of education has been noted by studies. For instance, Weiner (1991) himself noted the role of missionaries in changing societal norms towards education in the state of Kerala and in Sri Lanka. Further, studies have noted a shift in civil society participation in the arena of child labor and education in recent years. Focus in elementary education has sharply moved towards decentralization and community participation facilitated by local CSOs.¹⁷⁹ This is in contrast to Weiner’s findings in 1991 where he concluded that CSOs in India were largely indifferent to the cause of child labor and compulsory education. The transformation in the national policy context has been complemented by large inflow of donor funds following the ‘Education for All’ Declaration that seeks to universalize education in India. Wazir (2003)

¹⁷⁶ Vyas *et al* 2007.

¹⁷⁷ Dreze and Sen 1995

¹⁷⁸ De and Dreze 1999, p.25

¹⁷⁹ "Evaluation Report on Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan." (New Delhi: Planning Commission, Government of India, 2010).

argues that CSOs have acted as “change agents” in reducing the gender gap in education. In the context of cultural attitudes towards caste and gender, CSOs which have a significant local presence and have the advantage of being able to communicate directly with parents can lead to change in attitudes over time.¹⁸⁰

2.6 Conclusion

2.6.1 Moving Away from Traditional Approaches

Parental motivation lies at the center of the theoretical construct of this dissertation. However, parents are not seen as isolated agents operating in a black box—instead, the impact of social and institutional influences on parental motivation is examined. This study seeks to highlight the central role of educational deprivation in creating a pool of children who are a potential supply to the child labor force. Further, it attempts to bridge the gap between the child labor and the school participation literatures. It ties both the demand and supply factors together—parents must see education as a non-negotiable necessity and require it from the state. However, the supply of educational facilities by the state is equally important because a parental norm on education cannot be expected to be sufficient if the quality of education provided by the state is very poor. In a country like India, where compulsory education cannot be enforced, both the supply of education by the state and parental attitudes are important. This study, therefore, focuses on both the demand of education from parents and the supply of educational facilities by state.

2.6.2 Toward a New Theoretical Paradigm

This dissertation ties together two main themes from the literature on school participation to explain the variation in levels of child labor for India—the quality of education supplied by the state, and prevailing norms towards education in a state, shaped by cultural attitudes towards education of females and of low-castes. The state’s provision of education is mediated by the cultural context. In states where a social norm towards education is stronger, the state’s provisioning of education is reinforced by strong social demand for education. Though this study does not deny the importance of the traditional poverty argument in explaining child labor, it focuses on social and institutional factors to explain variation in child labor rates across states.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

Chapter 3

Looking Beyond Poverty: Institutional and Social Influences on Child Labor

3.1 Introduction

“When children work rather than go to school, it does not necessarily mean that work requirements are to blame for their failure to attend school. In many cases, it is the other way round: children work because they are unable to go to school.”¹⁸¹

The central argument in this dissertation is that educational deficiencies drive families who would otherwise be inclined to send their children to school, to send them into the workforce instead. The variation of child labor rates in India is explained not only by income constraints but also, more importantly, the paucity of publicly provided educational opportunities and a norm among parents that education is an option, not an imperative necessity for all children. Contemporary economists and demographers have discussed the phenomenon of child labor using a family strategy approach, focusing their attention primarily on family resource constraints and the cost–benefit calculus of the family head.¹⁸² However, the issues relating to the availability of schools, access to schools, and the quality of education imparted in the schools is glossed over. Diverging from these conventional arguments, this dissertation makes a case for considering the work and non-schooling of children as reflecting not only parental income constraints but also, more importantly, the paucity of publicly provided educational opportunities. Child labor is a product not just of parental utilitarian calculus but of deficiencies in public policy and social institutions.

This dissertation examines the issue of child labor primarily through the lens of parental motivation like previous econometric studies on child labor. However, unlike previous studies, this dissertation assumes that parents are influenced not only by income constraints, but are also shaped by social relationships and institutional influences. Parental motivation is examined within a framework of institutional capabilities of the state in providing education and a social consensus for education that prevails in the community.

Figure 3.1 and Figure 3.2 represent the schematics for the theory of this dissertation:

¹⁸¹ De and Dreze 1999, p.7-8

¹⁸² Cigno *et al* 2001; Deb & Rosati 2002

Figure 3.1 : Diagrammatic Representation of Theory (I)

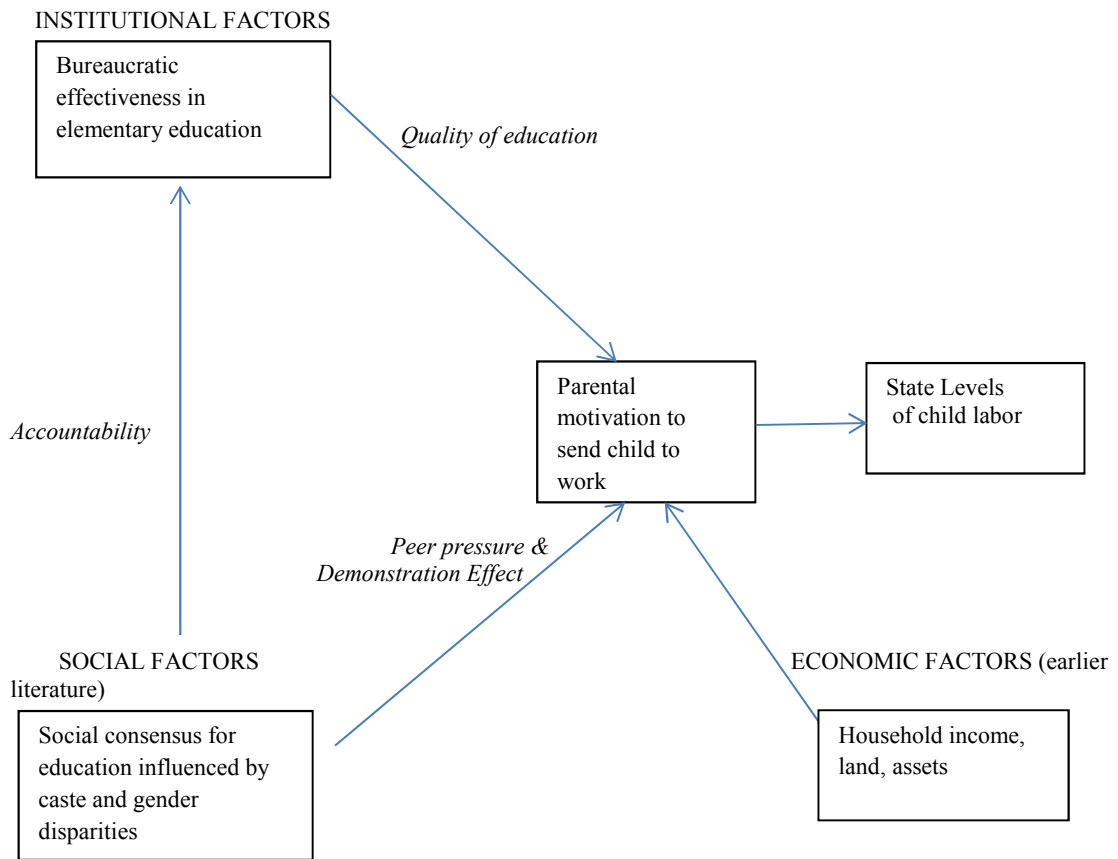
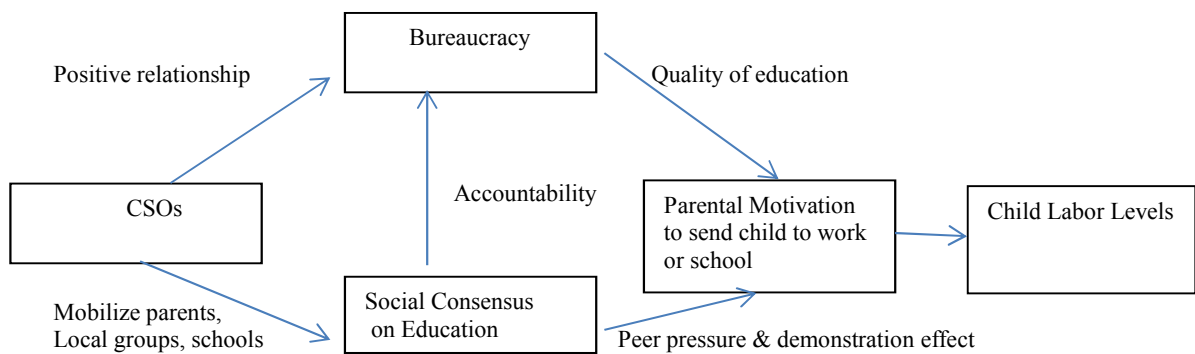


Figure 3.2 Diagrammatic Representation of Theory (II)



3.2 Basic Premise of Theory

Bureaucratic effectiveness in the implementation of elementary education policies and social consensus on elementary education influences levels of child labor across Indian states. By ‘bureaucratic effectiveness’, I mean the role of the state bureaucracy in translating the mission of universal elementary education to real outcomes on the ground. In India, the implementation of elementary education policies is primarily the responsibility of state level

bureaucracies. As such, there is considerable variation across states in the extent of focus on primary education.¹⁸³ As shown in Figure 3.1, the quality of schooling is predicated on bureaucratic effectiveness in the implementation of universal elementary education policy. The quality of education imparted in schools has direct ramifications on parental motivation to send a child to work or to school.

Further, the impact of bureaucratic effectiveness on parental motivation is indirectly conditioned by a social consensus on education. By 'social consensus', I refer to an accepted norm or agreement amongst parents that school is where *all* children, irrespective of caste, class, and gender should be. States which have deep social cleavages, for instance due to gender or caste disparities, have a lower social consensus on education than those where such cleavages are less salient. Social consensus has a direct and indirect effect on parental motivation. At the direct level, social consensus influences parents who are members of a community to send their child to school and galvanizes collective action to demand accountability from the schooling system. Indirectly, social consensus on education influences state bureaucrats since they are arguably a product of the cultural environment in which they administer policy. The pressure from the community forces more accountability from the educational bureaucracy. This approach is distinct from previous cultural arguments, for instance by Weiner (1991), that suggest that child labor persists in India due to hierarchical attitudes of the Indian middle class. Instead, social consensus is not a constant across Indian society, but varies across states and can change over time.

Further, even though social cleavages can deter a social consensus on education from emerging, such cleavages are not immutable. Figure 3.2 shows how proactive civil society initiatives animate both bureaucratic effectiveness and social consensus on education. CSOs can dilute social cleavages by emphasizing the importance of education and the long term adverse consequences of sending children to work. Further, by building a social consensus on education, they increase the pressure on the bureaucracy to deliver better services. CSOs also directly influence the bureaucracy by advocacy efforts and by lobbying with individual bureaucrats. However, the efforts of CSOs come to naught in the absence of support from the state. Unless the state is committed to withdrawing children from work and sending them to schools, impact of CSOs with their limited resources will remain localized to a small area.

Bureaucratic effectiveness in implementing elementary education policies must be complemented by a social consensus on education especially for two reasons. First, there are neither legal obligations on parents in India to send children to school, nor any penalty if they send their children to work. In the absence of a social consensus that education is a non-negotiable necessity, poor parents lack a strong incentive to send their children to school.

¹⁸³ Ramachandran *et al* 1997

Second, the elementary education system in rural areas suffers due to lack of accountability.¹⁸⁴ A social consensus on education creates pressure on bureaucrats and ensures accountability of the schooling system. If a state has high social consensus on education, but low bureaucratic effectiveness in the delivery of education, the poor quality of the educational system deters parents from sending their children to school. On the other hand, if a state has high bureaucratic effectiveness, but low social consensus on education, children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds like lower-castes or girls will continue to be marginalized by the education system and end up joining the labor force. The interplay of both bureaucratic effectiveness and social consensus has an impact on the levels of school enrolment and attendance, which consequently influences the supply of child laborers in the state. Instead of work preventing children from going to school, it is the poor bureaucratic effectiveness in the delivery of education, and the consequent impact on learning outcomes, that saps parental motivation in sending children to school.

3.3 Bureaucratic Effectiveness

3.3.1 What is Bureaucratic Effectiveness?

I define bureaucratic effectiveness as the ability of a bureaucratic agency to produce actions and outputs pursuant to the mission and the institutional mandate of the agency.¹⁸⁵ A plethora of literature measures bureaucratic effectiveness in diverse ways depending on the nature of a particular agency's mission.¹⁸⁶ Yet, regardless of the specific measure employed, an effective bureaucracy produces the outcomes pursuant to its mission, whereas an ineffective bureaucracy fails to do so. In explaining the concept of bureaucratic effectiveness, Rainey and Steinbauer (1999) illustrate it with examples: "Did the US military win the Gulf War, does the Center for Disease Control and Prevention reduce health risks, and does the social security administration pay benefits expeditiously, accurately, and appropriately, and do all these results come in significant part from the activities of agencies and its members?"¹⁸⁷ Bureaucratic effectiveness, thus, refers to actions on the ground by bureaucrats to translate the agency's mission into actual outcomes.

In the context of implementation of elementary education policies in India, bureaucratic effectiveness would be characterized by whether the outcomes of government policies on elementary education are translated into real outputs and outcomes on the ground: whether schools are being established, schooling infrastructure is maintained, scholarships are being disbursed on time, teacher appointments are taking place fairly, and enrolment targets are met. It also means that teachers are not merely appointed but are also present in school

¹⁸⁴ Kremer *et al* 2005; PROBE 1999

¹⁸⁵ Osborne and Gaebler 1992: 352, Wolf 1997

¹⁸⁶ Wolf 1993; or 'efficiency' Wilson 1989; or 'performance' Yackee and Yackee 2008

¹⁸⁷ Rainey and Steinbauer (1999), p.33

and teachers are not only doling out information but students are also able to comprehend what is being taught. Both quantity and quality therefore are essential dimensions of bureaucratic effectiveness in the implementation of elementary education.

Bureaucratic effectiveness is important from the perspective of this study because the actual delivery of quality education on the ground influences parental motivation in deciding whether to send their child to work. Since state units of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) implement the elementary education policy, it is to be expected that bureaucratic effectiveness varies across states. Therefore, though the SSA has similar organizational structure and the same institutional mandate across all states, the manner in which the SSA is translated into outcomes on the ground varies across states. Even if a state makes high investments in elementary education, it will not have an effect on parental motivation unless the state bureaucracy actually translates those investments into actual outputs and outcomes on the ground. A major problem identified in the elementary education sector in India is the major discrepancy between the amounts allocated by both the central and state governments and the amounts utilized at the ground level.¹⁸⁸ “Poor administrative capacity” at the state level has been identified as the main factor in the inefficient utilization of resources spent on elementary education.¹⁸⁹ A study conducted by the Center for Budget and Governance Accountability in 2011 analyzed the investment and utilization of public investments on children. It reported on the impact of educational expenditures on the ground:

“Institutional and procedural bottlenecks in delivery systems often constrain the ability of the state government to utilize public expenditure (on education), thereby reducing the potential impact of increased budget outlays on citizens and communities. Even when increased budget outlays do translate into higher levels of actual expenditure on the ground, deficiencies in composition and patterns of spending could reduce the impact of such expenditures.”¹⁹⁰

Therefore, the administration of elementary laws by the state bureaucracy plays a critical role in parental motivation to send a child to work. If the state’s education bureaucracy fails to provide relevant learning and a route to future employment through the state’s schools, parents are less likely to sustain the opportunity costs—and the real financial costs—associated with keeping children in school.

3.3.2 The Three Components of Bureaucratic Effectiveness

The key ingredients of bureaucratic effectiveness which are associated with parental inclination to send a child to school are the quality of school infrastructure, teaching standards, and school management structure. These aspects are intricately interrelated and together form the foundation on which the quality of education imparted by the state is

¹⁸⁸ De and Endow 2008.

¹⁸⁹ Mehrotra 2006.

¹⁹⁰ “Rajasthan: Tracking Public Investments for Children.” In *Rajasthan: Tracking Public Investments for Children*, ed. Center for Budget and Governance Accountability (New Delhi: UNICEF, 2011).

predicated. Even if parents are keen to send a child to school, they may not be able to send them to school under the following conditions: i) if school is not available or accessible, or the only school available is a primary school; ii) if teachers not available or the quality of instruction is such that students don't learn much at school; and iii) if the school management structure is inefficient. I explain how each of these dimensions of bureaucratic effectiveness adversely affects learning outcomes and consequently affects parental motivation to send a child to school:

i) Availability/ accessibility of schools: Whether or not schools are available for children to attend has an important effect on whether parents decide to send children to school or work. Official reports state that ninety-five percent of habitations in India have access to a primary school.¹⁹¹ What is frequently glossed over in government reports is that the corresponding coverage of middle schools is much less. The RTE Act, 2009 guarantees children education up to the age of fourteen years whereas primary school only covers children up to ten years. Provision of middle schools is an important first step in elevating parental motivation. Studies have shown that poor parents believe that the first few years of education yield low returns, and education is only valuable if children can acquire higher degrees. Parents seem to see education primarily as a way for their children to acquire (considerable) wealth, via a government job (a clerk or a teacher for example) or some kind of office job. In reality, available estimates show a linear relationship between education and income, with each year of education increasing income proportionally.¹⁹²

Even primary education alone has a positive impact on individuals' earning. For instance, a study in Andhra Pradesh found that the earnings of adults with primary education are twice as high as those of illiterate persons. Compared with mere literacy, primary education enhances individual earnings by twenty percent. An analysis of National Sample Survey data for Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu finds that each year of extra schooling raises men's productivity by eight percent and women's productivity by ten percent. Another study, which focuses on inter-state comparisons of productivity and growth, suggests that an increase of one year in the average educational attainment of the workforce raises output by thirteen per cent.¹⁹³ However, given the prevalence of a belief among parents that only higher levels of education are useful, the absence of a middle school in the village acts as a deterrent to parents from sending their children even to primary school. If parents know that their child cannot get even a middle school education, much less a secondary education, their opportunity cost of sending a child for five years of primary education appears to be much higher than sending her to work.

¹⁹¹ De and Dreze 1999

¹⁹² De and Endow 2008

¹⁹³ Studies referred to in De and Dreze 1999.

Even if a middle school does exist in the vicinity, the absence of transportation acts as a deterrent. The absence of transportation has also been found to hamper both primary and middle school attendance.¹⁹⁴ Even though primary schools are supposed to be within one kilometer (0.6 miles) of each village according to SSA guidelines, traveling to school can be a real challenge for young children living in hilly terrain, or during the rainy season. This is especially true for girls. In a survey of reasons for school dropout in NFHS-3, 2005-06, it was found that 5.8 percent girls and 1.1 percent boys dropped out because school was too far away, while 1.5 percent girls and 0.3 percent boys reportedly dropped out because transportation was not available. Therefore, the official figures of ninety-five percent availability of schools disguise the reality relating to viable accessibility to schools, and the availability of middle schools. The absence of schools or the difficulty in accessing schools can be a real deterrent to parents who are keen to send their child to school.

ii) Teachers and Teaching Standards: Teachers are the lowest link in the bureaucratic chain, but they are most significant in terms of motivating parents and children to come to school.¹⁹⁵ Not only the availability of teachers, but the qualification and commitment of teachers, the quality of education imparted in the classroom, and the treatment meted out to students has a substantial impact on the motivation of students to come to school. Even if infrastructure is inadequate, anecdotal accounts show evidence of how a single teacher played an important role in bringing children to school.¹⁹⁶ Further, teachers are the primary point of contact with parents and act as intermediaries between parents and the senior ranks of the educational bureaucracy. If teachers are accessible and accountable, parents are more equipped to cooperate with the schooling system in ensuring that children get the best education possible. Even in the absence of proper infrastructure or support from the management, a committed teacher can teach in a way that students actually learn.

However, the teaching process is affected by the politics in the education bureaucracy. The entire process of teacher recruitment, appointment, and transfers is wrought with complications. Some states have large numbers of teacher vacancies but refuse to recruit teachers on time, even though they have high student-teacher ratios. The entire process of teacher appointment and transfer is used by politicians as a means of granting patronage and favors. On the other hand, some states are scrambling to maintain student-teacher ratio in the face of inadequate budgetary allocation by appointing para-teachers or temporary teachers who don't go through the rigorous selection process as government school teachers. Therefore, instead of attracting the most committed and qualified individuals, the teaching profession attracts those who are looking for a comfortable job with benefits, or those who

¹⁹⁴ De and Dreze 1999

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

can curry favors with the right political connections. The process of recruitment is designed to attract apathetic individuals to the teaching profession, and not necessarily those with the best talent.

Further, a poor accountability system encourages absenteeism and poor teaching quality. The inspection system is irregular and action is rarely taken on complaints to school inspectors. This is reinforced by permanent tenures and the support of teachers' unions who protect errant teachers from being punished. The incentive system does not reward teachers for quality teaching. Instead, teachers are rated on their ability to maintain attendance registers, meet enrolment targets, disburse incentive schemes, and other administrative tasks.

The unsupportive nature of the school management structure affects the motivation level even of those teachers who are dedicated to their profession. The centralized system of recruitment and transfer in each state means that teachers are appointed in remote villages without arrangement of regular transportation. Since they spend a large amount of time commuting to work, it is difficult for them to focus on teaching. If they choose to stay in the village where the school is located, they are often treated as outsiders by the village community. They are so overloaded with administrative tasks that they cannot find the time to teach even when they want to. The delay in disbursement of maintenance grants and incentive schemes like textbooks or uniforms affects teaching quality since poor students have no other resources to acquire textbooks or uniforms. Though the teacher depends on the management system for disbursement of incentive schemes, it is she who bears the brunt of parents' anger when the school fails to deliver on its promised schemes. Like parents, teachers also don't have access to proper redressal mechanisms. In fact, they are bound by fears that if they complain against the school administration, they might be victimized by the higher-ups in the education bureaucracy. They spend a lot of time currying favors with influential people to ensure that they are not posted to an inhospitable location. In remote areas, teachers also complain of the disinterest of parents who are not aware of the benefits of regular attendance or basic hygiene, and fail to create a conducive learning environment at home. Such obstacles make it a challenge for a teacher in a rural government school to impart quality education to students.

iii) School management structure: The school management structure is the bedrock on which the quality of the schooling system rests. The management structure of the school controls a diverse array of functions such as the budgetary allocation of grants to schools, recruitment, training and monitoring of teachers, the disbursement of incentive schemes, data collection, research and dissemination of pedagogical knowledge. Each of these aspects affects the quality of education imparted in schools.

While the budgetary allocation for elementary education in many states have remained stagnant, if not declined, the school management system is often overstretched in

the frantic race to meet enrolment targets set by the SSA. The administrative system deals with pressure to set up new schools in remote habitations, appoint new teachers and inspectors, and allocate maintenance grants in the face of substantial resource constraints. Despite the RTE Act laying down certain minimum infrastructural requirements like minimum number of classrooms, boundary wall, toilets, and libraries for an institute to be recognized as a school, surveys show that large numbers of rural government schools are still lacking in basic infrastructural facilities.

With resources being spread so thinly, schools struggle with high student-teacher ratio, crowded classrooms, and poor teaching quality. The dearth of resources is compounded by the corruption rife in the awarding of government contracts for the building of schools, in the pilfering of supplies for incentive schemes, and in allocation of maintenance grants. The school management structure spends so much time dealing with law suits, battles with teacher unions, and meeting obligations of political bosses that there is little time left to focus on the quality of education imparted in the schools. Thus, a lot of issues other than teaching quality take up the time of the educational bureaucracy.

The inefficiency in the management system has a profound implication on the schooling experience of parents and children. First, the delay in the disbursement of scholarships and incentive schemes compels children of poor parents to complete the schooling year without text books, or uniforms. Parents have no mechanism to ensure accountability of the management system: no simple complaint mechanism exists for parents to protest against teacher absenteeism or delay in the disbursement of government schemes. Second, even if textbooks are distributed on time, the content of textbooks is pedantic, have a heavy urban bias, and do not reflect the lived experiences of rural students. The educational bureaucracy rarely focuses on making textbooks more appealing to students. In fact, textbooks have sometimes been regarded as tools for state-propaganda instead of a medium for learning. For instance, in 2002, the Hindu-nationalist BJP government ordered history text-books to be rewritten so as to minimize the contribution of Muslim rulers. Third, the pedagogical methods employed by teachers are conservative and emphasize rote learning rather than evoking interest in the students by practical teaching methods. The management system is responsible for teacher-training, but the training process does not account for the ground realities that teachers experience while teaching in school. For teachers who are struggling with absence of textbooks, the teaching of innovative pedagogical methods may mean little. Fourth, the examination-system is largely geared towards testing students' capacity for memorization rather than their understanding of the material. Failure to learn is therefore a common phenomenon in rural government schools.

Each of these components of bureaucratic effectiveness are interrelated-for instance, the budgetary constraints of the management system in maintaining school infrastructure

affects teacher motivation and attendance of students. There is variation across states in bureaucratic effectiveness along each of these dimensions which I shall show in Chapter 4. In the next section, I discuss how the quality of bureaucratic effectiveness impacts learning outcomes, thereby affecting parental motivation in sending children to school.

3.3.3 Impact of Bureaucratic Effectiveness on Parental Motivation

Bureaucratic effectiveness is a sum total of access and availability of schools, teaching standards, and school management structure. If schools are not within accessible distance, if teachers are not present in the classroom, if incentive schemes are not disbursed regularly, it is difficult for poor students in government schools to keep up with their studies. Learning outcomes in school are a direct reflection of bureaucratic effectiveness in delivery of education. When parents believe that children won't learn anything at school it reduces their motivation to send their child to school and increases the likelihood of sending children to work.

Since national and international schooling programs place an overwhelming emphasis on enrolment targets, the issue of learning has received little articulation.¹⁹⁷ For instance, the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDG) state that "by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling" and to "eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education."¹⁹⁸ Similarly, India's SSA focuses on universal enrolment by 2010, but does not mention learning outcomes. India's newly enacted RTE Act guarantees the right to universal education to every child in the age-group of five to fourteen years, but does not specify that the 'right to education' does not mean only enrolment, but also means that a child learns at school. The underlying assumption seems to be that that once children are enrolled in schools, learning will automatically take place. However, there is enough evidence to suggest that enrolment does not necessarily translate into learning outcomes.

In 1993, a National Advisory Committee on Education, India published a report titled 'Learning without Burden' which stated that "a lot is taught (in India's schools) but little is learnt or understood."¹⁹⁹ Since 2005, Pratham, an Indian NGO focused on education, has been conducting annual surveys in 600 Indian districts to find out what children are actually learning in schools. Every year, these teams test thousands of children in randomly chosen villages in every district to check for their comprehension of very basic language and mathematics skills. In 2011, the team followed a large cohort of almost thirty thousand children in five states across one calendar year to measure the progress of children in learning during one academic year. The study noted: "By the end of the year children do

¹⁹⁷ Banerjee and Duflo 2011

¹⁹⁸ "United Nations Millennium Declaration 2000," Resolution adopted by the General Assembly

¹⁹⁹ De and Dreze 1999, p.69

learn...however, children's pace of learning is far lower than what is expected of them by the textbook and learning content. Even in the best performing states in the study, the reading figures are unsatisfactory if we compare children's actual reading levels to what is expected of them according to textbooks."²⁰⁰ The Pratham findings suggest that either children are not being taught properly, or the learning standards expected of them by the curriculum are not age-appropriate.

A large body of evidence suggests that workers' productivity and earnings depend not only on years of education acquired but also on what is learned at school. Hanushek (2005) cites three US studies as showing quite consistently that a one standard deviation increase in mathematics test performance at the end of high school in the US translates into twelve percent higher annual earnings. He also cites three studies from the UK and Canada showing strong productivity returns to both numeracy and literacy skills. Substantial returns to cognitive skills also hold across the developing countries for which studies have been carried out, i.e. in Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Morocco, Pakistan and South Africa. Hanushek and Zhang (2006) confirm significant economic returns to literacy for thirteen countries on which literacy data were available. So when children don't learn at school, their potential of future earnings is diminished.

Surprisingly though, in surveys on educational non-participation, parents rarely report 'lack of learning' or 'poor schooling standards' as a reason for children dropping out: instead, it is mostly 'disinterest in studies' that is quoted as a reason.²⁰¹ In fact, 'disinterest in studies' among the poor was the single most predominant reason for children dropping out in the NFHS survey conducted in 2005-06. 'Disinterest in studies among the poor' is frequently cited by bureaucrats as the main reason behind failure of elementary education policy. But what does 'disinterest in studies' mean? Are poor parents less interested in studies than middle class parents? Are poor children in India systematically less smart than children of middle class parents? There may be an alternative explanation: what is frequently cited as disinterest in studies is actually disillusionment with the inability to learn at school. The PROBE report (1999) explores the underlying cause behind this perceived 'lack of interest' in schooling:

"First, the effect of poor teaching standards is a slow sapping of parental and child motivation over time, but the 'last straw' that causes a child to drop out is often something else, e.g. illness in the family or financial hardship. Respondents are more likely to report this last straw as the cause of discontinuation than the slow process of discouragement. Second, there is another crucial difference between 'poor teaching standards' on the one hand, and (say) 'schooling is expensive' on the other, as reported reasons why a child is out of school. In the latter case, the parents may remember having to decide between two concrete alternatives, e.g. to spend or not to spend on the child's schooling. Similarly, the response 'child was needed in other activities' reflects a concrete decision about alternative household arrangements. In the case of school quality, however, there is no such choice to make: the village school is the village school, and for most parents there is no other option. When a parent gives up the struggle to get a child educated, he or she is likely to report that the struggle had become too hard (e.g.

²⁰⁰ Annual Status of Education Report 2011-12, p. 13, (New Delhi: Pratham).

²⁰¹ De and Dreze 1999

schooling was too expensive), without adding that *had* the village school been up to the mark, it might have been worth soldiering on.”²⁰²

When children don't learn at school, it creates a “discouragement effect” for both parents and children. The frustrations of a non-functioning school are far harder to bear for parents from underprivileged families who cannot afford private tuitions or who cannot create a learning environment at home. Therefore, poor learning outcomes are an important reason for dropout rates. With an education system that primes children to drop out, especially once they have passed primary school, many often join the workforce with the objective of doing something productive with their lives.²⁰³ Studies have found that it is drop-outs, rather than never-enrolled children that form the largest pool of supply to the child labor force.²⁰⁴

The above discussion highlights the subtle ways in which low bureaucratic effectiveness depletes parental motivation to send a child to school. Based on this argument, I state my first two hypotheses, H1 at the state-level, and H2 at the individual-level.

At the aggregate level, the phenomenon of bureaucratic effectiveness is not limited at the individual child, or individual school level, but varies systematically at the state-level. Since the unit of educational administration is the state, state bureaucracies vary in the access and availability of schools, and in the management structure and in maintenance of teaching standards. The Pratham findings suggest variation in learning outcomes across states as well. For instance, in 2011-12, in the proportion of children who are low performers in the states of Himachal Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Assam had decreased substantially and the fraction of children scoring sixty percent or higher had increased. By contrast, the states of Jharkhand and Rajasthan did not show any improvement for the lowest performers from baseline to end. The variation in states' performance in delivering education affects parental motivation in sending children to school. If parents know that children will not learn much in the village school, they may find the opportunity cost of sending a child to school for five years much higher than sending her to work. In such cases, even if parents are convinced of the value of education in principle, they may not find it worthwhile to send their children to school. Therefore, the phenomenon of dropouts seeping into the child labor force should be more obvious in states where bureaucratic effectiveness is low, and children are consequently learning less at school.

Figure 3.3 shows a snapshot comparison in learning outcomes and dropout rates across four states: Rajasthan, UP, Kerala and Himachal. Each of the states represents major regions of India, while Rajasthan represents Western India, Himachal and UP represent northern India and Kerala represents southern India. Himachal and Kerala have better

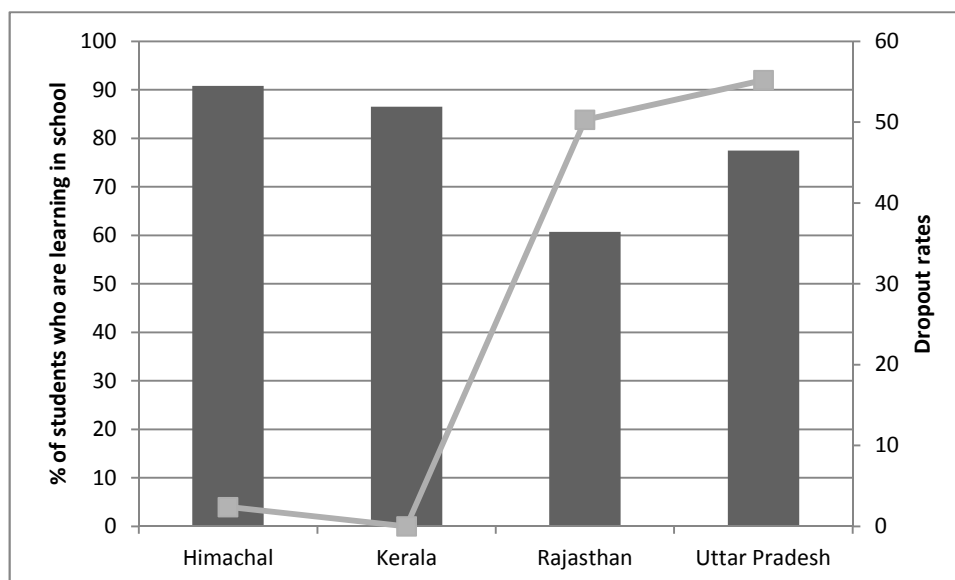
²⁰² De and Dreze 1999, p.37

²⁰³ Custer *et al* 2005

²⁰⁴ Brown 2010

learning outcomes compared to Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh (UP). It shows that states like Himachal and Kerala where learning outcomes are high have much lower dropout rates than states like UP and Rajasthan where learning outcomes are much lower.

Figure 3.3 : Learning Outcomes and Dropout Rates in Himachal, Kerala, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh, 2011



Source: "Learning and Enrolment Report Card 2011," In the Annual Status of Education Report 2012; "Drop-out rates in Classes I-V and I-VIII and I-X in India 2009-10," In the Abstract of Selected Educational Statistics, Ministry of Education.

H1: States that have higher bureaucratic effectiveness in elementary education are expected to have lower rates of child labor.

At the individual level, we should see that when a child goes to a good school where teachers are regular, teach well, and the school functions well, parents would be more motivated to send their children to school. Further, among those that are already admitted in school, there would be less likelihood of a child dropping out and joining the workforce. The parents' experience of bureaucratic effectiveness would therefore play a critical role in whether a child is sent to work or to school.

H2: A child who experiences higher levels of bureaucratic effectiveness at school should be less likely to join the workforce compared to a child who experiences lower levels of bureaucratic effectiveness at school.

The effect of bureaucratic effectiveness on a child joining the workforce will not take place directly, but will take place through the intermediate mechanisms of absenteeism from school, poor learning outcomes and dropping out. To flesh out these causal mechanisms, I test three intermediate hypotheses, H2a, H2b, H2c which will analyze the relationship of bureaucratic effectiveness in delivery of elementary education:

H1a: Increased bureaucratic effectiveness in the delivery of elementary education is expected to decrease levels of absenteeism.

H2b: Increased bureaucratic effectiveness in the delivery of elementary education is expected to decrease levels of dropouts.

H2c: Increased bureaucratic effectiveness in the delivery of elementary education is expected to increase the likelihood of better learning outcomes.

Therefore, H1 will test this hypothesis at the aggregate state level by examining if states that have higher bureaucratic effectiveness in elementary education also have lower rates of child labor. H2 will test whether bureaucratic effectiveness in the delivery of education is related to the probability of a child entering the workforce.

3.4 Social Consensus on Education

3.4.1 What is Social Consensus on Education?

I define ‘social consensus on education’ as an accepted norm or agreement that school is where *all* children should be and not at work. I draw this idea from the PROBE study by Jean Dreze, where he defines social consensus as individuals’ perception that education is an imperative necessity for *all* children, not only for children of a particular caste, class or gender. Therefore, states that have a high level of social discrimination among groups would have low levels of social consensus on education. The concept of social consensus refers to the social dimension of parental motivation. The PROBE report (1999) explains, “A consensus of this kind has indeed been achieved in Kerala. As one researcher observes, when parents in Kerala are asked why they send their children to school, some of them don’t know what to say, simply because they take it as self-evident that going to school is what children do.”²⁰⁵ As a concomitant of high rates of schooling in Kerala, it is also the state with the lowest levels of child labor. Another interesting example is Himachal Pradesh. Pointing to social consensus in Himachal, the PROBE (1999) report notes:

“The PROBE investigators were struck by the exceptionally high level of parental motivation for education in Himachal Pradesh. Most parents take it for granted that schooling is an essential part of every child’s upbringing, and have ambitious hopes for their own children’s education...In contrast with the situation in the other (north Indian) states, where practical expectations from the schooling system vary between different communities, the passion for education in Himachal Pradesh is widely shared. People consider schooling to be important not only for their own children but for all children.”²⁰⁶

Social consensus is connected to the concept of social capital, which sees networks, norms, and relationships in society as a form of capital investment that has an aggregate impact on productivity and institutional performance.²⁰⁷ Like other forms of capital, such as

²⁰⁵ De and Dreze 1999, p. 24

²⁰⁶ De and Dreze 1999, p. 117 In Himachal, the percentage share of child labor in 2004-05 has declined from 8.1% in 2001 to 0.15% in 2009-10. The percentage of Out of School Children in Himachal Pradesh is 0.3%. Gujarat, another state which has comparable levels of per capita income to Himachal, but is a far more divisive society, child labor levels have risen from 4.3% in 2001 to 7.8% in 2009.

²⁰⁷ Uphoff 2000

natural and human capital, studies have shown that social capital has the potential for improving institutional performance.²⁰⁸ A large plethora of work in development studies has focused on improving social capital to improve the impact of development programs.

Social capital has also been found to improve the impact on educational outcomes.²⁰⁹ A study analyzing the dropout patterns of college students in the US found that religiously based high schools and children whose parents did not move frequently had a much lower dropout rate than children whose parents moved frequently and those who were in secular schools. If a family moves often, the social relations that constitute social capital are broken at each move. Similarly, religiously based high schools are surrounded by a community based on the religious organization: the adults are members of the same religious body and parents of children in the same school and the social relations between parents acted as an effective check on the children in the community.²¹⁰ Social equality facilitates the emergence of consensual social norms on educational matters. It also creates cooperative action for the provision of local public services, cooperation between parents and teachers, cooperation between parents, and cooperation between teachers and management.

Studies on the determinants of child labor have pointed out that social disadvantages based on caste gender are a determinant of child labor.²¹¹ Children of backward castes are more vulnerable to getting drawn into the workforce--in the age-group of ten to fourteen years, the work participation rate (WPR) of children is highest for *Adivasis*, followed by *Dalits* and other castes.²¹² The gendered division of child labor is more subtle: girls are more involved in household chores compared to boys, and since household chores are excluded from statistics on child labor, therefore the girl-child's presence in the child-workforce is 'invisible.' Further, the disaggregation of gender along caste lines shows that lower caste girls are most vulnerable to getting drawn into the workforce. Thus, gender discrimination is accentuated by marginalization based on social category. This suggests that ubiquitous presence of social disadvantages overlap with poverty to create complex forms of social discrimination. Harris & White (2002) define social discrimination as the process through which:

“individuals with the same endowments (assets, entitlements, rights, skills, education, experience) but differing in social group (caste, religion, gender, ethnicity etc.) command different tangible returns (income, development benefits, realised entitlements) and less tangible ones (such as dignity and respect). Social discrimination is necessarily an intergroup social phenomenon transcending class differentiation ...social and cultural norms become the basis for defining intergroup relationships which in turn govern status relationships

²⁰⁸ Putnam 1993; Uphoff 2000

²⁰⁹ Coleman 1989; Dika & Singh 2002

²¹⁰ Coleman 1987

²¹¹ Brown et al 2002, Nambissan 1996, Chandrashekhar 1997

²¹² "Employment and Unemployment Situation in India, 2004-05." In *National Sample Survey 61st Round July 2004- June 2005*. (New Delhi: NSSO, Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation, Government of India, 2005).

(social rank, domination subordination), the division of labor in the economy, and sanctions (rewards and punishments).²¹³

The implementation of social policy does not take place in a social or cultural vacuum. It is in the presence of these social discriminations that bureaucrats implement elementary education policies. While caste may be a dominant social cleavage in one state, the cleavages between castes may be less divisive in other states.²¹⁴ Similarly, levels of gender discrimination vary across states.²¹⁵ I argue that the salience of such social discrimination based on caste and gender divisions conditions the impact of bureaucratic effectiveness and shapes parental decision-making on sending children to work. In the following sections, I explain how sharp cleavages along caste-lines and gender discrimination at the state-level hamper the formation of a social consensus on education, and indirectly influence the effectiveness of the bureaucracy in supplying education.

3.4.2 How Caste-cleavages hamper Social Consensus on Education

Access to schools varies across the Indian states, and is not merely a question of schools being physically available. What also matters is the social and emotional distance that parents and students experience from the school. For instance, in north Indian states like Rajasthan, and UP, where caste cleavages are strong, physical access to schools is a reality, but the social access to schools still remains a challenge.²¹⁶ However, in states like Kerala, where caste boundaries have become blurred to an extent that caste is no longer the predominant cleavage²¹⁷ access to schools among children of lower castes is far more equitable.

In states where caste cleavages are sharper, parents and children from lower castes experience greater barriers to accessing the schooling system in several ways. First, studies have shown that teacher attitudes, peer relations, and an alien curriculum make it difficult for children of lower castes to access schools in a free and equal manner as children of higher castes.²¹⁸ In a survey across Indian states, children were asked if the teacher treated them nicely. It found that while seventy-six percent of the upper caste children responded that their teacher treated them nicely, only sixty-six percent of *Dalit* children felt that way.²¹⁹ Qualitative research has documented the numerous ways in which lower-caste students are discriminated against by the schooling system.

²¹³ Harriss-White and Prakash 2002 p. 1

²¹⁴ Thorat and Attewell 2007

²¹⁵ Dyson and Moore 1983; Kambhampati and Rajan (2008)

²¹⁶ De and Dreze 1999

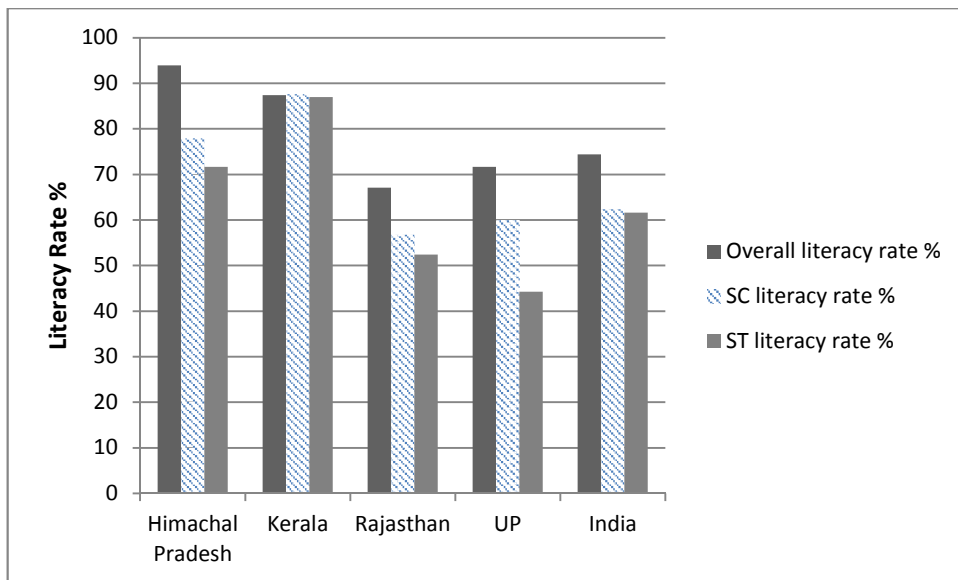
²¹⁷ Varshney 2008

²¹⁸ Nambissan and Sedwal 2002

²¹⁹ Jenkins & Barr 2006

Second, states in which caste is salient, a larger proportion of lower caste parents are traditionally excluded from the schooling system.²²⁰ Figure 3.4 shows that the overall literacy of *Dalits* (officially referred to as Scheduled Castes or SCs) and *Adivasis* (Scheduled Tribes or STs) are lower than the general population in the four states of Himachal, Kerala, Rajasthan, and UP. I chose the same four states as in Figure 3.3 for consistency in comparison. A large number of studies have shown that if parents are educated, there is a higher likelihood that children will be sent to school instead of work.²²¹ Therefore, it is far more likely that the lower-caste parents who have never gone to school will send their children to work than poor parents from other castes who have had the privilege of at least some education.

Figure 3.4 : Literacy Rates in India and Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh (2010-11)



Source: i) Overall literacy rate: Census of India 2011; ii) SC/ST literacy rate: “Rural Development Statistics 2010-11.

Third, parent’s own illiteracy and lack of education increases the perceived costs associated with sending their children to school. Even when parents value education, they may feel that it is not really achievable for them, or they may consider that the benefits of education are important only beyond a certain stage, and that there is little chance of their child reaching that stage.²²² Another reason that deters poor, illiterate parents is the “social distance” they experience in accessing the school and its teachers. The absence of a tradition of schooling in the community, coupled with the indifference of teachers, who usually come

²²⁰Nambissan 1996

²²¹Grootaert and Kanbur 1995

²²²Dreze and Sen1999

from more privileged, often high-caste backgrounds create a sense of alienation among illiterate low-caste parents. Parents who have traditionally been denied access to the schooling may experience a sense of intimidation in negotiating bureaucratic red tape like having to fill out admission forms, applying for certificates, or signing school documents which might require at least basic literacy from parents. In the absence of any forum to facilitate parents' interaction with the school, it might be easier for a poor, low-caste parent to send a child to work than to send her to school.

Fourth, years of marginalization and of being told that education is only the privilege of a few, makes even parents internalize the myth that their children are incapable of learning. So when children fail in school, instead of blaming the teacher, or the inadequacies in the schooling system, parents blame themselves and their children. Studies have also shown that even lower caste teachers harbour an attitude that children of the poor, lower castes cannot learn. A World Bank study (2004) in the state of UP showed that when students mentioned their last names in their examination-sheets through which their caste was identifiable, teachers gave the lower caste students lower scores than their upper caste classmates. However, the interesting finding of this study was that the lower caste teachers were more likely to give a lower grade to a lower caste student than an upper caste teacher.²²³ This indicates a strong internalization of the belief even among the lower caste themselves that their children are unable to learn.

This pervasive lack of faith in their own children's intelligence leads parents to give up as soon as the child faces some difficulty in school. Whereas these children may have learned if they had continued in school in spite of some failures, dropping out instead becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy of the belief that a child of a lower caste parent from an underprivileged family is unable to learn.²²⁴ It is possible that had the child continued in school, they might have eventually succeeded to learn. In an insightful theoretical explanation of why poor children don't go to school, Banerjee & Duflo (2011) argue that poor parents have high (even unrealistic) ambitions of what schooling can do for their children. But their expectations from their own children are very low. This combination of high ambition and low expectation is described as "lethal."²²⁵ They observe:

"The teacher ignores the children who have fallen behind and the parent stops taking interest in their education. If they give up they will never find out if the child could have made it. And in contrast, families that assume that their children can make it, or families that don't want to accept that a child of theirs will remain uneducated, which tend to be, for obvious historical reasons, more elite families, end up confirmed in their 'high hopes.'"²²⁶

²²³ Hoff and Pandey 2004

²²⁴ Banerjee & Duflo 2011

²²⁵ Banerjee & Duflo 2011

²²⁶ Banerjee & Duflo 2011, p. 92

Does this mean that the presence of caste-cleavages within a state will inevitably lead to a low social consensus on education? That is always not the case. Kerala is a state where caste-divisions were historically quite sharp, yet Kerala has a high social consensus on education. Further, hill-states such as Himachal and Uttaranchal in northern India have a far higher social consensus on education than other north Indian states such as UP and Bihar. The process of historical development of elementary education across states or special community characteristics prevalent in the state may blur caste divisions to create a social consensus on education.

The trajectory may have been different for different states, but in each case it culminates in varying outcomes in levels of social consensus on education across states. In Kerala, for instance, the intensive social movements in favour of higher education were accompanied by lower caste movements for inclusion in the nineteenth century. These movements had the effect of blurring distinctions of caste and creating a social consensus on education. The creation of a social consensus was supported by the ruling dynasties of that period.²²⁷ On the other hand, the creation of social consensus on education in Himachal which did not witness a lower-caste movement could be explained by the intrinsic nature of hill societies. Though caste distinctions exist in Himachal Pradesh like other states in North India, they tend to take a less hierarchical and exploitative form than in many other regions. De and Dreze (1999) argues that this feature is linked to the relatively equitable access to productive resources since disadvantaged groups have their own means of survival in the land-abundant and less densely populated hill villages. The power of caste hierarchies which are sustained by the dependence of disadvantaged groups on privileged groups in most North Indian states is relatively less powerful in hill-states. Exchange of labor among households during harvest time, celebrating festivals and weddings together are activities in which the entire hill villages participate. The cohesive nature of these societies facilitates civic cooperation. The momentum towards education for all builds on this foundation of community participation.

In sharp contrast, community participation is hard to build in the unequal setting of caste-ridden villages in rigidly hierarchical societies like Rajasthan or UP. Historically, *Dalits* and *Adivasis* have less access to land and have been denied access to wells, forests, and other common property resources in the village. For instance, the percentage of landless households among *Adivasis* in Rajasthan is seventy percent, in UP its seventy-five percent. In contrast, the proportion of landless households is nine percent in Himachal and fourteen percent in Kerala as a percentage of total *Adivasi* households.²²⁸ Since *Adivasis* constitute large proportion of landless peasants in Rajasthan and UP, they are economically dependent on higher caste landlords, an economic relationship that only serves to perpetuate the existing

²²⁷ For details on the rise of an educational movement in Kerala, see Weiner 1991 and Varshney 2008.

²²⁸ Rural Development Statistics 2010-11 (Ministry of Rural Development, GoI, 2011)

caste hierarchies. Households of the *Dalits* are usually huddled together in the periphery of the village. Earlier, a higher caste would not walk in the shadow of a lower caste person, or lower castes could not use the roadways used by higher castes. Though such severe forms of social distance have lessened over time, the inequities are still evident. For instance, marriages between castes are looked down upon if not severely punished. The proportion of inter-caste marriages are two percent in Rajasthan and four percent in UP. In contrast, Himachal has eleven percent inter caste marriages and Kerala has twenty-two percent inter-caste marriages.²²⁹ The low social interaction between castes hampers community participation.

In states where caste conflicts are sharp, the privileged higher-castes have insidious motives to keep education outside the reach of the lower-castes as a means of perpetuating the traditional power-relationship and preventing the lower-castes from demanding equal rights in public employment. For instance, in Rajasthan, the development of education has been spearheaded by the high-caste royal families and remained outside the reach of lower castes.²³⁰ Anecdotal instances of higher caste within a village going to a particular school, while lower caste children go to another school, or, instances where higher-caste parents have objected to their children being served midday meals with children of lower-castes have been documented.²³¹ In cases where there is sharp caste-salience, it is much less likely that parents of different social groups will come together to demand better quality of education. Such a social consensus on education, inherited over centuries makes their way into teacher attitudes, bureaucratic beliefs, and even towards the beliefs of disadvantaged parents, imbuing them with a loss of confidence in the educational system. These social divisions hamper the creation of a social consensus on education. On the contrary, where caste is not as salient, parents have more bargaining power through collective action to ensure accountability of the educational bureaucracy.

3.4.3 How Gender Disparities Hamper Social Consensus on Education

In states where gender biases are more salient, the social consensus on education is lower than states where there is greater gender equality because parents don't consider education to be as important for their daughters as it is for their sons. In Chapter 2, I presented findings from the school participation literature which showed that the threshold of difficulty that parents will face in order to send their daughters to school is lower than for sons—a large number of quantitative and qualitative studies show evidence on how parents prefer to send their son to school while daughters (often eldest siblings) are withdrawn from school to

²²⁹ NFHS 2005-06

²³⁰ Verma 1986

²³¹ De and Dreze 1999

participate in farm-work, look after siblings or to do household chores.²³² This behavior of parents is dictated by norms relating to protecting a girls' sanctity which constrain her mobility outside home, such that parents are hesitant to send their girl-child either to school, or to work. Thus traditional norms that constrain female labor-force participation and prevents girls from supporting parents financially after marriage discourages parents from investing in a daughter's education.

Parental attitudes towards daughter's education have to be examined in the context of kinship studies that point towards a systematic regional variation on attitudes towards female autonomy, freedom, and education across the states in India. States where girls are not considered as equally valuable as boys are states where the social consensus for education, i.e. education for *all* is low. Studies have found that in states where rates of return to education for women are perceived to be lower, less was spent on girls' education, compared to states in which rates of return to education were perceived to be higher.²³³ For instance, Meghalaya, a relatively poor state happens to be the only state in India where the female literacy rate (77.2 percent) is higher compared to the male literacy rate (74.04 percent).²³⁴ The culture of the tribes in the Meghalaya dictates that daughters look after parents after marriage, female participation in workforce is high, and women have high social mobility makes it worthwhile for parents to invest in the education of girls. Studies have found that states where there is high female literacy are also states where girls are more likely to go to school, and less likely to be doing household chores.²³⁵ This might reflect greater female autonomy, but it also reflects a higher social consensus on education so that regions in which women are normally literate are ones where it is the norm to educate girls as much as boys. Thus, the education of girls may have less to do with the economic status, and more to do with community-level features that are reflective of the cultural characteristics of a region.

Fig 3.5 shows variation in attitudes towards girl children across four states. For instance, the preference for sons to daughters is higher in the northern states of Rajasthan (57.6 percent) and UP (54.9 percent) compared to Himachal Pradesh (11.8 percent) and Kerala (11 percent). Even though Himachal is a northern state, in terms of gender relations, Himachali women are more equal than their other north Indian counterparts. Due to the more egalitarian nature of hill societies, Himachali women have much higher work participation rates outside the home and experience much more social mobility compared to women in other North Indian states. This contributes to economic independence, greater decision-making power, social acceptance of higher education for women, and more active

²³² Chaudhuri 1997

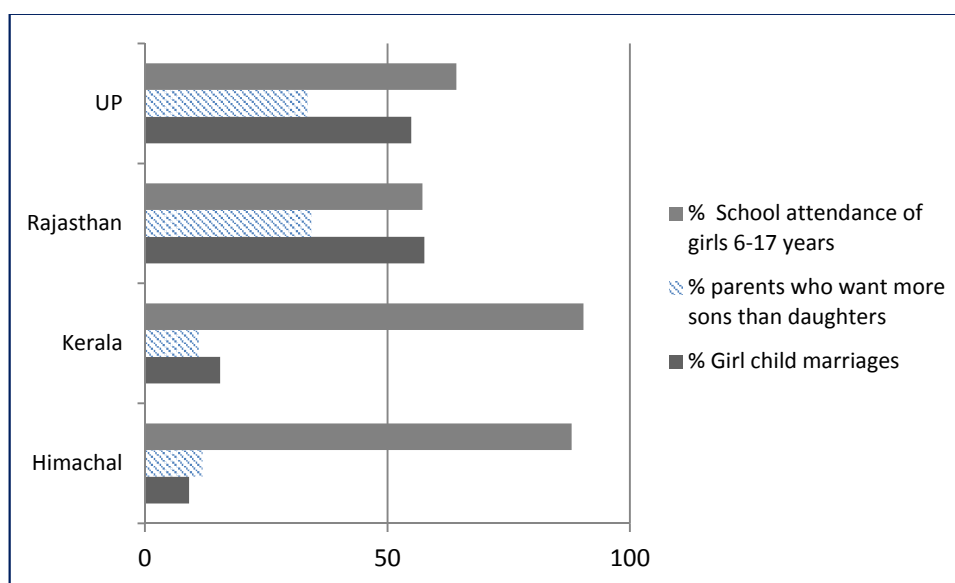
²³³ Kambhampati and Rajan 2008

²³⁴ Census of India 2011

²³⁵ Kambhampati and Rajan 2008

participation in politics. These equitable social norms lead to far lower rates of gender discrimination. For instance, child mortality rates are lower for girls in Himachal than for boys unlike other states. The variation in attitudes towards women across states is further reflected in the fact that the percentage of girls in the age group of six to seventeen years attending school is much lower in Rajasthan (57.2 percent), and UP (64.2 percent) compared to Himachal (88 percent) and Kerala (90.4 percent).

Figure 3.5 : Percentage of Parental Preference for Girls, Girl Child Marriages and School Attendance in UP, Rajasthan, Kerala, Himachal Pradesh (2005-06)



Source: i) Preference for sons: NFHS 2005-06; ii) Girl Child marriages: “Child Marriage: UNICEF Information Sheet-November 2011”²³⁶; iii) School Attendance of girls: NFHS 2005-06.

The low social consensus on female education has implications for child labor in two ways. First, depending on norms related to girls’ mobility outside her home, girls will either be involved in household activities or be sent to work outside the house. Parents may think that she will stay protected in the house till she gets married off, or they may send her to work to help the family, or to accumulate money for her dowry. Girls who are not going to school are more vulnerable to being drawn into the workforce. If social consensus on education is not very strong, the temptation to send her to work will be much higher as a means to increase the income of the family, even if the family does not absolutely need the income of the child for survival. For instance, in Andhra, parents withdraw school-going girls and send them to work in the hybrid cottonseed industry while their sons continue to go to schools.²³⁷

Second, when one generation of daughters are deprived of education it increases the likelihood that the next generation of children will go to work. Studies have shown that

²³⁶ “Child Marriage: UNICEF Information Sheet”, November 2011

²³⁷ Venkateswarlu 2010

mother's education is one of the most significant and consistent determinants of whether a child, especially a girl-child will go to work. Children of educated mothers are more likely to go to school than children of illiterate mothers. Therefore, when the social consensus on female education is low, the inter-generational transfer of children in the workforce is likely to be higher.

3.4.4 Impact of Social Consensus on Parental Motivation

In Figure 3.1, we see that social consensus for education influences parental motivation in two ways--direct influence through 'peer pressure' and 'demonstration effect' on parents; and indirectly, through improving accountability of the bureaucracy.

Social consensus on education directly influences parents because the power of a norm favoring education does not exist in a family in isolation but is socially determined. Societies have a way of instilling norms of behavior and causing conformity with them to be seen as right or natural. There may be an evolutionary force at work, or a tendency for bearers of successful behavior patterns to survive differentially.²³⁸ In that sense, the motivation for education has an important social dimension. A parent's motivation in sending a child to school is shaped, directed, and constrained by social context.²³⁹ In reality, parental attitudes are highly interdependent: what one person thinks about the value of education may be strongly influenced by other persons' views on this within his or her family, community or neighborhood.

The influence of a community norm on parents would work in two ways: through 'peer pressure' and through 'demonstration effect.' 'Peer pressure' means parents would be encouraged to send their own children to school if others did so too. For instance, where a social custom for early marriage prevails, parents fear social sanction in their villages if they send their daughters to school instead of marrying them off.²⁴⁰ During the course of fieldwork in Andhra, an NGO worker explained that conducting door-to-door campaigns with parents to make them aware of the harmful implications of child marriage. He said, "Once the entire community is convinced that girls should also be educated, parents are more willing to send their daughters to school. Peer-pressure plays a big role in tightly-knit village communities—parents fear what others will say if they don't marry their daughters early and educate them too much."²⁴¹ Some parents in the PROBE survey said that if other parents sent their daughters to school, then they would send their own daughters too.²⁴² Parents are forced to send their children to school if their children experience embarrassment because they are not

²³⁸ Dasgupta & Serageldin 2000

²³⁹ Coleman 2000

²⁴⁰ As explained by a parent in the Andhra village of Dornipadu during fieldwork.

²⁴¹ Interview with MV Foundation Resource person, Hyderabad, February 05, 2012

²⁴² De and Dreze 1999, p. 24

going to school but their peers are. This is particularly true in closely-knit village communities where the community norm has a strong influence on individual behavior.

An important aspect of the social dimension of education is that of ‘demonstration effect’: parents learn from what they observe in the community. In a middle class family in India, all of a child’s friends and neighbors go to school. So the question of not sending a child to school, or letting him drop-out is not even entertained. But among illiterate parents in a remote *Adivasi* village where almost every adult is illiterate, there are not many role models to draw on to send their children to school. When parents see that the children in a neighboring village or in their own village are able to read the newspaper, understand medicine labels, calculate their wages, or are able to get a job they are more willing to invest in their children’s education.

Figure 3.1 also demonstrates an indirect effect of social consensus on parental motivation—through increasing accountability of the bureaucracy, which in turn should improve school quality and encourage parents to send their children to school. A social consensus on education reduces transaction costs, increases information symmetry, and galvanizes individual parental grievances into collective action to ensure accountability. In the absence of sharp cleavages across groups, the transaction costs for the provision of education is lowered if the community can bargain with the bureaucracy to provide them their legal entitlements guaranteed by prevailing elementary education laws. Further, the community can set up enforcement and monitoring mechanisms to ensure that the bureaucracy fulfils its commitments.

A social consensus on education also leads to better information about the benefits of education to those who have traditionally been excluded from the education process. Studies have shown that parents who have gone to school even for a few years are keen to send their children to school because they have more information regarding the benefits of education.²⁴³ Greater interest in education leads them to become more involved in the quality of education imparted in schools and also make them aware of the mechanisms available to the community to exercise oversight on the schooling system. The decrease in information asymmetries between those with access to education and those without leads to increase in accountability of the bureaucracy. A World Bank study in 2006-2007 in three states in India (Karnataka, MP and UP) found that provision of information to the community about its oversight roles in public schools led to positive impact on behavior of teachers, delivery of entitled benefits to students (stipends, uniforms, midday meals) and learning outcomes of students in all three states.²⁴⁴

²⁴³ Kambhampati and Rajan 2008

²⁴⁴ Pandey *et al* 2008

When there is a social consensus favoring education for all children, the community is able to exercise a stronger check on the schooling system. Under the SSA, a community-based mechanism called Village Education Committee (VEC) is required to be set up in all government schools. A study of VECs in fourteen states found that overall, VECs had succeeded in increasing enrolment and attendance, improvement in schooling infrastructure, and increasing parental involvement within the schooling system.²⁴⁵ This suggests that increased involvement of parents and the village community improves the performance of schools. Studies have shown that where there are strong cleavages among ethnic groups, the inferior groups have less access to public goods because groups are less able to work together to extract public goods from the state.²⁴⁶ Therefore, if the social-groups across a state believe that education should be accessible to all, they are able to exert collective pressure on the state to provide equitable access to education.

A low social consensus on education undercuts bureaucratic effectiveness in the delivery of education. For instance, teachers are discouraged when parents condone or encourage the absence of their children from schools. Or it is difficult for bureaucrats to convince parents to send their daughters to school if they are bound by traditional norms that daughters should work at home, or get married at a young age. For instance in Rajasthan, twenty-nine percent women in rural areas are married before the age of fifteen and sixty percent below the legally permissible age of eighteen years. Eight out of ten women who were married before eighteen had never gone to school. Unless a social consensus on education is created, where the education for girls is seen as equally important as the education of boys, the existence of schools is not sufficient for parents to send their children to school. Hence, the social consensus on education affects the bureaucratic effectiveness in the delivery of education.

When there is a strong social norm to send children to school, it is much more likely that the bureaucracy will perform a better job of supplying schools. Esman (1997) argues that in ethnically heterogeneous societies like India, cleavages along ethnic lines constitutes an important dimension of public affairs and pervades the entire environment in which the bureaucracy operates. For states where caste salience is very high, the state bureaucracy would be dominated by better-educated high-caste individuals who would have an interest in recruiting their own kind and ensuring that lower-caste individuals stay uneducated, so that they cannot demand white collar jobs. In such a scenario, even the implementation of programs may be skewed to favor one kind of claimants over others. In a study of distribution of public goods in India, Banerjee and Somanathan (2007) found that the relative positions of social groups in the broader social hierarchy determined their access to public goods like

²⁴⁵ Singh 2011

²⁴⁶ Dayton-Johnson and Bardhan 2001

education. Areas with a higher concentration of high-caste *Brahmins* have more access to public schools. Therefore, in a scenario where bureaucrats also believe that education should be equally accessible to all children, they are more likely to provide schools equitably across all areas, than to favor one group over another.

To summarize, bureaucratic effectiveness in the implementation of elementary education policy has a direct impact on parental motivation. Further, bureaucratic effectiveness itself is affected by the social consensus on education. The social consensus on education is low in those states that have high social discrimination on grounds of caste and gender. A high social consensus on education affects levels of child labor directly by influencing parents through peer pressure and demonstration effect. It conditions the levels of child labor indirectly by increasing the accountability of the bureaucracy.

In this study, we regard social consensus on education as varying at an aggregate state-level and examine its relationship with child labor levels in the state.²⁴⁷ H3 and H4 will test whether the effect of bureaucratic effectiveness in keeping children in school and away from the workforce is weakened in states that practice high levels of gender discrimination or caste salience, and therefore have a low social consensus on education.

H3: States that have higher social consensus among caste groups should have lower rates of child labor than states that have lower social consensus among caste groups.

H4: States that have higher social consensus on female education should have lower rates of child labor than states that have lower social consensus among caste groups.

The importance of socio-cultural factors on individual level motivation is tested in H5 and H6. While H2 only tested the effect of bureaucratic effectiveness at the individual level, H5 and H6 tests the high caste salience and high gender discrimination affects parental motivation in sending a child to work.

H5: Higher social consensus among caste groups in the village community should reduce the likelihood of a child joining the labor force, than if there is lower social consensus among caste groups.

H6: Higher social consensus on female education in the village community should reduce the likelihood of a child joining the labor force, than if there is lower social consensus on female education.

²⁴⁷ Anirudh Krishna in his study on social capital in India says that social capital varies across states and even varies within states.

3.5 Is Social Consensus on Education Immutable? The Role of Civil Society Organizations

Is a social consensus on education immutable or does it evolve over time? The above discussion suggests that attitudes towards the education of lower castes, or girls shape social consensus. Are these attitudes fixed, or can they be changed through public interventions? Historical evidence suggests that norms towards education slowly but surely change. This is most evident in attitudes towards girl's education. Earlier, parents even harbored extreme superstitious views that an educated girl was likely to become a widow.²⁴⁸ Today, education is at least considered an important part of a woman's upbringing, even if parental ambitions in this respect continue to be modest. Other interventions that have helped in changing attitudes towards education are employment reservation policies that have enhanced the educational aspirations of the lower castes. Public interventions through incentive schemes such as the midday meal scheme in government schools have also been found to increase parental motivation.²⁴⁹

An important force that shapes parental attitudes towards children's work and school are CSOs. (Though scholars have debated that CSOs may also include fundamentalist groups, or terrorist groups, in this study, I limit the understanding of CSOs as groups that work with the poor with a positive objective such as redistribution, or restoration of their rights. CSOs are not a part of government and are not conventional for-profit business. Even if certain social disparities are salient within a community, a CSO may succeed in bridging the societal divides to create a social consensus for education.)

Since the 1980s there has been a proliferation of CSOs in India, particularly Non-government organizations, or NGOs (I use the terms CSOs and NGOs interchangeably in this study).²⁵⁰ The ideologies and strategies of CSOs involved in mitigation of child labor and universal education have been discussed in Chapter 4. Some of the advantages attributed to CSOs is particularly relevant in the Indian context, given the size and diversity of the Indian subcontinent: their strong presence in rural areas allows them to deliver cost effective and appropriate services to the poor;²⁵¹ they are better positioned to represent the views of the poor;²⁵² they can establish grassroots mechanisms through which rural poor can express themselves; and their small scale and flexibility allow rapid response to their needs.²⁵³ In the context of this study, the role of CSOs with the state bureaucracy and the community at large is relevant.

²⁴⁸ De and Dreze 1999

²⁴⁹ Dreze and Kingdon 2001

²⁵⁰ Sen 1999; Tandon 2002

²⁵¹ Farnworth 1991

²⁵² Clark 1991

²⁵³ Korten 1987

Figure 3.2 shows the role of CSOs in the theoretical scheme of this dissertation. CSOs are inserted to the basic theoretical formulation shown in Figure 3.1. CSOs animate both the bureaucracy and the social consensus on education over a period of time. The social consensus on education is shaped by caste and social discrimination, but these disparities can be overcome by civil society action. For instance, in traditional Kerala which had strong caste and class cleavages historically, the influence of missionaries succeeded in creating a norm in favor of education.²⁵⁴ In response, the Travancore and Cochin rulers, who were Hindus, funded their own schools to appease the high caste Nairs, worried about a Christian invasion. Even the Ezhavas, Kerala's low caste community who worked on the coir, tea and coffee plantations were incorporated into schools and even opened their own schools. Weiner (1991) attributes the success of Kerala's education to the passing of compulsory education law in 1904. However, a consensus that education is important for social mobility not only for the Nairs, but also for the Ezhavas and Muslims gradually emerged in the nineteenth century itself, *before* the passing of the compulsory education law. Social consensus for education emerged in a deeply divided society and was complemented by the support of rulers. Compulsory education law, therefore, was only a step in the causal chain. Thus the presence of civil society action, through the Christian missionaries, the upper-caste movement, and the lower-caste groups spearheaded the creation of a social consensus on education in Kerala. In the presence of proactive CSOs a social consensus on education can be generated.

The formation of a social consensus on education is shaped by *how* CSOs mobilize the community on the issue of sending all children to school. This means that the strategies of community mobilization utilized by CSOs are critical. CSOs have to formulate strategies to ensure that a social consensus on education is formulated in the community. Once the community understands the importance of education, child labor will automatically decline. CSOs have a greater probability of influencing the public agenda if they empower the community to make demands from the state, instead of making direct demands, since government organizations are more likely to yield to public demand than to pressure from CSOs. Further, CSOs are more likely to influence the public agenda by facilitating the emergence of local self-sustaining member organizations within the community which make the bureaucracy accountable.²⁵⁵ Creating local ownership is more likely to create sustainability of CSO interventions.

A positive relationship between CSOs and the state is a pre-requisite for success of creation of a broad social consensus on education.²⁵⁶ A positive CSO-bureaucracy relationship is more likely to be created if CSOs provide a supportive role, instead of adopting a critical

²⁵⁴ Weiner 1991

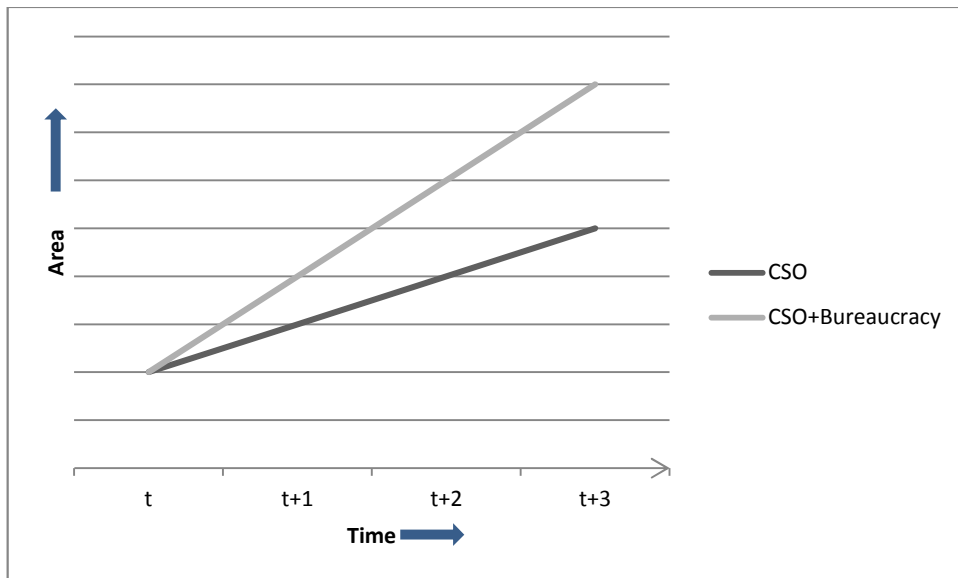
²⁵⁵ Farrington *et al* 1993

²⁵⁶ Farrington *et al* 1993

and cynical role towards state institutions. A “supportive role” would mean strengthening existing state institutions by facilitating linkage between community and the state, instead of replicating state institutions, or focusing on service delivery on behalf of the state.

The spread of the social consensus on education also depends on the collaboration of CSOs and the bureaucracy. CSOs are limited in terms of their resources. So they are constrained in spreading their innovations to a wide area. Innovations-technological, methodological, and institutional, developed by CSOs would acquire broader reach if state officials were to adopt them and apply them on a wider scale.²⁵⁷ Figure 3.6 diagrammatically represents the spread of the social consensus on education. When CSOs mobilize the public on the issue of education, the social consensus on education spreads over time (X-axis). However, when CSOs collaborate with the bureaucracy to socially mobilize on education, the social consensus on education spreads to a wider geographical area.

Figure 3.6 : Spread of the Social Consensus on Education



Hypotheses H7a to H7d lays down certain strategies of mobilization of CSOs at the grassroots level that are expected to create a social consensus on education. H7a to H7c relate to CSO strategies in relation to parents and the wider community, while H7d relate to CSOs strategies towards the bureaucracy.

H7a: CSOs that focus on influencing all parents in the community to send their children to school should be more successful in reducing child labor than CSOs that focus on only withdrawing children from the workforce.

H7b: CSOs that focus on an inclusive approach by influencing diverse groups in the community on the importance of education of children should be more successful than CSOs that adopt a go-it-alone approach in withdrawing children from the workforce.

²⁵⁷ Edwards and Hulme 1992

H7c: CSOs that focus on improving the quality of government-schools by facilitating the emergence of community-based institutional mechanisms for monitoring the schools should be more successful in withdrawing children from the workforce than CSOs that only focus on withdrawing children from the workforce.

*H7d: CSOs that collaborate with the bureaucracy should be more successful in scaling up their operations and spreading their influence across a larger area than CSOs that adopt an antagonistic approach towards the bureaucracy.*²⁵⁸

Studies have emphasized on the importance of wider socio-political context in influencing the formation of a social consensus.²⁵⁹ “Socio-political” context is a catch-all term and can have multiple interpretations. I argue that two contextual factors shape the formation of a social consensus on education and the collaboration of bureaucracies at the state-level—a culture of community participation arising from a historical tradition of social movements in the state which makes bureaucracy receptive to civil society demands; and the presence of a supportive political leader who is ideologically inclined and open towards universal education.

There has been a proliferation of studies on the importance of community participation following the trend towards decentralization and participatory governance in India since the 1990s. In the era of decentralization and debureaucratization, both state and non-state agencies like the World Bank are promoting community participation as an ideal for participatory governance.²⁶⁰ Putnam (1993), through his comparative study of Italian regions showed that a participatory civic culture was instrumental to good governance, while others like Sen (1999) argued that by enlarging the normative goals of empowerment, equity and human agency, participation builds ‘capabilities’ and far outweighs efficiency as a goal. Based on these perceived benefits of community participation, the Indian state is increasingly relying on the idea of community participation to fashion development interventions, like joint forest management committees, women’s self-help groups, etc. that utilize pre-existing social networks or create new ones.²⁶¹ CSOs would find it easier to build a social consensus on education in states that have historical tradition of mass based civil society movements. This would enable CSOs to build large grass-roots coalitions, stimulate participation in education and therefore, build a broad based consensus on education. Further, in states with a culture of community participation the bureaucracy would have a history of interacting with civil society and would therefore be receptive to civil society demands. This would ease

²⁵⁸ Edwards and Hulme 1992

²⁵⁹ Farrington *et al* 1993

²⁶⁰ Puri 2004

²⁶¹ Govinda and Diwan 2002; Uphoff *et al* 1998

collaboration of CSOs and the state bureaucracy and enable the spread of the social consensus of education.

Weiner (1991) elaborates on how no political party in India has child labor on its electoral agenda. This is ascribed as one reason why the agenda of child labor elimination in India is not implemented widely. At the state level, the support of a political regime is a critical factor in bringing about widespread change in child labor. Even if there is no policy change on child labor at the national level, the support of a state-level political party/leader to the issue of child labor or universal education will take the cause of child labor forward. This leads to hypotheses H7e and H7f:

H7e: A culture of community participation should make it easier for CSOs to build a social consensus on education.

H7f: The presence of a supportive political leader who is ideologically inclined and open towards universal education is expected to play a positive role in creating a social consensus on education.

3.6 Research Design

These hypotheses exploit the variation offered by India's vast and complex democracy to test causal mechanisms at both the aggregate- state and the individual level.

The argument being tested above has two components: a cross-sectional or time-invariant component and a component that tests changes across time. H1-H6 test the cross-sectional component analyzing the relationship of bureaucratic effectiveness and social consensus at the individual and at the state level to prevalence of child labor. Hypotheses 7a-H7d tests variation across time, i.e. it tests the formation of social consensus over time through the intervention of CSOs, while H7e and 7f examines certain contextual factors that help in the formation of a social consensus on education.

To test the above hypotheses, I use a mixed-methods approach—while I use a large-n empirical analysis to test the broad relationships in H1-H6, I adopt a qualitative approach based on fieldwork in the two states of Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan to flesh out the causal mechanisms that are laid down in H7a-H7f. This research design presents a layered analysis—a large-n analysis at the individual-level, substantiated by study of contextual factors at the block-level and the state-level. Statistical methods are used to uncover broad patterns at the national level. Qualitative analysis through field research is employed to understand the causal mechanisms and how these causal patterns then find reflection at the broader state-level and at the lowest block-level.

3.6.1 Methods for Testing National Cross-Sectional Data

First at the state level, H1 tests whether systematic variation in the delivery of education by individual states has a relationship with aggregate rates of child labor at the state

level. The delivery of elementary education policy in India is the primary responsibility of states—therefore, H1 tests how the bureaucratic effectiveness in the delivery of elementary education is correlated with rates of child labor. H3 and H4 test if social consensus on education undercuts the effect of bureaucratic effectiveness on elementary education at the state level.

This study uses a national survey sample of 54,007 conducted across all the 28 states in India conducted by the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) in 2004-05. This survey, known as the India Human Development Survey (IHDS) described in more detail in Chapter 5, constitutes the most detailed and extensive survey across a range of variables that cover quality of schooling experience and details of work profile of children. It is also the first of its kind of survey that asks questions related to social capital of communities. Therefore, the survey covers individual data, but also covers socio-economic and cultural status of the community an individual lives in. The IHDS dataset is used to analyze the impact of bureaucratic effectiveness and social consensus on education on the probability of children joining the workforce, at both the state and the individual level.

Using a range of statistical analyses, this dissertation examines whether the bureaucratic effectiveness in the delivery of education is associated with rates of child labor at the state-level. For the state level analyses, I utilize scatterplots to map the relationship between bureaucratic effectiveness and child labor rates at the state level (H1). With the help of graphs, I show how child labor rates vary with social consensus on education (H3 and H4).

3.6.2 Methods for Testing Individual Cross-Sectional Data

Second, at the individual level, H2 tests the impact of bureaucratic effectiveness in the delivery of elementary education on the probability of a child going to work. The logic here is that if the child has a good experience of learning within the school, there is less probability of a child dropping out and joining the workforce. H2 needs to be tested at the individual level to establish whether there is a relationship between bureaucratic effectiveness and child labor at the individual-level. A large majority of quantitative studies on child labor are at the household-level and the key explanatory variables usually relate to income or assets of the household.²⁶² School-related variables used are limited to availability of schools, measured by the distance to the nearest primary school.²⁶³ In this case, H2 will test the impact of the quality of schooling experience on the probability of a child joining the workforce.

H5 and H6 test the interplay of social consensus on education with bureaucratic effectiveness at the individual level. As explained earlier, social consensus is related to underlying discrimination based on caste or gender. Though caste and gender discriminations

²⁶² Grootaert and Kanbur 1995

²⁶³ Canagarajah and Nielsen 2001

have been accounted for in qualitative studies in the school participation literature, they haven't been tested empirically. The logic of H5 and H6 is that a low social consensus on education (in regions of high gender discrimination and sharp caste-cleavages) would undercut the impact of bureaucratic effectiveness in the delivery of education. Therefore, these two hypotheses test at the individual level whether the high gender discrimination and high caste salience in the community influence the probability of sending a child to work.

For analysis at the individual level, this study uses logistic regression analysis to examine the effect of bureaucratic effectiveness and social consensus on education in the delivery of education on the probability of whether or not a child would join the workforce (H2, H5, H6). The analysis finds compelling evidence of the association between bureaucratic effectiveness and the likelihood of a child joining the workforce, even after controlling for potential confounding effects like income of the household, parents' education, number of siblings, etc.

H2a, H2b, and H2c attempt to empirically test the causal mechanisms to tease out how bureaucratic effectiveness in the delivery of elementary education leads to a child joining the workforce. H2a tests the relationship of bureaucratic effectiveness with the probability of a child's absenting herself from school. H2b tests the correlation of bureaucratic effectiveness with the probability of dropping out of school, and H2c tests the correlation of bureaucratic effectiveness with the level of a child's learning in school. Each of these factors is assumed to contribute to the pool of dropouts and therefore, to the availability of children in the labor force. I use multiple regression analysis to test H2a, H2b and H2c.

3.6.3 Methods for Testing Changes across Time in Two States

While the national data provides persuasive evidence in favor of the H1-H6, the empirical analysis only shows association; it does not provide adequate insights into how the causal mechanisms operate on the ground. Further, H1-H6 is limited to analysis at a point in time. In order to probe into the formation of social consensus over time, I utilize qualitative analysis through case studies in two states of Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan. The case studies serve two objectives: they demonstrate whether strategies of civil society action can lead to formation of a social consensus on education over time (H7a to H7d). They demonstrate the causal mechanisms through which bureaucratic effectiveness and social consensus on education each have a direct effect on parental motivation, and the causal pattern through which social consensus on education conditions bureaucratic effectiveness by creating accountability of the bureaucracy.

H7 tests the variation in the formation of social consensus on education across time. H7a to H7d test strategies whereby CSOs can create sustainability of innovations, and strategies that allows the CSO innovations to be taken to scale. H7e and H7f tests impact of

wider socio-political factors: in this context, H7e tests the impact of a history of community participation in the state. The logic is that the bureaucracies of states that have a history of a social movements and a dense associational life are more receptive to civil society interventions. In such states, it should be easier for a social consensus on education to form and to be scaled up to a wider area. H7f tests the null that support from a political leader does not make any difference to the formation and spread of social consensus. Therefore, this study is set up to test individual and state level factors that explain child labor.

3.6.4 Choice of Cases for Qualitative Analysis

For the purpose of qualitative analysis, I chose to study child labor in the hybrid cottonseed industry in the two Indian states of Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan. The choice to study child labor in one industry that spreads across two states creates the scope for a quasi-experimental research design. Since cross-state analysis is encumbered with a large array of possible explanatory factors, limiting the study to the same industry across two states should control for potentially confounding variables. Both Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan are states that have historically had the highest rates of child labor among all states in India, and both have been on the lower end of the ladder of economic development. In recent years, both states have witnessed a surge in the numbers of children working in the hybrid cottonseed industry—in Andhra, the cottonseed industry is alleged to be employing the largest numbers of children, while Rajasthan supplies a steady supply of migrant children to work in the hybrid cottonseed industry to the neighboring state of Gujarat.

Several reasons drive my choice of the cottonseed industry as the focus of my case studies: First, child labor in the hybrid cottonseed industry is a relatively recent phenomenon. It allows to trace the evolution of trends in child labor within a relatively short span of time. Within a brief snapshot of time, this industry demonstrates comparative changes in trends of levels of child labor which provides a segway to analyze the broader variation in levels of child labor across states. Second, it demonstrates the contemporary trend for employment of child labor in commercial agriculture, i.e. the shift from employing children in family farms to large scale commercial cultivation. It shows how an industry that has brought unprecedented economic growth in the agriculture sector has also created an increase in demand for child labor, thereby questioning the notion that economic growth will necessarily lead to declines in rate of child labor. Third, India has the maximum numbers of children working in agriculture, albeit in family farms, the cottonseed industry is representative of the issues involved in employment of children in agriculture. Fourth, this study shows how the state has responded to civil society interventions, and how that in turn has affected the issue of child labor in the cottonseed industry.

Besides being a strongly contemporary and representative case for study, the geographical spread of the cottonseed industry itself creates the scope for creation of a quasi-experimental research design—the spread of the industry across the two states of Andhra and Rajasthan allows for controlling a large number of potentially confounding factors. Table 3.1 shows the parameters for case selection.

Table 3.1: Parameters for Case Selection

	Parameters for case selection	Andhra Pradesh	Rajasthan
1.	Child labor in the hybrid cottonseed industry	Yes	Yes
2.	Type of child laborer	Dalits; predominantly girls	Adivasis; both boys and girls
3.	Rural per capita income	\$571	\$405
4.	Bureaucratic effectiveness	Moderate	Moderate
5.	Social Consensus on Education	Low	Low
6.	Civil Society action on child labor	Active and led to reduction in levels of child labor	Active but did not lead to reduction in levels of child labor

First, both states supply large numbers of children to work in the hybrid cottonseed industry. Though hybrid cottonseed is grown in several states, the southern state of Andhra alone accounts for more than fifty percent of the child labor employed in the cottonseed industry.²⁶⁴ Studies estimate that there are around 250,000 child laborers in the cottonseed industry in Andhra Pradesh.²⁶⁵ The north-western state of Rajasthan is another state from which around 90,000 child laborers have migrated to work in the bordering cottonseed-producing districts in the neighboring state of Gujarat.²⁶⁶

Second, in both the states, it is children from marginalized backward communities that are employed in the cottonseed industry. The cottonseed industry in Andhra predominantly employs Dalit female child laborers; while in Rajasthan, it is children from the Adivasi tribal belt of south Rajasthan that are recruited for work in the cottonseed industry in Gujarat. The cottonseed industry in both these states is therefore reflective of not just poverty, but also of high social exclusion on grounds of caste and gender.

Third, both Andhra and Rajasthan have similar levels of rural per capita income that allows us to achieve some level of control over the income parameter.

Fourth, the choice of Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan was also guided by the national-level empirical analysis and informed by its results. The empirical analysis shows that at an aggregate state level, both Andhra and Rajasthan have similar levels of bureaucratic effectiveness and social consensus on education. Thus, we have two states, one in northern

²⁶⁴ Venkateswarlu 2010

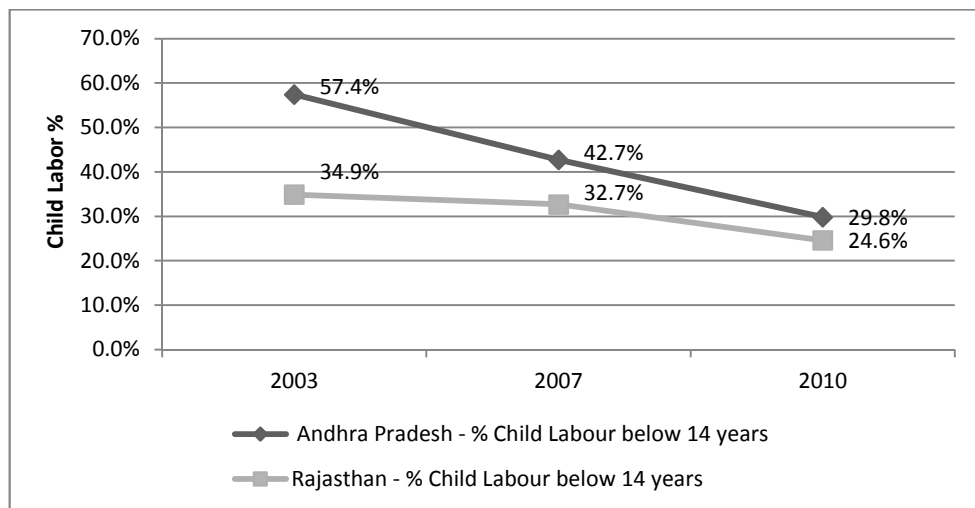
²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

India and another in southern India, that are at similar levels for our key independent variables at the aggregate state level: bureaucratic effectiveness, social consensus and per capita income. Now, both Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan have witnessed intensive civil society movement on the issue of child labor in the hybrid cottonseed industry, but the results have been different in both—while civil society action has resulted in decline of child labor in the hybrid cottonseed industry in Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan continues to be a hotbed for the supply of child labor to the hybrid cottonseed industry in Gujarat.

Figure 3.7 shows the over-time variation in child labor from Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan in the hybrid cottonseed industry.²⁶⁷ Between 2003 and 2010, child labor in the hybrid cottonseed industry in Andhra Pradesh declined from 57.4 percent to 29.8 percent, while the rate of decline in Rajasthan during the same period was from 34.9 percent to 24.6 percent.

Figure 3.7: Child Labor in the Hybrid Cottonseed Industry in Andhra and Rajasthan, (2003-2010)



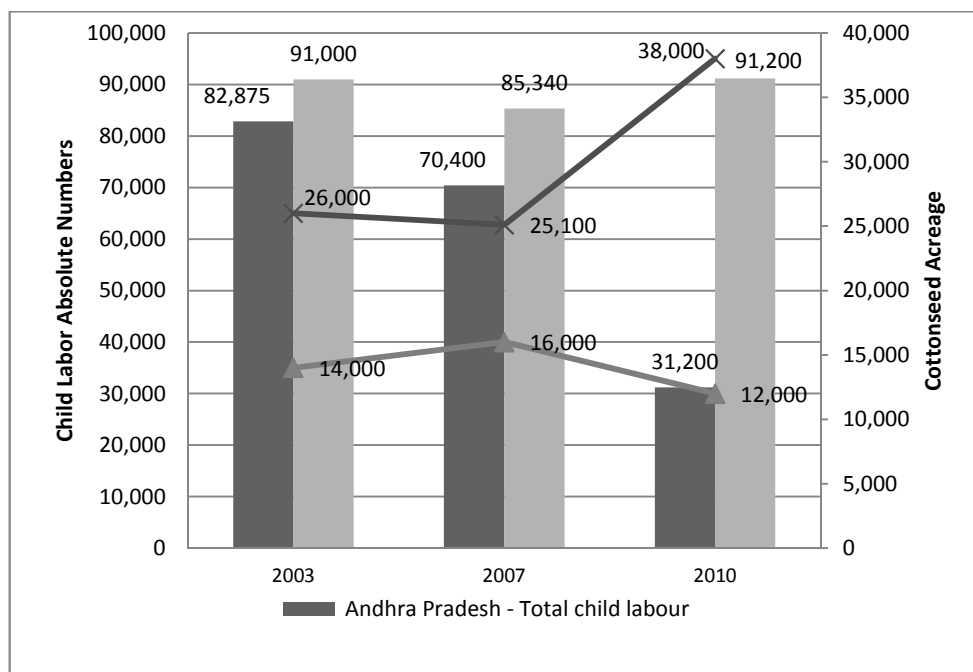
Source: Venkateswarlu 2010

Figure 3.8 makes the trends in decline clearer. Between 2003 and 2010, the absolute numbers of child laborers in the hybrid cottonseed industry Andhra declined from 82,875 to 31,200. In Rajasthan, child laborers increased from 91,000 to 91,200. During the same time period, cottonseed acreage in Andhra declined from 14,000 acres to 12,000 acres, while in Gujarat (which gets 80 percent of its labor from Rajasthan), it increased from 26,000 acres to 38,000 acres. In fact, Gujarat overtook Andhra as the highest producer of hybrid cottonseed during

²⁶⁷ Since 80% of the children in the hybrid cottonseed in Gujarat are from Rajasthan, the data in the figures refer to Gujarat, even though my prime case for comparison is Rajasthan, i.e. the trends of child labor in Gujarat represent trends of supply of child labor from Rajasthan

this time-period. Studies also show that many cottonseed farms in Andhra shut shop and shifted to other states on account of intense pressure from CSOs.²⁶⁸

Figure 3.8 : Absolute Numbers of Child Laborers and Cottonseed Acreage in the Hybrid Cottonseed Industry in Andhra and Gujarat(2003-2010)



Source: Venkateswarlu 2010

This unique situation allows us to create a quasi-experimental research design: given that bureaucratic effectiveness and social consensus on education are similar, what made civil society action against child labor more successful in Andhra than in Rajasthan. Though I have said that both Andhra and Rajasthan have active civil society intervention on the issue of child labor in the hybrid cottonseed industry, the levels of civil society activity is not the same across the whole state. There is variation even within the states. Therefore, I choose two blocks (revenue sub-division, known by different names such as *mandals/ taluks/blocks*) within each state to add another layer to my analysis- each block with a different level of civil society activity. In Andhra Pradesh, I chose the two blocks of Uyyalawada and Dornipadu, the former with intensive levels of civil society activity in the form of intervention by a CSO called MV Foundation (MVF), while the latter had no civil society activity. On the other hand, in Rajasthan, I chose the two blocks of Jhadol and Kotra, the former had witnessed massive civil society interventions through the action of a trade union called Dakshini Rajasthan Mazdoor Union (DRMU), while the latter had witnessed some civil society intervention through another NGO known as Aastha Sansthan. Choosing two blocks within the same state allows for further control of confounding factors like poverty and bureaucratic

²⁶⁸ Venkateswarlu 2010

effectiveness and allows alienating the singular impact of civil society intervention. It gives us traction in understanding which strategies of civil society mobilization are most effective in reducing child labor.

I therefore apply both cross-case and within-case analysis to my case studies. By choosing two blocks within each state for within-case analysis, we can test whether the theory will work even *within* one state where the cultural milieu is the same. If the presence of certain strategies of mobilization that worked in one block in one state also worked in another block in another state, and the absence of certain strategies created similar results in both states we can say with confidence that it is the strategies of mobilization of CSOs that created those results instead of other factors like culture or attitudes. On the other hand, the cross-case analysis at the state level helps to identify certain broader contextual factors that may have facilitated the work of CSOs at the block level. In this case, I test whether a culture of community participation and political support to the issue of child labor at the state level that influenced the success/failure of CSOs. Therefore, the inclusion of both within-case and cross-case analysis in the research design enables to test the hypotheses at the block-level and also at the broader state-level.

Within each of the states, I interviewed politicians, bureaucrats in the education and labor departments, child rights activists, parents of child laborers, and independent researchers (See Bibliography for list of people interviewed). I attended meetings of CSOs with employers, parents, and community members. These meetings provided me with valuable clues about the specific tactics employed by CSO members to overcome the initial animosity that employers and parents exhibit towards them when they exhort them to withdraw children from the workforce. I conducted archival research in both states to understand the historical progression of the debate on child labor and education, as also to understand the particular nature of interaction between civil society and bureaucracy—this provided me with clues to how the formation of a social consensus on education influences the bureaucracy.

The next four chapters present tests and evidence in favor of the hypotheses stated in this chapter. Chapter 4 presents descriptive evidence to show that elementary education in India has received higher priority than child labor policy, therefore studying bureaucracy and CSO's role in operationalizing elementary education policy offers insights into the variation in child labor rates across Indian states. Chapter 5 presents quantitative analysis to test the cross-sectional hypotheses (H1-H6). Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 are case studies from the two states of Andhra and Rajasthan to present evidence in favor of over-time variation (H7). The multi-level analysis (at the individual, block, state and national level) through cross-sectional and over-time data therefore sheds light on motivation of individual parents, on the actions of local bureaucracies and CSOs, and how these interactions ultimately shape levels of child labor at the broader state-level. Therefore, this study goes beyond

economic factors to account for institutional, social, and cultural factors that shape the magnitude of children in the workforce.

Chapter 4

Prioritizing Elementary Education: The Role of Bureaucracy and Civil Society Organizations

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I examine the historical background of child labor and education policy in India and show how elementary education has received higher priority at the state level compared to child labor policy. In viewing the issue of child labor through the prism of the policy-implementation process, I focus on two actors whose role has not been given adequate attention in the literature of child labor and elementary education policy: state bureaucracies and the role of civil society organizations (CSOs). Given that parental motivation is the central focus of this dissertation, I emphasize on the two actors whose actions have had the most significant and direct impact on parental motivation.

This chapter presents descriptive data on the implementation of child labor and elementary education policies. The discussion of the determinants of child labor has to be undertaken in conjunction with a description of children's educational needs and school supply constraints. Strictly speaking, school attendance is not the exact inverse of child labor, since children can either combine these two activities or do none and remain idle. Nevertheless, one can certainly make the argument that whatever promotes school attendance is likely to impede child labor. School attendance imposes limits on the hours of work and on the character and conditions of employment.²⁶⁹ Tracing the evolution of child labor and elementary education policies, this chapter shows that both these policies were operating in isolation from one another, with elementary education receiving more attention from state governments than child labor policy. But since 2000, child labor policy has been made an essential component of the universal education policy in India. This chapter makes the case that the variation in child labor rates in India is better understood by focusing on state governments' implementation of elementary education policy rather than focusing on child labor policy.

Further, this chapter elucidates the role of the bureaucracy and CSOs in the implementation of these policies. It captures the singularly important role of state bureaucracies in implementing policies that have received little or no attention in the policy domain. It also presents data to demonstrate the variation across states in bureaucracy's implementation of elementary education policy. Also, CSOs have played a critical role in bringing the issue of child labor and universal education to the center of the policy debate. However, their role has not received adequate attention in studies on child labor in India.

²⁶⁹ Weiner 1991, De and Dreze 1999

Through case studies of three CSOs spread across the ideological spectrum, I present the influential role of CSOs in highlighting the issue of child labor.

4.2 Evolution of Child Labor Policy in India

4.2.1 Child Labor Policy & Elementary Education Policy (1947-2000)

Though child work has traditionally been accepted in India, the colonial British Government, under the influence of the ILO in the 1920s and 1930s, passed a series of legislations laying down the minimum age for work of children in certain occupations. The first Act devoted entirely to child labor was the Employment of Children Act (1938) which listed occupations and processes in which children could not be employed.²⁷⁰ The aim of these legislations was not to prohibit child labor *per se* but rather to subscribe minimum age for child work and there was much emphasis on protecting the traditional indigenous occupations that were passed from one generation to another.²⁷¹ These acts were applicable throughout the country but state governments also passed their own rules to regulate the conditions of work for children. Despite the variety of legislations laying down the minimum age of working children in different industries, India has not signed ILO's Minimum Age Convention adopted in 1973 which requires ratifying countries to set the minimum age of child work at fifteen years.

When the Indian Constitution was adopted in 1950, the Constituent Assembly wrote in certain protections for children within the Fundamental Rights (Chapter III) and Directive Principles of State Policy (Chapter IV). Article 24 provides that "no child below 14 shall be employed in any factory or mine or engaged in hazardous employment." Article 39 stipulates that state shall ensure that "children are not abused and that citizens are not forced by economic necessity to enter avocations unsuited to their age and strength and children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity, and that childhood and youth are protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment." Article 45 says, "the state shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of the Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years." This is the only provision in the Constitution related to elementary education that has a built in time-limit,

²⁷⁰ The Factories Act (1948) lowered the minimum age of employment to 14 years and defined factories as a premise where manufacturing was carried on with the aid of power and employed at least 10 persons and above 20 where no power was employed. None of these Acts required children to submit a birth certificate, an age certificate, or certificate of school attendance.²⁷⁰ Subsequent legislations after independence also set minimum age for children's work. The Plantation Labor Act (1951) set the minimum age for working on the plantations is twelve, compared to fourteen in industry (since plantations are not considered dangerous), the age limit in the Mines Act (1952) was raised to fifteen, the Factories Act (1954) prohibited the employment of adolescents under seventeen at night; and the Beedi and Cigar Workers Act (1966) prohibited the employment of children under fourteen in any factory manufacturing *beedis* and cigars.²⁷⁰

²⁷¹ Burra 1995

thereby indicating the seriousness accorded by the framers of the Constitution towards implementation of universal education. Despite such constitutional mandate, between 1950 and 1955, public expenditure on education was less than 1 percent of GDP and between 1956 and 1979 it stagnated between 1 percent and 2 percent.²⁷² In his detailed study of annual national budgets, the reputed social activist Dr. L. C. Jain noted that article 45 "lay under a lid"; there was "not to be found a passing reference to education let alone to Article 45 in the budget speeches."²⁷³

In subsequent Five Year Plans, the budget for higher education grew at the cost of the budget for elementary education. It clearly reveals the Government of India's (GoI) focus on expanding higher education. Indian planners saw education in the context of a development strategy that focused on big development projects and the training of skilled workers, rather than focusing on mass education.²⁷⁴ The amounts invested by the states for elementary education were never adequate to meet the goals of universal education. There was little or no innovation by states which looked toward the Center both for financial resources as well as policy innovations.²⁷⁵ Despite such commitments by the Government, the Fourth All India Educational Survey conducted by the National Council of Educational Research and Training in 1978 reported that only 86.6 million children were in school as against the targeted 104 million by 1975.

Meanwhile in 1979, in response to the United Nations General Assembly resolution proclaiming 1979 as the International Year of the Child, GoI appointed the Committee on Child Labor to review existing legislation on child labor. The main recommendation of the Committee was to raise the minimum age for children to fifteen years and stringent enforcement of existing laws. The GoI did not accept the recommendation of the Committee with respect to raising the minimum age. The other recommendations of the Committee which the government accepted related to improving the working conditions of children with health schemes in areas of concentration of child labor, supplementary nutrition provided by employers with tax concessions from the government, and the establishment of non-formal education centers for the part time education of child labor. The Committee supported primary education for children but repeated the familiar argument that "serious doubts are raised about the usefulness of the present system of education," which "does not prepare them for future occupations. The educational curriculum must be geared to bring the maximum skill and competence in the child keeping in view the environment in which he is living."²⁷⁶

²⁷² Weiner 1991.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁴ De and Endow 2008.

²⁷⁵ Weiner 199.1

²⁷⁶ "Report of the Committee on Child Labor." (New Delhi: Ministry of Labor, Government of India, 1979), p.54.

The Committee suggested that given resource constraints, universal education was not a feasible goal and therefore promoted the idea of non-formal centers for working children.²⁷⁷

The government position was also promoted by a Bangalore-based trade union organization 'Concerned for Working Children' (CWC) which held a seminar in 1985 and promoted a draft bill on child labor which categorically laid down that the government should distinguish between 'child work' and 'exploitative child labor'. It was reiterated in the seminar that while exploitative labor should be completely banned, child work should be regulated. The draft Bill of the CWC became the model for the subsequent child labor bill drafted by parliament. The overwhelming sentiment in government circles was that Indian economy was not prepared to ban child labor and introduce universal education.²⁷⁸ This attitude was reflected in the newly enacted CLPRA which was approved by the Indian Parliament in 1987.

The CLPRA prohibits the employment of children below fourteen years in certain industries and industrial processes laid down in Schedule 'A' of the Act, while regulating the conditions of work in non-hazardous industries. The Act prohibits children from working in hazardous occupations and processes like *bidi*-making, carpet-making, shellac manufacturing, match manufacturing, explosives and fireworks, soap manufacturing, wool cleaning, tanning, and building and construction work. The Act defines children as those below the age of fourteen and overrides the minimum age provisions of other statutes like the Merchant Shipping Act and Transportation Act which set the minimum age at fifteen and Plantation Act which sets the minimum age at twelve. For non-hazardous occupations, the Act lays down certain prohibitions regulating the conditions of work like limiting the number of days of employment, the number of hours of work and restricts the times of work. Other details relating to hygiene, temperature, disposal of effluents, etc. are delegated to the states to lay out in detail through legislation. This Act was modelled after the CWC Bill and in fact, the list of hazardous industries and occupations was entirely adopted from the Employment Act of 1938. The Act lays down the establishment of a Child Labor Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) with the mandate to add other hazardous industries to the Schedule of the Act.

However, the CLPRA also has some exceptions even for employing children in hazardous occupations. The Act says that "nothing in this Act shall apply to any workshop wherein any process is carried on by the occupier with the aid of his family." Thus, the Act does not prohibit children from working in workshops which are run by family even if the occupation is hazardous. Further, the Act only applies to factories where more than ten persons are employed; this provision was inserted in the Act with the intention of protecting

²⁷⁷ Weiner 1991

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

cottage industries. The regulations on conditions of work have the same restrictions that “none of these restrictions shall apply to any workshop wherein any process is carried on by the occupier with the aid of his family or to any school, established by, or receiving assistance from, or recognition from the government.” Through this provision, the Act exempts government run apprenticeship programs to teach children carpet weaving.²⁷⁹ The exceptions carved out in the Act have been used by employers to subcontract out work to families or to small units employing less than ten persons.²⁸⁰

In addition to the CLPRA, the GoI also formulated a National Child Labor Program (NCLP) in 1987. NCLP was envisaged as an action-based program to withdraw child labor from the hazardous occupations, provide them with transitional occupations and vocational skills, provide livelihood support to their families, and eventually mainstream the erstwhile child workers into formal schools. NCLP was formulated with the basic objective of suitably rehabilitating the children withdrawn from hazardous occupations in areas where there is known concentration of child labor. By focusing on elimination of child labor in hazardous industries, the main thrust of the NCLP was to encourage the elimination of child labor *progressively*. NCLP encapsulates GoI’s philosophy of adopting a sequential approach towards elimination of child labor, by first focusing on the elimination of children working in hazardous industries.

Though the debate of universal education and child labor occurred simultaneously, government policy on elementary education and abolition of child labor were isolated from one another. The administration of the CLPRA was anchored in the Ministry of Labor & Employment (MoLE) while the administration of elementary education was largely the responsibility of the Department of Education under the Ministry of Human Resources & Development (MHRD). In 1985, the Ministry of Education proposed a New Educational Policy in 1985. The NEP has relevance for our understanding of child labor because it introduced Non Formal Education (NFE) as a key strategy to bring working children into the fold of education policy. The idea behind NFE was that working children would be taught through a curriculum that was flexible in terms of organization, timing and duration of teaching and learning, clientele groups, age group of learners, contents, methodology of instruction and evaluation procedure. The philosophy behind NFE was that children who are in the workforce don’t need theoretical knowledge but only need a part-time program of general education that may be focused around literacy, numeracy and citizenship training. In 1985-86, according to the government, 3.67 million children were enrolled in 128,000 centers around the country.²⁸¹ It appeared as though the goal of universal education was conceived for

²⁷⁹ Weiner 1991

²⁸⁰ Burra 1995

²⁸¹ Weiner 1991

children who were not in the labor force, while providing basic education through non-formal education centers was considered as good enough for child laborers.

Over the years, the dismal failure of NFE has been noted by studies.²⁸² In most cases, the states failed to supply their share of the funds, teachers were not properly trained, and many of the centers closed down: many of the students enrolled in NFE centers should actually have been in regular schools, and there was no effective monitoring and evaluation of the centers.²⁸³ A kind of social apartheid developed with child laborers going to NFE schools and learning very little, while children from better-off families went to the village school. Critics argued that the government made token investments in non-formal education to shirk away the need to commit to the massive increase in elementary education expenditure needed to achieve universalization.

In 1999, a team of researchers led by Jean Dreze in collaboration with the Center for Development Economics in New Delhi undertook an extensive research of the state of the schooling system in India and published a report known as the Public Report on Basic Education in India (PROBE). It was the first serious evidence-based study spanning 242 villages in five north Indian states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh. The PROBE report's evaluation of NFE Centers is quoted below:

“In the 188 sample villages located in the four PROBE states, we found fewer than 10 functional NFE centers (one village had as many as nine NFE centers, all non-functional). Even in the ‘functional’ centers, the level of teaching activity was minimal. So much so that, in many cases, local residents and even school teachers were unaware of their existence. In 1,221 sample households, the survey found only two children who were actually enrolled in an NFE center. And the survey did not uncover a single case of a child who had ‘graduated’ from a non-formal education center to a formal school, even though one of the main goals of NFE centers is precisely to make this possible”²⁸⁴

The PROBE report cautioned that while alternative schooling can provide short term solution to dealing with certain situations (for instance, where there are thinly dispersed hamlets or where children cannot attend regular schools because they are working), they cannot be seen as a permanent feature on the way to universal education. The report cautions that at a time when state governments are short of funds, the temptation to use alternative schooling as a low-cost shortcut to universal elementary education should be promoted with caution.²⁸⁵ Yet the NFEs have continued to expand because it has turned into a profitable industry.²⁸⁶ Currently nearly 300,000 centers of non-formal education are there which provide education to such children according to the needs of their daily life.²⁸⁷

²⁸² De and Dreze 1999

²⁸³ “Education for All at Snail’s Pace.” May 30, 1987. *Overseas Hindustan Times*.

²⁸⁴ De and Dreze 1999, p. 99

²⁸⁵ De and Dreze 1999, p. 100.

²⁸⁶ Attributed to a bureaucrat in De and Dreze, p. 100.

²⁸⁷ Khurana, Shona. “Write a Short Note on Non-formal Education in India.”

4.2.2 *The Operation of NCLP*

Other than NFE centers, child laborers withdrawn from hazardous industries could be admitted to special schools established under the NCLP Program. Unlike NFE centers where children could go for part-time studies after work, NCLP schools were only designed for children who were withdrawn from hazardous work. NCLP was initially set up with a broad mandate of withdrawing children from hazardous occupations by focusing on four core areas: education, health, nutrition and anti-poverty programs. The policy lays down a threefold strategy to eradicate child labor in hazardous industry that includes: i) a legislative action plan which will lay down the policy steps to ameliorating child labor; ii) focus on general social development programs that benefit the families of children; iii) project-based action plan in areas of high concentration of child laborers.²⁸⁸

The principal medium of operationalization of NCLP was through the setting up of special schools with provision for vocational training, supplementary nutrition, and healthcare services. One of the key policy innovations in NCLP was to give child laborers a monetary stipend to compensate for the loss of child's income to the family. Once the children were trained in an NCLP school for a maximum period of three years, they were to be equipped with formal education and vocational skills to enable them to be mainstreamed into the formal schooling system or join the workforce as skilled workers. Complementary aspects of NCLP program were to focus on the education of parents, step up enforcement of child labor laws by strict implementation of the CLPRA, raise public awareness on child labor and convergence initiatives with other government departments to link poor families to poverty alleviation and employment generation schemes initiated by these departments. Broadly, the NCLP program was conceived with focus on enforcement, rescue and rehabilitation of children working in hazardous industries.

The major thrust to the NCLP program came with the landmark judgement of the Supreme Court in December 1996 in the case of *M.C. Mehta V. State of Tamil Nadu*.²⁸⁹ The Supreme Court gave certain directions regarding the manner in which the children working in the hazardous occupations were to be withdrawn from work and rehabilitated, as also the manner in which the working conditions of the children employed in non-hazardous occupations were to be regulated and improved upon. It prescribed employment of at least one adult member of the family of the child so withdrawn from work. A compensation of Rupees 20,000 (~USD 400) per child was ordered to be paid by the offending employer into a corpus fund set up for the welfare of child labor and their families. If the state government failed to compensate the employer, it would have to contribute to this Welfare Fund Rupees 5,000 (~USD 100) per child. The interest earnings of this corpus were to be used for

²⁸⁸ "Annual Report 2010-11." (New Delhi: Ministry of Labor and Employment, Government of India, 2011).

²⁸⁹ *M.C. Mehta v. State of Tamil Nadu & Others* (1996) 6 SCC 756

providing financial assistance to the families of these children.²⁹⁰ The Court also ordered regulation of working hours for children engaged in non-hazardous occupations, so that their working hours did not exceed five to six hours per day and that at least two hours of education was ensured. It further directed that the entire expenditure on education of these children should be borne by their employers.²⁹¹

NCLP has faltered in its goal of withdrawing children from hazardous work. In 2010, NCLP was operational in only 267 out of 600 districts in India. This means that fifty-five percent of the India's districts are not covered by any protective child labor policy. Out of the sanctioned NCLP schools, twenty-eight percent of the schools were not operational. Only thirty-three percent of all children working in hazardous industries are enrolled in an NCLP school.²⁹² Even twenty-five years after the start of NCLP, sixty-seven percent of children working in hazardous occupations remain outside the coverage of any protective child labor policy.²⁹³

Evaluation studies of NCLP have pointed to a number of weaknesses in its operation. In a meeting in September 2008, the Chairperson of the Child Labor Monitoring Committee under MoLE noted that the NCLP Scheme is in operation in nearly fifty districts for over ten years and State governments have not been able to declare any of these districts as 'child labor free' which showed that efforts were lacking in some way.²⁹⁴

A survey conducted by the VV Giri National Labor Institute, Noida (NLI) in seventy districts across fifteen states found that one of the biggest lacunas of NCLP has been in the targeting of children working in hazardous industries. The NLI (2010) study found that only twenty-five percent of enrolled children in NCLP schools belong to hazardous industries. The survey observed that there is hardly any link between the prevalence of child labor in a district, survey results and actual enrolment in schools. The infrastructure was found to be in very poor condition since the NGOs that ran the special schools received only about Rupees 1,000 (~USD 20) per month for rent, water and electricity.²⁹⁵ Schools were found to be short of teachers and the posts of vocational teachers were found to be lying vacant in almost fifteen percent of the sample schools. Another innovative component of NCLP schools was the payment of stipend to students to compensate for absence of work. Seventy-six percent of

²⁹⁰ M.C. Mehta v. State of Tamil Nadu & Others (1996) 6 SCC 756

²⁹¹ "Report on the Working Group on Child Labor for the 11th Five Year Plan." (New Delhi: Planning Commission, Government of India, 2006).

²⁹² *Ibid.*

²⁹³ 8710 NCLP schools with 3.39 lakh children; 7.05 children have been regularly mainstreamed.²⁹³ See "Annual Report 2012-13." 2013. New Delhi: Ministry of Labor and Employment, Government of India.

²⁹⁴ "Minutes of the Meeting of the Central Monitoring Committee on Child Labor." (New Delhi: Ministry of Labor and Employment, Government of India, 2008).

²⁹⁵ 12th Working Group has suggested upward revisions to the amount allocated to NGOs for infrastructure costs. See "Report of the Working Group on Child Rights for the 12th Five Year Plan (2012-17)." (New Delhi: Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, 2012).

schools reported opening up of an account for depositing the students' stipends whereas only twenty-seven percent reported regular deposit of stipend amount.²⁹⁶

One of the key objectives of NCLP special schools was to mainstream the enrolled children into regular government schools, once they had attended a maximum of three years in the NCLP school. The NLI study noted that mainstreaming happened only in fifty out of seventy sample districts.²⁹⁷ An important aspect of NCLP was mainstreaming into the labor market through teaching children vocational skills so that they could get jobs. However, vocational classes in the schools were conducted more like hobby classes rather than the teaching of skills which would eventually lead to gainful employment. The vocational training program was largely affected by non-appointment of master trainer in a large number of districts, non-availability of vocational kits, and low skill level of the existing vocational trainers.²⁹⁸ As an obvious consequence, hardly any notable mainstreaming to labor market was happening in any NCLP school.

4.2.3 Reasons for Poor Implementation of NCLP

The failures of running NCLP stem from the composition and structure of the Project Societies, the appointment and tenure of staff, and the procedure for allocation of funds. The responsibility of implementing the NCLP is delegated to state governments through the establishment of Project Societies at the district level. The NCLP guidelines mandate that the Project Society should consist of government officials at the district levels, trade unions, employers' associations, voluntary organizations and parents. However, the Project Societies reflect a vertical hierarchy with a predominance of government officials in the district. On an average, government officials represent seventy-nine percent, NGOs and Panchayati Raj officials represent thirteen percent, and employers represent around three percent. Representation of parents is almost negligible in almost all the districts. Further, nil or low representation of women leads to decrease in seriousness regarding issues related to girl children in special schools. Only forty-four percent of children enrolled in NCLP schools are girls.²⁹⁹ The most critical problem facing the NCLP project staff is that none of the staff in these Project Societies are appointed on a permanent basis. Staff in NCLP project societies hold additional positions while simultaneously holding other positions in the government. This leads to an attitude whereby the Project Directors and the staff often consider their job in

²⁹⁶ Satpathy *et al* 2010.

²⁹⁷ Apart from 25 districts which do not report any mainstreaming, 8 districts such as Siddhi, Nagaon, Thane, Mathura Beed, Ghaziabad, Raipur and Saharanpur report less than 10 per cent mainstreaming. Further, mainstreaming rate is less than 20 per cent in 10 districts. In contrast to this, districts such as South 24 Paraganas, Visakhapatnam, Vijayanagaram, Mayurbhanj and Ananthpur report more than 80 per cent mainstreaming to total enrolled children. See Satpathy *et al* 2010

²⁹⁸ "Report on the Working Group on Child Labor for the 11th Five Year Plan." 2006. New Delhi: Planning Commission, Government of India.

²⁹⁹ Satpathy *et al* 2010

NCLP as a peripheral activity and are unable to devote full time and commitment to their NCLP positions.³⁰⁰

Another critical aspect hindering smooth functioning of NCLP schools has been delay in disbursement of funds due to bureaucratic entanglements between the Labor Ministry and the District Project Society. While delay in funds in the last couple of years has already led to permanent or temporary closure of many NCLP schools in states, the teachers have also threatened now to leave the schools which are unable to pay them salaries.³⁰¹ The Save the Children Report said that the appointment of bureaucrats and temporary appointees also brings a regressive style of functioning to the job as many of them are unwilling to experiment with innovations and place too much emphasis on rules and procedures.

The NCLP staff also struggle with inadequate resources. Compared to government schools, the honorarium paid to teachers in NCLP schools is abysmally low.³⁰² The Report of the Working Group, Eleventh Five year plan shows that even though there were frequent complaints about the inadequacy of funds, vast amount of the funds remain under-utilized. For example, utilization of funds under heads such as “Child Labor Survey”, “Awareness Generation Programs” and “Teachers Training” are almost negligible in almost all the districts. The late release of funds by the MoLE, the lack of flexibility to reallocate funds across sectors, and the lack of proper planning has resulted in poor management and underutilization of funds for some components of crucial importance to the project.³⁰³

Eighty-six percent of the special schools are run and managed primarily by NGOs with negligible participation of *Panchayati Raj* Institutions, Trade Unions and Self Help Groups. Due to the provision of NGOs being able to run special schools, many NGOs have jumped on the bandwagon of opening NCP schools, even if they are small, and lack adequate training and manpower. It has also led to competition among NGOs to set up schools. Further, schools are opened where NGOs express the desire to open schools and not necessarily where there is highest concentration of child labor in hazardous industries. In a meeting on Central Advisory Board on Child Labor in 2010, corrupt practices of NGOs in running NCLP schools were brought to light: “Funds were being mis-utilized by some NCLP schools, particularly in

³⁰⁰ "Scheme for National Child Labor Projects." Paper presented at the Workshop of District Collectors/District Heads in 'Elimination of Child Labor in Hazardous Occupations', New Delhi, 1995.

³⁰¹ Nine schools in Panchmahals, three schools in Vadodara and a few schools in Rajkot and Ahmedabad have been closed down. There is a backlog of Rs 29.13 lakh that we are supposed to pay to the NGOs alone. We have also not been able to deposit the monthly stipend of Rs 100 meant for students. Grant to NCLP schools irregular, teachers threaten to resign. See Basu, Debarati. "Grant to NCLP Schools Irregular, Teachers Threaten to Resign." November 21, 2009. *The Indian Express*.

³⁰² That creates low morale among the teachers. NCLP fieldworkers are paid Rs. 8000 per month (\$160) and a typist gets around Rs. 3000 per month (\$60). These amounts were decided in 1996 and have not been revised upward since. Annual Report 2012-13 of the Ministry of Labor and Employment, Government of India affirmed this observation by recommending that there was “long due” upward revision of pay and recommended increase of pay by 50%.

³⁰³ Satpathy *et al* 2010.

the NCLP schools at many places of Bihar where the schools were being operating in paper only.”³⁰⁴ The delegation of running NCLP schools to NGOs has created adverse incentives that have ultimately affected the proper implementation of the Act. State Governments have been advised to set up State Level Monitoring Committees but very few states have a monitoring committee in place.

Though running NCLP programs was one part of the broad mandate of NCLP, the other aspects included enforcement actions by district labor inspectors under the CLPRA, convergence with other departments, and awareness generation about child labor. Each of these aspects has received little attention under NCLP and the entire energy of the program has become directed towards the setting up of special schools. A study released as a result of Workshops of DCs/District Heads on Elimination of Child Labor in Dangerous Occupations (#) noted: “The NCLP was initiated with laudable goals but its functioning cannot be said to have been very commendable...instead of remedying the lacunae and the weaknesses of the projects over the years, it has become virtually one-dimensional. The overemphasis on special schools to the near-exclusion of other activities has undermined the project.”³⁰⁵

Enforcement against employers of child labor under NCLP has been assessed as “the weakest aspect of the program.” Table 4.1 shows the numbers of inspections, prosecutions, violations and convictions under the CLPRA between 1997 and 2007 in ten states with the highest numbers of child labor in Census 2001. UP which presumably has nearly 200,000 children working in hazardous industry saw only 405 convictions in the span of 10 years. In both Bihar and West Bengal, the numbers of recorded convictions in ten years has been three each. Rajasthan, which is third highest in absolute numbers of child laborers, had only around 50,000 inspections in 10 years. The rates of prosecutions and convictions are even more dismal. UP and Andhra Pradesh have the percentage of prosecutions, but when it comes to conviction, other than Andhra, all other states have really poor conviction rates.

³⁰⁴ “Minutes of the Meeting of Central Advisory Board on Child Labor.” (New Delhi: Ministry of Labor and Employment, Government of India, September 20, 2010).

³⁰⁵ “Scheme for National Child Labor Projects.” Paper presented at the Workshop of District Collectors/District Heads in ‘Elimination of Child Labor in Hazardous Occupations’, New Delhi, 1995, p. 8

Table 4.1: Enforcement under CLPRA 1997-98 to 2007-08

State	Number of Inspections	Prosecutions %	Convictions %
Uttar Pradesh	24,399	31	1.7
Andhra Pradesh	289,275	18	6.0
Rajasthan	49,190	3.5	4.5
Bihar	244,308	1	0.0
Madhya Pradesh	48,470	3.2	0.6
West Bengal	89,448	0.1	0.0
Karnataka	201,573	5.3	0.4
Maharashtra	228,644	0.3	0.0
Tamil Nadu	1,827,531	0.1	0.0
Gujarat	18,522	4.2	1.6

Source: Working Group for Social Inclusion of Vulnerable Group like Child Labour and Bonded and Migrant Labour in the 12th Five Year Plan (2012-17). (New Delhi: Planning Commission, 2012)

Employers get away owing to loopholes in the law. They change the structure of employment, mostly outsourcing work to household units. They procure false medical certificates as "proof of age" in respect of children who worked in the factory premises. Further, the money collected as fine from the accused in the child labor case as per the 1996 Supreme Court guidelines is getting accumulated in the child labor welfare fund in many states but the money has remained unutilized. In a meeting of Cabinet Advisory Board on Child Labor in April 2010, it was pointed out that the unutilized funds should be used for the benefit of children withdrawn from work.³⁰⁶

A critical aspect of NCLP is convergence with other social welfare departments so as to provide an integrated system of support to families who lose the incomes of their children. However, the NLI study found that convergence of NCLP with poverty alleviation initiatives was almost nil. Forty-seven percent of the Project Directors reported unsatisfactory performance on convergence³⁰⁷. Other aspects of NCLP like education of parents and raising public awareness have also been systematically marginalized. The above discussion highlights the inadequacy of the NCLP in providing coverage to a large proportion of India's children even in hazardous industries.

4.2.4 Convergence of Child labor and Education Policy (2000-present)

Given the poor performance of NCLP, it is the elementary education policy of states that has been prioritized by state governments and succeeded in drawing children away from the workforce into schools. While NCLP withered, elementary education received a shot in

³⁰⁶ "Minutes of the Meeting of Central Advisory Board on Child Labor." (New Delhi: Ministry of Labor and Employment, Government of India, April 15, 2010).

³⁰⁷ Statement by YJ Yajurvedi of VV Giri National Labor Institute in "Minutes of the Meeting of the Central Advisory Board on Child Labor." (New Delhi: Ministry of Labor and Employment, Government of India, September 20, 2010).

the arm with a Supreme Court Judgement in 1992 which declared that the right to basic education was a fundamental right. The apex court ruled on the status of the right to education in the context of a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) – *Mohini Jain v. State of Karnataka*³⁰⁸ and *Unnikrishnan J.P. v. State of Andhra Pradesh*.³⁰⁹ In *Unni Krishnan*, while dealing with the constitutional status of the right to education, the Supreme Court expressed its dissatisfaction at the obvious neglect of Article 45 in the following words:

“It is noteworthy that among the several articles in Part IV, only Article 45 speaks of a time-limit; no other article does.... Does not the passage of 44 years-more than four times the period stipulated in Article 45-convert the obligation created by the article into an enforceable right? In this context, we feel constrained to say that allocation of available funds to different sectors of education in India discloses an inversion of priorities indicated by the Constitution.”³¹⁰

The Supreme Court held that the right to education flowed from Article 21—a seminal clause of the Constitution that guarantees the right to life and personal liberty.³¹¹ As the movement for a constitutional amendment guaranteeing the right to education gained momentum, various NGOs and independent actors began to coordinate their efforts. The result of one such effort was the creation of the National Alliance for the Fundamental Right to Education (NAFRE) which, at its peak, represented a coalition of almost 2,400 grassroots NGOs from fifteen states across India. Groups committed to the abolition of child labor, such as the South Asian Coalition on Child Servitude and the Campaign Against Child Labor, realizing the importance of the right to education for their own causes, joined forces with groups such as NAFRE. In 1997, responding in part to the momentum generated by such groups, the central government introduced the Constitution (Eighty-third Amendment) Bill, 1997, which sought to make the right to education a Fundamental Right. The Eighty-third Amendment Bill inserted Article 21A into the Chapter of Fundamental Rights:

*Article 21A: The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years, as the state may, by law, determine.*³¹²

The passing of the Article 21A was revolutionary in that for the first time the Constitution had recognized that the right to education was a fundamental right that was justiciable in court. However, the actual Right to Education Act that operationalized Article 21A was adopted by the Parliament of India in April 1, 2010.

While the Right to Education movement was gaining momentum, the GoI launched the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in the year 2000, a countrywide program with the goal to achieve universalization of elementary education (UEE) in a time bound manner. For the first

³⁰⁸ *Mohini Jain v. State of Karnataka*, A.I.R. 1992 S.C. 1858. This case was decided by a two-judge bench of the Supreme Court and was partially modified in the *Unni Krishnan* case. The opinion of the Court was delivered by Justice Kuldeep Singh.

³⁰⁹ *Unnikrishnan v. State of Andhra Pradesh*, A.I.R. 1993 S.C. 2178. This case was decided by a five-judge bench of the Supreme Court, and the main opinion of the Court was delivered by Justice B. P. Jeevan Reddy.

³¹⁰ A.I.R. 1993 S.C. 2178, p. 2232.

³¹¹ Basu, Durga Das.1997. *Introduction to the Constitution of India*. New Delhi: South Asia Books.

³¹² The Gazette of India Extraordinary, Part II-Section 1. registered No. DL-3300r (New Delhi: Ministry of Law and Justice, Government of India, December 13, 2002).

time, a child labor component was integrated into elementary education policy. There was a recognition of the 'convergence model' where the need to integrate the efforts of the Labor and the Education Departments to tackle child labor was formally institutionalized. On March 23, 2004, a circular was issued by the Department of Elementary Education and Literacy, MHRD, GoI that emphasized the importance of effective convergence between the SSA and the Department of Labor at the State, district and local levels.³¹³ SSA officials were advised to maintain a close liaison with the Department of Labor and exchange data of working children in hazardous and non-hazardous occupations, out of school children, curriculum and training programs. One of the key strategies of SSA was to set up bridge courses, remedial courses, and Back to School camps to provide transitional educations to child laborers. Another important strategy was to set up Education Guarantee Centers in habitations that did not have a formal government primary school so that children were not denied at least some basic education. The SSAs were specifically directed to support teaching learning process in Special Schools of NCLP, coordinate with NGOs running these schools, arrange training of instructors of the schools, introduce effective student assessment techniques in special schools – the aim was to mainstream the children of these schools into the formal school system of education.³¹⁴

The Eleventh Plan Working Group on Child Labor established by the Planning Commission of GoI lay down certain guidelines for the Education Department, SSA and the NCLP to work together. It was decided that children in the five to eight years age group would be directly admitted to SSA schools while children in the nine to fourteen years age group would be admitted to NCLP schools for a certain period of time and then transitioned to formal schools. Further, one of the formal schools in the area was to be identified as a 'lead school' for the mainstreaming of the children coming out of the special schools in that area. It was the responsibility of the Education Department to ensure timely supply of textbooks and bridging material for children in NCLP Schools. The Working Group recommended that it was necessary to sensitize the district education administrative setup, SSA Planning teams and school head-masters, teachers, and VEC members about child labor issues & the specific needs of these children.³¹⁵ This process marks the beginning of the impact on SSA program in terms of recognition of 'child labor' as a specific category.

The ILO has also shown support for the 'convergence model' adopted in India. Under the ILO-IPEC Program, a pilot project has been started in Tamil Nadu to rehabilitate children working in stone quarries and rice mills. The convergence model has been

³¹³ Mishra 2000

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*

³¹⁵ "Report on the Working Group on Child Labor for the 11th Five Year Plan." (New Delhi: Planning Commission, Government of India, 2006)

operationalized in this program. Child labor policy has now become a complementary strategy of the government's elementary education policy. The priority accorded to elementary education vis-à-vis child labor is also visible from budget outlays for both sectors. The Tenth Plan outlay for Elementary Education and Literacy was Rupees 300 billion (~USD 6 billions).³¹⁶ Comparatively, the budget allocation under the NCLP Scheme for the Tenth Plan period was Rupees 6 billion (~USD 120 millions).³¹⁷ The government has also started a two percent 'education cess'—a dedicated tax imposed on all taxpayers specifically to fund expenditure on elementary education. The inclusion of a child labor focus within SSA itself reinforced the strength of the Government's initiative against child labor.

The above analysis indicates that NCLP covers a very minute proportion of the child workforce. The operation of NCLP leaves much to be desired. On the other hand, elementary education policy has received comparatively higher priority in the policy domain. Since the scope, reach and resources available to SSA are much higher than that allocated by the government to the NCLP, focusing on universalization of education by the states provides a clearer understanding of levels of child labor than focusing on the implementation of child labor policy.

4.3 The State Bureaucracy as the Primary Implementer of Education Policy

4.3.1 Institutional Bifurcation

The state-level bureaucracy is the primary mover of elementary education policy. The issue of child labor or children's education has not been a serious mobilizing issue in the political/electoral domain in India.³¹⁸ The social movement literature in India suggests that where a policy does not find support in the electoral domain, it acquires center-stage in the bureaucratic and judicial domains. For instance, in the absence of support from political parties, the women's movement and the environmental justice movement have sought redress in the bureaucratic and judicial domains.³¹⁹ The same analogy is applicable to the issue-areas of child work and UEE which have not been mobilizing electoral issues for any political party in the entire ideological spectrum of Indian politics. The social movement literature argues that the 'state' in the democratic context of India should be examined not as a monolithic entity, but as a disaggregated sum of parts. There is an "institutional bifurcation" in India, where interest-based social movements coalesce around bureaucracy and the judiciary, whereas identity-based social movements represent their interests in the electoral arena.³²⁰

³¹⁶ "Report on the Working Group on Child Labor for the 11th Five Year Plan." (New Delhi: Planning Commission, Government of India, 2006).

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*

³¹⁸ Weiner 1991

³¹⁹ Katzenstein *et al* 2001; Omvedt 1993

³²⁰ Katzenstein *et al* 2001

The institutional bifurcation on issues of identity versus interest has evolved over time.³²¹The social movement literature shows that movement activism, particularly those concerned with women's movement or the environmental movements in India have remained substantially disengaged from electoral politics. Movement activism, most recently the Hindu nationalist movement which is plainly concerned with issues of national and sectarian identity and the earlier identity-focused ethnic, linguistic, caste or anti-caste movements have largely succeeded with these issues in the electoral arena. On the other hand, movements concerned with the amelioration of poverty or the redress of economic and social problems, when they engage the state, have operated at the national level primarily within the arenas of the bureaucracy and the judiciary. Unlike European and Latin American instances (the German Green Party, the Sandinistas), interest based social movements have not successfully coalesced to form national electoral movements even when the issues and interests that they represent are national in their relevance. On the other hand, identity movements, as evident in the electoral successes of the BJP in the 1990s, have been able to establish themselves as national movements through electoral mobilization.

The institutional bifurcation between the electoral and bureaucratic or judicial domains has acquired sharper definition in the last few decades.³²² India's three most powerful movements have been identity-based movements--they were the linguistic movement, the Dalit and backward caste movement, and the Hindu nationalist movements. By the early 1950s, when linguistic movement became the basis of reorganization of states, it was clear that identity politics sold well in the electoral arena.³²³ However, the institutionalization of what has been termed interest politics within the bureaucratic or judicial sectors has become increasingly evident in recent decades with the surge of activism around environmental and gender issues. Issues raised by the environment or ecology groups and by the women's movement have on occasion been the subject of specific action, but these issues are rarely seen in party politics as significant enough to frame electoral strategies or to mobilize around politically. Rarely are these taken so seriously that they come to characterize a party's identity with the voters.³²⁴

Since political parties have skirted around the issues of child labor and elementary education, this dissertation examines the bureaucracy's role in implementation of these policies. The issue of child labor does not find mention in the agenda of any political party in India.³²⁵ Elementary education does find mention in the electoral agendas of parties like the Congress and the BJP, it has not been a major rallying issue during elections for any political

³²¹ *Ibid.*

³²² Chatterjee 1993; Kaviraj 2001; Katzenstein *et al* 2001

³²³ Katzenstein *et al* 2001

³²⁴ *Ibid.*

³²⁵ Weiner 1991

party.³²⁶ In the absence of focus by political parties, the actual outcomes on the ground become dependent on the manner in which the state bureaucracy implements existing elementary education policies. In this study, I focus on the bureaucratic domain rather than the judicial domain. Since parental motivation is the main variable of interest, the bureaucracy's role is more important in interfacing with parents than the judiciary. Further, CSOs in India have adopted diverse strategies on the issue of child labor, including lobbying with the bureaucracy and approaching the judiciary (as I shall discuss in detail later in this chapter). However, I shall limit this study to CSO's role as far as their interactions with the bureaucracy are concerned, because I am primarily concerned with the combined impact of bureaucracy and CSOs on parents' motivation.

4.3.2 State Bureaucracy: Main Implementer of Education Policy

One of the key reasons why I focus on the state bureaucracy is that the implementation of the program is wholly the responsibility of the state bureaucracy though the Central and State government contribute funds in a 75:25 ratio.³²⁷ Though the objectives of SSA are expressed nationally, it is expected that various districts and states are likely to achieve universalization in their own respective contexts and in their own time frame.³²⁸ All the activities for elementary education in each state have been brought under the State Mission Authority for Universal Elementary Education.

Each state sets up a State level Implementation Society which then sets up district, block and cluster level teams to implement policy for UEE. The village-level committee identifies the needs of the schools, conducts community mobilization, manages grants at the school-level and supervise training programs. The block-level committee is entrusted with the tasks of household level data collection, monitoring status of enrolment and attendance in schools, distribution and monitoring of grants, securing the cooperation of NGOs, and creating awareness on the requirement of UEE. The District level Committee consolidates the plans of the block level committees under its jurisdiction. The state-level directorate is mainly assigned with the task of planning and monitoring: for instance, preparing the annual plans, coordinating the activities of district collectors, conducting academic research, organizing teacher trainings, and monitoring the status of infrastructure development at the state level. Thus, the SSA organizational structure consists of staff from the state-level, right down to the village-level.

³²⁶ Weiner 1991

³²⁷ "Particulars of Organization, Functions and Duties: Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan." (New Delhi: Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, 2000).

³²⁸ *Ibid.*

The most senior officers belong to the federal administrative services such as the Indian Administrative Service. However, the other staffs manning the SSA are officers of the state-level Education Departments.³²⁹ The lowest in the link of the state-level bureaucracy is the school teacher. In every state, the state SSA unit forms the crux through which the elementary education policy is translated into real outcomes at the ground level.

4.3.3 Bureaucracy is the First Point of Contact

Since parental motivation is the primary focus of this study, the role of bureaucracy is important— field-level bureaucrats like the school-teacher, the headmaster, the Block Education Officer (BEO) are the first agents of the state they would contact with their petitions and their grievances. The efficiency of the bureaucrats in delivering quality education, the attitudes of these bureaucrats, and the ease of access to the bureaucracy influences parental attitudes towards the schooling system.

Even non-state actors like NGOs, or CSOs who work on children's issues work in close association with field-level bureaucrats. Non-state actors apply pressure on the bureaucracy, cooperate and coordinate with the bureaucracy to bring changes at the ground-level. If they have petitions against non-implementation of education policies, the first recourse is to petition senior officers within the state bureaucracy. The labyrinthine network of the bureaucracy from the state-level down to the village-level creates multiple points of access for parents and non-state actors.

4.3.4 Variation in Educational Provision across States

Though SSA has similar organizational structure and the same institutional mandate across all states, the manner in which SSA is translated into outcomes on the ground varies across states. For every state bureaucracy, there are three critical areas of service delivery for the educational bureaucracy to be effective. As explained in Chapter 3, these are the physical infrastructure and availability of schools; the size, competence and motivation of the teaching staff; and the organizational and managerial factors that determine the effectiveness with which resources are utilized.³³⁰ Though there may be debate on the relative importance of each of these aspects, it cannot be denied that certain minimum standards have to be met in order to create a favorable environment in which learning can take place. However, there is considerable variation in each of these criteria across states.

I discuss each of the aspects below and also compare each of the criteria across four states: Rajasthan, UP, Kerala and Himachal. Each of the states represents major regions of

³²⁹ "Particulars of Organization, Functions and Duties: Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan." (New Delhi: Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, 2000).

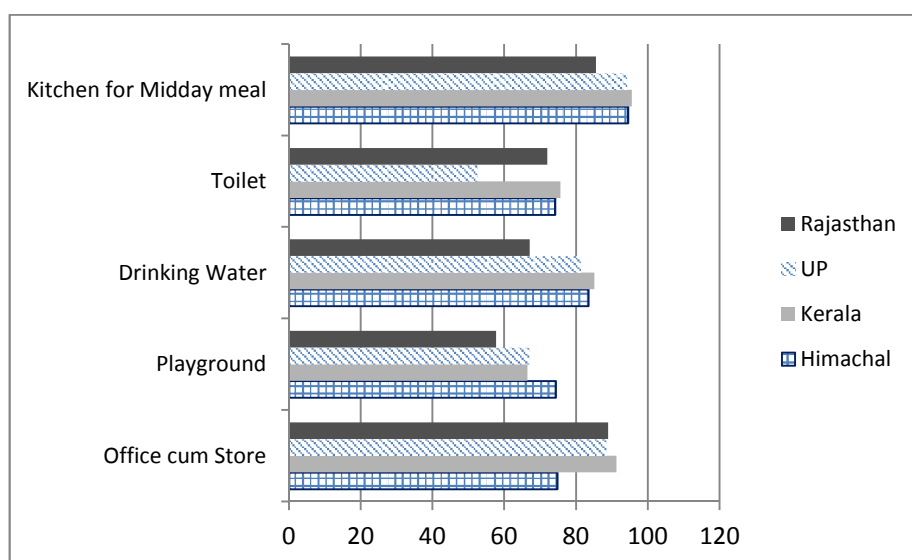
³³⁰ Bhatta 1996

India, while Rajasthan represents Western India, Himachal and UP represent northern India and Kerala represents southern India. I chose the same states as in Chapter 3 for consistency of comparison. The discussion below shows that along each of the above criteria, Kerala and Himachal perform relatively better than UP and Rajasthan.

i) Schooling Availability & Infrastructure

The elementary programs in India, starting with the District Primary Education Program (DPEP) in the 1990s to the SSA have had a strong emphasis on the quality of school infrastructure. The RTE Act, 2009 clearly lays down the basic infrastructural norms for every school. Figure 4.1 shows the percentage of schools in each state that have met the RTE norms with respect to provision of basic infrastructure. It shows that on an average, in each of the criteria for physical infrastructure set out in the RTE (like office-cum-store, playground, drinking water, toilets, sheds for preparing midday meals) states like Kerala and Himachal are performing better in meeting RTE norms than other states like Rajasthan and UP.

Figure 4.1: Rural Government Schools meeting Right to Education Act Norms in Himachal, Kerala, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh (2010-11)



Source: All India Status of Education Report 2011.

ii) Availability and Access to Schools

The availability and access to schools is another key area that determines children's enrolment and attendance in schools. Table 4.2 shows the variation in the access to primary schools and the availability of middle schools across four states. In terms of accessibility, UP and Kerala have almost full access through all-weather roads, while in Himachal, access is 81.3 percent and in Rajasthan it is 81.2 percent. Himachal has better primary school-middle school ratio than the all India average, UP also has fairly good access while Kerala and Rajasthan are below the all-India average.

There are three reasons why the absence of middle schools and high schools is a problem. First, studies have shown that poor parents perceive that education is valuable and can bring returns when children can get a degree or a higher education. The attractiveness of sending a child to a primary school is much less when parents know that there is not even a middle school nearby.³³¹ So instead of sending the child to study for five years, they prefer to send them to work.³³² Second, parents are often reluctant to send their daughters to school outside the village. In villages without a middle school, girls often drop out after the fifth grade, even when their parents are otherwise able and willing to continue supporting their studies.³³³ Third, studies have shown that eleven to fourteen years is the main age group when students are most vulnerable to joining the labor force.³³⁴ The absence of schools is yet another reason for children to discontinue their studies and join the labor force.

Table 4.2: Variation in Availability and Accessibility of Schools in Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh (2010-11)

States	Primary-Middle School Ratio (2010-2011)	% Primary Schools with access to all-weather Roads (2010-11)
Himachal Pradesh	2.1	81.3
Kerala	1.7	94.6
Rajasthan	1.72	48.9
UP	2.05	100

Source: *Elementary Education in India: Where do We Stand? State Report Cards: 2011-2012*

iii) Availability of teachers and teaching standards

An important aspect of the human dimension of infrastructure is the availability of teachers. One way to measure the adequacy of teachers is the Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) which is defined as the ratio of children enrolled to teachers appointed at the primary stage. The RTE Act lays down that the PTR for Grades I to V shall not exceed 1:30, while for Grades VI to VIII, it shall not exceed 1:40. In 2012, the percentage of schools in India that met the pupil-teacher norms was 42.8 percent. As Figure 4.2 shows, percentage of government schools meeting RTE norms with respect to PTR is 89.5 percent in Kerala, 78.4 percent in Himachal Pradesh, 51.1 percent in Rajasthan, and 15.6 percent in UP, suggesting significant variation across states.

The problem of teacher shortage occurs because in some states, the government is unable to recruit the requisite quota of teachers and teaching posts are absent in less attractive locations. Teacher shortage culminates in what are known as single-teacher schools, i.e. schools where one teacher teaches students belonging to different age-groups. When students

³³¹ Banerji & Duflo 2011

³³² Banerji & Duflo 2011

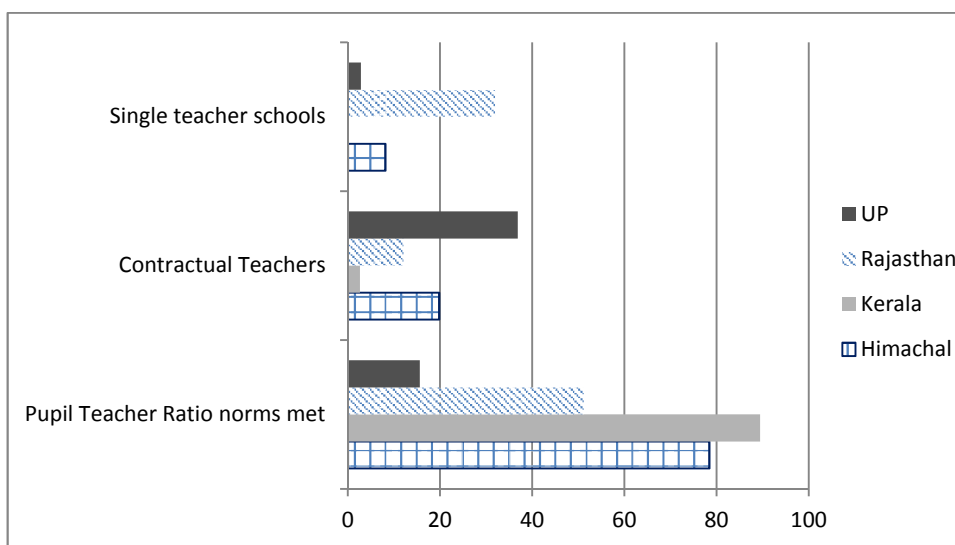
³³³ De and Dreze 1999, p. 3

³³⁴ Chaudhuri 1997

of different age-groups are huddled together and one teacher is teaching all students from different age-groups, acceptable teaching standards are hard to maintain.³³⁵ Figure 4.3 shows that the percentage of single-teacher primary schools is 7.9 percent in Himachal, 0.2 percent in Kerala, 31 percent in Rajasthan, and 3 percent in UP.³³⁶

In order to solve the problems of teacher-shortage, states have resorted to recruiting para-teachers who are essentially teachers who are recruited on the basis of temporary contracts. Unlike regular teacher appointments where teachers are recruited through a state-level exam and are appointed to schools across the state, the para teachers are usually drawn from within the village where the school is located.³³⁷ Further, para-teachers do not have to meet the stringent recruitment or qualification requirements of regularly appointed teachers. At an all India level, the percentage distribution of para teachers is 17.2 percent. Figure 4.2 shows that in UP almost 40 percent of the teachers in government schools are para teachers, while it is 19.8 percent for Himachal, 12 percent for Rajasthan and only 2.6 percent in Kerala. The low initial qualification of para teachers has raised doubts about their impact on teaching quality.³³⁸

Figure 4.2: Single-Teacher Schools, Contractual Teachers and Schools meeting PTR-norms in Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh (2010-11)



Source: i) PTR: ASER 2012; ii) Single teacher schools & Contractual Teachers: Elementary education in Rural India. Where do we stand? Analytical Tables 2010-2011

The absence of adequate standard of teaching has been identified as one of the fundamental gaps in the elementary education system in India. The recruitment and training procedures of teachers are not designed to attract the most committed candidates to the

³³⁵ De and Dreze 1999

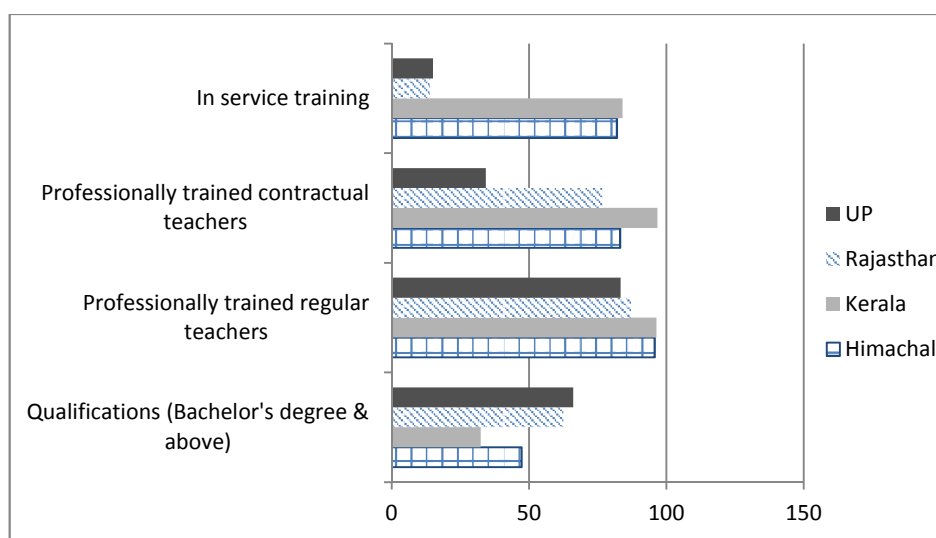
³³⁶ "Elementary Education in India: Progress towards UEE. DISE flash statistics 2010-2011." (New Delhi. Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, 2011).

³³⁷ Ramachandran 2001

³³⁸ Banerji and Duflo 2011

teaching profession. Since teaching jobs are considered high-prestige, low-pressure jobs that are well paid, it attracts candidates without adequate training or any particular commitment to the profession. Secondly, in-service training for teachers which can elevate teaching standards is also not systematically organized and fails to have a decisive impact on teaching standards.³³⁹ Studies have shown that teachers are of the opinion that the principles taught during these training courses are difficult to apply in practice in the classrooms, due to lack of infrastructure and teaching aids.³⁴⁰ Figure 4.3 shows that the initial qualification of teachers is higher in UP (66.1 percent) and Rajasthan (62.4 percent) than in Himachal (47.2 percent) and Kerala (32.4 percent). However, when it comes to in-service training, Himachal (82 percent) and Kerala (84.1 percent) fare better than UP (15.1 percent) and Rajasthan (13.1 percent). Since a large proportion of teachers in UP and Rajasthan are para-teachers, the poor training of para-teachers is a cause for concern. Even if teachers come in with high initial qualifications, the lack of in-service training means that over the years, they lose their edge in adopting new pedagogical techniques which impacts the overall standards of teaching.

Figure 4.3: Qualifications and Training of Teachers in Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh (2010-2011)



Source: *Elementary Education in Rural India: Where do we stand? Analytical Tables 2010-2011*

The unsupportive environment which creates scope for demotivation of teachers is compounded with a total absence of accountability within the elementary education system. The UNESCO's International Institute of Educational Planning study on corruption in

³³⁹ Kremer *et al* 2005. Each state has district level training institutes called District Institutes of Educational Training (DIET). However, the training imparted in these institutes is mostly in the nature of crash courses of one or two days. The trainers in these institutes are mostly bureaucrats and not experienced teachers who have hands-on classroom experience. Many of the bureaucrats in the DIETs are frequently transferred to different assignments making it difficult for DIETs to have a pool of experienced trainers.

³⁴⁰ De and Dreze 1999

education released recently reports that there is twenty-five percent teacher absenteeism in India. It is among the highest in the world, second only after Uganda. There is variation across states in levels of teacher absenteeism as well: in the ASER study (2011), the percentage of teacher-absenteeism ranged from 62 percent in Assam to 80 percent in Rajasthan. Teacher absenteeism does not just affect quality of education; it is also a huge drain on resources resulting in the wastage of almost twenty-three percent of education funds in India.³⁴¹ In a study on teacher absenteeism, it was found that teacher absence is less correlated with pay but more correlated with daily incentives to attend work: teachers are less likely to be absent at schools that have been inspected recently, that have better infrastructure, and that are closer to a paved road.³⁴² In addition to the disempowering environment in which teachers work, these findings also suggest a deep lack of commitment of the teaching community.

iv) School management

The administration of incentive schemes, the school inspection system, and the training of teachers are some of the most vital aspects of the school management system. Incentive schemes (for free textbooks, uniforms) were conceived by the planners as ‘part of the approach of government’ to motivate parents ‘to send their wards to school.’³⁴³ A large number of studies have documented the usefulness of these incentive schemes in drawing children to school.³⁴⁴ Yet it is also seen that the delivery of these incentive schemes is haphazard, arbitrary, and often don’t take place on schedule.³⁴⁵ Figure 4.4 shows the variation in disbursement of school development grants to primary schools.³⁴⁶ The percentage of schools that received school development grants is much higher in Kerala (92.1 percent) and Himachal (91.7 percent), than in Rajasthan (68.5 percent) or UP (66.1 percent). (Since incentive schemes vary across states and the data is not readily available, I used data on school development grants as an indicator of how efficiently the bureaucracy disburses grants to schools.)

A serious weak link in the management system is the inspection system in schools. The inspectors are required to respond to the complaints of teachers and are required to advise on their teaching methods. However, in practice, the inspection system, much like other aspects of management structure, also is overstretched. Each inspector has to oversee about

³⁴¹ Kremer *et al* 2005

³⁴² *Ibid.*

³⁴³ “Report of the Working Group on Elementary Education.” (New Delhi: Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, 1996).

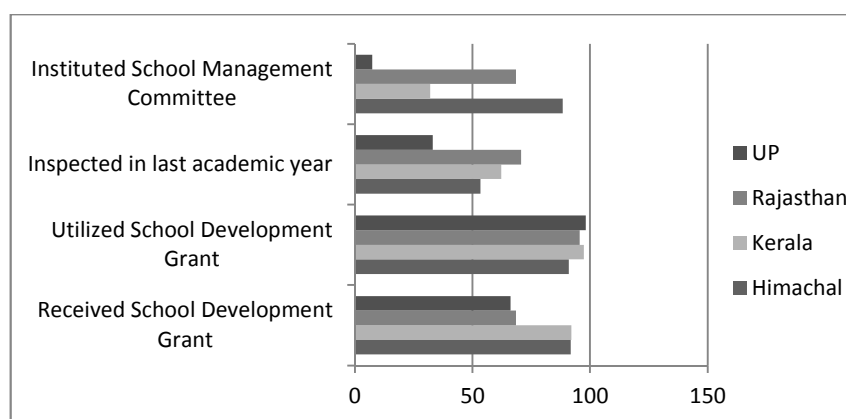
³⁴⁴ Dreze & Kingdon 2001

³⁴⁵ De and Dreze 1999

³⁴⁶ Under the SSA, every primary school is entitled to receive a school development grant (Rs. 5,000 (\$100) per year for primary school and Rs. 7,000 (\$140) per year for middle schools). This grant can be used for buying school equipment like blackboards, sitting mats, etc.

fifty schools, sometimes in remote areas.³⁴⁷ Figure 4.4 shows that the rates of inspections during the 2009-10 academic year were poor in all states-- 53.4 percent in Himachal, 62.4 percent in Kerala, 70.6 percent in Rajasthan, and 33.1 percent in UP. In the absence of a systematic inspection system, it is difficult, if not impossible to ensure that schools are running efficiently and teachers are performing their duties diligently. The lacuna in inspection sanctions a lack of accountability on the part of the teaching community. Given the poor state of inspection, it is not surprising that India has one of the highest rates of teacher absenteeism in the world.

Figure 4.4: Management of Schools in Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh (2010-11)



Source: All India Status of Education Report, 2012

The varied effectiveness of state bureaucracies in translating the ideal of universal education on the ground plays a crucial role in determining the rates of children who are out of school, and consequently, on the pool of children available for the child labor force.

4.4 Civil Society Organizations and Child Labor

Another actor whose role has been under-emphasized in studies on child labor is that of CSOs. Weiner (1991) argued that social activists, including NGOs are constrained from playing a leading role in pressing for compulsory education and enforcement of child labor laws by a host of conflicting realities. He argues: “Social activists are critics of the social order but with a few exceptions they lack a workable agenda for improving the proposition of children of the poor.”³⁴⁸ They believe that the poor have a right to employ their children, that the education system is so poor that parents are right in not sending their children to school, and are fearful that abolition of child labor will make small-scale and cottage industries redundant. Some even believe that “fundamental structural changes” must precede elimination of child labor.

³⁴⁷ Dreze & Kingdon 2001

³⁴⁸ Weiner 1991, p. 202

When Weiner wrote his treatise, there were a few CSOs that were working on the issue of child labor, but they were at a fledgling stage both ideologically and tactically. However, in the past two decades, the movement on children's rights which encompasses child labor and universal education has expanded significantly. A plethora of NGOs, trade unions, child workers' organizations—albeit with divergent ideologies and strategies—have sought to bring the issue of children's rights to the center of policy discourse. While some like the Bachpan Bachao Andolan (BBA), Pratham, Child Rights and You, Plan-India, and MV Foundation have national and international networks, others such as the Concerned for Working Children (CWC) in Karnataka, CINI-Asha in Bengal, Center for Rural Education and Development Action in UP, Impulse NGO-Network in Meghalaya largely focus their work in one region/state. Besides these large organizations, large numbers of small organizations work in individual cities, districts or local level. Whether the child rights movement in India has attained the status of a social movement is one that is open to interpretation. Issues of scale and sustainability are up for debate. A social movement essentially involve the following four characteristics: i) sustained collective mobilization through either informal and formal organization; ii) are oriented towards bringing change in an existing system of relationships; iii) has an ideological framework that articulates aspirations, shapes values, directs energies and induces legitimacy; iv) has an organization which involves the role of leadership, local and regional networks and the functional division of tasks.³⁴⁹ Based on these criteria, the child rights movement in India which has grown in scope since the 1980s could be said to have attained the status of a movement. Even though it encompasses myriad organizations with diverse ideologies, the movement has succeeded in pushing the discourse on child rights from a needs-based to a rights-based framework.³⁵⁰

The child rights movement in India shares similarities with other interest-based movements in India such as the women's movement and the environmental movement. It encompasses a large plethora of groups with diverse ideologies. The issue of child labor especially brings forth strongly contrasting positions—some argue that school and harmless work can be combined, others assert that there should be a complete elimination of child labor since the definition of 'harmless work' is largely ambiguous. Other CSOs focus on universal education but are silent on their position on child labor. The organizations adopt divergent tactics—some are purely service-delivery organizations, some are advocacy groups, while others combine service delivery and policy advocacy.

In the following section, I document the ideologies, collective mobilization strategies, organizational network, and methods of interaction with the state of three CSOs: the BBA, the CWC, and Pratham. I chose these three organizations because each of these

³⁴⁹ Karna 1998

³⁵⁰ Majumdar 2002

organizations has been influential in shaping the discourse on child labor in India. They have been recognized by the ILO-IPEC and have achieved national recognition for their work on ending child labor in India. Further, they adopt widely divergent ideologies and strategies towards child labor, even though all of them share the same objective of ensuring universal education and protecting the rights of all children. The purpose of documenting the work of these three organizations is to demonstrate the breadth and scope of the child labor movement. These cases also show how CSOs' engagement with the state and the local community has shaped national and international discourse on child labor. They have done so sometimes as critic, at times as part critic-part ally, and at other times, they have collaborated with the state to enforce children's rights. Further, these three cases builds the context for understanding the role of CSOs in my case studies in Chapters 6 and 7. In the narration below, I shall expand on the ideologies, strategies, and nature of interaction with the state and the community of three child rights organizations.

4.4.1 Bachpan Bachao Andolan (Save the Childhood Movement)

The Bachpan Bachao Andolan (BBA) was founded by Kailash Satyarthi in 1980 as the first movement against the employment of children in bonded labor in India. An electrical engineer by profession, he gave up his career to launch the child labor movement in India, which has since expanded to become a global movement. BBA advocates complete elimination of child bonded and domestic labor and has rescued more than 82,727 children and 200,000 bonded laborers. Poverty, illiteracy and child labor are regarded as part of a triangular paradigm forming a vicious circle where each is a cause and consequence of the other. It considers education as the key to prevention of child labor, child trafficking and all manifestations of violations of child rights. Following its discourse on ending child slavery, the BBA has expanded its operations from child labor to the broad issues of child trafficking and missing children. Initially, BBA was based in New Delhi, but it now has offices in seven states across India.³⁵¹

National Interventions: When BBA first started its campaigns in 1980, it focused on rescue operations of child labor in certain hazardous occupations such as brick kilns, carpet weaving, and the firecracker industry. In 1996, the BBA launched the Fairplay Campaign focusing on child labor in manufacturing sports goods in India. In 2002, BBA launched research and campaign on child labor and child trafficking in circuses in India. In 2003, the All India Circus Conference resulted in a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between BBA and the Indian circus industry to stop employment and exploitation of children. In 2005, BBA launched the first research on child labor and trafficking in the garment sector. In 2008,

³⁵¹ Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Rajasthan, UP, Jharkhand and Bihar

India Action Week was constituted which involved rescue of 500 child laborers rescued from various parts of India. Therefore, BBA has adopted an industry-specific approach.

Besides intervention in industries, BBA's key strength has been in large scale collective mobilization. In 1993, BBA organized a 2,000 kilometer (~3,000 mile) long Bihar-Delhi rally against child labor for increasing public awareness, the first such campaign in India. In 1994, a 5,000 kilometer (~8,000 mile) rally from Kanya Kumari to Delhi against child labor was started. The campaign against child domestic labor resulted in the banning of employment of children by government employees. In 1996, the first ever *Bal Sansad* (Children's Parliament) in India participated by over 10,000 children was organized.

BBA also organizes massive mass mobilization campaigns. In 2012, it organized the Child Labor Free India Campaign. In response to this campaign, the Cabinet approved the Child and Adolescent Labor (Prohibition) Act on August 28, 2012. The Bill imposes a blanket ban on all forms of child labor up to the age of fourteen and ban on child work in hazardous occupations up to the age of eighteen. Employing a child below fourteen years of age is set to become a cognizable offence, punishable with a maximum 3 years imprisonment or fine up to a maximum of Rupees 50,000 (~USD 900). This will allow employing children in fourteen to eighteen years age-group in non-hazardous occupations. This would mean scaling up the state's efforts and responsibilities, enhanced expenditure and more involvement of the police and judiciary if the government is serious about enforcement.

BBA has set up a large number of initiatives for rescue and rehabilitation of child laborers. In 1990, Mukti Ashram, the first transit rehabilitation cum education center established for bonded child laborers was established. In 1997, the first establishment of Bal Ashram, the second rehabilitation cum education center in Rajasthan for child laborers and another one called Balika Ashram in Delhi. It was also the beginning of 'Bal Mitra Gram' (child friendly villages) model as a preventive program to tackle child labor and child trafficking and ensuring the participation of children in education. The uniqueness of Bal Mitra Gram (BMG) initiative lies in active participation of village children in creating a legitimate democratic space for themselves in panchayats, communities, schools and families. The main objective of BMG is the identification of withdrawal of child laborers and mainstreaming them into schools. Further a Bal Panchayat (Children's Parliament) is formed where children can speak and express their grievances. The Bal Panchayats were a child centric democratic process especially incorporating the voices of the girl-child into the decision-making process and to build up sensitivity towards the commencement of gender equality.

The idea of Bal Panchayats has brought success in some areas. Bal Mitra Gram Rupkawas in Rajasthan is especially known for electing an all-girl Bal Panchayat. This is especially significant because girl-child has always faced discrimination in Rajasthan. The

BMG in Rupkawas formed a Kishori Balika Mandal, a group of twenty girls that discusses social issues like child marriage, dowry and raises the matter with adults. They built a separate toilet in the school for girls which was leading to dropout of girls and formed a concrete playground in the school. Similarly, in Mirzapur a tribal village had no middle school which meant that most girls dropped out after primary education. This increased the number of domestic girl child laborers. The *Sarpanch* of the Bal Panchayat wrote letters to the District Magistrate and the Education Department describing the problem and children demonstrated in front of the District Magistrate's office. A middle school has since been constructed in Mirzapur. In other BMGs such as Ramchandranagar and Fatuha in Bihar, children from the Bal Panchayat demonstrated against the sale of liquor as it was believed to be destroying homes in the state. In the village of Malutana, thirty-seven children working in carpet looms and stone quarries have been rescued and they have worked on getting electricity, telephone, construction of toilet and library in the school.

Since its inception in 1980, BBA has strongly advocated the relationship between child labor and education as two sides of the same coin. Education was one of the missions during the countrywide marches joined by millions of people in 1995, 1996, and 1997 as well as in the Global March Against Child Labor in 1998. In the 1990s, BBA initiated a Parliamentary Forum for Education with 166 members of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, which is still active. A National Coalition on Education consisting of Teachers Unions and other CSOs was formed. In 1995, in an innovative campaign, BBA approached more than 800,000 village Panchayat heads and about 20,000 relevant state institutions individually demanding elimination of child labor and the RTE for all. A nationwide movement for Constitutional amendment for making education as a Fundamental Right was launched through a 15,000 km, 6 month long march 'Shiksha Yatra' (Education Rally) across 20 states in the country in 2001. Former child laborers met with then prime minister of India Atal Bihari Vajpayee to demand a law of education. A complementary action for this demand was taken up by the Parliamentary Forum. This has impacted the 86th Constitutional amendment in making education a fundamental right.

Engaging with the state: BBA's primary strategy in engaging with the state is through the judicial machinery, The Supreme court issued an order on April 18, 2011 in *BBA versus Union of India (UoI) and Others*.³⁵² It banned the employment of children in circuses and lay down the guidelines of the implementation of institutional framework for the protection of children. Subsequently, the GoI included circus as a hazardous industry in Schedule Part A of the CLPRA 1986.

³⁵² *BBA v. Union of India and Others*, WP(C) 51 of 2006

Further, BBA also filed a case for implementation of the Juvenile Justice Act, 2000. On April 18, 2011, in *BBA vs. UoI and Others*,³⁵³ the Supreme Court ordered the GoI to constitute Juvenile Justice Boards, Child Welfare Committees and Children's Homes in all districts in the country for rehabilitation and protection of children remanded under the Juvenile Justice Act. The National Council for Protection of Children's Rights was named as the statutory body to oversee the implementation of the Juvenile Justice Act.

In another order dated September 23, 2011 under *BBA versus UoI 2006*, BBA filed an application in the Supreme Court for the complete ban on all forms of child labor. The Supreme Court of India sought responses from the Union Government and all state governments within four weeks. On December 4, 2012, the MoLE introduced the CLPRA Amendment Bill 2012 in the Upper House of the Parliament (Rajya Sabha) banning child labor. Further, the Ministry recovered Rupees forty four million in the form of fines. The Supreme Court of India formed the All India Legal Aid Cell on Child Rights under the BBA's central office.

BBA also filed cases against state governments in respective High Courts in the states. The Delhi High Court has been proactive in passing several child labor legislations. On July 15, 2009, in *Save the Childhood Foundation vs. Union of India and Others*³⁵⁴, the Delhi High Court ordered a complete ban on all forms of child labor. It defined the roles and responsibilities of all government agencies in detail vis-a-vis child labor. It laid down that 500 children would be rescued every month and a fine of Rupees 20,000 (~USD 400) would be paid by the employer for the rehabilitation of the victim irrespective of whether the offender is convicted. In another order dated March 21, 2011, the Court laid down direction of law and responsibility of law enforcement agencies in the case of child labor. Thereafter, on May 28, 2012, the Court ordered the cancellation or suspension of licenses of units employing child labor. In an order dated December 24, 2010, the High Court of Delhi in *BBA vs. UoI and Others*³⁵⁵ ordered that placement agencies that supplied domestic laborers would have to be registered with the government and domestic laborers would have to be paid wages under the Minimum Wages Act, 1948. Subsequently, the Government of Delhi formulated the Delhi Private Agencies (Placement Regulation) Bill 2012.

High Courts of other states have also responded to BBA's petitions on child labor. On November 30, 2010, the High Court of Bihar directed the state government to identify and rescue child laborers as per the state action plan and directed BBA to provide training to the Labor Department. Similarly, the High Court of Punjab directed the Government of Punjab to formulate a Plan of Action and Standard Operating Procedure for the rescue of child laborers.

³⁵³ *BBA vs. UoI and Others*, WP (C) 51 of 2006

³⁵⁴ *Save the Childhood Foundation vs. Union of India and Others*, WP (Crl) 2069/2005

³⁵⁵ *BBA vs. UoI and Others*, WP (Crl) 82 of 2009

The Government of Punjab formulated the plan and 1,980 child laborers have been rescued in Punjab till 2011. In Jharkhand, the High Court directed the Constitution of State Child Protection Committees, CWCs, Children's Homes and Shelter Homes and ordered compliance with the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) Act, 2000. In response, the government of Jharkhand formed the State Commission for Protection of Child Rights.

Direct lobbying with state departments and legislators has also brought about legislative change on the issue of child labor. In 2000-01, BBA started 'Knock the Door Campaign' whereby children knocked the door of every single Parliament member at six in the morning and handed them an empty slate as a symbol of widespread illiteracy due to the lack of political will. The impact of this movement was powerful—for the first time, more than 200 interventions were made by members in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha within a week that resulted in a special debate on education in the House. On October 10, 2006, after a sustained campaign by BBA for ten years, the Parliament of India banned domestic child labor. BBA's efforts also played a role in the enhancement of budgetary allocation for elementary education in India.

4.4.2 The Concerned for Working Children (CWC)

Founded in the 1970s, CWC is an organization based in Bengaluru in the state of Karnataka in southern India. The organization's work received international recognition when it was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2012. CWC was founded by two trade union leaders, Nandana Reddy and Damodar Acharya. In 1977, at a union meeting in the Peenya industrial estate in Bangalore, trade unionist Nandana Reddy noticed a large number of children among the workers. She realised that working children are in need of organisation and support and began working with them to secure legal rights and protection under labor laws. She was instrumental in setting up a Task Force chaired by Dr. L.M. Singhvi under the auspices of the India International Center, New Delhi to critique the CLPRA 1986. The Task Force drafted the Child Labor (Employment, Regulation, Training and Development) Bill that was presented to the Governments of Karnataka and India and later adopted with changes as the Government Bill on Child Labor. Damodar Acharya is also an active member of the trade union movement.

Ideology: CWC adopts a different philosophy towards children's work compared to other organizations such as BBA and MV Foundation which demand complete abolition of child labor. CWC argues that the 'ban' approach has failed to reduce the prevalence of child labor. The current approach of the state has removed thousands of children forcefully from work and incarcerated them in children's homes, before being returned to their families only to return to work in an unofficial, lower paid and less safe position. Instead of criminalizing

child work, CWC believes in tackling the root causes of child labor and recognizing the positive role that age-appropriate work can play in childhood.

CWC adopts the traditional distinction of child work and child labor—where the former is regarded as not just safe, but actively beneficial for children’s growth and learning, while the latter is regarded as work that does not contribute to her growth and development. While it is acceptable to abolish child labor, it is a mistake to abolish child work. Work is seen as providing a vital source of income for children from poor families which not only helps meet basic living costs, but offsets the cost of education. CWC supports an approach which focuses on addressing the social and economic factors that drive children to work while recognizing that, in moderate amounts and in the right roles, work can and should be a healthy part of childhood.

CWC argues that the current policy trend of complete elimination of child labor is disturbing. A Draft Bill proposed by the CWC in 1985 went beyond the current CLPRA which had proposed a large developmental component that included integrating work and education, setting up of ‘flexi-schools’ and exploring the provisions of the Apprenticeship Act by strengthening the safety and educational components of the Act. However, this was not accepted by the government. Reddy argues that based on the position of World Trade Organization and ILO-IPEC and pushed by hardliners in India, strategies on child labor in India are based on generalized examples of children in hazardous industry, that account for only a small percentage of the labor force. As such, the banned list has been expanded, but little or nothing has been done to regulate safe occupations. She argues that this ‘black and white’ approach obtained from generalizations derived from the worst forms of child labor shuts down all avenues of employment, even safe and developmentally necessary ones. She says that the CLPRA focuses on demand side of child labor by focusing on employers but does not focus on factors like poor education that pushes children into the workforce. In response to the proposed 2011 amendment to the CLPRA which bans all forms of work for children below fourteen years of age, she says, “The new amendment will be even more difficult to enforce and will further push children into more invisible, unmonitored, and therefore hazardous situations.”³⁵⁶

As member of the monitoring committee of the National Council of Education Research and Training, Reddy played an extensive role in the development of the latest National Curriculum Framework in 2005. In her submission titled ‘Work and Education’, Reddy argued that schools must acknowledge the educational value of work. CWC director Kavita Ratna is a member of the National Planning Commission’s sub-committee on

³⁵⁶ Reddy, Nandana. "Blanket Ban on Child Labour Will Hit Right to Livelihood." September 4, 2012. *Deccan Herald*.

adolescent education. She successfully argued for the Twelfth Five-Year Plan to respond to the needs of out-of-school children. According to her, the RTE Act and the NCLP do not adequately respond to the needs and aspirations of adolescents who are out of school. This group includes children and adolescents who are working, who combine work with education, who are migrants and who are in juvenile justice institutions. She argued that the present strategy of removing a adolescents child from work and putting them into an education institution has not worked because the social problems that pushed them into the labor market have not changed and remain a driving force both for the family and the young person.

Organization: Unlike the BBA that has expanded its network nationally as well as internationally, the CWC has remained limited largely to the state of Karnataka. It works primarily in the districts of Udupi, Bellary, and in the urban area of Bengaluru. Bal Sangha, child workers' organizations started by CWC operates local chapters and groups which form the core of children's organizations. These local chapters consist of an average of ten to twenty children living or working in the same area. There is little formal hierarchy in the organization and the regular members of the group are those that support the group in monthly or bimonthly meetings. Bal Sanghas do not have formal membership criteria and all are open to children in the six to eighteen years age group.

CWC also founded the National Movement of Working Children. Its members are mostly situated in the southern part of India and they work towards securing the rights of working children.

National Interventions: CWC adopts a child-centric approach in its efforts towards collective mobilization. It has pioneered radical new models of children's participation in governance. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), ratified in 1990, sets out three broad categories of rights all children should enjoy: protection from threats, provision of basic services like education, and participation in decisions affecting them. CWC argues that the 'third P' has been missing in approaches to children's rights. CWC believes that it is children, not adults, who know best what children need and want. Instead of merely 'helping' children, CWC works to empower children to organize themselves and identify, and solve, their problems.

CWC has pioneered the formation of an international child workers' movement. In 1996, facilitated by CWC, working children from across Africa, Asia and Latin America gathered at CWC's campus in Kundapur for the inaugural meeting of the International Movement of Working Children. Over three days of debate and deliberations, the children agreed ten guiding principles—dubbed the 'Kundapur principles'—which have informed the child labor debate since. The Kundapur principles call for the recognition of the initiatives, suggestions and organization processes of child workers' organizations; oppose the boycott of products made by children; demand for respect and safety for children's work; call for

education suited to child workers; professional training; access to good health system; consultation with child workers' organizations; research into the reasons that are at the origin of the child labor situation; initiatives in rural areas so that children don't have to go to the city; and oppose the exploitation of children's labor, but in favor of a dignifying job with a schedule suited for education and spare time.

The movement scored an early victory in providing a voice for working children worldwide by successfully petitioning to attend the International Child Labor Conference held by the ILO in Amsterdam in 1997. Since then, the movement has had two more formal conventions: in Berlin in 2004, and in Italy in 2006.

However, CWC has achieved most notable success through the formation of unions for working children. On April 30 1990, over 500 working children from across the State gathered in Bengaluru's Gandhi Park and declared the formation of *Bhima Sangha*, a union for, by and of working children. Instead of focusing on welfare measures, the organizations demand that working children be acknowledged as a group that possesses rights and in order to create lasting change children must be given a voice. They do not call for ban on child labor rather on regulation, control, and protection within their work sphere. Work is seen as a legitimate strategy for children to respond to the challenges they face in their daily lives.

Named after a character in the Hindu epic Mahabharata, the Bhima Sangha has played a formidable role in the protection of working children. The most notable case was in 1991, when four child workers died in a fire at a local hotel in Bengaluru. Bhima Sangha established an Enquiry Committee to establish the cause of the fire and secure justice for their colleagues. The children interviewed hotel workers, neighbors, and the police and made maps and took photographs of the scene, uncovering negligence on the part of the owners that led to the fire. After they made their findings public, the hotel's licence was revoked and it closed down. Like any workers' union, it intervenes in matters relating to work, whether forcing a neighbor to apologize for beating a domestic worker or securing better safety conditions for workers in a cashew nut factory. For instance, in Alur Panchayat in 2002, Bhima Sangha members set up a dairy to prevent children from walking long distances each day to milk cows. Currently, Bhima Sangha has over 12,500 members and has gained international recognition as a working children's organization. The formation of Bhima Sangha has been followed by formation of other workers organizations like the Bal Mazdoor Union in New Delhi, Hasiru Sangha and Ele Nakshatra.

The most significant campaign of Bhima Sanghas has been 'Dhudio Makkala Toofan' ('Working Children's Typhoon') Program, launched in 1990. Toofan was a radical experiment in children's representation in local government. In five *panchayats* across Karnataka, Toofan establishes 'Makkala Panchayats' (Children's Councils) and task forces to carry children's voices into government decision-making processes. It is aimed at creating an

environment where children are not involved in any form of work that is detrimental to their development, and where all children's rights are recognised and realised. Elected by all the children of a *panchayat*, the Makkala Panchayat monitors the work of the adult *panchayat*, identifies problems facing children, works to create solutions and, and where necessary, demands action from adult representatives. Makkala Panchayats have had some credible successes. In Alur village, for example, the Makkala Panchayat helped children convince adult elected representatives of the need for a high school in the village, enabling many children, especially girls, to go to school. In Keradi village, members of the Makkala Panchayat convinced the *Gram Panchayat* to close down illegal alcohol shops in their community.

Makkala Panchayats have had significant achievements. In 1998-999, children in the five Toofan Panchayats conducted a survey of their peers to establish local definitions of suitable and unsuitable work for children.³⁵⁷ The guidelines created become the basis of the *panchayats'* child labor policies. Using these standards, all five Panchayats were declared "child labor free" within the next five years. In 2002, Bhima Sangha members in the village of Holagundi conducted a successful campaign to prevent one of their members from being forced by her parents into early marriage. Inspired by the campaign, CWC and Bhima Sangha initiated a major state-wide campaign against child marriage.

State governments have recognized the contribution of Makkala Panchayats. In 2004, Makkala Panchayats were central to CWC's work facilitating 20,000 children to participate in their village's contributions to the national five-year planning process. State officials were so impressed with their work they recruited children who ran the Makkala Panchayats to provide training to 82,000 adult *panchayat* members state-wide.³⁵⁸ In 2006, CWC published a Protocol of Makkala Panchayats, a publication designed to help other *panchayats* across Karnataka set up Makkala Panchayats. The Government of Karnataka endorsed the Makkala Panchayats when the State Minister of Development and Panchayat Raj, C.M. Udaasi said that Makkala Panchayats were "showing the adults how to run the government in harmony."³⁵⁹

The work of Bhima Sanghas was expanded at a national level when members established the 'National Movement of Working Children' in 1999. The National Movement has become a powerful force in children's issues at national and international level. Its members have twice prepared a 'Children's Report' to the UNCRC in Geneva, as an alternative to the Indian government's official report on its compliance with the Convention

³⁵⁷ "Work We Can and Cannot Do: (Working Children of Belve Panchayat, Karnataka Define What Work Is Appropriate for Them and What Work Is Not)." (Bangalore: Concerned for Working Children, 1999).

³⁵⁸ See "Unique Revolution (Children Develop the Official Five-Year Plan of Their Panchayats)." (Bangalore: Concerned for Working Children, 2004).

³⁵⁹ The results from one province, Balkur, are published in 1999 as the CWC book *Work We Can and Cannot Do*.

on the Rights of the Child. Members also participated in the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children in New York in 2002, and have contributed to a range of national and state consultations on legislation and Action Plans concerning children.³⁶⁰ In 2002, representatives of the ILO met with members of Bhima Sangha from Bangalore and three rural districts to hear their views on child labor – the first time the ILO has ever consulted with a working children’s organization. In 2008, CWC played a key role in the formulation of the UN’s General Comment on Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, designed to advise governments on how to implement children’s right to have their views heard on issues concerning them.

Education interventions: Besides establishing child workers’ organizations, CWC has also intervened in the field of education. However, since it believes in child work, the educational centers have mostly been sites for informal education. In 1986, CWC launched its urban field program, with full-time field staff working to help and empower children employed in hotels, garages, construction sites and elsewhere around Bangalore. Night centers and extension schools were opened to provide working children with education, hot meals, and the opportunity to bathe. In 1989, CWC expanded its rural program, sending field workers to Udupi district in Western Karnataka to help working children organize for their rights. Centers for children are opened in villages across the *taluk* of Kundapur, an area where many migrant working children are from. In 1993, CWC established Namma Bhoomi, a residential resource center in Kundapur and began providing vocational training to local working children. Ultimately this evolved into Namma Nalanda Vidyapeetha, a full-fledged teaching program educating over 100 students each year. In 1995, CWC introduced the Appropriate Education Program (AEP). AEP aims to enhance children’s access to and experience of education by working with teachers and government to improve formal schools and establishment of extension schools for working children.

In recent years, CWC has become more heavily involved in helping to organize and empower school-going children. In 2003, CWC began facilitating children to form school-children’s organizations. By the end of 2005, more than 140 school children’s Sanghas (organizations) had been formed across Kundapur. They have now spread throughout Udupi district, providing school children a forum to discuss problems and identify solutions.

Engagement with the State: CWC has worked with the state, especially the bureaucracy to push forth the agenda in favor of improving the rights of working children. In

³⁶⁰ The first “Working Children’s Report” was prepared by Bhima Sangha, Mahashakti Sangha of Tamil Nadu, and Soshu Panchayat of Orissa. The second alternate report was prepared by Indradhanush Sangham, Vidiyal Vanavil Sangham, Ele Nakshatra, Hasiru Sangha and Bhima Sangha. See “*Working Children’s Report, 1998 (First Report Prepared by Children Submitted to the UN Child Rights Convention)*.” (Bangalore: Concerned for Working Children, 1998); “*Alternate Report of National Movement of Working Children*.” (Bangalore: Concerned for Working Children, 2003)

2004, the Government of Karnataka was trying to enable the participation of civil society in the formulation of plans through the vitalization of *Gram Sabhas* without much success. CWC facilitated the participation of children in fifty-six panchayats of Kundapura *taluk* in Udupi district of the state of Karnataka in the participatory planning process. An opportunity came their way in the form of an offer from the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Udupi district to enable participatory planning in Kundapur. Every year, the Gram Panchayats prepare action plans relating to funds earmarked under the Jawahar Samridhi Yojana and the Tenth Finance Commission. The CEO of the district had witnessed the presentation of plans drawn up by five Makkala Panchayats where in addition to needs assessment, data collection, and problem prioritization, there was also collation of history, mapping, surveys and documentation of discussions held with various groups. The CEO requested CWC to facilitate a similar process in all the *panchayats* of Kundapur. The children's plans were found to be comprehensive and substantiated with statistics and data. They recorded the history of the village, degradation of resources, made maps of the *panchayats* and proposed solutions to the problems of the community. The problems of the disabled, environmental concerns, and issues related to mobility and transport were reflected in the plans. The adults' plans were found to be less well-researched in comparison. The children's plans were adopted as the official plans of the *panchayat*. Subsequently, the Government of Karnataka requested the CWC to facilitate the planning process in other districts. So it set up a State Resource Team comprised of representatives of Bhima Sangha, Makala Panchayats, and representatives of CWC.

The bureaucracy has also supported the expansion of innovations of the CWC. In 2006, following CWC's success in establishing Makkala Grama Sabhas in its core areas, the Government of Karnataka issued a circular calling on all panchayats state-wide to conduct such meetings. By the end of the year more than 21,000 children state-wide took part in Makkala Grama Sabhas. CWC has also held bureaucrats accountable. In 2001, government surveys declared Bairumbe and Holagundi, two *panchayats* where CWC works, 'child labor free.' This was challenged by CWC fieldworkers in these two villages. Members of Bhima Sangha conducted house-to-house interviews to measure the number of child workers and successfully challenged the government to repeat its survey. CWC's engagement with the state through the bureaucracy has had an impact in enforcing the agenda on children's rights.

4.4.3 Pratham

Pratham is an NGO whose primary focus is on universal education but has special outreach programs for child laborers. Unlike most other NGOs which are born out of the enterprise of a few individuals, Pratham was established as a Public Charitable Trust in 1994 by a collaboration of a senior bureaucrat (the Commissioner of the Municipal Corporation of

Greater Mumbai), UNICEF, and a few other individuals. Pratham's team includes people from diverse backgrounds including social workers, activists, chartered accountants, civil servants, bankers, corporate professionals, consultants, and academicians.

Ideology: Pratham's mission is to ensure "Every Child in School and Learning Well." The organization is founded on the firm belief that education is the fundamental right of every child and no child should be deprived of this basic right simply because he/she does not have access to it or does not have the resources to realize his/her dreams. Pratham's key principles are to generate a societal mission of universal education through a triangular partnership of the government, the corporate sector and the citizens; to create large-scale impact to bring about a perceptible change; to create low-cost models for sustainability and replicability of interventions.

An innovative aspect of Pratham's ideology is to bring about accountability of the state by collecting and presenting verifiable statistical evidence. The Pratham approach visualizes measurement as the first stage for action. It believes that the absence of a culture of measurement with respect to outcomes has hampered the creation of effective plans and strategies and the process of taking stock of progress of plans. Such tools and findings that quantify the problem can involve large numbers of people and can be used to propel action at different levels. Once the evidence is collected, the next step is to create a demand for better services at the ground level. Pratham believes that unless people and (in the case of schools) parents demand better services, quality is unlikely to improve, regardless of government provisioning. At the same time, there is an overall public perception that government delivery of services cannot be improved. There is also a low level of awareness that government programs are actually funded by tax payer money. Thus the demand for improved quality is low. Pratham therefore, aims at measuring quantifiable evidence to demand government accountability.

Interventions: Pratham's works on the issue of child laborers through the Pratham Council for Vulnerable Children (PCVC) which started its outreach program in Mumbai in the year 2001. When Pratham volunteers were working on implementing their mission for universal education, they came across many children who worked as child laborers in industries like *zari* (gold/silver thread embroidery), leather, gold polishing, hotels, rag picking and begging. This led to the realization that the goal of UEE could not be achieved without reaching out to these vulnerable children who were involved in the workforce. Till 2004, the focus of PCVC was on working children in the city of Mumbai, who were mainly found to have been trafficked from different parts of the country. Creation of a task force under the Government of Maharashtra led to the rescue and rehabilitation of almost 45,000 working children in Mumbai alone. Since many of the children were trafficked from poor states like West Bengal and Bihar, the PCVC has now expanded its program to source states.

Until 2005, PCVC was not involved in rescue and rehabilitation efforts. However, the death of a twelve year old student of Pratham educational unit who was also a child laborer in a local *zari* unit triggered the initiation of a movement against this inhuman practice. Pratham presented the data related to the death of the child and also statistics related to other children in the *zari* industry to the Chief Minister and Labor Minister of Maharashtra. This led to the formation of Task Force consisting of the important Government departments and NGOs including Pratham. Due to this initiative more than 22,000 child laborers were rescued from in and around Mumbai. Pratham's key strategy is convincing employers not to employ children; a raid is used as a last resort since it entails considerable planning and manpower.

Majority of the children rescued by Pratham were from the states of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and some from Rajasthan and Gujarat. The children were repatriated to their respective villages. To prevent children being trafficked in the first place, Pratham started focusing on the source areas to deal with the push factors that force children into work. PCVC started providing education, residential care, and age appropriate vocational training. Large scale education programs were started with the help of the Central Government in UP and Bihar.

Organization: In every PCVC state, Pratham works in one rural district (2 blocks per district; 100 villages per block, on average) and in one city (usually capital city for collaboration with State authorities). Each district/city has been selected based on data of high numbers of out of school/working children). Today, PCVC is operational in seven states (Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Orissa), reaching out to about 60,000 children through direct programs such as Drop In Centers, Educational Support Classes, Residential Shelters, Child Rights Desks, Focus City-Block Interventions and about 120,000 children through child rights awareness sessions in schools, communities and villages.

Pratham has designed educational interventions tailored to suit the special requirements of child laborers. They have Drop-in Centers which are like a resting place for working children. They provide vulnerable and working children with a safe and child-friendly place where they can drop in at any time of the day. The Drop-in Centers, which is the first step towards drawing the children into formal education, is a low cost and replicable model; it caters to the immediate needs of the working and vulnerable children, establishes a presence in the community, and also helps gather information about the profiles of working children and their working conditions. The second intervention is the non-formal education classes which prepare children to be mainstreamed into formal education through collaboration with existing Government schemes such as Non Residential Bridge Courses under SSA, NCLP Schools, etc. Lastly, support classes provide children who have been enrolled in formal schools with extra coaching to help with homework outside school hours.

This ensures that the children whose parents are unable to help them at home are able to cope with the school curriculum, and therefore decreases potential drop-out rates of these children. PCVC also runs residential shelters to provide a safe place for orphaned and abandoned children.

Engagement with the state: Pratham has become a strong voice in governmental educational reform. Facilitated by Pratham, ASER (All-India Status of Education Report) is the largest household survey undertaken in India by people outside the government. It annually measures the enrolment as well as the reading and arithmetic levels of children in the age group of six to fourteen years. The survey is being conducted annually and in 2008, ASER reached over 7,04,000 children in 16,198 across India. More than 32,000 volunteers from NGOs, colleges and universities, youth and women groups participated in this effort.

ASER has become an important input in the educational policies of both the Central and State governments. Since the last four years the report has been released by the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, Dr. Montek Singh Ahluwalia. The findings of the survey have been referred to in the approach paper to the Eleventh Planning Commission and several state governments use the findings to define their educational programs each year. ASER's team leaders are members of important policy making bodies both at the Central and State levels, including the Governing Council of the SSA. ASER has attempted to involve ordinary citizens in understanding the current situation in elementary education.

Pratham's interventions are aimed at supplementing rather than replacing governmental efforts. It has signed Memorandums of Understanding with eight state governments for the *Read India Program* which is designed to improve learning schools of students and is working in close collaboration with the municipal corporations in several cities such as Mumbai and Delhi. Farida Lambay, the Director of PCVC has been made a member of the National Advisory Council on Implementation of the RTE Act, 2009 and a member of the Maharashtra State Commission for the Protection of Children's Rights. PCVC is a member of the drafting committee appointed by the Central Labor Ministry for the Protocol on standard operating procedures to be followed during Rescue, Repatriation and Rehabilitation of Working Children and are also members of the State Task Force for the Eradication of Child Labor in the states of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh.

In its role as part critic-part ally, Pratham has built pressure on the government to improve the delivery of education. Pratham works to raise awareness on the issue of child labor and child rights by building pressure groups across communities and by working with local and state authorities to create political will based on concrete evidence. In 2009, Pratham mobilized 200,000 citizens from all over Mumbai to protest against the Maharashtra Government's Resolution passed on March 3, 2009 which reduced the age of the working

child from eighteen years to fourteen years. Pratham has tied up with more than 8,000 housing societies in Mumbai to ensure that no children are employed in their housing colonies.

Pratham teams up with government officials in its community-vigilance mechanisms. It has set up Child Rights Help Desks in key child labor prone areas in urban and rural areas such as railway stations. The setting up of Help Desks allows PCVC to establish an accurate database of the children moving in and out of the city and better understand their situations. These Desks also serve as a focal point for building contact with children begging or working on the platforms and helps raise awareness among the hundreds of passengers coming to and from the terminus.

At the community level, Pratham facilitates the formation and replication of community vigilance groups which work in collaboration with Pratham's Prevention Teams to scout the communities for working children. These community vigilance groups generally consist of an officer of the local police station, the local Labor Officer, representatives of Owners Association, members of youth and women's groups, as well as other NGOs working in the community. The community vigilance groups help the Prevention teams locate factories where children are working, put pressure on owners to release the children, and ensure that the factories permanently stop employing children. Across various states, different bodies have been more actively involved in setting up these community prevention groups: School Management Committees in Rajasthan, village panchayats in Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh, Students Action Committees in Andhra Pradesh, and Self-Help Groups in Maharashtra.

Pratham's initiatives have had a significant impact on child laborers. In 2011-2012, Pratham rescued 3,321 children from work through its rescue and repatriation program. 13,362 children were reached by the Prevention team. 12,416 children participated in Pratham's education program and 7,824 were enrolled in formal schools. 119,515 members of the community participated in its awareness activities. In 2008-09, under the Read India Campaign, 33 million children across 19 states were reached. It covered 305,000 out of the 600,000 villages of India and mobilized 450,000 volunteers. Over 600,000 teachers/ officials/ government workers have been trained.

4.5 Conclusion

The above discussion on three NGOs focuses on the divergent ideologies and strategies adopted by CSOs on children's rights. While BBA focuses on complete elimination of child labor, CWC supports the idea of non-exploitative work for children, and Pratham believes that elimination of child labor is critical for universalization of education. Each of these organizations adopts a different strategy and ideology, but each has contributed in its

unique way in shaping the discourse of child labor in India. Each of the CSOs described above also have engaged with the state in seeking support for their agenda. BBA's strategy is to force the executive into action by filing PILs in the High Courts and Supreme Courts of India. However, CWC and Pratham have adopted a partnership role with government agencies. CWC lobbies with educational reform bodies to push for an agenda which will allow children to combine work and school. Pratham partners with the state in its prevention and rescue efforts, but also attempts to keep the educational bureaucracy accountable by collecting quantifiable evidence on the status of education imparted in government schools in India.

In this chapter, I showed that child labor policy has covered a miniscule proportion of child workforce in the country. Instead, it is variation in the implementation of elementary education policy that gives us a better understanding of why children stay out of schools and join the workforce. In understanding the implementation of elementary education policies, the role of two actors is important: the bureaucracy and CSOs. The next chapter presents empirical evidence on the role of bureaucratic effectiveness and social consensus on education in influencing levels of child labor.

Chapter 5

“Push Factors”: Uncovering the Potency of Bureaucratic Effectiveness and Social Consensus on Education

5.1 Introduction

In Chapter 3, I lay down a theory which stated that the effectiveness with which state bureaucracies translated educational outcomes to real outcomes on the ground plays a role in reducing the likelihood of children being sent to work. Social consensus on education deters parental motivation to send children to work and encourages them to send their children to school directly through peer pressure and demonstration effect; it also affects parental motivation indirectly by improving accountability of the educational bureaucracy and improving the quality of schools. Further, the social consensus on education can be built over time through various means, one of which is through the intervention of civil society organizations.

This chapter tests the explanation using a national survey sample known as India Human Development Survey (IHDS) of over 50,000 children across twenty eight Indian states conducted by the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER), New Delhi in collaboration with the University of Maryland during 2005-2006.³⁶¹ The IHDS covers health, education, employment, economic status, marriage, fertility, gender relations, and social capital. The theoretical argument of this dissertation examines the role of bureaucratic effectiveness (BE) and the social consensus on education (SC) in influencing levels of child labor. Based on this argument, I derived seven hypotheses, six of which (*H1-H6*) I shall test in this chapter. H1-H6 test the effect of BE and SC, whereas the role of CSOs will be discussed in the case studies chapters.

Table 5.1 recapitulates the hypotheses derived from the theory in Chapter 3 which I shall test in this chapter.

³⁶¹ Desai, Sonalde, Reeve Vanneman, and National Council of Applied Economic Research, New Delhi. India Human Development Survey (IHDS), 2005. ICPSR22626-v8. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 2010-06-29

Table 5.1: Summary of Hypotheses

<p>State level Hypotheses</p> <p>H1: <i>States that have higher bureaucratic effectiveness in the delivery of elementary education are expected to have lower rates of child labor.</i></p> <p>H3: <i>States that have higher social consensus among caste groups should have lower rates of child labor than states that have lower social consensus among caste groups.</i></p> <p>H4: <i>States that have higher social consensus on female education should have lower rates of child labor than states that have lower social consensus on female education.</i></p> <p>Individual-level hypotheses</p> <p>H2: <i>A child who experiences higher level of bureaucratic effectiveness at school should be less likely to join the workforce compared to a child who experiences lower levels of bureaucratic effectiveness at school.</i></p> <p>H2a: <i>Increased bureaucratic effectiveness in the delivery of elementary education is expected to decrease levels of absenteeism.</i></p> <p>H2b: <i>Increased bureaucratic effectiveness in the delivery of elementary education is expected to decrease levels of dropouts.</i></p> <p>H2c: <i>Increased bureaucratic effectiveness in the delivery of elementary education is expected to increase the likelihood of better learning outcomes.</i></p> <p>H5: <i>Higher social consensus among caste groups should reduce the likelihood of being a child labor, compared to lower social consensus among caste groups.</i></p> <p>H6: <i>Higher social consensus among on female education should reduce the likelihood of being a child labor, than if there is lower social consensus on female education.</i></p>
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5.2 Debate on Measuring ‘Child Labor’

Before delving into the discussion of measurement of child labor for this dissertation, it is well worth discussing the challenges that have surrounded the definition and measurement of child labor. That would provide a context to understand the rationale for the measurement choices made in this dissertation. In the literature on child labor, it is conventional to distinguish between three categories of children: child labor, working children, and street children. ‘Child labor’ refers to those who work for a wage and to those that are employed by a person outside the family (usually implies some sort of exploitative relationship between the employer and the child), ‘child workers’ are those that are involved in non-exploitative forms of work which also includes family labor, and ‘street children’ are those that work in semi-urban and urban centers and live on the employees premises or on the streets.³⁶² In terms of performing statistical analysis, such distinctions are not very helpful because child labor data is not collected according to these categories, such neat distinctions are not replicated in reality, and there is frequent overlap between the categories. To avoid confusion with semantics, the term ‘child labor’ is used throughout this analysis.

Some of the issues surrounding the measurement of child laborers are those related to defining ‘who is a child?’, ‘what kind of economic activities should be counted as labor?’, and ‘should only paid work be considered as labor?’ The conventional definition in India, adopted generally by population censuses and survey organizations, recognize as workers

³⁶² Burra 1989

only those children (between the age of five and fourteen years) who are involved in ‘*gainful economic activity*.’ However, none of the government sources of data define who a ‘child laborer’ is. The Census of India, which is one of the most widely quoted source on child labor statistics defines ‘worker’ as one who is engaged in ‘work.’ ‘Work’ is defined as:

“...participation in any economically productive activity with or without compensation wages or profit. Such participation may be physical and/or mental in nature. Work involves not only actual work but also includes effective supervision and direction of work. It even includes part-time help or unpaid work on farm, family enterprise or in any other economic activity. All persons engaged in ‘work’ as defined above are workers. Persons who are engaged in cultivation or milk production even solely for domestic consumption are also treated as workers. Reference period for determining a person as worker and non-worker is one year preceding the date of enumeration.”³⁶³

On the basis of this definition, a child is defined as a ‘worker’ if she contributes towards the national product based on an economic accounting model. Though children, especially girls involved in household work account for seventy percent of child work in India, household work is not included in census data on child work.³⁶⁴

Even the CLPRA, 1986 does not define who is a child laborer. It only defines a child as a “person who has not completed the age of fourteen years”³⁶⁵ and bans the employment of children in eighteen occupations and sixty-five processes defined as ‘hazardous’ in Schedule A of the Act. The CLPRA broadly follows the definition of the ILO which distinguishes between ‘child labor’ and ‘child work.’³⁶⁶ The term ‘child labor’ is defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to their physical and mental development, and deprives them of the opportunity to attend school. The ILO position argues that children’s participation in work that does not affect their health and personal development or interfere with their schooling, is generally regarded as being something positive. This includes activities such as helping their parents around the home, assisting in a family business or earning pocket money outside school hours and during school holidays. Whether or not particular forms of work can be called ‘child labor’ depends on the child’s age, the type and hours of work performed, the conditions under which it is performed, and the objectives pursued by individual countries. The answer varies from country to country, as well as among sectors within countries. It is obvious that the complexities involved in such a nuanced definition of child labor makes the task of collecting reliable statistics on child labor very challenging.

Further, the ILO has also defined a separate category for the ‘worst forms of child labor’ in Article 3 of ILO Convention No. 182 as: (a) all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labor, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed

³⁶³ Census of India 2001.

³⁶⁴ Brown 2010

³⁶⁵ Article 1, Child Labor Prohibition and Regulation Act, 1986.

³⁶⁶ Burra 1989

conflict; (b) the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances; (c) the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties; (d) work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.³⁶⁷ Labor that jeopardises the physical, mental or moral well-being of a child, either because of its nature or because of the conditions in which it is carried out, is known as ‘hazardous work’.

In India, no attempt has been made so far to collect data on children involved in these worst forms of child labor. In fact, activities like prostitution, begging, smuggling which come under the ambit of the definition of the ‘worst forms of child labor’ are not considered as economic activities. As such they are not included in the Census definition of ‘work’. Therefore, no reliable estimates of children involved in the worst forms of child labor are available in India. Nor is there any data exclusively on ‘hazardous’ forms of child labor.

Government statistics underestimate the actual magnitude of children involved in hazardous work. The Working Group on Child Labor on the Twelfth Five Year Plan (2011) arrived at an estimate of 1.2 million children working in hazardous occupations in 2001.³⁶⁸ This estimate was arrived at by adding children in eleven categories of occupations which are defined as ‘hazardous’ in Schedule A of the CLPRA. This estimate undermines the true extent of child labor in hazardous industries because it doesn’t include children working in all the eighteen occupations and sixty-five processes defined as ‘hazardous’ under the CLPRA. It also does not include children working in prostitution, smuggling or begging. As such, data collected by government agencies which are the basis of large-n studies on child labor, more often than not, severely underestimate the actual magnitude of the child labor force.

Another factor that confounds data collection on child labor is the age-range for the definition. According to the CLPRA, any individual below the age of fourteen is defined as a ‘child.’ This is not in line with the ILO Minimum Age Convention. When it comes to define the minimum age for children’s work, the ILO’s Minimum Age Convention No. 138 defines fifteen as the minimum age. Article 2(3) of the ILO Minimum Age Convention says that the minimum age for work shall be in line with the minimum age of compulsory schooling, “but in any case shall not be less than fifteen years of age.” Though the Indian Cabinet has proposed a bill to bring the minimum age for schooling in line with the RTE, it has not yet ratified the ILO’s Minimum Age Convention. One of the most serious problems acknowledged in the child labor literature is with respect to the accuracy of the data. Burra, an eminent researcher in the field of child labor writes:

³⁶⁷ “Worst Forms of Child Labor.” Article 3, ILO Convention No. 182.

³⁶⁸ “Working Group for Social Inclusion of Vulnerable Group like Child Labour and Bonded and Migrant Labour in the 12th Five Year Plan (2012-17).” (New Delhi: Planning Commission, Government of India, 2012).

“The authenticity and the quality of the data with respect to child labor and education in different Asian contexts have to be assessed with a certain degree of scepticism. In many countries of the region, the prevalence of child labor is often denied by authorities, and if recognized its magnitude severely underestimated. Restrictive definitions of child labor minimize the size of the problem and with limited public awareness, countervailing views did not gain prominence....in India, a healthy debate on the issue of child labor was generated about four years ago. It is one's experience of the Indian context that has led one to view with caution the version of events propagated by governments, both in the areas of child labor and education. If underestimation is the rule in the former, overestimation is the norm in the latter. A critical but judicious assessment of different views of the problem is called for if one wishes to measure reality.”³⁶⁹

Therefore, controversy surrounds estimates on child labor released by the government which form the basis on most empirical studies on child labor.

Since the late 1990s, there has been a shift towards adopting a broader definition of child work. This initiative has been spearheaded by UNICEF which proposes a broader definition of child labor based on age, economic activity, and number of hours of work by a child. According to UNICEF, a child is considered to be involved in child labor under the following classification: (a) children five to eleven years of age that during the week preceding the survey did at least one hour of economic activity or at least twenty-eight hours of domestic work, and (b) children twelve to fourteen years of age that during the week preceding the survey did at least fourteen hours of economic activity or at least forty-two hours of economic activity and domestic work combined. By focusing on age, number of hours worked, and paid versus unpaid work, the UNICEF definition offers a more comprehensive definition of child labor.

In India, a new trend is observed where NGOs led by the Andhra Pradesh based MV Foundation are lobbying in favour of defining any out of school child as a child laborer. The argument is that a child that does not go to school is inevitably involved in some form of work within the household, or potentially enters the child labor force in the near future. Adopting this argument, the Government of Andhra Pradesh adopted the nomenclature of ‘out of school children’ and to conducted surveys to collect data on out of school children. Subsequently, the Ministry of Human Resources Development also collected data on out of school children for the first time in 2009. Though data on out of school children is helpful in studies on educational participation, it is unable to fully capture the magnitude of children’s work-participation because a large number of child workers combine both work and school. So all out of school children may not necessarily be child laborers (since some are idle), and not all child laborers may be out of school.

5.3 Choice of Dataset

Given the myriad problems surrounding the measurement of child laborers, questions arise as to which is the best measurement and the most reliable data source for the purpose of this study? The primary sources of data on child laborers are those collected by government

³⁶⁹ Burra 1989, p. 2

agencies. The three main sources of government data are the Census of India, the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO), and the National Family Health Survey (NFHS). The pros and cons of adopting each of these sources of data are discussed below:

The Census data is collected by the Office of the Registrar General of India. It is a household census conducted every ten years in all the states and Indian territories in India. As discussed before, it does not include children involved in activities that are not economically productive. As a result it excludes large numbers of children involved in home-based agricultural work or unpaid household work, even if children work for long hours during the day. Many quantitative studies on child labor use the Census data on children's work. These studies on child labor that are based on Census definition of 'work' leave out majority of children who are involved in unpaid household work.

The NSSO, under the Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation, GoI conducts a quinquennial all-India survey to assess the employment status of India in all states and union territories in India. The 66th round of NSSO conducted in 2009-10 covered 100,957 households and enumerated 459,784 persons. Persons who were engaged in any economic activity or who, despite their attachment to economic activity, abstained themselves from work temporarily due to illness, injury, etc. constituted workers.³⁷⁰ Therefore, like the Census of India, studies based on NSSO data also define work as involvement in an economically productive activity and define a vast majority of children involved in unpaid work.

The NFHS conducted by the Ministry of Health, GoI covered 109,041 households and 515,507 individuals in all twenty-eight states. For the first time, NFHS-3 conducted in 2005-06 included a set of questions on the participation by each child in the five to fourteen years age group in the household in different types of work. This survey is more comprehensive compared to the Census of India data or the NSSO survey. It collects data on whether children worked for pay or without pay, whether a child was working for a household member or for someone outside the household, whether a child who did household worked for more than twenty-eight hours per week, and it also collects data on 'other family work' such as work in the farm, in a business, or selling goods in the street. The data collected by this survey is closest to the UNICEF definition because it tries to account for unpaid work outside the household and unpaid work within the household if it exceeds twenty-eight hours. So far, one could say this is the most comprehensive and targeted collection of children's work collected by a government agency.

³⁷⁰ Unpaid helpers who assisted in the operation of an economic activity in the household farm or non-farm activities were also considered as workers. All goods and services that add value to national product was considered as an economic activity for the employment and unemployment survey. Such activities included production of all goods and services for market (i.e. for pay or profit) including those of government services, and, the production of primary commodities for own consumption and own account production of fixed assets.

Before 2005, data collection on child labor by non-government agencies was mostly limited to small number of villages, or at best a few districts.³⁷¹ However, in 2005, for the first time an autonomous New Delhi-based research organization known as the NCAER collected data on children work in all twenty-nine states and six Union Territories. This is possibly the most comprehensive information collected on children's work by a non-government organization. The IHDS 2005-06 covers 41,554 households and 215,754 respondents (both adults and children). It includes data on children who worked farm-work (even for their family), children who took care of animals, children who worked for salary/ wages from 25 hours/ year to 4320 hours/year, and those who were involved in household non-farm business. As such, IHDS accounts for unpaid family-farm work and also includes data on number of hours a child worked.

Depending on how child labor is defined in each of the above datasets, estimates of the magnitude of working children varies quite sharply. According to Census of India 2001, there were 12.26 million working children in the age group of five to fourteen years with a WPR of 5 percent. The NSSO sample survey 2004-05 cites a total of 9.1 million working children in the 5-14 age group and a WPR of 3.1 percent (these numbers exclude the seven north-eastern states).³⁷² The NSSO does not collect data on child labor directly. These statistics are presented at the Ministry of Labor's website. It says that the figures were derived from unit level records of NSSO. However, the methodology for deriving these numbers has not been explicitly mentioned and attempts to contact the NSSO to understand the methodology for calculating the data went unanswered. Many quantitative studies use the NSSO data on child labor which does not account for children's unpaid work, notwithstanding the number of hours a child worked. NFHS 2005-06 which has a broader definition of children's work estimates that the absolute numbers of working children are 22.2 million and the WPR of children is 7.6 percent. This indicates the wide disparity in estimates on child labor based on the manner in which child labor is defined. The definitional issues discussed above obviously leads to challenges in collecting data and forming reliable estimates on the true magnitude of children in the workforce.

Further, my experiences in the field showed that there were problems with reliability of government collected data. NGO fieldworkers narrated experiences where they found wide discrepancies between the data they collected in the field and the data that was reported by government agencies. An experience in Kurnool district in Andhra Pradesh was telling. MV Foundation (MVF), an NGO in Andhra Pradesh recruits local youth to conduct door to door surveys, specifically with the purpose of collecting data on child laborers. The MVF coordinator of Kurnool district explained some of the problems with the government's data

³⁷¹ Majumdar 2001

³⁷² The seven north-eastern states are Arunachal, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura.

collection. He said, “Census data is collected by school teachers. Under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, every school has to ensure that all children in the village are enrolled. So teachers have an incentive to over-report enrolment and underreport working children. Teachers also report enrolment statistics and not attendance statistics, so children who are enrolled but working full-time are also reported in the enrolled records. Also, parents are wary of reporting to teachers that they are sending their children to work. That is why we send local village youth to conduct household surveys. Parents are much more likely to be truthful to them about the status of their children.”³⁷³

In 2009-10, MVF’s household census data in 5 *mandals* (*mandal* is a revenue subdivision of a state) in Kurnool found 9,000 child laborers. When this data was presented to the district-level government officials, they challenged it since government statistics showed a total of 3,000 children in all of 54 *mandals* in Kurnool district. MVF stuck to its statistics since they had collected the data by individual names of each child and they said that could prove their numbers. The conflict was reported to the District Magistrate who called a meeting of MVF activists and government officials responsible for collecting the data. Cross-checking of the status of children in some sample villages found that MVF’s statistics were accurate. The government officials conceded the mistake and a ‘compromise’ was reached that the government statistics would be corrected to report 9,000 child laborers. Even in 2012-13, MVF statistics report 9,000 children in 5 mandals while government statistics report a total of 16000 in all mandals. Needless to say, such ‘compromises’ are not good for reliable empirical research.

Such experiences are not unique to Andhra Pradesh alone. In the same year, Dakshini Rajasthan Mazdoor Union (DRMU), a local trade union conducted a sample survey of 1,414 households in 43 villages in Jhadol block of Udaipur district. DRMU data shows that 790 children had gone to work from these 43 villages alone. On the other hand, the government’s Child Tracking Survey in the same year reported that 113 children had migrated from *all* the villages of Jhadol block, Udaipur district to work in Gujarat. Another NGO in Udaipur also reported similar discrepancies. The NGO worker said, “We collect data for Girwa and Sarada blocks in Udaipur district. We cross-checked our data with the government data and we found an entire habitation (cluster of villages) missing from the government’s data.”³⁷⁴ A member of DRMU pointed out that data collection in schools was conducted *before* the migratory season started, which led to a gross underestimation of absenteeism in schools owing to migration.³⁷⁵ Since NGOs have resources to collect data at the village, or at best block level only, they

³⁷³ Interview with MVF coordinator of Kurnool district, Kurnool. February 11, 2012.

³⁷⁴ Interview with official of Gayatri Seva Sansthan, Udaipur, July 7, 2012.

³⁷⁵ Interview with member of DRMU, Udaipur, July 4, 2012.

cannot challenge the aggregate level data collected by the government at the district or state level.

Due to such issues with existing sources of government statistics, I decided to use the IHDS, 2005-06 dataset for both the individual-level and state-level analysis. Since there is a lot of criticism against data collected by the government, using an independent source of data collected by a reputed autonomous research institution such as the NCAER should circumvent some of the criticisms against using child labor data collected from government sources. The IHDS collected a nationally representative sample which minimizes the chances of the results reflecting regional biases. Further, IHDS collects data on children working in agriculture even if it is unpaid work in family-owned farms. The data is collected on the basis of hours worked and wages earned, thereby giving us information about children involved in work that is not necessarily economically productive. In addition to the household surveys, IHDS includes village, school, and medical facility surveys. Within the household survey, several sections focus on the household's connections to the wider community. Such features are especially useful to this study since I am trying to capture the impact of social variables situated in the broader community like caste salience and gender discrimination.

5.4 State-level Data Analysis

In this section, I test H1, H3 and H4 to show broad patterns of association at the state level. Through the state-level analysis, I attempt to demonstrate the cumulative impact of bureaucratic effectiveness on the overall rates of child labor in the state. I also examine if social consensus on education is associated with child labor rates at the state level.

5.4.1 Defining the Child Labor Variable

Rate of child labor (*Chidlabor_rate*): The dependent variable for H1, H3 and H4 is *Chidlabor_rate* which is defined as the percentage of child laborers in each state as a proportion of the total population of children in the five to fifteen years age-group.³⁷⁶ For the purpose of this study, I broadly adopt the UNICEF definition of child laborer as: i) children five to eleven years of age who in the twelve months preceding the survey did at least one hour of economic activity per day or at least four hours of domestic work per day, and ii) children twelve to fifteen years of age who in the twelve months preceding the survey did at least two hours of economic activity per day or at least six hours of domestic work per day. This definition adopts age, number of hours worked, and involvement in economic activity as the three defining criteria for child labor. Therefore, the scope of the child labor definition in

³⁷⁶ Though fourteen is taken as the upper limit of CL in government statistics, in this study, I take fifteen as the upper limit in congruence with the ILO Minimum Age Convention.

this dissertation is broader than previous empirical studies on child labor which were based on nature of work alone.³⁷⁷

The IHDS dataset collects data on the employment status of each individual in the household, including involvement in farm-work, non-farm business enterprise, paid work, and unpaid work. The questions in the survey are answered by the adults in the household on behalf of the children. However, every individual within the household including each child is uniquely identified with a specific identification number. Therefore, it is possible to determine the employment and income status of each child in the household including number of hours worked, wages, and type of occupation the child is involved in.

I created a dichotomous variable *chldlabor* which I coded as 1 if a child fulfilled any of the above criteria and as 0 if the child did not fall in any of the aforementioned categories. (For a detailed description of how the *chldlabor* variable was coded, refer to Appendix 1). I used the *chldlabor* variable as the dependent variable in my individual-level analysis.

For the dependent variable in the state-level analysis, I created a *Chldlabor_rate* variable which represents the percentage of child labor in each state by aggregating the numbers of *chldlabor* variable at the individual level across states and adjusting by sample size.

5.4.2 Descriptive Analysis of Child Labor Data

Before examining the correlational analysis with explanatory variables, it is useful to look at some descriptive disaggregation of data concerning child labor. The IHDS dataset consists of 54,007 children in the age-group of 5 to 15 years. A total of 1,829 children consisting of 3.4 percent of total children in the 5 to 15 years age-group are child laborers.

Based on the above definition of child labor, the frequency and WPR of children in the three age groups are represented in Table 5.2. The age-wise distribution of child laborers is consistent with the finding in the literature that as age increases and children enter adolescence, their participation in the work force increases. Child labor rates is 0.3 percent in the 5-7 years age-group, but it increases to 1.6 percent in the 8-11 years age group, and spikes sharply to 8.5 percent in the 12-15 years age group. It is also worth noting that twelve is the age when children pass out of primary school and enter middle-school. The low presence of middle schools compared to primary schools may contribute to the sharp spike in child laborers in the twelve to fifteen years age-group.

³⁷⁷ Studies have shown that while the first 20 hours of weekly employment has a limited impact on school attendance, there is a marked risk-escalation beyond this point (Brown 2011). I have therefore taken 4 hours as the minimum threshold of numbers of hours worked for a child. Also, the age limit for child labor in the UNICEF definition is 14 years, but I have raised it to 15 years in this study in accordance with ILO's Minimum Age Convention.

Table 5.2: Frequency Distribution and Work Participation Rates of Child Laborers by Age-group

Age-group	Frequency of child laborers	Work Participation Rate of children in the Relevant Age Group (%)
5-7	44	0.3
8-11	280	1.6
12-15	1505	8.5
Total	1829	3.4

Source: IHDS 2005-06

Table 5.3 disaggregates the data by gender, location and occupational distribution of child laborers.

Nearly 60 percent of the child laborers are male, while 40 percent are females. Of the total child laborers, 84.1 percent are in rural areas and 15.9 percent are in urban areas, indicating the predominance of agriculture as an occupation for children. The caste composition of child laborers shows that lower castes constituting the Other Backward Castes, the *Dalits* and *Adivasis* are higher than Brahmins and other high castes. While WPR is 2.3 percent among all Brahmin children, the WPR is 7.3 (almost three times more) among the *Adivasi* children. Among the different religious groups, 3.6 percent of Hindu children are found to be child laborers compared to 3.4 percent Muslims or 0.8 percent Christians. Some studies have noted a predominance of Muslims among child laborers, but that is not the case in the IHDS sample.³⁷⁸

The occupational distribution of child laborers also indicates that an overwhelming proportion of children work within the household: as farm labor, tending to cattle, or engaged in family-owned businesses. My findings are concomitant with the findings in the literature that large numbers of children are involved in agriculture or related activities like grazing and tending to cattle.³⁷⁹ It must be noted here that there is overlapping between the occupational categories, and therefore it is difficult to parse out absolute percentage of child laborers in each category. The data reflects that 45.1 percent child laborers are working without remuneration in either cash or kind. Further, the finding that child labor interferes with educational participation is reflected in the data—43 percent of child laborers are not enrolled in school while 57 percent combine work and school.

³⁷⁸ Nambissan and Sedwal 2002

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

Table 5.3: Gender, Location, Caste Composition, Religious Composition and Occupational Distribution of Child Laborers

Gender (%)	
Male	59.9
Female	40.1
Location (%)	
Rural	84.1
Urban	15.9
Caste Composition (Child laborers as % of particular group of respondents)	
Brahmins and Other High Castes	2.3
Other Backward Castes (OBCs)	3.4
Dalits	3.4
Adivasis	7.3
Religious Composition (%)	
Hindus	3.6
Muslims	3.4
Christians	0.8
Occupational Classification (%)	
Working	38.9
Tending to cattle for family	22.7
Family business	23.3
Work for salary or wages outside the household	54.9
Income Status (%)	
Received payment in cash or kind or both	54.9
Did not receive any payment	45.1
Educational Status (%)	
Combines work and school	57
Not enrolled in school	43

Source: IHDS 2005-06

5.4.3 State-wise Variation of Child Laborers

Using the state-level IHDS data, I calculated the average rates of child labor across twenty Indian states (I excluded the eight North-eastern states of Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Meghalaya because of the small sample size). Table 5.4 shows the rates of child labor in descending order for twenty Indian states.

Table 5.4: Child Labor in Indian States (2005-06)

State	Child Labor Rate (%)
Chattisgarh	8.0
Andhra Pradesh	6.5
Madhya Pradesh	5.3
Gujarat	4.5
Bihar	4.4
Orissa	4.0
West Bengal	3.9
Jharkhand	3.8
Karnataka	3.6
Uttar Pradesh (UP)	2.8
Rajasthan	2.7
Maharashtra	2.5
Jammu & Kashmir (J&K)	2.4
Himachal Pradesh	2.3
Uttarakhand	2.1
Haryana	1.8
Tamil Nadu	1.7
Punjab	1.5
Goa	0.7
Kerala	0.1
India	3.3

Source: IHDS 2005-06

The IHDS data shows that the average rate of child labor in Indian states is 3.3 percent, but there is wide variation across states. Child labor rates vary from as high as 8 percent in Chattisgarh to almost negligible rates in states like Kerala. The states of Chattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, and Bihar with above 4 percent of children in the workforce are the highest child labor states. On the other hand, Haryana, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Goa, and Kerala have the lowest rates of child labor.

5.5 Testing Hypotheses at the State-level

5.5.1 Testing H1: The Relationship of Bureaucratic Effectiveness and Child Labor Rate

The expectation in H1 is that states that have better BE in the delivery of elementary education policy have succeeded in reducing their proportion of child laborers. The main explanatory variable for testing H1 is the measurement of bureaucratic effectiveness.

Measuring Bureaucratic Effectiveness (BE Index_{st}): In Chapter 3, I defined bureaucratic effectiveness as the outcomes delivered by the educational bureaucracy on the ground level.

To measure BE, I created a state-level Index of Bureaucratic Effectiveness (*BE_Index_st*). To measure the concept of bureaucratic effectiveness, I first created a Bureaucratic Effectiveness Index at the individual-level (*BE_Index*). It is worth reiterating here that parents in the household answered the survey on behalf of children, so the individual-level *BE_Index* variable is a measure of how an individual parent perceives the delivery of public educational services. This measure is important from the perspective of this study, since I am trying to determine how a parent’s perception of educational services affects their decision-making in sending a child to work.

I obtained the *BE_index* by adding four variables that represented distance to school, regularity of teachers’ attendance, provision of midday meals, and provision of free uniforms. Therefore the *BE_Index* variable represents the three dimensions of BE discussed in Chapter 3—provision of physical infrastructure, teachers’ attendance, and administration of incentive schemes. The *BE_Index* is a continuous variable with values ranging from 0 to 5, with 0 representing lowest levels of bureaucratic effectiveness, and 5 representing highest levels of bureaucratic effectiveness. The summary statistics and distribution of *BE_Index* are shown in Table 5.5 and Table 5.6 respectively:

Table 5.5: Summary statistics of *BE_Index*

	Observations	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
<i>BE_Index</i>	22587	2.8	0.8	0	5

Table 5.6: Frequency Distribution of *BE_Index*

<i>BE_Index</i>	Frequency	Cumulative Frequency
0	155	0.69
1	334	2.16
2	8302	38.92
3	9960	83.02
4	3572	98.83
5	264	100
Total	22587	

For the state level analysis, I created a state-level index of bureaucratic effectiveness (*BE_Index_st*) by averaging the *BE_Index* variable across states.³⁸⁰ The values of the *BE_Index_st* variable vary from the lowest of 1.39 to 2.56. The average measure of BE at the state level is 1.76. States that have a value of below 1.5 (1 standard deviation below the mean) are categorized as Low Bureaucratic Effectiveness states. States that have values between 1.5 and 2.07 are Moderate Bureaucratic Effectiveness states, and states that have values higher than 2.07 (one standard deviation above the mean) are categorized as High Bureaucratic Effectiveness states. Table 5.7 shows the three groups of states. Three states are categorized

³⁸⁰ For detailed description of how *BE_Index* was constructed refer to Appendix 2.

as high bureaucratic effectiveness states, fourteen states have moderate levels of bureaucratic effectiveness, and four states have low levels of bureaucratic effectiveness.³⁸¹

Table 5.7: Bureaucratic Effectiveness of Indian States (2005-06)

Low Bureaucratic Effectiveness (<1.5)	Moderate Bureaucratic Effectiveness (>=1.50 to 2.0)	High Bureaucratic Effectiveness (>=2.0)
UP (1.48) Assam (1.46) Bihar (1.42) Punjab (1.39)	Madhya Pradesh (1.94) Maharashtra (1.90) West Bengal (1.88) Himachal Pradesh (1.87) Kerala (1.85) Chattisgarh (1.84) Orissa (1.76) Uttarakhand (1.67) J & K (1.65) Goa (1.64) Andhra Pradesh (1.62) Rajasthan (1.58) Jharkhand (1.58) Haryana (1.57)	Tamil Nadu (2.57) Karnataka (2.45) Gujarat (2.13)

Source: IHDS 2005-06

These figures give us a fairly relative assessment of bureaucratic effectiveness in different parts of India. Qualitative studies do attest to the better quality of elementary education in states like Karnataka and Tamil Nadu (shown as high BE states in the table) compared to states like UP and Assam (low BE in the Table).³⁸² Further, there is no reason to believe that figures collected by an independent research organization are particularly inflated in particular regions more than in others, and thus the comparisons this data affords us remain valuable.

To test H1, I create a scatterplot to test if BE in the delivery of elementary education is correlated with child labor rates at the state level. The scatterplot in Figure 5.1 shows that low BE states like Assam, UP, and Bihar have the highest rates of child labor. Similarly, high BE states like Karnataka, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu have relatively low rates of child labor. There is considerably wide variation among the moderate BE states, but on an average, states such as Maharashtra, Himachal, and Kerala which have higher scores on the *BE_Index_st*

³⁸¹ The seven northeastern states of Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura are excluded from the analysis of bureaucratic effectiveness because the sample sizes are small. Traditionally, comparative studies of Indian states focus on the fifteen largest states, but in this analysis, I focus on all twenty one states, other than the seven north-eastern states.

³⁸² Ramachandran and Sethi 2001

have lower child labor rates compared to states such as Andhra, Jharkhand and Chattisgarh which have lower scores on the *BE_Index_st*.

Further, the linear regression line has a negative slope, indicating the negative correlation between child labor and BE, i.e. as *BE_Index_st* increases, child labor rates at the state-level decline. The regression equation shows that everything else being equal, a 1 unit increase in BE reduces child labor rate by 0.4 percentage points.

Figure 5.1: Scatterplot showing Relationship between *BE_Index_St* and *chlldlabor_rate*, (2005-06)

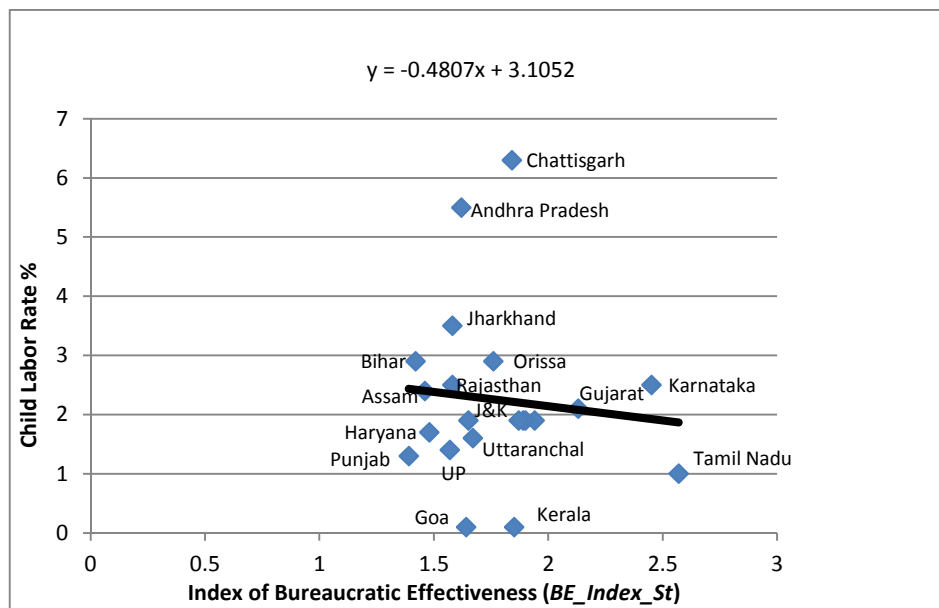


Figure 5.1 shows that not all states however follow the aforementioned trend. Punjab is an outlier which has low BE, but it also has a low child labor rate. When the IHDS survey was conducted in 2005-06, Punjab had the fourth highest per capita income among all the states in India. The example of Punjab indicates that if per capita income is high, parents find a way to send their children to school, even if BE is low. This inference is supported by the fact that forty-five percent children in Punjab go to private schools which are more expensive compared to government schools. On the other hand, in Himachal which has similar levels of per capita income like Punjab, but moderate BE, only twenty-eight percent children go to private schools.³⁸³ Studies have shown that where quality of government schools is poor, higher numbers of children go to private school. Therefore, notwithstanding low BE in Punjab, more parents can afford private education.

If a state has high levels of per capita income, then the bureaucratic effectiveness in the delivery of elementary education shouldn't matter in determining child labor rates since

³⁸³ ASER 2011-12.

parents will bypass the government schooling system to send their children to private schools. The five richest states- Punjab, Haryana, Goa, Maharashtra, and Himachal Pradesh have varying levels of bureaucratic effectiveness. Punjab has low levels of bureaucratic effectiveness, while the other four have moderate levels of bureaucratic effectiveness. Each of these states have comparatively low child labor rates compared to other states. One plausible explanation is that in states with higher percapita income, parents send their children to school notwithstanding levels of BE in the delivery of education. Based on this analysis, one could argue that the oft repeated proposition which correlates low child labor with high rates of economic growth applies only to states where per capita income is high. If per capita income in a state is low, and parents don't have the alternative of sending their children to private schools, then BE in the delivery of education matters in determining the levels of out of school children and correspondingly, the magnitude of the child labor force.

5.5.3 Testing H3: The Relationship between Social Consensus among Caste-Groups and Child Labor Rate

H3 says that the social consensus among caste-groups has a direct effect on parental motivation in sending children to schools, and also an indirect effect through increasing the accountability of the bureaucracy. The key explanatory variable to test H3 is the SC among caste-groups.

Measuring Social Consensus among Caste-Groups (SC_Caste_St): In order to create the state level social consensus variable (*SC_Caste_st*), I first create individual-level social consensus among caste-groups variable (*SC_Caste*). The individual-level *SC_Caste* variable is representative of an individual's perception of the cohesiveness among caste-groups in her community. I theorize that if *SC_Caste* is high, a parent lives in a community where there is cohesiveness among caste-groups and an understanding that all children, notwithstanding caste-identity should go to school. If *SC_Caste* is low, there is a low social consensus among all groups, and therefore, parents of higher castes may not consider education as an imperative for children of all castes. *SC_Caste* is a dichotomous variable that is coded as 0 when an individual cites that there is little or no conflict among castes in her community and as 1 when there is caste conflict in her community (For detailed description of measurement of *SC_Caste*, refer to Appendix 3). Tables 5.8 and 5.9 show the summary statistics for *SC_Caste* variable.

Table 5.8: Summary Statistics of *SC_Caste*

	Observations	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
<i>BE_Index</i>	53739	0.69	0.46	0	1

Table 5.9: Frequency Distribution of *SC_Caste*

<i>BE_Index</i>	Frequency	Cumulative Frequency
0	16590	30.9
1	37149	100

To create the state-level social consensus variables, I averaged *SC_Caste* across states to obtain state-level variables for *SC_Caste_St*. Table 5.10 categorizes states as high SC among caste-groups and low SC among caste-groups. If a state has values above the mean of *SC_Caste_St* (0.73), I categorized it as a state that has high social consensus among castes.³⁸⁴ Ten states have high social consensus among castes and eleven states have low social consensus among caste-groups.³⁸⁵

Table 5.10: Social Consensus among Castes, (2005-06)

High Social Consensus among Castes (> 0.73)	Low Social Consensus among Castes (<=0.73)
Goa (0.93), Maharashtra (0.86), Uttaranchal (0.84), Tamil Nadu (0.81), Assam (0.81), Haryana (0.81), Kerala (0.8), J&K (0.79), Jharkhand (0.77), Punjab (0.74)	Rajasthan (0.72), Himachal Pradesh (0.72), Andhra Pradesh (0.72), Madhya Pradesh (0.69), Chattisgarh (0.66), Bihar (0.66), Karnataka (0.66), West Bengal (0.63), Gujarat (0.62), UP (0.49), Orissa (0.48)

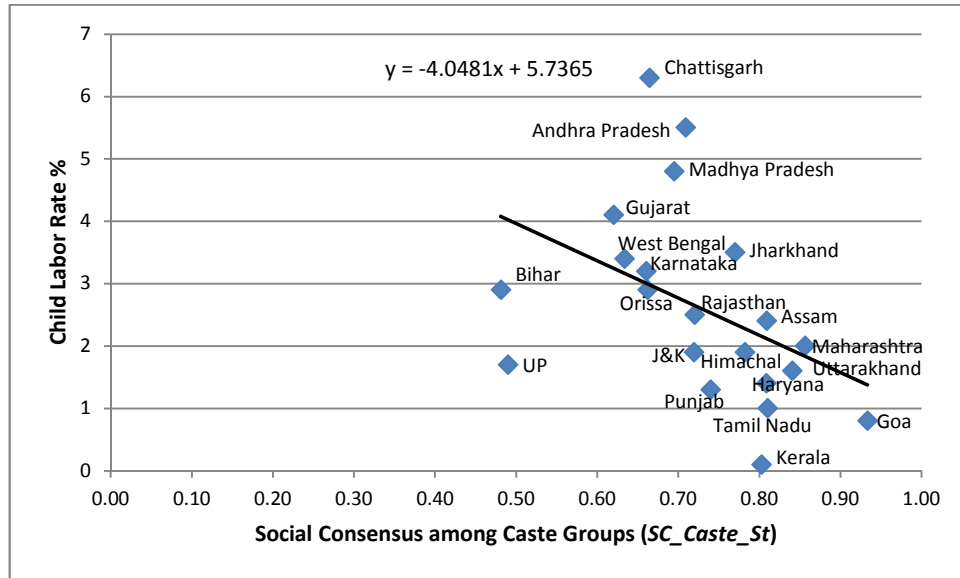
To test the relationship of social consensus among caste groups and child labor rates at the state-level (H3), I create a scatterplot with *SC_Caste_St* along the X-axis and *ChildLabor_Rate* along the Y-axis (Fig 5.2). It shows that with increase in the cohesiveness among caste-groups, child labor rates decline across states. The downward slope of the regression line in scatterplot in Fig 5.5 indicates that there is a negative relationship between the x and y variables, i.e. as social consensus among caste-groups increases, child labor rates decline. States with high social consensus among caste groups such as Goa, Kerala, Himachal, Uttarakhand, Jammu & Kashmir, and Punjab have relatively low rates of child labor compared to states such as Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, and Gujarat which have low social consensus among caste groups. The slope of the regression line tells us that with every 1 unit increase in the social consensus among caste groups, child labor rates would decrease by 4 percentage points (However, the substantive interpretation cannot be taken at

³⁸⁴ For the purpose of this analysis, I excluded the seven northeastern states of Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura, and Arunachal Pradesh.

³⁸⁵ cite

face-value since the scatterplot does not control for any confounding factors). However, Figure 5.2 is useful in showing the negative correlation between *SC_caste* and *Chidlabor_rate*.

Figure 5.2: Child Labor Rates for Varying Levels of Social Consensus among Caste Groups by State, (2005-06)



5.5.3 Testing H4: The Relationship between Social Consensus on Female Education and Child Labor Rate

H4 says that the social consensus on female education has a direct effect on parental motivation in sending children to schools, and also an indirect effect through increasing the accountability of the bureaucracy. The key explanatory variable to test H4 is the SC on female education.

Measuring Social Consensus on Female Education (*SC_Caste_St*): In order to create the state level SC on female education variable (*SC_Gender_st*), I first create individual-level social consensus on female education variable (*SC_Gender*).

The individual-level *SC_Gender* variable is representative of the level of female autonomy in the community of the respondent. I discussed in Chapter 3 how communities with higher female autonomy are likely to have a high social consensus on female education. The individual-level *SC_Gender* variable measures if women in the respondent's community are usually beaten by their husbands if she fails to bring dowry, cook properly, look after the children, or goes out of the house without his permission, and if it is common in the respondent's community for daughters to financially support parents after marriage. *SC_Gender* is a dichotomous variable that is categorized as 0 (low SC on female education), if the respondent says 'yes' to any of the above questions, and as 1 (high SC on female

education) if the respondent says ‘no’ to any of the above questions. (For detailed coding of the *SC_Gender* variable, please refer to Appendix 4). Tables 5.11 and 5.12 show the summary statistics for *SC_Gender* variable.

Table 5.11: Summary statistics of *SC_Gender*

	Observations	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
<i>SC_Gender</i>	49,586	0.35	0.5	0	1

Table 5.12: Frequency Distribution of *SC_Gender*

<i>SC_Gender</i>	Frequency	Cumulative Frequency
0	32,394	34.7
1	17,192	100

To create the state-level SC on female education variable, I averaged *SC_Gender* across states to obtain state-level variables for *SC_Gender_St*. Table 5.13 categorizes states as high SC states on female education and low SC states on female education. If a state has values above the mean of *SC_Gender_St* (0.9), I categorized it as a state that has high social consensus on female education.³⁸⁶ Nine states have high social consensus on female and twelve states have low social consensus on female education. Even high per capita income states such as Gujarat have a low social consensus on female education.

Table 5.13: Social Consensus on Female Education, (2005-06)

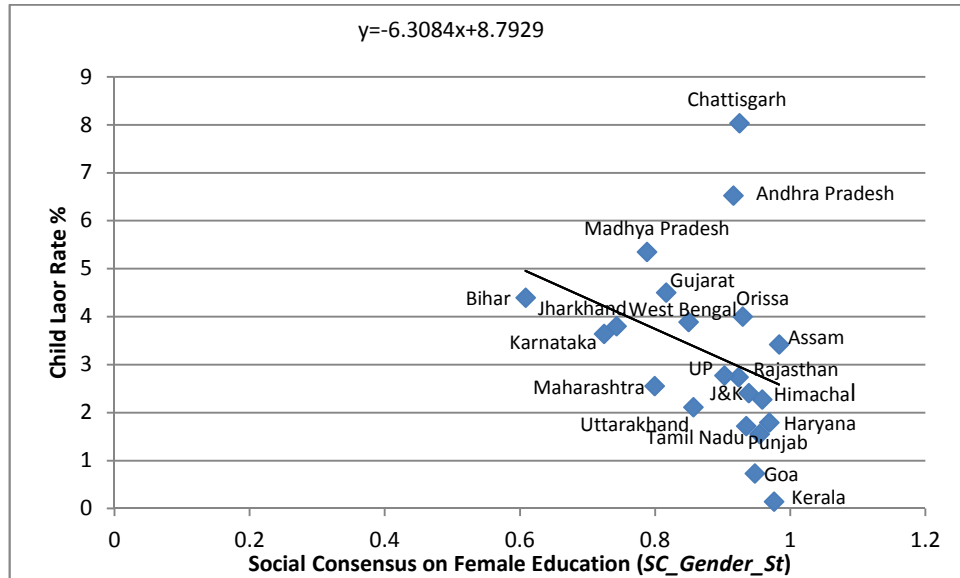
High Social Consensus on Female Education (> 0.90)	Low Social Consensus on Female Education (<=0.90)
Assam (0.98), Kerala (0.98), Haryana (0.97), Himachal (0.96), Punjab (0.95), Goa (0.95), J&K (0.94), Tamil Nadu (0.93), Orissa (0.93)	Chattisgarh (0.9), Rajasthan (0.90), Andhra Pradesh (0.9), UP (0.9), Uttarakhand (0.86), West Bengal (0.85), Gujarat(0.82), Maharashtra (0.8), Madhya Pradesh (0.79), Jharkhand (0.71), Bihar (0.61)

To test H4, I create a scatterplot with *SC_Gender_st* on the X-axis and *ChildLabor_Rate* on the Y-axis (Figure 5.3). States with high social consensus on female education such as Goa, Kerala, Himachal, Uttarakhand, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu have relatively low rates of child labor compared to states such as Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, and Gujarat which have low social consensus on female education. The negative slope of the regression line in Figure 5.3 shows that with increase in a social consensus on female education, child labor rates decline across states. Further, the regression equation shows that with one unit increase in social consensus on female education, child labor rates decrease by 6 percentage points (This figure is only indicative of the broad

³⁸⁶ For the purpose of this analysis, I excluded the seven northeastern states of Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura, and Arunachal Pradesh.

correlation between SC on female education and child labor rate since this regression equation does not contain any control variables). However, Figure 5.3 indicates the negative correlation of social consensus on female education and child labor rates at the state-level.

Figure 5.3: Child Labor Rates for Varying Levels of Social Consensus on Female Education by State, 2005-06



H1, H3 and H4 are supported in the above analyses. Both higher levels of BE and higher levels of SC on education are associated with lower rates of child labor at the state-level. Admittedly, the state-level analysis shows general patterns of relationships and broad trends but does not control for a large number of confounding factors. It is possible that any confounding factors such as income renders the relationship of interest to be a result of spurious correlation. Given the small number of observations, it is not possible to conduct a regression analysis at the state level. The individual-level analysis will help us to get better traction on analyzing the relationship of BE and social consensus with child labor.

5.6 Testing Hypotheses at the Individual level

In this section, I turn to testing the individual-level hypotheses presented earlier (H2, H5, H6) which posited that experiencing low bureaucratic effectiveness in schools and a social consensus on education in the community would make a parent more likely to send a child to work. These hypotheses are designed to test if the aggregate effects specified in H1, H3 and H4 are operating at the individual level, thus providing an additional test of the causal logic of the theory laid out in this dissertation. How does the combined experience of the schooling system and the social pressures affect the individual parent's decision-making calculus?

H2 states that increased bureaucratic effectiveness in the delivery of elementary education is expected to decrease the likelihood of a child being sent for work. H5 and H6 state that high social consensus among caste groups and high social consensus on female education respectively are expected to decrease the likelihood of a child being sent to work.

5.6.1 Defining the Variables

A. Dependent Variable (*chldlabor*): Whether or not an individual child goes to work.

For the purpose of the individual level-analysis, the dependent variable *chldlabor* is a dichotomous variable, coded as 1 if a child is a child labor and as 0 if a child is not a child labor. The measurement of this variable is described in Section 5.4.1. I use logistic regression analysis to test the relationship of BE and SC with child labor.

B. Explanatory variables for Individual-level analysis

i) Bureaucratic Effectiveness (BE_Index): I use the *BE_Index* as the explanatory variable. The procedure for construction of *BE_Index* is explained in Section 5.5.1. As explained earlier, the *BE_Index* variable is based on individual perception towards the schooling system which this study is trying to measure, rather than some external objective measure.

ii) Social Consensus among Caste Groups (SC_Caste): *SC_Caste* is a measure of the amount of conflict among caste-groups in a respondent's community. The procedure for construction of *SC_Caste* is explained in Section 5.5.2.

iii) Social Consensus on Female Education (SC_Gender): *SC_Gender* is a measure of the extent of female mobility and autonomy in a respondent's community. The procedure for construction of *SC_Caste* is explained in Section 5.5.3.

C. Individual-level Control Variables

In order to test H2, H5 and H6 i.e. the relationship of BE and SC on child labor, it is imperative to see whether the relationship holds when controlling for variables measuring confounding effects. I take an approach advocated by James Lee Ray, who argues that more careful multivariate analysis should focus on evaluating the impact of a key factors rather than explaining as much of the variation in the outcome variable as possible. This approach argues against including any and every variable that might have an impact on the outcome and in doing so helps avoid the practice of including exhaustive lists of control variables. This practice, which has been critiqued as 'garbage-can' or 'kitchen-sink' regression, poses a host of problems for causal inference. In following this approach, I include the control variables to proxy income, level of mother's education, level of father's education,

number of children in the household, and costs of schooling which have been found in the literature to be significant determinants of child labor.

i) Household wealth (HHASSETS): IHDS asked a series of questions about what goods the household owned and about the quality of the housing. Similar housing and consumer goods questions are now widely used in developing country surveys as an easily administered scale measuring household economic level. Even more than consumption expenditures, household asset scales reflect the long-term economic level of the household. Since wealth has been found to be the most significant predictor of child labor, I use the variable *HHASSETS* in the IHDS dataset to measure the economic status of the respondent's household. The *HHASSETS* scale sums 30 dichotomous items measuring household possessions and housing quality including whether the household has a *pucca* (concrete) roof, *pucca* walls, electricity, piped water, television, air conditioner, etc. The resulting *HHASSETS* scale ranged from 0-30. As levels of household economic status increase, the probability of a child being a child labor declines. Therefore, the coefficient on *HHASSETS* should be negative and significant.

ii) Age (AGE): The variable *AGE* refers to the child's age. It is a continuous variable ranging from 5-15. The age of the child has consistently emerged as a significant predictor in child labor studies because children are much more likely to be sent to work as they grow older and become adolescents (i.e. coefficient on *AGE* should be positive and significant).

iii) Number of children (NCHILD): The variable *NCHILD* in the IHDS dataset indicates the number of children in the respondent's household. It is a continuous variable with integer values ranging from 1-15. Studies on demography show that as fertility increases, i.e. as numbers of children in the household increase, there is a tighter resource crunch in the household budget thereby increasing the likelihood that children will go to work.³⁸⁷ This variable also captures the effect of a child having a sibling, as children with younger siblings are more likely to be sent to work. We should expect that as the numbers of children in a household increase, it should result in an increase in the levels of child labor (i.e. coefficient on *NCHILD* should be positive and significant).

iv) Mother's Education (HHED5F): The variable *HHED5F* in the IHDS dataset captures the highest level of education of the women above the age of twenty-one in the household. It is a continuous variable ranging from 0-15 where each value captures the maximum number of years of education of adult women above the age of twenty-one in the respondent's household. Studies have shown that mother's education has a positive effect on

³⁸⁷ Rozensweig and Evenson (1977); Cigno *et al* 2001; Deb & Rosati 2004

whether or not children are sent to school.³⁸⁸ So as level of mother’s education increases, we should expect that the likelihood of being a child labor decreases (i.e. coefficient on *HHED5F* should be negative and significant).

v) Father’s Education (*HHED5M*): The variable *HHED5M* in the IHDS dataset captures the highest level of education of the adult men above the age of twenty-one in the respondent’s household. It is a continuous variable ranging from 0-15 where values capture the maximum number of years of education of adult men above the age of twenty-one in the respondent’s household. Studies have shown that parental education has an important influence on employment status of child.³⁸⁹ But the effect of father on the employment status of children is not as clearly established as that of the mother.³⁹⁰ As father’s education increases, we should expect that child labor should decrease (i.e. coefficient on *HHED5M* should be negative and significant). However, given findings in the literature, we should also expect that women’s education will have a bigger impact on work status of the child than that of the man.³⁹¹

vi) School costs (*School_Cost*): The variable *School_cost* in the IHDS dataset measures the amount of expenditure on the schooling of each child in books, uniforms, etc. The variable answers the question: “How much did you spend on books, uniform transportation and other materials last year?” It is a continuous variable with values ranging from 0-30,000. Studies in the education literature show that schooling costs dampen the enthusiasm of poor parents to send their children to school. We should expect that as the costs of schooling increases, the levels of child labor should also increase.³⁹² (i.e. coefficient on *School_Costs* should be positive and significant). Table 5.14 summarizes the expected effect of the individual level confounding factors.

Table 5.14: Individual-level Confounding Factors

<i>HHASSETS</i>	Where household wealth is more, likelihood of a child going to work is less (-)
<i>AGE</i>	Where age of a child is more, the likelihood of going to work is more (+)
<i>NCHILDREN</i>	Where numbers of children in household is more, likelihood of child going to work is more (+)
<i>HHED5F</i>	Where adult women in the household are more educated, likelihood of child going to work is less (-).
<i>HHED5M</i>	Where adult men in the household are more educated, likelihood of child going to work is less (-).
<i>School_Costs</i>	Where cost of sending a child to school is high, likelihood of a child going to work is more (+)

5.6.2 Testing H2, H5, H6: Relationship of Bureaucratic Effectiveness and Social Consensus on Education with Child Labor

³⁸⁸ Duraiswamy 2000; Cigno *et al* 2001

³⁸⁹ Duraiswamy 2000

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁹¹ Kurosaki *et al* 2006

³⁹² Dreze & Kingdon 2001.

The next step is to statistically test the importance of bureaucratic effectiveness in the delivery of education and social consensus on education on the likelihood of a child being a laborer or not being a laborer. To do so, I conduct an analysis based on a logistic regression of the form:

$$\text{logit}(\pi) = \alpha + \beta_1 BE_Index + \beta_2 SC_Caste + \beta_3 SC_Gender + \xi x + \varepsilon,$$

where $\text{logit}(\pi)$ is the logit function of probability that a child is a child laborer or not.

As explained earlier, BE_Index is a continuous variable ranging from 0 to 5 suggesting varying levels of bureaucratic effectiveness at school experienced by the parent of the child, SC_Caste is a dichotomous variable coded as 0 for low social consensus among caste-groups, and as 1 for high social consensus among caste groups, and SC_Gender is a dichotomous variable coded as 0 for low social consensus on female education and as 1 for high social consensus on female education.

Table 5.15 represents the results of the logistic regression. Model 5.1 represents the model with inclusion of all control variables, Model 5.2 excludes both the social consensus on education variables, Model 5.3 excludes BE_Index variable, and Model 5.4 excludes both the bureaucratic effectiveness and social consensus variables.

Table 5.15: Multivariate Logistic Regression Results on *chlldlabor*

	Model 5.1	Model 5.2	Model 5.3	Model 5.4
<i>BE_Index</i>	-.119** (.069)	-.142** (.068)		
<i>SC_Caste</i>	-.266** (.104)		-.202** (.082)	
<i>SC_Gender</i>	-.236** (.116)		-.166* (.087)	
<i>HHASSETS</i>	-.099*** (.013)	-.098*** (.012)	.094*** (.010)	-.094*** (.009)
<i>AGE</i>	.334*** (.022)	.326*** (.021)	.349*** (.018)	.340*** (.017)
<i>NCHILD</i>	.082** (.029)	.080** (.028)	.066** (.023)	.063** (.022)
<i>HHED5F</i>	-.035** (.017)	-.041** (.016)	-.027** (.013)	-.034** (.012)
<i>HHED5M</i>	-.017 (.013)	-.018 (.012)	-.011 (.001)	-.007 (.009)
<i>School_Cost</i>	.001*** (.000)	.001** (.001)	-.001 (.001)	-.001 (.001)
Constant	-6.3*** (.354)	-6.4*** (.334)	-6.8*** (.255)	-6.9*** (.237)
N	23974	25618	38735	42043
Pseudo-R2	0.107	0.105	.106	.101
Hosmer & Lemeshow Goodness of Fit Test	10.5	10.7	17.4	16.2

*p<0.1, **p<.05**p<0.001***

The results indicate that both bureaucratic effectiveness and social consensus on education are statistically significant. Model 5.1 which includes all the control variables indicates that as bureaucratic effectiveness in the delivery of education increases, a parent is less likely to send their children to work. The co-efficient on the *BE_Index* is statistically significant at the 0.05 level (95% confidence interval). Likewise, Model 5.1 also indicates that as social consensus among caste groups increase, a child is less likely to be sent to work, with the co-efficient on *SC_Caste* being significant at the 0.05 level. Also, as social consensus on female education increases, a child is less likely to be sent to work, and the co-efficient on *SC_Gender* is statistically significant at the 0.5 level.

The results also indicate that all of the potentially confounding variables, except *HHED5M* are also statistically significant in the expected direction in Table 5.15. Therefore, household income, age, mother's education, and number of children in the household are significant predictors of whether or not a child will join the workforce. These findings reiterate previous results in the econometric and demographic literature. Further, father's level of education is not found to be a significant predictor of child labor.

Further the results of the Hosmer-Lemeshow test for goodness of fit are also included in the model.³⁹³ If the Chi-square statistic of the Hosmer-Lemeshow test is significant, it means that the model is not a very good fit for the data. Goodness-of-fit statistics assess the fit of a logistic model against actual outcomes. In Model 5.1, the inferential goodness-of-fit test is the Hosmer-Lemeshow test that yielded a χ^2 of 10.5 and was insignificant, suggesting that the model was fit to the data well.

An additional descriptive measure of goodness of fit is the R^2 index presented in Table 5.15.³⁹⁴ We observe that compared to model 5.4, the R^2 index increases in Models 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3. This means that the model fits the data better when bureaucratic effectiveness and social consensus on education variables are introduced into the models.

At the same time, statistical significance shows us that the explanatory variables are significantly associated with the dependent variable, but it tells us little of the substantive impact these variables have on the likelihood of a child being sent to work. Interpreting

³⁹³ The Hosmer-Lemeshow tests the null hypothesis that there is a linear relationship between the predictor variables and the log odds of the criterion variable. Cases are arranged in order by their predicted probability on the criterion variable. These ordered cases are then divided into ten groups (lowest decile [prob < .1] to highest decile [prob > .9]). Each of these groups is then divided into two groups on the basis of actual score on the criterion variable. This results in a 2 x 10 contingency table. Expected frequencies are computed based on the assumption that there is a linear relationship between the weighted combination of the predictor variables and the log odds of the criterion variable. For the outcome = no (decision = stop for our data) column, the expected frequencies will run from high (for the lowest decile) to low (for the highest decile). For the outcome = yes column the frequencies will run from low to high. A chi-square statistic is computed comparing the observed frequencies with those expected under the linear model. A non-significant chi-square indicates that the data fit the model well.

³⁹⁴ R^2 has a clear definition: It is the proportion of the variation in the dependent variable that can be explained by predictors in the model. Attempts have been devised to yield an equivalent of this concept for the logistic model. None, however, renders the meaning of variance explained (Long, 1997, pp. 104–109; Menard, 2000). Furthermore, none corresponds to predictive efficiency or can be tested in an inferential framework (Menard).

coefficients of logistic regression is difficult, given the non-linearity of the underlying relationship. A clearer understanding of the impact of each variable can be attained through examining their impact on the predicted probability of a child becoming a laborer. Table 5.16 shows the changes in predicted probabilities for each of the variables across the different model specifications. This information describes the change in likelihood of becoming a child laborer increases as the explanatory variable increases from its minimum to its maximum observed value. For example, BE is measured by the variable *BE_Index* which varies from a minimum of 0 (low) to 5 (high). The change in predicted probability reported below charts the change in the probability of a parent sending a child to work, as a respondent goes from experiencing low BE in the delivery of elementary education to high BE, holding other values in the analysis at their mean values. This analysis employed the simulation-based estimation of predicted probability (or predicted values) utilized in the *Clarify* program for STATA to ascertain the predicted values for each estimation point.

Table 5.16: Changes in Predicted Probabilities of Key Independent Variables (values in percentage points)

Variables	Model 5.1	Model 5.2	Model 5.3	Model 5.4
<i>BE_Index</i>	-0.5	-1.1		
<i>SC_Caste</i>	-0.3		-0.3	
<i>SC_Gender</i>	-0.2		-0.2	
<i>HHASSETS</i>	-3	-3	-2.7	-2.8
<i>AGE</i>	5	4.9	4.3	4.7
<i>NCHILD</i>	2.1	2.1	1.5	1.5
<i>HHED5F</i>	-0.7	-0.6	-0.4	.4
<i>HHED5M</i>	-0.3	-0.2	-0.1	.2
<i>School_cost</i>	15.7	13.2	0.4	.6

Table 5.16 indicates the substantive effect of *BE_Index*, *SC_Caste* and *SC_Gender*. As *BE_Index* changes from low to high, the probability of a child joining the workforce decreases by 0.5 percent. As *SC_Caste* changes from low to high, the probability of a child joining the workforce decreases by 0.3 percent while it is 0.2 percent for changes in *SC_Gender*. Therefore, BE and SC on education undoubtedly have both significant and substantive impact on the probability of a child joining the workforce. Though the substantive effect of BE and SC is small, their substantive impact have to be seen in the context of other variables related to education, such as *School_Cost* and *AGE*.

Notably, *School_Cost*, *HHASSETS*, and *AGE* are the other variables that have a strong substantive impact on the likelihood of a child going to work. The impact of economic factors (*HHASSETS*) is no doubt important. However, both the cost of schooling and the age of the child are related to educational deprivation. This dataset was collected in 2005-06, a few years before the RTE Act was passed—at a time when the government only made tuition

free for school-going children. Therefore, it is possible that the cost of schooling acted as a deterrent. But since 2009, uniform, books and other school supplies are also provided by the government, so if BE is high, then the cost of schooling for poor parents should be highly defrayed.

The other factor of age is also related to educational provision. As explained earlier, states have done a much better job of providing primary schools, the coverage of middle schools is still not as extensive. So, as age of children increase, many more children are likely to join the workforce due to the absence of middle schools. Overall, school-related factors have the biggest substantive impact on the probability of a child joining the workforce. The analysis above shows clearly that besides economic factors, variables related to educational deprivation have the biggest substantive impact on the probability of a child joining the workforce.

The overall model evaluation, the statistical tests of individual predictors, the goodness-of-fit statistics, and the validations of predicted probabilities show us that controlling for income, the institutional supply of education by the bureaucracy and the social consensus on education are significant determinants of whether or not a child joins the workforce.

5.6.3 Relationship of BE to Absentism, Dropout and Learning Outcomes

Three other individual-level hypotheses H2a, H2b, and H2c test the relationship of BE_Index on other dependent variables *Absentism*, *Dropout* and *Learn* respectively. The purpose of these three hypotheses is to understand the causal mechanism through which BE affects parental motivation to send a child to work. If *BE_Index* is negatively associated with absenteeism and dropout rates, while having a positive association with learning outcomes, it is additional evidence in favour of the hypotheses that poor quality of education provided by the state affects learning outcomes, encourages higher dropout rates, and higher levels of absenteeism among children. Once children stop going to school, the alternative is to start work in an attempt to do something productive with their lives.

Since *Absentism* and *Dropout* are continuous variables, I performed multilinear regression analyses for the Models 5.5 and 5.6 with *Absenteeism* and *Dropout* as dependent variables. Since *Learn* is a dichotomous variable, I performed a logistic regression analysis in Model 5.7 with *learn* as the dependent variable. As Table 5.17 shows, *BE_Index* has a positive and significant relationship with *Absentism*, i.e. with increase in levels of *BE_Index*, the number of days a student remains absent from school significantly reduces. *BE_Index* has a positive and significant relationship with *Dropout*, i.e. with increase in levels of bureaucratic effectiveness, the numbers of years of school attended increases. Similarly,

increase in *BE_Index* has a positive effect on learning outcomes, but the relationship is not statistically significant.

Table 5.17: Bivariate regression of *BE_Index* with *Absentism*, *Dropout*, and *Learn*

	Model 5.5	Model 5.5	Model 5.6
	<i>Absentism</i>	<i>Dropout</i>	<i>Learn</i>
<i>BE_Index</i>	-0.323** (0.004)	0.218** (0.019)	0.013 (0.003)
Constant	3.831**	3.982**	2.33

Hypotheses 2a, 2b, 2c stands true according to this analysis. These three hypotheses hint at the causal mechanism with which *BE_Index* has a relationship with *chlldlabor*. As discussed in the theory section in Chapter 3, low levels of bureaucratic effectiveness in the delivery of education is likely to lead to lower levels of parental motivation in sending a child to school. As children fail to learn at school, parents cannot stop their children from dropping out or absenting themselves from school. The children who are absent or who drop out of school form the pool of children most vulnerable to be recruited into the workforce.

Table 5.18 shows the correlation of Absentism, Dropouts and child labor. The Pearson-correlation between *Dropout* and *chlldlabor* is 0.13 indicating a positive correlation between dropouts and the probability of being a child labor. The correlation between absenteeism and child labor is only 0.05, but it does show a positive sign indicating that higher levels of absenteeism leads to higher probability of being child labor. Intuitively, it does make sense since dropouts are more likely to be drawn into the labor force

Table 5.18: Correlation between *Absentism*, *Dropout* and *chlldlabor*

	<i>Absentism</i>	<i>Dropout</i>	<i>chlldlabor</i>
<i>Absentism</i>	1.00		
<i>Dropout</i>	-0.07	1.00	
<i>chlldlabor</i>	0.05	0.13	1.00

5.7 Conclusion

The evidence presented in this chapter serves to highlight the importance of educational deprivation in determining whether children join the labor force at both the individual and state-level. The fact that economic variables are shown to be important comes as no surprise. But what stands out in this analysis is that the delivery of public educational services and the social consensus on education emerge as significant factors determining the likelihood of a child joining the workforce. These institutional and social factors were not included in previous econometric and demographic studies on child labor.

However, the evidence presented above is incomplete and needs to be supplemented in two different ways: the cross-sectional analysis presented above does not get at critical issues of temporality that must be addressed specifically in dealing with the over-time

variation in the social consensus of education. For instance, the cross-sectional data does not help us address the question of whether child labor is anyway low in places that have high BE and high SC on education. If so, the analysis presented here could suffer from endogeneity, thereby raising questions about its validity. The cross-sectional analysis also does not help us address the question of how SC affects levels of BE. Further, what are the causal mechanisms that link BE and SC to child labor, i.e. how does BE and SC translate into children not joining the labor force. Second, the cross-sectional analysis also does not allow us to capture the effect of CSOs that have played a central role in pushing the issue of child labor into national discourse. What are the conditions under which CSO mobilization leads to changes in levels of child labor?

To address these issues, the next two chapters look at variation across and within the states of Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan. It employs block-level survey data along with extensive interviews to address the questions above by showing how variation of CSO presence and strategies of mobilization affects BE and SC both at the block-level and also at the state-level. These two chapters make up for inadequacies in the national-level cross-sectional analysis by highlighting the causal mechanisms of how increased BE and SC affect parental decision-making calculus regarding children's work.

Chapter 6

Civic Support, State Action: The Transformation of Child Labor in Andhra Pradesh

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented a broad analysis of how the delivery of elementary education and the social pressures on parents are correlated with child work in India. Bureaucratic effectiveness in the delivery of education and the social consensus on education emerged as central variables in explaining the phenomenon of child labor, at both the state and the individual level. However, the large n-empirical analysis is limited in its ability to provide a nuanced understanding of the ways in which institutional factors like the delivery of education, and social discrimination act on parental motivations in sending children to work. An argument that focuses on individual motivations and implementation of policies requires an analysis that is more locally specific. Further, the empirical analysis was limited to cross-sectional data. The over-time formation of a social consensus on education was not captured in the empirical analysis.

Chapters 6 and 7 attempt to provide analyses of changes over time in the formation of a social consensus on education. CSOs are viewed as the main actors influencing the changes in the formation of social consensus over a period of time. Through case studies of CSOs' initiatives in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh and the north-western state of Rajasthan, these two chapters present evidence to demonstrate the over-time influence of CSOs on perceptions of education in the community and the public delivery of education.

The purpose of the case studies is to primarily test *H7a* to *H7f* recapitulated in Table 6.1 below. Here, I shall analyze how CSOs animate the community to form a social consensus on education and the bureaucratic effectiveness in the delivery of elementary education. Chapter 6 analyzes the trajectory of change in child labor rates in Andhra Pradesh at the block-level (block is an administrative subdivision of a state) and at the state-level within the framework of the stated hypotheses, while Chapter 7 will analyze the same trends in Rajasthan. I specifically focus on child labor trends in the hybrid cottonseed industry at the block-level in each of states, since analyzing trends within one industry across two states allows controlling for a large number of confounding factors. Further, I connect the block-level analyses to broader trends at the state-level to understand how larger state-level forces influence the politics of child labor at the ground-level.

Table 6.1: Hypotheses 7a- 7f

Formation of Social Consensus on Education: Role of CSOs

H7a: CSOs that focus on influencing **all parents** in the community to send their children to school should be more successful in reducing child labor than CSOs that focus on only withdrawing children from the workforce.

H7b: CSOs that focus on an inclusive approach by influencing **diverse groups in the community** on the importance of education of children should be more successful than CSOs that adopt a go-it-alone approach in withdrawing children from the workforce.

H7c: CSOs that focus on improving the quality of government-schools by facilitating the emergence of **community-based institutional mechanisms for monitoring the schools** should be more successful in withdrawing children from the workforce than CSOs that only focus on withdrawing children from the workforce.

H7d: CSOs that **collaborate with the bureaucracy** should be more successful in scaling up their operations and spreading their influence across a larger area than CSOs that adopt an antagonistic approach towards the bureaucracy.

H7e: A culture of community participation should make it easier for CSOs to build a social consensus on education.

H7f: The presence of a supportive political leader who is ideologically inclined and open towards universal education is expected to play a positive role in creating a social consensus on education.

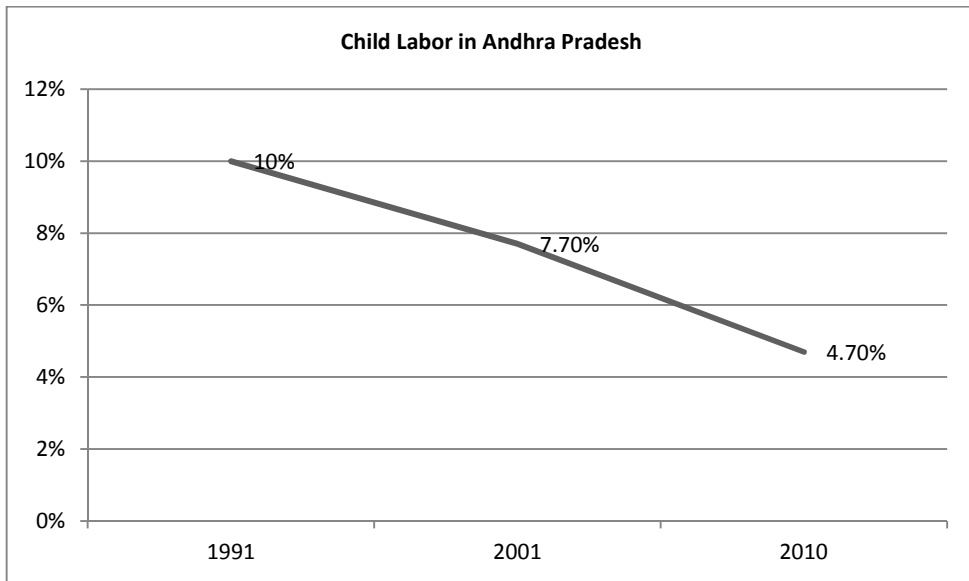
6.2 The Transformation of Child Labor in Andhra Pradesh

When the 1991 Census of India was released, the state of Andhra Pradesh was reported to have the highest percentage of children in the workforce.³⁹⁵ In 1991, 10 percent of the children in the age-group of five to fourteen years amounting to a total of 1.7 million children were a part of Andhra's workforce. Between 1991 and 2010, the percentage of children decreased from 10 percent to 4.7 percent, making Andhra Pradesh the state with the sharpest decline in the percentage of working children within a span of two decades (Figure 6.1).³⁹⁶ During the same period, Andhra also witnessed a steady decline in the percentage of children who are out of school (Figure 6.2).

³⁹⁵ Census of India 1991

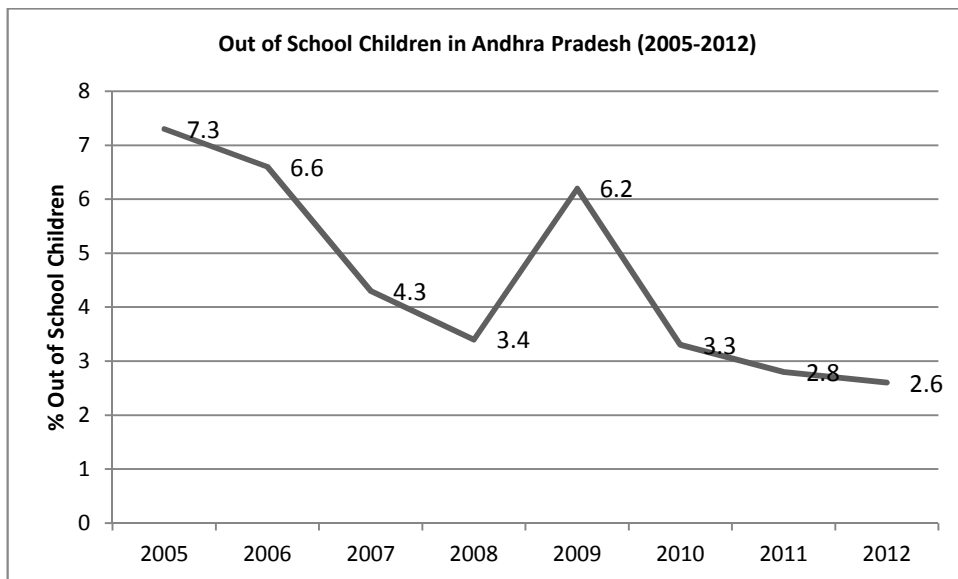
³⁹⁶ Census of India 2001; "Employment and Unemployment Situation in India-NSSO Report (2009-10)".

Figure 6.1: Decline in Child Labor Rate in Andhra Pradesh (1991-2010)



Source: Census of India and NSSO, various years.

Figure 6.2: Decline in Out of School children in Andhra Pradesh (2005-2012)



Source: ASER 2005-2012 (State Reports)

A local NGO called Mamidipudi Venkatrangaiyya Foundation (MV Foundation, hereafter referred to as MVF), founded in 1991 has worked extensively on the issue of child labor in Andhra Pradesh. MVF has been credited by state agencies, media, and independent evaluators to have brought about a ‘social movement’ in Andhra. There are reports of a ‘change in mind-set’ among village communities where education is now seen as an imperative and child labor is deemed as unacceptable.³⁹⁷ Andhra is also the only state in India to have witnessed a string of legislative and policy initiatives from the mid-1990s onwards to

³⁹⁷ Ekbote 1995; Rajendra Prasad 1994; Ravikiran 1996; Wazir 2002; Wazir 2002-03

completely abolish child labor and make education compulsory, initiatives that were still in nascent stages of debate at the national level. What makes the Andhra case even more compelling is that states like Gujarat with much higher per capita income than Andhra and similar levels of inequality have witnessed an increase in the magnitude of the child workforce.³⁹⁸ In 2005, Andhra's per capita GDP is \$1430 compared to \$3853 for the state of Gujarat – yet in the last two decades, Gujarat has witnessed a rise in rates of child labor from 3.9% in 1991 to 4.3% in 2001 and to 7.8% in 2010. The change in child labor levels in Andhra therefore challenges the unquestioned axiom that poverty causes child labor and therefore, logically long-term economic growth should be the panacea to child labor. Therefore, Andhra is an interesting case to study why and how both state and civil society took proactive steps to end child labor when other economically better-off states dragged their feet on the issue. Civil society intervention against child labor has been heavily understudied, so the case of Andhra seems to be a particularly promising case in which to study CSO intervention more closely.

Andhra, which is the largest maritime state in India, comprises the two regions of coastal Andhra and Telengana.³⁹⁹ The poor soil, low erratic rainfall, limited infrastructure and irrigation, declining groundwater has made life hard for the farmers of this predominantly agricultural state. In the past decade, Andhra has been catching up with economic growth with an average growth higher than 5 percent since the 1990s touching 8.7 percent in 2004-05.⁴⁰⁰ Average per capita income in Andhra has risen to Rupees 2,804 (~USD 256) during 2001 to 2006, catching up with the all India average of Rupees 3,058 (~USD 261). However, economic growth, driven mostly by exponential growth in the services sector, especially the Information Technology industry has been mostly urban centric. The development model of the state is a picture in contrasts—on one hand, urban centres boast of software technology parks and special economic zones while rural Andhra has rampant farmer suicides due to rising rural indebtedness. Though the state is showing economic growth, its investment in the social sector is declining. In 1980-81, Andhra's share in the social sector was 7.5 percent, which declined to 6 percent between 2006 and 2007.⁴⁰¹ Despite the inequitable nature of economic growth and the drop in social spending, the state has made rapid progress in reducing child labor.

³⁹⁸ Source: Directorate of Economics and Statistics of respective State Governments.

³⁹⁹ The Andhra Assembly has passed a Bill to create a separate state of Telengana in 2013.

⁴⁰⁰ "Human Development Report 2007: Andhra Pradesh." (Hyderabad: Government of Andhra Pradesh, 2008).

⁴⁰¹ Expenditure of social services includes education, sports, art and culture, medical and public health, family welfare, water supply and sanitation, housing, urban development, welfare of SCs STs OBCs, labor and labor welfare, social security and welfare, nutrition, relief for natural calamities.

6.3 Methodology

This chapter is based on field research on child labor in the hybrid cottonseed industry in the two blocks of Uyyalawada and Dornipadu in Kurnool district for a period of three months (February-April 2012). Though MVF's activities on the issue of child labor have been extensively documented, what is less understood is how the organization was able to influence the state's agenda on the issue of child labor and universal education. While trying to understand how the broader movement evolved, I focused on the linkage between the social movement initiated by MVF with changes in education and child labor policies of the state since many of MVF's interventions were eventually incorporated into Andhra Pradesh's state policy. I interviewed MVF's staff and volunteers, government officials, elected members of gram *panchayats*, school teachers, parents of child laborers, and former child laborers.⁴⁰² I also interviewed senior bureaucrats and politicians who have been the key architects of child labor and education policies in Andhra Pradesh. I interviewed academic experts specializing in Andhra's civil society at the Osmania University in Hyderabad. I also attended a Government-NGO collaboration seminar on the RTE Act to observe real-time interaction between government officials and civil society activists. I conducted archival research at the social science library of Osmania University and in MVF's archives to understand the institutional context of Andhra Pradesh's child labor and elementary education policies.

The findings in this chapter show that variation in the strength of CSO activity influences levels of child labor *within* states. The local analysis gives a finer understanding of how strategies of CSO mobilization that focus on improving access to education impacts individual parent's motivation in sending their children to work. Further, the state-level analysis draws attention to the broader state-wide contextual factors that influence of CSOs at the block-level. I present evidence to show that a state-wide culture of community participation in Andhra and political support to the issue of child labor influenced MVF's strategies of grassroots mobilization, enabled government- civil society collaboration, and brought about an ideological shift in the state bureaucracy's attitude towards child labor. This ideological shift has resulted in the bureaucracy accepting that child labor elimination is an important pre-requisite to reduce poverty. Consequently, child labor elimination and poverty alleviation have been made an integral component of Andhra's poverty alleviation programs.

6.4 Setting the Context: Child Labor in the Hybrid Cottonseed industry

The hybrid cottonseed industry is the latest entrant in the commercial agriculture sector in Andhra. Its growth is driven by the explosive growth of *Bt* cotton, a hybrid variety of

⁴⁰²*Panchayats* are the village-level elected governments.

cotton that was first commercially introduced in India in 2002.⁴⁰³ The introduction of *Bt* cotton, which was infused with a gene that protected the cotton plant from the bollworm (a pest that was known to destroy most of the cotton crops), revolutionized the cotton industry in India.⁴⁰⁴ Since 2002, *Bt* cotton has generated economic benefits for farmers valued at USD 5.1 billion, halved insecticide requirements, contributed to the doubling of yield, and transformed India from a cotton importer to a major exporter.⁴⁰⁵

Promised by the lure of huge profit margins and underlined by an intensive media campaign by seed companies, a large number of farmers in rural Andhra Pradesh gave up growing food crops and instead moved to the commercial cultivation of *Bt* cotton.⁴⁰⁶ When *Bt* cotton was first introduced in the Warangal district in Andhra Pradesh, the government had to deploy police forces to prevent the breakout of fights among farmers wanting a share in the limited supply of seed.⁴⁰⁷ Cotton is a major commercial crop in Andhra Pradesh occupying 1.1 million hectares of land in 2006-07. Out of this eighty-eight percent of the cotton cultivation relied on hybrid cottonseeds.⁴⁰⁸

Between the years 2001 and 2006, the average requirement for hybrid cottonseed in Andhra has been around 107.4 thousand pounds and the average supply was 51.6 thousand pounds.⁴⁰⁹ Witnessing the increase in demand for hybrid cottonseed, many entrepreneurial farmers from coastal Andhra migrated to Mahbubnagar, Ranga Reddy and Kurnool districts, areas of suitable climate and cheap labor, to start cottonseed cultivation. Initially the preserve of rich migrant farmers, many local rich farmers in these districts also migrated from growing food crops to growing cottonseed because of the potential of high profits.⁴¹⁰ Around ninety percent of the cottonseed cultivation in Andhra, amounting to around 27,000 hectares is concentrated in the Kurnool and Mahbubnagar districts and comprises around 62 percent of the cottonseed production in India.⁴¹¹

The economics of *Bt* cotton has driven the demand for child labor. With conventional cotton, farmers could reuse the cottonseed from one crop cycle to the next, but in the case of *Bt* cotton, farmers have to buy new seeds every season. As demand for *Bt* cotton increased, demand for hybrid cottonseed has also spiralled. The development and distribution of new

⁴⁰³ In Andhra Pradesh, the use of hybrid seeds started in the early 1970s in the Green Revolution districts of Guntur, Prakasam, and Krishna in coastal Andhra. These hybrids were created by crossing several indigenous strains of hybrid cotton. With the opening up of India's markets to the world in early 1990s, the government started allowing the import of plant germplasms through the New Seed Policy of 1988. For the first time, an Indian company Mahyco acquired the rights to import strains of *Bt* cotton produced by the multinational Monsanto. With the introduction of *Bt* cotton, there was a spiraling growth of the *Bt* cottonseed industry as well.

⁴⁰⁴ Herring and Rao 2012

⁴⁰⁵ Chaudhury and Gaur 2010

⁴⁰⁶ Herring and Rao 2012

⁴⁰⁷ Herring 2008

⁴⁰⁸ Barik 2010

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁰ Venkateswarlu 2010

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*

crop varieties was earlier a public sector activity but with the development of hybrid varieties, private players became important in the market. The drive for profit among the private players has led to the driving down of seed procurement prices—the direct impact of low seed procurement prices is on the small cottonseed farmer who tries to increase his profit margins by cutting down labor costs.⁴¹² It is this equation for profit that has primarily motivated the employment of child labor in the hybrid cottonseed industry.

The process of cultivation of hybrid cottonseed itself explains why the cottonseed farmer prefers to employ children instead of adults. Cottonseed is a labor-intensive industry with manual labor required for sowing, planting, pollinating, emasculating and linting the cottonseeds. However, a field-study showed that ninety percent of the man-days of labor required in the process of hybrid cottonseed production is in the process of pollination—a very labor-intensive activity that requires separating and manually pollinating each flower.⁴¹³ Till the 1970s, adult women mainly were employed for cross pollinating work, but the nature of labor employment slowly changed when cottonseed farmers found that it cost seventy percent of the adult female's wages to employ young girls. In order to alleviate demands from adult women that they be employed in the cottonseed industry, producers have deliberately spread superstitions among the illiterate farmers that the cottonseed crop would be destroyed if the pollination activity was carried out by post-pubescent women.⁴¹⁴ The majority of workers working in the cottonseed industry in Andhra Pradesh, therefore, are young girls. Since the cottonseed plant is about three feet tall and pollination is a delicate activity, employers find children, especially girls more suitable to the activity than adults.

Profits in the cottonseed industry are largely dependent on the ability of the cottonseed farmer to secure cheap agricultural labor. At the beginning of each season, seed-coordinators are hired by cottonseed farmers to search for suitable villages to plant cottonseed for the upcoming season. The basic criterion for identifying a 'cottonseed village' is whether there are enough children, especially young girls, available for employment. Other aspects of cultivation like quality of soil, land acreage, etc. are secondary to the decision.⁴¹⁵ The children are paid either on a daily, weekly or monthly basis, but the wages are fixed at the beginning of the season itself for the entire season. Daily wage laborers earn Rupees 12-18 per day (USD 0.24- 0.36), monthly wage laborers earn Rupees 400-1,200 (USD 8-24) while seasonal laborers earn Rupees 4,000-Rupees 4,500 (USD 80-90) for the entire season, depending on the age group of workers and the availability of labor.⁴¹⁶

⁴¹² *Ibid.*

⁴¹³ Santhy *et al* 2008

⁴¹⁴ Venkateswarlu and De Corta 2001, Ramamurthy 2000; Ramamurthy 2010

⁴¹⁵ Venkateswarlu 2001

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*

The seed-coordinators enter into long-term agreements and pay loan advances to parents to ensure that children are bound to work with them for the entire season. Since the pollination activity has to be carried out within a small time window of two days within which the flower blooms, farmers have to ensure that they have a ready supply of labor available for the entire season. In places where there is a high concentration of seed production, seed producers employ both local and migrant children who are brought from poor, backward areas of Andhra and stay with the employers in temporarily constructed sheds for the entire season. The contract entered into with parents does not constitute any arrangements with regard to hours of work, health benefits, safety precautions or working conditions. This is in clear violation of the CLPRA. In the absence of any such arrangement, children end up working nine to fourteen hours a day. Further, there is no possibility of them combining work and school since they are tied down by the contract for the whole season. Investigative reports have also found that though the long term contracts are made for one season, children often are compelled to work for the same farmer for several crop seasons, in order to pay off the loan advances, thereby making this system into a disguised form of bonded labor.⁴¹⁷

6.5 Block level Analysis: Uyyalawada and Dornipadu

Both Uyyalawada and Dornipadu are blocks/*mandals* or revenue subdivisions of the district of Kurnool in Andhra Pradesh. Kurnool, located south of the capital city of Hyderabad, has the dubious distinction of being one of highest child labor districts in India⁴¹⁸ (Figure 6.3). In 2001, 14.6 percent of the children in the age-group of five to fourteen years amounting to a total of 138,326 children in Kurnool were in the workforce. ASER (2011) reported Kurnool as the district with the highest rates of out of school children in all of Andhra Pradesh.

Child labor is extensively employed in the hybrid cottonseed industry in Kurnool district.⁴¹⁹ The majority of child laborers in the cottonseed industry are either landless poor or poor peasants owning less than two acres of land. A study of child labor in three mandals in Kurnool district in 2001 showed that ninety-two percent of the child laborers are Dalits.⁴²⁰ On the other hand, seed farmers who mostly belong to upper castes, are generally from economically well-off families and are comparatively better educated. Ninety percent of the child labor employed in the cottonseed farms of Andhra Pradesh consists of young girls. Further, Kurnool has also been the site of CSO intervention on the issue of child labor in cottonseed since 2004. Therefore, cottonseed industry in Kurnool provides a perfect site for

⁴¹⁷ Venkateswarlu 2001

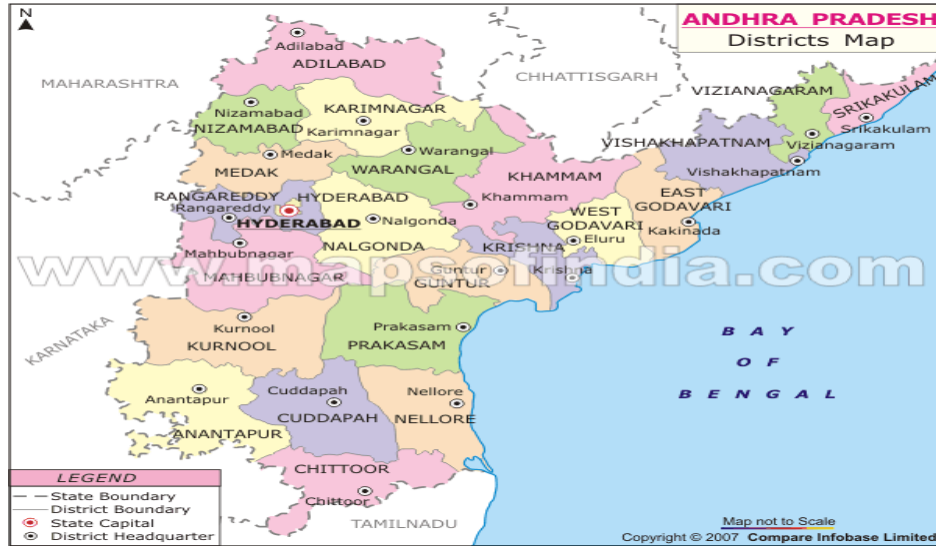
⁴¹⁸ Census of India 2001

⁴¹⁹ Venkateswarlu 2010

⁴²⁰ Venkateswarlu 2010; 47.1% belonged to SC caste mainly Madiga caste while 47.1% of the children belonged to Backward castes like Kuruva, Magali, Chakali and Golla.

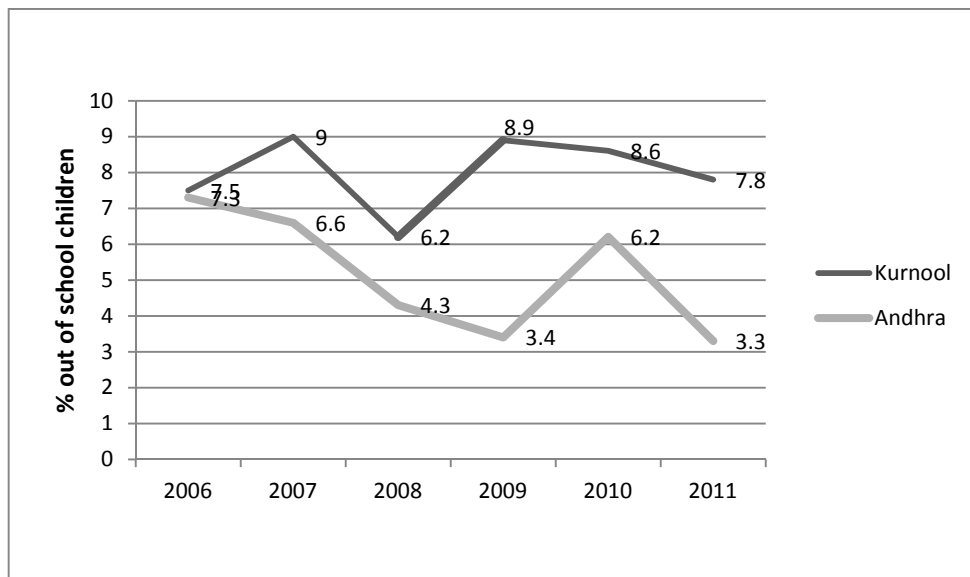
testing the hypotheses regarding over-time formation of social consensus on education by CSOs since both caste and gender discrimination is rife within this industry.

Figure 6.3: District Map of Andhra Pradesh



Source: "Political Map of Andhra Pradesh"

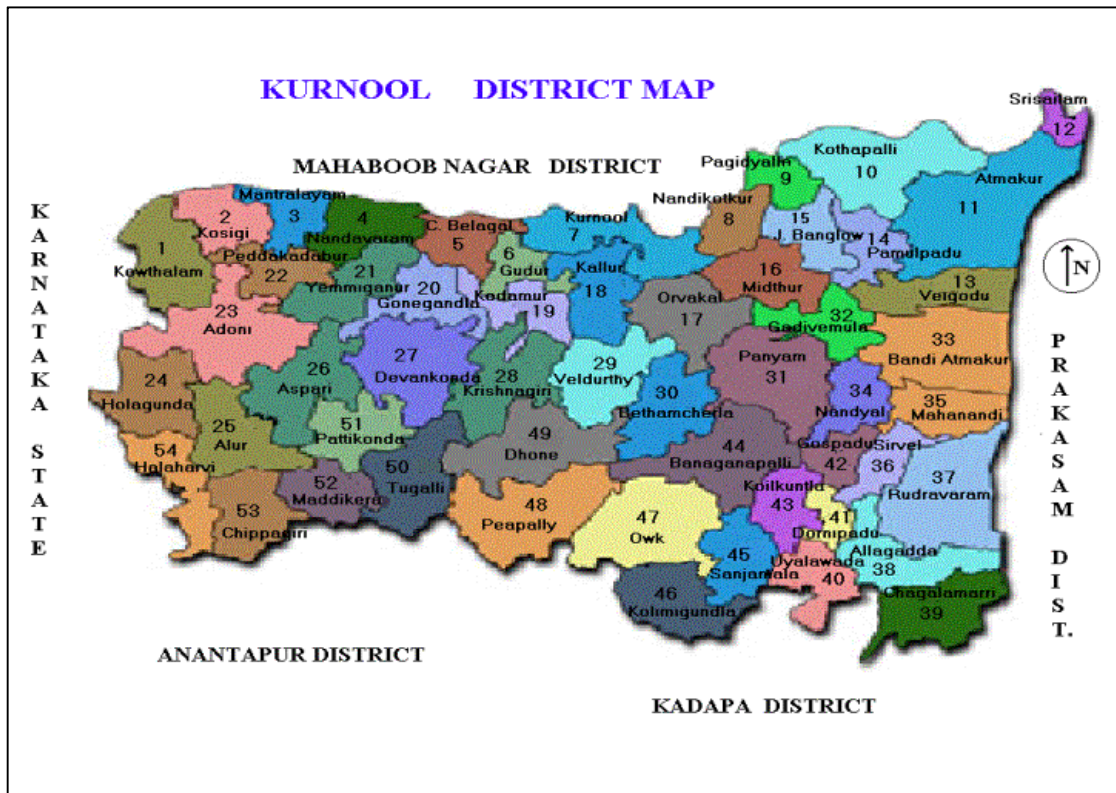
Figure 6.4: Out of School Children in Kurnool and Andhra Pradesh (2006-2011)



Source: All-India Status of Education Report, various years.

However, even within Kurnool, not all *mandals* have witnessed CSO intervention equally. Uyyalawada has witnessed intensive civil society intervention through the work of MVF, a local NGO. Though Dornipadu is a neighboring *mandal*, there was no civil society intervention when I went for fieldwork in 2012. Therefore, Uyyalawada and Dornipadu provide variation along the dimension of civil society intervention. Figure 6.5 shows a map of Kurnool district (No. 40 and No. 41 on the map refer to Dornipadu and Kurnool respectively).

Figure 6.5: Uyyalawada (No. 40) and Dornipadu (No. 41) in Mandal map of Kurnool district, Andhra Pradesh



Source: "Mandal Map of Andhra Pradesh," accessed from

6.6 Civil Society Intervention in the Cottonseed Industry: Uyyalawada Mandal

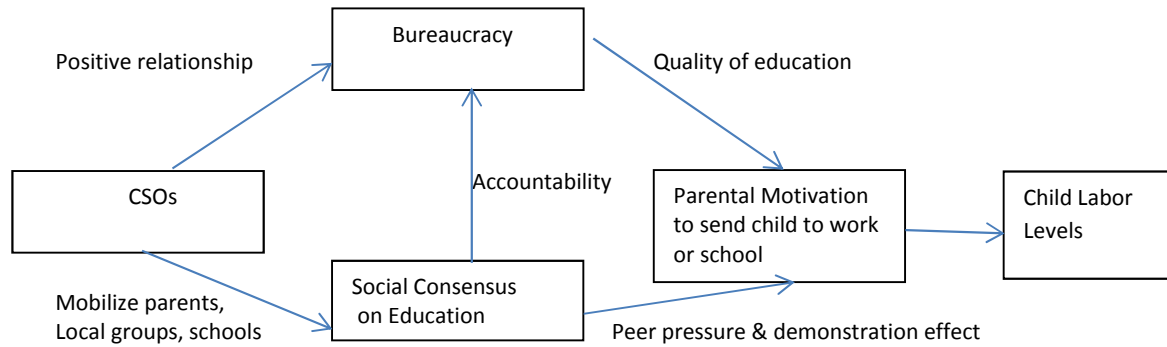
Through an inter-block comparison within Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh,⁴²¹ I examine the processes through which trends in child labor changes in the two blocks of Uyyalawada and Dornipadu. I examine the changes in the context of the hypotheses (H7a-H7d): i) whether there was mobilization of parents on the issue of education; ii) whether community groups were involved; iii) whether MVF focused on creating channels of accountability in the local schools; iv) whether MVF collaborated with the local bureaucracy on the issue. Each of these dimensions gives a clue as to whether a social consensus on education was created in each of these blocks.

I also test whether the changes in trends of child labor in Uyyalawada and Dornipadu map out with the theoretical formulation delineated in Chapter 4 (Figure 6.6). If a social consensus on education is created, how does it affect the bureaucratic effectiveness in the delivery of education? How do changes in bureaucratic effectiveness and social consensus affect parental motivation? Lastly, does it create changes in levels of child labor? I theorized that the social consensus on education directly influences parental motivation through peer

⁴²¹ In India, a state is divided into administrative districts, which are further divided into blocks/*mandals* and these are further divided into villages.

pressure and demonstration effect and indirectly through making the bureaucracy more accountable. This chapter fleshes out the causal mechanisms as to how the formation of a social consensus on education through the efforts of CSOs influences parental motivation.

Figure 6.6: Diagrammatic Representation of Theory (II)



6.6.1 About MV Foundation

The campaign against child labor in Uyyalawada was carried out by MVF, a local NGO that has been working on issues of child rights since 1991 in Andhra Pradesh. MVF was founded by Dr. Shantha Sinha, a Political Science Professor of the University of Hyderabad, who also held the position of Chairperson of the National Commission for Protection of Children’s Rights (NCPCR). In the mid-1980s, when Dr. Sinha was working as Director of the *Shramik Vidyapith*, an adult literacy program for wage laborers, she discovered that forty percent of the bonded laborers they released from landlords were children.⁴²² Meanwhile, the 1991 Census revealed that Andhra had a literacy rate of forty-four percent, one of the lowest among all Indian states and also largest percentage of children in the workforce.⁴²³ At that time, there was no organization in Andhra that focused exclusively on the rights of children.⁴²⁴ To fill up this void, Dr. Sinha established MV Foundation with the aim of reducing child labor and promoting education for all children.

In the past two decades, MVF has withdrawn 6,00,000 child laborers, released 25,000 child bonded laborers, mainstreamed 50,000 children to formal schools, and stopped 8,000 child marriages. MVF’s model has also been adopted by NGOs in other countries like Nepal, and in countries in Central America and Africa. MVF’s senior resource persons have successfully transferred the model to urban cities of Delhi, Patna, and Bhopal, to Naxalite areas in Bihar and Chattisgarh, to remote tribal habitations in the state Madhya Pradesh, and even areas disturbed by ethnic insurgency and separatist movements in the state of Assam.⁴²⁵

⁴²² Sumanaspati. “Striving for Better Lives.” *The Hindu*. August 5, 2003.

⁴²³ Census of India 1991

⁴²⁴ Sumanaspati. “Striving for Better Lives.” *The Hindu*. August 5, 2003.

⁴²⁵ Wazir and Saith 2010

Through a network of 80,000 youth volunteers and alliances with thousands of local groups, MVF has successfully created an extensive social network across 25,000 villages in Andhra who consistently monitor children's rights.⁴²⁶ MVF's programs have been sponsored by the Ministry of Labor and Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India. It has received support from national and international funding agencies such as CRY, ILO-IPEC, HIVOS, UNICEF, UNDP/NORAD, and the JRD Tata Trust. It has also received support from some corporates such as the AXIS Bank Foundation, Indian Overseas Bank, and ICICI Foundation.

The organization recognizes poverty as a relevant factor in child labor but holds that the main causation is rooted in social and cultural factors that condone the existence of employed and non-school going children.⁴²⁷ The philosophy underlying MVF's work has crystallized into the following 'Charter of Basic Principles for Emancipation of Child Labor', also known as 'non-negotiables, that summarize the organization's stand on the issue of child labor and guide its work in the field: i) all children must attend formal full-time day schools; ii) any child out of school is considered a child laborer; iii) all work is hazardous and harms the overall growth and development of the child; iv) there must be complete abolition of child labor; and v) any justification perpetuating the existence of child labor must be condemned.⁴²⁸ Therefore, MVF's philosophy promotes an across-the-board ban on child labor and makes the connection between child labor and universal education.

MVF's non-negotiable principles challenge certain fundamental assumptions that have steered GoI's child labor policy. MVF argues that every child who is not going to school is a child labor or a potential child labor. This is a radical interpretation of the term 'child labor' since the CLPRA, 1986 only regards children working in hazardous occupations as child labor.⁴²⁹ MVF recognizes all forms of child-work as hazardous since it ultimately leads to long-term deprivation of the child and perpetuates the inter-generational transfer of poverty. Instead of taking a 'progressive step-wise approach' to eradicating child labor that has been the essence of the Indian government's policy on child labor, MVF promotes complete abolition of child labor.⁴³⁰ It also challenges the GoI's approach that poor children can combine work and school, an approach that guided the policy of non-formal education under India's National Education Policy, 1986.⁴³¹ MVF argued that non- formal education

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁶ For a more detailed account on MVF's philosophy, mandate and strategies, see Wazir, R. *Getting Children out of Work and Into School*. (Secunderabad: M.V.Foundation, 2002); Wazir, R. "No to Child Labor, Yes to Education: Unfolding of a Grass Roots Movement in Andhra Pradesh." *Economic and Political Weekly* Vol. 37, No. 52, (2002), pp. 5225-5229; Mahajan, S. *Education for Social Change: MVF and Child Labor* (Delhi: National Book Trust, 2008).

⁴³⁰ For examining the rationale of Indian Government's child labor policy, see Planning Commission. Government of India. *Working Group for Social Inclusion of Vulnerable Group like Child Labour and Bonded and Migrant Labour in the 12th Five Year Plan (2012-17)*, (New Delhi: Government of India, 2012).

⁴³¹ Weiner 1991

perpetuates the divisions between the rich and poor children and ensures that the children of the poor never get quality education or a chance to get out of the vicious cycle of poverty. The organization recognizes poverty as a relevant factor in child labor but holds that the main causation is rooted in social and cultural factors that condone the existence of employed and non-school going children.⁴³² The National Coordinator of MVF says:

“Our field experience showed us that it is not necessarily the poorest of the poor who are sending their children to work. Cultural resistance to education mostly arises because illiterate parents of first generation learners often find it difficult to access the school system. Access to schools is not only a matter of physical access; they must have emotional access as well. Instead of making schools more accessible to working children, the assumption is made that parents do not want to send their children to school. MVF challenged these assumptions and presented parents with alternatives that made schooling more accessible. It has been our experience that when poor parents have feasible alternatives, they are willing to endure great hardships to educate their children.”⁴³³

MVF bases its strategy on the close link between child labor and universal education- -therefore, it focuses on creating a social norm in the village community to withdraw children from work and simultaneously works on improving the condition of government schools.

MVF’s strategies of mobilization are locally-specific. Its key strength lies in mobilizing local stakeholders in the community, inspiring them to share a common philosophical approach to child labor and education, and to come up with sustainable solutions to the problem of child labor. A Resource Person for MVF says, “Once the community as a whole supports the idea that all children should go to school, it becomes easier to convince individual parents. Also, the community itself applies pressure to local bureaucrats and politicians to improve the schooling system so that children can go to school.”⁴³⁴ Instead of lobbying directly with the government, MVF empowers the community to make demands from the government.

An integral component of MVF’s locally specific strategy is alliances with local groups such as trade unions, women’s self-help groups, handicraft workers’ cooperatives, and *Dalit* groups.⁴³⁵ Creating alliances with other groups gives MVF legitimacy in the local community, gives the movement the strength of numbers, creates a critical mass of support, and creates a ‘mood’ for mass movement.⁴³⁶ An independent evaluation of MVF’s strategies of mobilization observes:

“Much of the success of MVF in achieving this is a consequence of its philosophy of inclusion. All social groups, classes, castes, communities and individuals are involved in its programs...this has the advantage of having a wider appeal and of bringing the entire community-parents, teachers, employers of child labor, government officials and above all the children themselves – together around the issue of child rights. What is effectively sought through this inclusive approach is a change in the values and norms that were previously acting as constraints to universal education and the elimination of child labor.”⁴³⁷

⁴³³ Interview with MVF National Coordinator, Hyderabad on February 20, 2012

⁴³⁴ Interview with MVF Resource Person, Hyderabad, February 13, 2012.

⁴³⁵ The word *dalit* is used to denote the former untouchable castes.

⁴³⁶ Interview with National Coordinator, Hyderabad, February 20, 2012

⁴³⁷ Wazir and Saith 2010, *op. cit.*, p.15-16

Sustainability of interventions is one of the biggest challenges of NGOs.⁴³⁸ MVF ensures sustainability by institutionalizing community level mechanisms such as Child Rights Protection Forums (CRPFs) and local units of the All India Teachers Forum for Protection of Child Rights (AITFCR). CRPFs consist of village-level volunteers who monitor the status of children's nutrition, health, protection and development within the village. With a four tiered structure at the village, *mandal*, district and state level, there are around 80,000 registered life-members of CRPF who monitor child-related institutions like village schools, mobilize communities against child marriage and corporal punishment, act as a pressure group on government institutions and are motivated with the objective of ensuring complete elimination of child labor. The AITFCR is a voluntary group of government school teachers whose main objective is to improve the standard of teaching in government schools. These institutionalized mechanisms ensure sustainability on the issue of child rights even when MVF withdraws its operations from a particular area.

MVF's inclusionary strategy mandates that not only members of civil society but even bureaucrats should be actively involved in the consensus building against child labor. MVF has a clear strategy of not attempting to create any parallel structures to the government or to get involved in any service delivery activity. Instead of replacing government institutions, the strategy is to strengthen existing institutions so that the benefits reach the public.⁴³⁹ MVF acts as a conduit of channelizing accurate data, monitoring the quality of education in government schools, and interfacing with government officials in order to make the educational system responsive to local needs and demands.

6.6.2 *Creating a Social Consensus on Education: MVF in Uyyalawada*

The issue of child labor in the hybrid cottonseed industry first came to the notice of MVF when a researcher in Hyderabad published a report in 2001 on the extensive employment of girl children in the hybrid cottonseed industry in Andhra Pradesh.⁴⁴⁰ Kurnool, Mahbubnagar, and Ranga Reddy were identified as three districts having the maximum concentration of child labor in cottonseed farms.

In 2003, MVF started a United Nations Development Project-supported government program in four *mandals* of Kurnool district (Dhone, Mahanandi, Midthur and Peapully) which was focused on organizing a grassroots advocacy campaign to mobilize communities around the issue of child labor elimination through raising a demand for universal primary

⁴³⁸ Farrington *et al* 1993

⁴³⁹ By virtue of the powers granted under the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, Gram Panchayats have the authority to monitor local institutions such as schools, social welfare hostels, health centers, and aanganwadis and mobilize resources for infrastructure development. They also have the authority to summon the police in finding cases of exploitative child labor and thereby provide a crucial link in the chain between civil society and the government bureaucracy.

⁴⁴⁰ MVF Foundation. *FNV Report 2006-07*. (Secunderabad: MV Foundation, 2007)

education.⁴⁴¹ In the course of this project, the grassroots workers of MVF became aware of the massive numbers of children working in the cottonseed industry. They became aware that there was a mass exodus of children from Yemmiganur *mandal* to work in the cottonseed fields of Uyyalawada.

Consequently, in 2004, with support from a Dutch trade union known as FNV, MVF started a project focusing exclusively on children working in the hybrid cottonseed industry.⁴⁴² The focus of this project was to remove 4,000 out of school children in 80 villages in the two blocks of Yemmiganur and Uyyalawada, the former a source area for child labor and the latter a destination for child labor. Though MVF activists had started a gradual mobilization since 2004, the program of social mobilization was formally launched in October 2006.

I examine MVF's activities in Uyyalawada along the four hypotheses of i) mobilization of parents; ii) mobilization of local groups; iii) creating accountability mechanisms in schools; and iv) collaborating with the bureaucracy and examine the overall impact of these initiatives. I compare the effect in Uyyalawada versus that in Dornipadu. An initial MVF survey revealed that in ten out of seventeen villages in Uyyalawada, hybrid cottonseed is grown by four companies.⁴⁴³ The MNCs Monsanto and Bayer were found to have a substantial presence in Uyyalawada. The survey in 2006-2007 found that hybrid cottonseed production was carried out by 593 farmers over an area of 1,217.3 acres with the employment of 3,366 child laborers. Just a year earlier, a pilot survey conducted by MVF staff before the launch of the program showed that in 2005-06, 446 farmers were cultivating cottonseed in a total of 904 acres, thereby indicating an increase of over twenty-five percent in cottonseed acreage within a span of one year.

6.6.3 Testing H7a: Mobilization of parents

MVF volunteers undertake a door-to-door campaign focusing on each parent to send her child to school. MVF used the techniques of awareness, appeal, facilitation, and sanction to convince parents to withdraw their children from the cottonseed farms. Volunteers spoke with parents to find out what obstacles they faced in sending children to school. An MVF resource person said, "We use an economic argument with parents. We tell them that your family has been poor for generations, if you don't send your children to school, your children will also remain poor like you. We have found this strategy to be very helpful not only in Andhra, but also in other states."⁴⁴⁴ Further, MVF has a cadre of former child laborers who have acquired

⁴⁴¹ M.V. Foundation. *Media Advocacy Campaign for Getting Children Out of Work and Into Schools. Child Labor Elimination Project, Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh, April–June 2003*, (Secunderabad: UNDP, 2003)

⁴⁴² FNV is a Dutch Trade Union Federation

⁴⁴³ MV Foundation. *FNV Annual Report 2007-08*. (Secunderabad: MV Foundation)

⁴⁴⁴ Interview with MVF Resource Person for Madhya Pradesh, Dharur *mandal*, February 23, 2012

education and are placed in steady jobs. They speak with parents of child laborers to convince them. These former child laborers act as role models to parents who can envisage an alternative future for their children.

Volunteers cited a large number of non-economic factors that made parents send their child to work. MVF field coordinator of Kurnool district said, “Sometimes even a simple procedure like having to fill out forms in the school intimidates an illiterate parent. Child marriage and parents’ alcoholism are two other important factors that act as major deterrents in the Uyyalawada area from sending their children to school.”⁴⁴⁵ It is these gaps between parents of a first generation learner and the schools that MVF tried to bridge. Volunteers designed localized strategies depending on the requirements and attitudes of parents. Where parents are very keen to educate their child, but find that they cannot afford to do so, MVF has admitted a large number of children into its expansive network of Residential Bridge Course Camps (RBCs) where education and residence is provided free of cost to former child laborers.

MVF volunteers found that many parents who had signed contracts on the basis of trust on the seed coordinators were unaware of the hazards faced by children on the cottonseed farms. On being made aware of the dangers facing their children, they voluntarily agreed to withdraw their children. In cases where parents were not cooperative, pressure was brought on them through village meetings. When eight children from Pedda Emmanur village dropped out of the local school to work in cottonseed farms, local CRPF members summoned the parents to a public meeting and were warned against the ill effects of sending their children to work and said that legal action could be taken against them if they continued to send their children to work. The collective pressure from the village community convinced the parents to withdraw their children. The *gram sabha* also resolved that the employer would not be reimbursed the money that he had given away as advance. CRPF members also convinced parents to send their daughters to school and spoke to them about the ill effects of child marriage and the benefits of helping their daughters seek higher education. When parents are insistent on getting daughters married off, MVF makes police reports to stop the marriage.⁴⁴⁶

6.6.4 Testing H7b: MVF’s mobilization of the community

MVF’s primary strategy is to mobilize the entire community through a program of social mobilization. The agenda in each village develops organically to suit specific local needs. Since the cottonseed industry employs a large number of girl child laborers, MVF recognized the need to specifically address the attitude of gender bias that prevailed among

⁴⁴⁵ Interview with MVF Resource Person, Secunderabad, February 9, 2012

⁴⁴⁶ FNV Report 2007-08, *op.cit.*

parents. Therefore, women's self-help groups, and girls' youth groups were actively involved in the discussions for child rights. Similarly, MVF solicited the support of trade unions on the ground that child labor in the hybrid cottonseed industry was causing adult underemployment and depressed adult wages. In Uyyalawada, Joint Action Committees on Elimination of Child Labor consisting of representatives of local trade unions, a handicrafts cooperative, caste group known as Dalita Sangham and even political parties like the Communist Party of India (CPI) and the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI-M) lent support to the campaign.

Unique mobilizational strategies were designed by MVF in Uyyalawada to create awareness among the public about the status of children in general, and children in the hybrid cottonseed industry in particular. MVF and local CRPF members organized a jeep campaign in sixty-two villages from August 17 -21, 2008 to oppose the employment of children in the hybrid cottonseed industry which involved the participation of 5,605 members of community. A 150 kilometer (~90 mile) long *padayatra* (rally) in Uyyalawada was organized between July 5 and July 8, 2008 in which 165 people participated to raise awareness in the villages on the route of the *padayatra*. A sticker-campaign was taken up in Yemmiganur on June 12, 2008 during which CRPF members pasted 3,000 campaign stickers to vehicles denouncing child labor and advocating education for all children. Through a postcard campaign, 150 postcards were sent to the Supreme Court of India listing out the problems of children in the cottonseed industry. In 2009-10, CRPF forwarded 2,320 signed petitions to the Minister of Labor and Employment asking him to raise the issue of child labor at the Global Meet on Child Labor due to be held in the Hague on May 10-11, 2010.

The purpose of these large scale initiatives was to mobilize a critical mass of support in the community for children's issues that would influence parents, employers and public officials to act proactively against child labor and in favour of universal education. A teacher of a local school who works with MVF in Uyyalawada said, "It gives the local people awareness about the rights of children. It creates a mood in favour of children's rights. It creates a feeling that if they employ children, someone is watching."⁴⁴⁷ The *gram panchayat* member of Peapully *mandal* said, "CRPF members requested the village tailor to stop stitching the bags that children use to pick cotton. Autorickshaw drivers transporting children to work in cottonseed farms were asked to stop doing so."⁴⁴⁸ Such multi-level strategies were meant to create a sense of communal responsibility towards children and to change the values and norms that constrain the elimination of child labor.

In order to ensure that the initiatives are sustainable, MVF launched CRPFs in all the *mandals* in Kurnool in August 2004. Between 2006 and 2010, 36 CRPFs were formed in Uyyalawada with membership increasing from 0 to 621, as more and more people got

⁴⁴⁷ Interview with teacher, primary school, Uyyalawada *mandal*, February 12, 2012

⁴⁴⁸ Interview with Sarpanch, Peapully *mandal*, February 8, 2012

mobilized into the movement and on September 30, 2009, a district level CRPF was formed. The aim of MVF is to equip CRPF members with in depth knowledge of children's rights so that they can debate, demand and solicit the support of government officials, parents and the community. The CRPF members in each *mandal* took up the responsibility of surveying cottonseed farms, motivating employers to release child labor, convincing parents to send their children to school, and monitoring child related institutions like schools, hostels, *aanganwadis* (day-care centers) and health centers. A CRPF member of Uyyalawada explained, "We have learnt from experience that focusing exclusively on one group or one occupation shifts the agenda from the issue of children's rights to the issue of gender, class or caste rights. In order to avoid compartmentalization of issues, we bring up all child related issues in the area like child marriage, school infrastructure, gender discrimination while keeping the focus on child labor in the hybrid cottonseed industry."⁴⁴⁹ Further, the CRPFs are the primary channels through which pressure is applied on the bureaucracy. MVF Resource person explains, "It is much more effective when the CRPF approaches the bureaucracy with complaints about the school rather than MVF. Once the pressure starts building from within the community, bureaucrats and even politicians are forced to respond."⁴⁵⁰ So instead of directly approaching the bureaucracy or parents, MVF trains the community to make the demands.

6.6.5 Testing H7c: Accountability mechanisms in schools

MVF's strategy involves a simultaneous process of withdrawing child labor from cottonseed farms and also improving the government schooling system in the villages. Since its inception, MVF has followed a focused strategy of strengthening the government schooling system instead of creating a parallel infrastructure. It strongly believes that it is impossible for private sector to replicate the scope of the government schooling system. Based on this approach, MVF first undertook joint visits with the volunteers and *gram panchayat* members to schools in Uyyalawada to identify gaps in the government schools. They conducted a survey of social welfare hostels in Uyyalawada to assess the possibility of admitting child laborers into these residential hostels. They found that the seven hostels in both *mandals* (four in Yemmiganur and three in Uyyalawada) had severely dilapidated infrastructure and poor living conditions. Out of the 984 children admitted in these hostels, only 788 were present when the survey was conducted.⁴⁵¹ Further, a survey of dropouts from schools in Uyyalawada was conducted and it was found out that 107 children had dropped out of the village schools in the past year. Once the status of schools became clear, CRPF

⁴⁴⁹ Interview with MVF Resource Person, Hyderabad March 1, 2012

⁴⁵⁰ Interview with MVF Resource Person, Secunderabad, February 13, 2012.

⁴⁵¹ FNV Annual Report 2006-07, *op. cit.*

members mobilized government teachers and *gram panchayat* members to actively participate in the monitoring of schools.

Education Sub-Committees were formed in ten *gram panchayats* with the objectives of monitoring infrastructure gaps in schools, usage of school funds, teacher regularity, implementation of the midday meal scheme, assessing the quality of education and physical verification of children's presence in school against school records. Eighty-five members of the Education Sub-Committee attended a district level review meeting held in Kurnool on February 6, 2010 to assess the status of schools in the two *mandals*. The meeting highlighted that nearly one half of the schools in Uyyalawada were facing shortage of drinking water and toilet facilities, six schools had insufficient teachers, drop-out rate among girls was high, and there were no monitoring mechanism for Government schools. Further, the implementation of midday meal scheme and mandatory health check-ups was tardy and school development grants were being misutilized. The sub-committee also reported that village-level *sarpanches* (head of *gram panchayat*) were of the opinion that they had no official powers to monitor schools and even if they had any, they were unsure how to use them.

Once the problems of schools were identified, MVF focused on strengthening the accountability mechanisms in schools with the help of the Education sub-committees. One of the key interventions of the Education sub-committees was educating the *gram panchayats* on their powers and responsibilities. The Education Sub-committee decided that the *sarpanch* ought to display details of all children aged less than fifteen years in the *panchayat* office. School Monitoring Committees (SMCs) under the RTE would be formed in all schools, and regular review meetings would be held with parents to focus on children's issues. 412 children from Uyyalwada and 177 children from Yemmiganur were followed up to school. MVF introduced them to the concept of school audit and trained them on twenty-four parameters that a local *panchayat* official could assess on visit to a school. MVF believes that the involvement of the *panchayat* has the potential to create strong accountability to teachers and school officials.

The enactment and adoption of the Right to Education Act in 2009 gave a fresh impetus to the movement as MVF activists now had legal legitimacy for their demands from the state. MVF volunteers now had the legal right to question government officials if the basic requirements of the Act were not fulfilled. Since there was no law formally banning child labor, MVF activists used this Act to improve the status of schools so that parents could be convinced to send their children to school, instead of sending them to work.

As part of its strategy of institutionalizing local mechanisms of accountability, a district level meeting of the AITFCR was held on August 8, 2010 by MVF in Kurnool to chalk out plans for effective implementation of the RTE Act. Sixty-three teachers from five *mandals* including Uyyalawada and Yemmiganur attended the meet. The members were

acquainted with the background of the AITFCR and were oriented on the provisions of the RTE Act, the role of different actors, and the part that they were expected to play in the process of ensuring effective implementation of the Act. A total of 164 CRPF members, 56 *gram panchayat* members, and 106 *sarpanches* were trained on the RTE Act and their role in streamlining its implementation. *Mandal*-level Action Teams were formed to strengthen the implementation of the RTE Act.

Thus, a large numbers of measures were taken to increase the accountability of schools. *Gram panchayats* were involved to ensure that elected representatives felt a sense of ownership towards the school. Further, the creation of CRPFs, Education Subcommittees, AITFCR, and the Action Teams for RTE ensured that multiple channels of accountability existed at the village-level. Further, the federation of CRPFs and AITFCRs at the *mandal*, district and state levels ensured that grievances that were not resolved at the *mandal*-level could be addressed at higher levels by the district and state teams.

6.6.6 Testing H7d: Collaboration with the Bureaucracy

MVF worked closely with the local bureaucracy in Uyyalawada to stop employment of children in the cottonseed farms. MVF coordinator of Kurnool district explains the rationale of collaborating with the local bureaucracy: “We need the help of the bureaucracy because as an NGO we have no legal standing to stop employers from employing children, since employing children in agriculture is not illegal under the CLPRA.”⁴⁵² With the help of the local bureaucracy, MVF conducted raids on farms. Even though most farmers were able to go scot-free by paying a small fine, the involvement of the local authorities created fear among the cottonseed farmers and the MNCs whose international reputation was threatened if the media highlighted that child labor was being employed in their farms.

The issue of child labor in the hybrid cottonseed industry received serious attention from the local bureaucracy in Kurnool when two minor girl child laborers were raped and killed in a cottonseed farm in R. Pampally village in 2007. Following widespread public protests, the accused were arrested and the District Magistrate ordered that all hybrid cottonseed farms in the district should be raided.⁴⁵³ Under pressure from the district administration, majority of the seed farmers in Uyyalawada sent back the children employed in their farms. The Mandal Revenue Officer (MRO) of Yemmiganur mandal said, “I warned the seed organizers of severe punishment if they continued trafficking children. Without a law it is difficult to stop them, but at least the warnings have some deterrent effect.”⁴⁵⁴ The MRO, Uyyalawada, in response to another petition from MVF, directed the Village Administrative

⁴⁵² Interview with MVF Coordinator, Kurnool, Secunderabad, March 6, 2012

⁴⁵³ FNV Annual Report 2007-08, *op. cit.*

⁴⁵⁴ Interview with Mandal Revenue Officer, Yemmiganoor, March 9, 2012

Officers to talk to farmers to ensure that no child is employed on the farms. Thus MVF's collaboration with the state administration was critical in raising awareness against employment of child laborers in Uyyalawada.

The support of *gram panchayats* and *mandal*-level officials proved to be critical in the fight against child labor in the cottonseed industry. Even the local administration started organizing mass campaigns against child labor. Initially, the *gram panchayats* sponsored rallies in seven villages and organized *dandora* (tom toms/village crier) to sensitize people against employing child labor at the start of the cottonseed season. Further, MVF organized meetings with block officials which demanded that seed companies pay just prices for the produce of farmers, banned the entry of children in cottonseed farms, warned parents against child marriage, and created mechanisms to monitor the activities of different government departments.

However, the reliance on the bureaucracy has also come with its share of problems. Between 2006 and 2010, CRPF staff submitted 369 petitions to the Labor Department of Kurnool district for violation of children's rights. However, no action has been taken so far on these petitions. An official of the Labor Department said, "We are government servants—we have to follow government rules. There is no law against employing child laborers in the cottonseed industry, so how do we stop them?"⁴⁵⁵ How does MVF staff respond to this attitude among bureaucrats? MVF coordinator of Kurnool said, "We focus on those bureaucrats who are supportive of the issue. Many consider child labor to be a real problem; they help us."⁴⁵⁶ The reliance on individual bureaucrats means that transfers of supportive government officials, which is quite common, hampers the effectiveness of enforcement interventions. The transfer of the *tehsildars* and Sub Inspectors of Police in both *mandals* significantly weakened enforcement. In fact, in 2009, the area of land under cottonseed cultivation went from 12 to 24 acres in Yemmiganur mandal, as the new *tehsildar* was not very supportive of the program.

When bureaucratic support was not forthcoming, the movement had a tendency to ebb. For instance, in April 2009, General Elections to the State Legislature and the National Parliament created a considerable dent in the movement since members of the CRPF, trade unions, and *panchayat* representatives were preoccupied with the elections. The imposition of the Election Code also came in the way of holding large scale meetings and officials were too busy with election duties to respond to petitions on child labor. At the *mandal*-level, lack of convergence between line departments and shortage of funds with the Labor Department are major inhibiting factors. Further, in the absence of delegated resources for the child labor campaign, events like floods that diverted the attention and resources of the district administration took away official attention from the child labor campaign.

⁴⁵⁵ Interview with Officer of Labor Department, Hyderabad, March 13, 2012

⁴⁵⁶ Interview with MVF coordinator Kurnool, March 6, 2012

Notwithstanding such challenges, the involvement of the local bureaucracy had strong positive effects. The most powerful impact of the bureaucracy-CSO collaboration was that the successful experience could be replicated in other *mandals* as well. MVF's strategies were replicated in eleven other mandals in Kurnool district. When bureaucrats witnessed a particular initiative succeeding in one area, they have the authority to implement it in other areas as well, since many of the senior bureaucrats are in transferable positions within the state. Many bureaucrats, who worked with MVF in a particular area, invited the organization when they are transferred to a new area. The other benefit is that bureaucrats can incorporate successful initiatives into policy- this ensures that successful NGO initiatives are replicated at a broader level.

6.7 Relating MVF's Campaign in Uyyalawada to Hypotheses

In the section above, I analyzed MVF's actions in Uyyalawada along the four dimensions of mobilization of parents, social groups, creating accountability in schools and collaboration with the bureaucracy. Each of these dimensions is hypothesized as helping to build a social consensus on education. An analysis would be incomplete without understanding the impact of these interventions. To understand the impact, it would be helpful to turn to the original theoretical formulation of this study in Figure 6.6. Based on this figure, I analyze, whether a social consensus on education was indeed formed in Uyyalawada; whether MVF's initiatives influenced the effectiveness of the local bureaucracy; and what impact these interventions ultimately had on parental motivation to send children to school or to work?

6.7.1 The Creation of a Social Consensus on Education

The impact of MVF's interventions should be analyzed in view of the complete absence of legal sanction against child labor in agriculture. The impact of MVF interventions on building a social consensus on education can be assessed through the scale and intensity of new associations and social networks that were created as a part of this movement, particularly with the objective of sustaining the program through the avenue of empowered institutional structures.

Between 2007 and 2010, the establishment of pressure groups, their membership and their scope of activity in Kurnool has shown a rising trend. A total of 36 CRPFS were established in Uyyalwada and Yemmiganur with membership rising from 0 to 621 members. Education Sub Committees were formed in ten *panchayats* for the purpose of implementation of RTE regulations while twenty-three *gram panchayats* were empowered with the task of monitoring and tracking the status of children in each village. AITFCR was established in December 2008 and school teachers across the mandals were registered as members. *Mandal*

level CRPFs and *Mandal* level Action teams for implementing the RTE Act were set up in 2010. A committee called Students for Child Rights (SCR) was formed in 2006-07 in six villages in Uyyalawada. Each SCR consisted of fifteen students studying in undergraduate courses – the objective of this committee was to monitor the status of schools in the village. A district level forum has been formed with fifteen members under the banner of *Pathasaalalo Balika Samasyala Porata Samithi* with the exclusive objective of identifying problems specific to girl children.⁴⁵⁷

A large number of social networks were built with local civil society groups. Networks were formed with trade unions, agriculture unions, handicraft societies, and caste groups. In 2010 alone, 203 village-level meetings were held consisting of 2,404 participants. In the same year, 56 *mandal* level meetings were held consisting of 716 participants. A total of 350 media reports were published in 2007 to 2010 on various issues concerning children's rights within Kurnool.⁴⁵⁸ This indicates a very high degree of mobilization. Entire village communities have been made aware of laws and government schemes relating to children, institutions of redress and requirements to make the village child friendly. The creation of such new and dynamic forms of organization has created mechanisms at the grassroots level that can constantly monitor the status of children and react rapidly to evolving local demands.

In small village communities where community approval is very important, this environment for education that is created has a very important impact on individual parents. A quick survey of twelve boys in the Dharur RBC revealed that before joining the camp two of these children had worked as bonded laborers, four had herded cattle, four worked as agricultural wage labor, one worked in a garage, and one worked in the family farm.⁴⁵⁹ The empowering effect of MVF's program is evident when one speaks to them in the field. A former child laborer who went through MVF's Patlur RBC and currently works as a teacher in the government's *Sakshar Bharat* program said, "I had dropped out of the fourth grade and was tending to cattle and goats. MVF volunteers took me to Patlur Bridge Camp for five years. Initially my parents were reluctant but now they are proud because people in the village treat me with respect."⁴⁶⁰ Another former child laborer rescued from a circus says, "I stay in a government Social Welfare Hostel and MVF still supports my education. I have started my own voluntary group in my college to rescue child laborers."⁴⁶¹ Many of the children in the RBCs had been working as cottonseed workers. It would not be far-fetched to imagine that without MVF's intervention, these children would have continued as child labor and moved on to unskilled work as adults.

⁴⁵⁷ Interview with D. Prakash, State Coordinator AITFCR, Secunderabad, March 6, 2012.

⁴⁵⁸ FNV Report, 2007-08, *op. cit.*

⁴⁵⁹ Field-visit to Dharur RBC, Dharur *mandal*, February 23, 2012

⁴⁶⁰ Interview with Ex Child Labor, currently Sakshar Bharat education coordinator Maredpally mandal, Dharur mandal, February 23, 2012.

⁴⁶¹ Interview with former child laborer, Secunderabad, March 3, 2012

A relevant question is what is the implication for the resource-balance of the family when children are withdrawn from work from the household. A mother of three whose husband works as a watchman said, “We wanted to educate our children but did not have the money. Since Nallareddi (an MVF volunteer) said our children would be educated for free in the bridge school, we sent all three children there. Now, my oldest son is an electrician in Dubai, my second son does computer work in New Delhi, and my daughter is enrolled in a government residential school.”⁴⁶² It is a powerful testimony to the fact that if government schools actually provided free tuitions and incentives as promised under the RTE, parents would send their children to school instead of sending them to work.

The experience of the MVF movement, confirmed during field visits, showed that the poverty argument should not be accepted at face-value. Under the surface of the “we are too poor to send children to school”, there are stronger forces at work, an indifferent school environment, social norms of child marriage, and a lack of socialization into the world of education. MVF tried to dismantle these non-economic barriers to schooling. Even though parents were initially resistant, once the child settles into a schooling environment, parents see it as an achievement not just of the child but of the whole family. Parents who earlier contended that they needed the labor of their children are now taking double jobs to be able to send their children to private schools. The impact of MVF’s intervention on families is powerfully portrayed in the following evaluation:

“All this does not deny the hardship of families, and the fact that stopping child labor and starting schooling would shift the family financial equation. But what the poverty argument fails to do is explore the array of diverse responses open to the family to find a new household equilibrium built around new realities—that the child does not work but goes to school. Many strategies are possible, involving the switching of patterns of livelihood, labor, and expenditure within the family; the reassignment of roles and tasks.”⁴⁶³

The impact of MVF on *gram panchayats* and the village community is also evident. The *sarpanch* of Panchalingam village in Maredpally *mandal* says, “Earlier we were not even aware that the Panchayat could monitor schools. With MVF’s training, we now regularly check the schools and maintain 100 percent enrolment in our village.”⁴⁶⁴ A CRPF member said, “We regularly monitor the status of the schools in Uyyalawada. If there is any lacuna in infrastructure we petition the Mandal Education Officer under the RTE Act.”⁴⁶⁵

Involvement of members of *gram panchayat* radically increases the accountability of schools because *panchayats* have powers to control school funds and to call errant teachers into account. The involvement of a large number of stakeholders like trade unions and women’s SHGs meant that there was a consistent monitoring structure at the village level to keep check that every child was going to school. The power of these social networks in

⁴⁶² Interview with parents of former child laborer, Maheshwaram *mandal*, March 3, 2012.

⁴⁶³ Wazir and Saith 2010, *op. cit.* p.47

⁴⁶⁴ Interview with Sarpanch, Maredpally *mandal*, Dharur, February 23, 2012.

⁴⁶⁵ Interview with CRPF convenor, Tandur *mandal*, Dharur, February 24, 2012

defeating traditional norms like child marriage cannot be undermined: when the community as a whole starts condemning the practice of marrying off daughters at a young age, even parents feel more confident to send their daughters to school. MVF's campaign in Uyyalawada was directed towards questioning existing norms on children's work, education and marriage and empowers the community to accept a new norm of education of all children.

6.7.2 *Impact of Social Consensus on Bureaucratic Effectiveness in Schools*

According to the theoretical formulation in Chapter 3, an increased social consensus on education should improve bureaucratic effectiveness of the educational bureaucracy. This would happen due to the community demanding more accountability from the bureaucracy. As expected, I witnessed a similar process unfolding in Uyyalawada. With the involvement of *panchayat* members in the schools, there was a transformation in the accountability and functioning of village schools in Uyyalawada. The monitoring of schools improved the quality of midday meals, improved infrastructure, ensured regularity of teachers, prevented dropouts, and brought in more children into the schooling system. Some examples of improvement due to monitoring mechanisms are illustrated below⁴⁶⁶:

i. In Kakarapadu village, unavailability of funds had halted the construction of a school building in the village, which had adversely affected the educational prospects of children from the *Dalit* community. They were forced to walk a kilometre and a half to attend the nearest school. A good number of them had subsequently dropped out after the fifth grade and were going to work in the cottonseed fields. The volunteers spoke to the *panchayat* members and the latter took up the issue on a priority basis to get the required funds released.

ii. In Daivamdinne village, it was found that children did not come to school after lunch as the midday meal program in the school did not have enough plates to serve food to the 350 children. *Panchayat* members mobilised funds from community groups for the purchase of plates and a team of five members was formed with the aim of ensuring that quality food was served to the children.

iii. CRPF members in Peddemanoor pressurised the *sarpanch* to relocate the village school, as a stream separated the school from the village and children of the village found it difficult to reach the school. He also identified a new building for the school.

iv. A number of children from the local school in T.S. Kulur dropped out, as it lacked teaching staff. Some of them enrolled in private school. The CRPF and the *sarpanch* locked up the school one day and petitioned to the Mandal Education Officer for additional teaching staff. He responded by recruiting three teachers immediately.

⁴⁶⁶ Examples have been compiled from FNV Reports.

v. Some parents from T.S. Kulur, Yemmiganur *mandal* informed during a *panchayat* review meeting that one of the female teachers from the school was always late and another made the students massage her feet. The teachers were questioned during a meeting the next day but refuted the villagers' claims. The children, however, declared in the presence of the entire village that the teacher had got them to press her feet on a number of occasions. The *sarpanch* warned the teacher and asked her to pay a penalty.

vi. One of the teachers of the school in Bodemanur, Uyyalawada *mandal* was highly irregular to her duties, as a result of which five of the students wanted to drop out. Their parents complained to the CRPF who in turn, informed the *mandal* officials. The MEO immediately posted a volunteer in the school and also arranged for a teacher the very next day.

The improvement in the quality of infrastructure, midday meals and especially regularizing the attendance of teachers has had a significant impact on increasing retention rate in schools. Though there is now an accountability mechanism place, the quality of education in MVF schools is still subject to inquiry. A local official of the Education Department said, "In a scenario where children were not coming to schools at all, the first step is to take initiative to bring all these children into school, so that the supply of child labor can be stopped. Only the next step is to improve quality."⁴⁶⁷ In Ranga Reddy district, where MVF started the campaign in 1991 has moved into the next phase of quality improvement in education. Though my research does not delve into the quality of teaching in the schools, the basic steps of improving infrastructure and ensuring teacher attendance itself had an impact in improving retention rates.

6.7.3 Impact on Child Labor and Universal Elementary Education

I hypothesize that the interplay of social consensus on education and bureaucratic effectiveness in the delivery of education should lead to increased parental motivation to send children to schools, and consequently, decreased child labor rates. Between 2007 and 2010, the numbers of child laborers in Uyyalawada decreased from 3,336 to 405. A total of 1,644 child laborers were withdrawn from the cottonseed industry in these 2 *mandals* within a span of three years while 644 children were also withdrawn from shops, domestic labor and construction work in three years. The acreage under cottonseed declined from 1067.5 acres to 653.4 acres.⁴⁶⁸ The numbers of farmers who cultivated cottonseed went down from 563 to 365 (Figure 6.7).

In 2007, 8.3 percent of all children in Uyyalawada were out of school. By 2010, the out of school children declined considerably as retention rate in local schools increased from

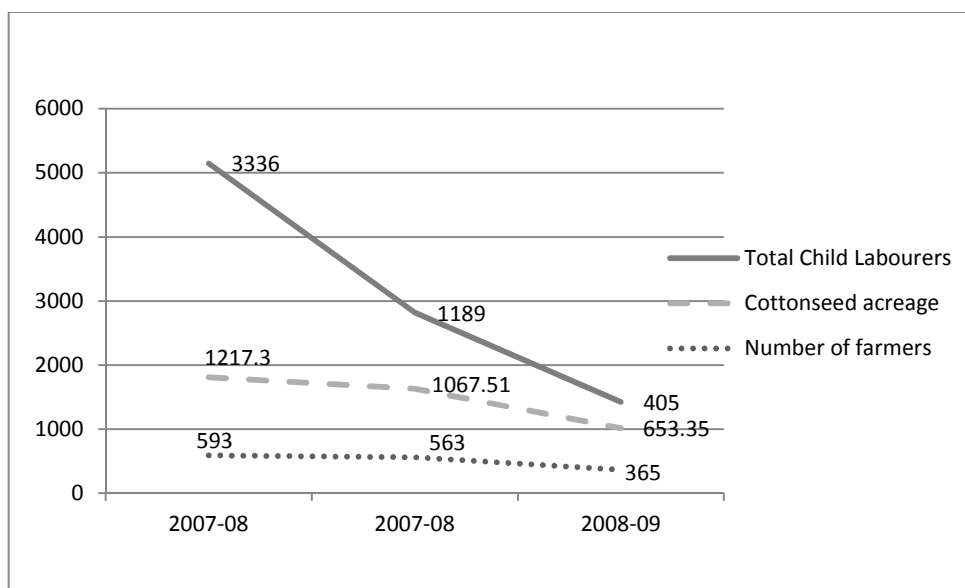
⁴⁶⁷ Interview with Headmaster and MEO-in-charge, Shankarpally *mandal*, February 27, 2012.

⁴⁶⁸ Data collected from FNV Reports 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10, *op. cit.*

30 percent to 85 percent. A total of 517 children were mainstreamed into formal schools and Bridge schools. The number of child labor free villages in these *mandals* has risen steadily and the impact has been especially positive for the case of girl child laborers.

The improvements are confirmed statistically – owing to the improvements in the schooling system, those who entered the educational system for the first time benefited from superior infrastructure, regular teachers, and better quality of education.

Figure 6.7: Child Labor and Cottonseed Acreage for Uyyalawada Mandal (2007-2010)



Source: MV Foundation Survey 2007-2010

MVF’s interventions also had a positive impact on the girl child. The issue of sending girls to school was very sensitive in this area because of the large numbers of girl child labor in the cottonseed industry. In concurrence with the program of motivating parents, MVF launched a new program of action in these two *mandals* against child marriage to facilitate the entry of girls into higher education and professional careers. Child marriages have substantially reduced in MVF’s program areas—the average age of girl child marriage has risen from eight years to fourteen years between 2000 and 2006.⁴⁶⁹ MVF collects data on child marriage systematically at the village level to allow proactive identification of girls who might be under pressure from their families to get married. In 2012, 1,055 child marriages took place in Yemmiganoor *mandal* alone. MVF was able to stop 120 child marriages.⁴⁷⁰

An indirect impact on the numbers of child laborers working in Uyyalawada has taken place due to the pressure exerted on MNCs by MVF’s campaign. Many of MNC farms have shifted base from Uyyalawada. Also, owing to MVF’s campaign, MNCs have taken certain steps to ensure that sub-contracted farmers under the company do not employ

⁴⁶⁹ Wazir and Saith 2010, *op. cit.*

⁴⁷⁰ Interview with MVF coordinator, Kurnool, March 5, 2012

children.⁴⁷¹ The cottonseeds multinationals entered a clause in their subcontracting arrangements preventing farmers from employing children, and have appointed field assistants to conduct surprise checks on the sub-contracted farms.⁴⁷² These measures have brought pressure on the farmers to stop employing children.

Uyyalwada illustrates the processes through which CSO intervention with parents, social groups and schools creates a social consensus on education; how social consensus on education improves bureaucratic effectiveness through improvement in accountability mechanisms; and how the combined impact of social consensus on education and bureaucratic effectiveness impacts rates of child labor. However, the conclusions drawn from Uyyalawada intervention can be further deemed to be conclusive if we compare it to another cottonseed *mandal* in the same area. To test the impact of civil society intervention, the ideal comparison unit will be a *mandal* where there is cottonseed cultivation, but no civil society intervention. This would allow us to test the impact of CSO's strategies of mobilization even more conclusively. For this purpose, I chose Dornipadu *mandal* in Kurnool district.

6.8 The Absence of Civil Society Intervention: Dornipadu mandal

When I started fieldwork in Dornipadu in March 2012, MVF had just started their project in Dornipadu in January 2012. I chose Dornipadu because it was adjoining Uyyalawada and since MVF had conducted initial surveys here, cottonseed acreage data and child labor data was available for this *mandal*. The government does not collect data only for cottonseed production and the seed companies do not collect child labor data. I attempted to understand people's attitudes towards children's work and education in Dornipadu.

6.8.1 Testing the Social Consensus on Education in Dornipadu

Unlike Uyyalawada, Dornipadu had large numbers of child laborers in 2010. There were 1,300 child laborers and 730 out of school children in Dornipadu in 2010. MVF's pilot survey identified 250 children who had dropped out of school to work in the cottonseed farms.⁴⁷³ Children from Dornipadu were also migrating to work in other areas. Another trend in Dornipadu for increasing child labor was that contractors were bringing children from other *mandals* to work in the cottonseed farms in Dornipadu. More than seventy-five children from five villages in Dornipadu had migrated to Guntur district to work in chilli farms there. The survey found that child labor in the age group of twelve to fourteen years is high.

Interviews in Dornipadu revealed certain ideas about attitudes towards education. Parents who had sent their children to work were hesitant to talk about it because they were aware of the mobilization against child labor in nearby *mandals*. A parent who had pledged

⁴⁷¹ Venkateswarlu 2010, *op.cit.*

⁴⁷² Interview with Human Rights Officer, MNC for hybrid cottonseed, Hyderabad, March 15, 2012

⁴⁷³ MVF Pilot Survey, Dornipadu *mandal*

the services of his ten year old daughter in return for an advance payment of Rupees 5,000 (~USD 100) said, “I have to repay a debt.”⁴⁷⁴ He refused to divulge information about the farmer who had paid him the money. A trade union member explained why parents in Dornipadu were sending their children to work, “The problem here is that sending children to work in cottonseed farms is a source of good income for the family. Many parents here are alcoholics. This puts them under debt. They make their children work while they spend their money on alcohol.”⁴⁷⁵ A mother who has one son and one daughter said, “My son goes to private school, but my daughter has not been going to school since last year.” Her daughter had attained puberty the previous year and she was hesitant to send her to school. So gender discrimination towards education of girls was quite common in Dornipadu as well.

Unlike Uyyalawada, there was less awareness among public officials about child labor, and those who were aware were reluctant to admit it. The *sarpanch* of a village in the *mandal* at the MVF pilot meeting said, “I don’t know anything about child labor in my village. I didn’t even know that it is illegal to employ children. Now that I know, I will look into the matter.”⁴⁷⁶ A *panchayat* member of Kristipadu village said, “Cottonseed farming has been increasing in Dornipadu. But it is difficult to stop the farmers from employing children because they usually do it under covers.”⁴⁷⁷ In response to MVF’s statistics about 750 out of school children in Dornipadu, the MEO said, “There are only eighteen out of school children in this *mandal*. Even they are being followed up by the Education Department. So very soon, all children in our *mandal* will be in school. As far as I know, there is little child labor.”⁴⁷⁸

The word of MVF’s campaign in Uyyalawada had spread in Dornipadu and farmers were reluctant to speak openly about employing children. I asked one cottonseed farmer how they employed children since MNCs had entered into contracts with the farmers against employing child labor. He said, “We always find out beforehand if an inspector is visiting the fields. We hide the children.”⁴⁷⁹ Another farmer said that it was a common practice among farmers to teach the children to lie about their age. Since no medical tests are conducted to determine their age, field inspectors are forced to believe what the children say. Further, they said that there were no local organizations that warned them against employing child labor.

The large numbers of out of school children and the dropping out of children to join schools is an indication that the social consensus on education is low in Dornipadu. The average wage-levels in this *mandal* is relatively high, so non-economic factors such as alcoholism, hesitation to send girls to school, child marriage, etc. act as deterrents to

⁴⁷⁴ Interview with parent of child laborer, Dornipadu *mandal*, Hyderabad, March 20, 2012

⁴⁷⁵ Interview with parent of child labourer, Dornipadu *mandal*, March 25, 2012.

⁴⁷⁶ Interview with Member of AIFS, Dornipadu *mandal*, March 25, 2012

⁴⁷⁷ Interview with Sarpanch, Dornipadu *mandal*, March 25, 2012

⁴⁷⁸ Interview with MEO, Uyyalawada *mandal*, March 15, 2012

⁴⁷⁹ Interview with Cottonseed farmer, Dornipadu *mandal*, March 15, 2012

education. Even the officers of the Education Department denied the existence of child labor, even though villagers clearly spoke of increasing child labor in Dornipadu. One significant reason that deterred parents from sending their children to schools was the poor status of schools in Dornipadu.

6.8.2 Bureaucratic Effectiveness in Delivery of Education in Dornipadu

A visit to the government schools in Dornipadu brought to light the poor status of government schools. Six primary schools in Dornipadu had just one room each. Eleven schools in the mandal had no toilets and in another fourteen schools, the toilets were not usable. Eight schools did not have drinking water facility. A Backward Caste Elementary School in Dornipadu had no building and the twenty-six children enrolled there were being seated on the veranda of a house nearby. The children who were present on the day I visited were distracted by the cows which were grazing in the compound.

The condition of the schools did not meet the requirements of the RTE Act. The headmaster of one school said that he was paying the rent for the school from his own pocket since no measures had been taken to construct the school-building. One of the teachers said, “I have to hold classes for different age-groups of students at the same time since we don’t have enough classrooms.”⁴⁸⁰ The headmaster of one school said, “We struggle when the school development grants don’t come on time.”⁴⁸¹ Besides infrastructure, teacher absenteeism, or vacancy in teacher’s posts or irresponsible teachers was another problem. No teachers had been posted in three schools of the *mandal* and they were being run solely by volunteers. One parent said, “The teacher was so irregular that my child was not learning anything. Now, I am sending him to a private school. He is also learning English there.”⁴⁸² A youth who was conducting the school surveys said, “We found that the teacher of the government school in Chakarajuvemula came to school drunk every morning. He even sent children to fetch alcohol for him. Parents have complained to the MEO.”⁴⁸³

Absenteeism is rampant in the schools in Dornipadu. During a pilot survey of thirty schools in October 2012, MVF volunteers conducted a headcount exercise in ten schools. The survey found that 399 children were present in class during the visits as against 202 absentees. However, the school registers claimed that 481 children were in school and 120 of them were absent from class. The Urdu Aided School in W. Govindinne had thirty-nine children on the rolls but practically none of them had reported at school during the survey.⁴⁸⁴ The survey

⁴⁸⁰ Interview with teacher, primary school Dornipadu mandal, March 15, 2012

⁴⁸¹ Interview with Headmaster, primary school Dornipadu mandal, March 15, 2012

⁴⁸² Interview with parent, Dornipadu mandal, March 16, 2012

⁴⁸³ Interview with MVF volunteer, Dornipadu mandal, March 25, 2012

⁴⁸⁴ MVF Pilot Survey 2012, Dornipadu mandal

found that government scholarships for poor students in eighth grade to tenth grade were not being disbursed on time. Health check-up facilities were unavailable in most schools.

An important aspect of bureaucratic effectiveness is the implementation of incentive schemes. Midday meal is a scheme that is universally implemented in all government primary schools in India. MVF pilot survey found that even though some children had not been partaking of the midday meal but the money due on their count was being claimed by midday meal agencies and school managements. Twenty schools did not have kitchen sheds and the midday-meal agencies had been cooking the meal away from school in the worker's homes. So children had to go during lunch hour to the worker's homes to get their meal. The headmaster of one school complained that children had received uniform of the wrong size.⁴⁸⁵

The poor accountability of teachers, the deplorable infrastructure, and the high rates of absenteeism and dropouts can be attributed to the absence of any functioning accountability mechanism in the schools in Dornipadu. Every school is required to have a SMC under the RTE Act, 2009. The MEO of Dornipadu said that SMCs had not been constituted in all schools.⁴⁸⁶ I met some of the members of SMCs. The members of SMCs said that they had not received any training under RTE Act. So none of them were aware as to what their duties towards the school were under the RTE Act. This was definitely in marked contrast to Uyyalawada where teachers and SMC members of government schools were conversant with the entitlements of schools and children under the RTE.

It is perhaps not surprising that sixty percent of children in Dornipadu are enrolled in private schools. However, the names of some children that had shifted to private school are still in the local government school's registers.

6.8.3 Impact on Child Labor and School Enrolment

Between 2006 and 2012, cottonseed acreage had increased in Dornipadu, at the same time when it was declining in Uyyalawada. Independent evaluators and *panchayat* members have confirmed that there has been a steady rise in both cottonseed acreage and employment of child laborers in Dornipadu. Though time-variant statistics are not available for Dornipadu since 2006, in 2010, cottonseed acreage in Dornipadu was 4386.5 acres while child laborer in the cottonseed farms was 1577. As shown above, in the same year in Uyyalawada, 2624.2 acres of land were under cottonseed cultivation and 408 children were found to be working in Uyyalawada.

The data for school enrolment in Dornipadu is not very promising either. In 2011, 6.9 percent children in Dornipadu in the 6-14 years age-group, amounting to a total of 261 children were not going to school. In the fifteen to eighteen age group, 30.6 percent of

⁴⁸⁵ MVF Pilot Survey 2012, Dornipadu *mandal*

⁴⁸⁶ Interview with MEO, Dornipadu *mandal*, March 9, 2012

adolescents were not going to school, making it evident that the dropout rates in the senior grades was very high. Out of a total of 5,575 children in the 6-18 age group in Dornipadu mandal, a total of 730 children were not going to school. . In contrast, school retention rates had improved to 85 percent by 2010 in Uyyalawada.⁴⁸⁷ An independent researcher who has been consistently conducting surveys in the cottonseed farms in different states since 2006 said, “Dornipadu is a new area in which cottonseed farming has been started. Both cottonseed acreage and child labor are increasing in Dornipadu.”⁴⁸⁸ A comparative study of these two blocks gave significant leverage in understanding how CSO processes at the ground level made an impact on reduction in levels of child labor.

Further, the attitude of teachers and MEOs in Dornipadu are also not cooperative. I asked MVF personnel who were planning their intervention in Dornipadu if it would be more difficult to convince the officers in Dornipadu than in Uyyalawada. The coordinator of Dornipadu said, “It is natural for us to face this kind of indifference in every area we intervene. Instead of confronting government officials, we present them with the statistics collected from the household surveys and request them to cooperate with us in sending these children back to school. Once they see household-level data, it is very difficult for them to refute our argument. When the *panchayat*, CRPFs, and women’s groups started questioning them and making demands, the government officials usually relent and cooperate.”⁴⁸⁹ He was making a reference to MVF’s strategy of empowering the community to apply pressure on bureaucracy.

The comparison of Dornipadu and Uyyalawada shows that in two neighboring *mandals* within the same district, the change in trends of child labor are opposite: in Dornipadu, its increasing, but in Uyyalawada, due to CSO intervention to change norms on education, child labor is declining. The within-state analysis of these two blocks is helpful because it controls for other confounding factors and shows that CSO intervention is the only independent variable that made a significant difference in child labor rates across the two blocks. It also showed how CSO intervention built a social consensus on education and influenced the effectiveness of the local bureaucracy.

6.9 State-level Analysis

While MVF’s success in Uyyalawada is significant, it draws attention to the larger questions to understand why MVF has been successful in Andhra Pradesh. The Uyyalawada-Dornipadu cases show evidence in favour of creating a social consensus on education, but by itself, this does not explain the paradigmatic change in child labor policy throughout Andhra

⁴⁸⁷ MVF Pilot Survey 2012, Dornipadu *mandal*

⁴⁸⁸ Interview with Independent Researcher on child labor in hybrid cottonseed industry, Hyderabad, March 5, 2012

⁴⁸⁹ Interview with MVF coordinator, Dornipadu mandal, March 15, 2012

Pradesh. MVF works in about nine districts in Andhra, but overall child labor has declined in most other districts as well. What explains this state-wide decline in child labor rates? Why has the bureaucracy in Andhra supported MVF and gone as far as incorporating MVF initiatives into state policy? This is especially puzzling since the organization's 'non-negotiable principles' are diametrically opposite to the Indian state's conventional approach on child labor? More importantly, why is Andhra the only state that accepts child labor eradication as an essential instrument in its poverty eradication programs? Is there something unique about the state that allowed MVF initiatives to be so successful? Answers to these questions will demonstrate whether MVF's process of creation of a social consensus on education will work as predicted in other states as well.

I theorized that state-level contextual factors, especially a culture of community participation (*H7e*) and a supportive political leader (*H7f*) can play a decisive role in creating a social consensus on education. In the following section, I describe how both these conditions came together in Andhra in the post-1991 period to change the trajectory of decline in child labor.

6.10 Evidence for H7e: A Culture of Community Participation in Andhra Pradesh

Andhra Pradesh has a dynamic history of community participation in public affairs. Prior to the 1980s, Andhra was home to significant caste and class movements, but in the post eighties phase, the state has witnessed the emergence of a proactive NGO sector and a spate of social movements led by civil society groups. These movements have relied largely on grassroots participation and have created a cache of youth-leaders who are deeply engaged with the ideology of inequality and are tactical experts in strategies of community mobilization.⁴⁹⁰ An expert on Andhra's civil society says, "Andhra's civil society is unique in that it is a more open organization, owned by the plebeian classes with a significant amount of grassroots mobilization. This is unlike the civil society in states like West Bengal, which are much more regimented and top-down and led by a *bhadralok* (refers to upper class elite) class."⁴⁹¹ This inclination towards grassroots mobilization and bottom-up participation was harnessed by MVF in its struggle against child labor.

The state of Andhra Pradesh consists of two major regions—the economically developed and urbanized region of coastal Andhra, and the relatively backward region of Telengana. In 1956, during the linguistic reorganization of Indian states, these two economically diverse, but linguistically similar regions were united to create the Telugu-

⁴⁹⁰ Srinivasulu, K. Caste, Class and Social Articulation in Andhra Pradesh: Mapping Differential Regional Trajectories. (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2002)

⁴⁹¹ Interview with Professor of Political Science, Osmania University, Hyderabad, March 19, 2012.

speaking state of Andhra Pradesh.⁴⁹² Both the coastal Andhra region and the Telengana region have since been home to long running socio-political movements—a *Dalit* movement in the former, and a radical communist movement in the latter.

The *Dalit* movement in coastal Andhra led by the *Dalit Maha Sabha* emerged in the 1980s as a consequence of mistreatment of *Dalit* agricultural laborers by other more economically and politically powerful castes like the Kammas and Reddys. Even the Kammas and Reddys are backward castes, but they have emerged as economically powerful by monopolizing the benefits of land redistribution in the post-independence period. However, the *Dalits* continued to remain landless and poor. The Reddys and Kammas continued to perpetuate the feudal treatment that was once meted out by high caste Brahmins. The *Dalit* movement consists of a social base of educated youth, urban middle class, and urban intelligentsia who have deep engagement with rationalist thought and the theories of justice propounded by renowned *Dalit* leader, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. What is unique about this movement is that even though it has a caste identity, essentially it is a class movement.⁴⁹³ In recent years, the politicization of the movement with its failed foray into parliamentary politics, has led to some loss of its mass appeal. However, the movement has succeeded in creating a large group of *Dalit* youths who displayed a consistent track record of struggle and dedication and were trained in the tactics of grassroots activism.

On the other hand, the Telengana region which had been a hotbed of communist politics in the pre-independence period saw a resurgence of the communist movement in the 1970s. The inegalitarian social structure led to a schism in the CPI which had been co-opted into parliamentary politics after independence. A new faction called the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) (CPI (M-L)) emerged which considered the Indian state as allies of the feudal landlord class. Unlike the CPI, they were unwilling to be part of parliamentary politics and sought to bring about radical change through a communist struggle. Owing to the poor economic and educational development in the Telengana region, many of the rural lower class youth of this region entered the institutions of higher education for the first time only in the 1970s. These youth, who had grown up in the oppressive conditions under feudal agricultural system gravitated to radical politics in a significant way. They dropped out of colleges to join the '*Gramalaku Taralandi*' or 'Go to Villages' campaign that spread the message of agrarian revolution to the rural poor. Powered by the dynamism of youth, a wave of social revolution was created in Telengana. Instead of addressing the communist problem as rooted in societal inequality, the state addressed it as a 'law and order' issue and responded with violent attacks on radicals. They were forced to go underground and responded with

⁴⁹² In 2013, the Parliament of India assented to the creation of a separate state of Telengana, owing to a long-running separatist movement.

⁴⁹³ Srinivasulu 2002, *op. cit.*

guerrilla warfare against the state, leading to an unending cycle of violence in the Telengana region which continued till the early 1990s.⁴⁹⁴

The trajectory of localized politics gave rise to class and caste movements, but both these movements are actually expressions of deep-rooted class contradictions owing to the incomplete agrarian reforms agenda of the ruling Congress party.⁴⁹⁵ Since both the *Dalit* and the communist movement relied on mass participation, they have created mobilization of civil society on social and political issues. Unlike other communist-ruled states like West Bengal, where civil society is regimented and led by a *bhadralok* class, the mass-based movements in Andhra allowed the poorer classes to engage with political ideologies and grassroots activism. Generations of the same families have actively participated in these long-running movements. This background in mass action has created a dynamic culture of community participation in Andhra.⁴⁹⁶

In the post liberalization period of the 1990s, the state's model of liberalization which is perceived as anti-poor has created a new spate of social movements in Andhra. Anti-Special Economic Zone movement, fishermen's movement, handloom weaver's movement, anti-nuclear movement, etc. are evidence of an expanded scope of civil society movements that are against the state's current neo-liberal development model.⁴⁹⁷ Under these social movements, there is clear articulation of civil society demands. Unlike the movements in the pre-liberalization period which involved political parties, these movements are mostly led by CSOs, especially the state's NGOs. Political parties, including the Left, have largely stayed away from getting involved in these movements. The conventional role of political parties which is to bring in a localized movement and give it larger focus, as seen for example in the anti-arrack movement in the 1980s, has taken a backseat.⁴⁹⁸ Growth of an independent pro-people media has also played a significant role in giving publicity to these movements.⁴⁹⁹

A significant development in the civil society sector in the 1990s is the unprecedented growth of the NGO sector which was related to the tapering out of the radical Left movement in the state. The violence unleashed by the radical Left movement alienated popular support, especially of the educated middle class. Meanwhile, in the 1990s, with the Telegu Desam Party (TDP) coming to power, the grassroots initiatives undertaken by the TDP started

⁴⁹⁴ Balagopal, K. "Maoist Movement in Andhra Pradesh." *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 41, No. 29,(2006), pp. 3183-3187.

⁴⁹⁵ Srinivasulu 2002, *op. cit.*

⁴⁹⁶ Interview with Professor of Political Science, Osmania University, Hyderabad, March 19, 2012.

⁴⁹⁷ Larsson, M, "When Women Unite! The Making of the Anti-liquor Movement in Andhra Pradesh, India," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. 14, No. 3, (2008), pp. 698-699; Staff Reporter, "Handloom Weavers Plan Statewide Protest." *The Hindu*, November 20, 2004; Pratap, S., "Resistance Movement against SEZs: Case Studies of Kakinada SEZ & Brandix SEZ in Andhra Pradesh," (Accessed May 30, 2013), available from <http://www.amrc.org.hk/node/1235>; "Indian Farmers and Fishermen Stop Coal Plant in Sompeta, Andhra Pradesh, 2010-11." (Accessed June 14, 2014), available from <http://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/>

⁴⁹⁸ D.N.Reddy, and Arun Patnaik. "Anti-Arrack Agitation of Women in Andhra Pradesh". *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.28, No.21, (1993), pp. 1059-1066.

⁴⁹⁹ Interview with National Coordinator MVF, Secunderabad, February 20, 2012.

making the radical ideology irrelevant to the people. Many activists left the erstwhile radical Left movement and gravitated towards the NGO sector in Andhra. Those who had dropped out of college to join the radical Left movement in the 1980s found themselves unemployable when they finally left the movement, since they were in their mid-thirties or early forties, and had never completed their education. The NGO sector provided an attractive opportunity for employment of the erstwhile activists—it allowed them to escape the repressive state machinery, provided them employment, and allowed them to pursue a social goal.⁵⁰⁰ The NGO sector also benefited from the skills of these activists, particularly those related to mobilizing the masses. A political science professor of the Osmania University says, “The drawing of activists and issues from the Left has given the NGO sector in Andhra a very distinct progressive, pro-people thrust.”⁵⁰¹

A significant boost to the idea of community participation came in the 1990s when the TDP unseated the Congress and came to power under the leadership of N. Chandrababu Naidu. A key prong of Naidu’s reform agenda was the development of participatory grassroots bodies that would function in parallel to the previously established elected local councils. Post-Naidu, Andhra saw an explosion of community based groups. By 2003, Andhra had 37,885 youth employment groups, 10,292 water user associations, 6,616 forest management groups, 99,618 school education committees and 5499 watershed committees, highest for any state in India. Forty percent of women’s Self-Help groups (SHGs) in India are in Andhra alone.⁵⁰² Community participation in Andhra has been strengthened as a result of platforms of participation offered by multiple institutions. The increase in “grassroots associational density”⁵⁰³ has led to the building up of social capital in Andhra leading to dynamic collective action and institutional accountability.

6.10.1 Impact of Culture of Community Participation on NGOs and the Bureaucracy

The success of MVF on the issue of child labor has to be understood in the context of the historical background of community participation in Andhra. Like many other NGOs in Andhra, MVF successfully modelled its styles of campaigning, framing of issues and its grassroots mobilization drawing from the rich history of social movements in the state. One of the key founding members of MVF was a retired member of the radical Left movement. He explained, “We have worked for years with the poor in rural backward areas. They trust us. As student activists with the radical Left, we were trained to go to poor villages and win over the trust of the people. We shared their meals and understood their problems. We have given

⁵⁰⁰ Interview with NGO coordinators of Pratham, Confederation of Voluntary Associations and Sakshi Human Rights Watch, Hyderabad, March 17, 2012

⁵⁰¹ Interview with Professor of Political Science, Secunderabad College Hyderabad, March 19, 2012.

⁵⁰² Benjamin Powis, "Grass Roots Politics and 'Second Wave of Decentralisation' in Andhra Pradesh." *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 38, No. 26, (2003), pp. 2617-2622.

⁵⁰³ Putnam 1993, *op. cit.*

the same training to the cadres.”⁵⁰⁴ This pro-people orientation of MVF and the identification that the poor feel with its activists has worked in its favor.

Even MVF’s styles of campaigning have been drawn from the traditional styles of campaigning of the Left. A senior MVF member explained, “When we made our first MVF posters, we did not say ‘Take children to school’, our poster said, ‘Stop exploitation of children.’⁵⁰⁵ The image of children being exploited is very powerful for youth. So when the youth came and asked us, ‘What should we do to stop exploitation of children?’ We then said, ‘send them to school.’” The use of cultural modes of mobilization through songs, dances, *kalajathras* and public rallies are reminiscent of the earlier styles of campaigning of the Gadar movement in the pre-independence era.⁵⁰⁶

The success of MVF in mobilizing youth volunteers could also be traced to the culture of participating in social issues. Many of MVF’s youth volunteers belong to families who have for generations been politically and socially active in the social movements of the state. MVF provided a forum, ideology, and systematic training whereby the youth could transform this energy into real action. The national coordinator of MVF said, “The issue of changing the lives of children resonates deeply with these youngsters. They have been successful because they are deeply committed to bringing change.”⁵⁰⁷ Many of the grassroots level MVF workers in the villages have been working for the organization for almost two decades. A teacher of a government school in Ranga Reddy district said, “I joined MVF as a volunteer in the early 1990s. Many of the students that I rescued from child labor at that time have today become constables and teachers themselves. That experience gave me so much satisfaction that I decided to become a teacher myself.”⁵⁰⁸ Though he is a teacher in a government school, he leads the local chapter of AITFCR. The training of CRPF members in the democratic process of mobilizing the community and engaging with public officials has created a group of dynamic grassroots-level leaders, and significantly over 750 members of CRPF have won elections at the village, *mandal* and district levels.⁵⁰⁹

The principle of internal democracy and allowing grassroots participation is pervasive in the organization’s culture. Dr Sinha elaborates on the bottom-up culture within the organization:

“There is always a group of people in society who can be charged by imagination and a moral agenda. MVF has been able to fine-tune the strategies by which people’s capacities are brought on to full potential by trusting in their ability to bring change. There are still people who are inspired by a vocabulary of ‘*niyat*’-what is

⁵⁰⁴ Interview with National Co-ordinator MVF, Hyderabad, February 20, 2012.

⁵⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁶ In 1915, members of the Gadar Party, an organization founded by Punjabi Indians in Punjab and Canada conducted revolutionary activities in central Punjab. These uprisings which came to be called the Gadar movement, were crushed by the British Government.

⁵⁰⁷ Interview with National Coordinator of MVF, Hyderabad, March 2, 2012

⁵⁰⁸ Interview with Headmaster, Upper Primary School and Co-ordinator of AITFCR, Shankarpally Mandal, February 27, 2012

⁵⁰⁹ Interview with Education Committee Member, MVF, Shankarpally Mandal, February 27, 2012

fair and what is just. These values are practiced not only in what the organization practices but also in its organization and management. The principles of decentralized management and internal democracy are integral to MVF. It is part of the MVF agenda to give freedom to the last volunteer, to hear his experience and feedback and to be proud of the achievements of every volunteer. This is also integral to the way regarding how the child rights message is being delivered. How you deliver a message is as important as what is the subject of the message.”⁵¹⁰

The culture of community participation has also predisposed the bureaucracy to be more open and flexible to accepting CSO initiatives. Andhra is the only state which has created an institutionalized mechanism for state-CSO collaboration in implementing the RTE Act. On March 17, 2012, the Rajiv Vidya Mission under the state’s SSA organized a ‘State level Consultation on Convergence for Effective Implementation of the Right to Education Act.’ The meeting consisted of officials from the state’s Education Department, representatives of the central government’s National Advisory Council and a large number of NGO representatives. The purpose of the meeting was to set up a mechanism for collaboration of the Education Department and CSOs to jointly implement the RTE Act.

This state-level convergence is the first of this kind of partnership model in the country. Andhra has moved faster than any other state in the implementation of the RTE. The Principal Secretary of Primary Education (SSA) said, “Government alone cannot do the entire work (of RTE) and the need is to work in partnership with NGOs, depending on their competencies. We need to standardize the relationship of a Government-NGO convergence which is necessary. We are talking about NGOs and small civil society groups who can be useful as delivery mechanisms. Such interventions to mobilize communities, stress on girls’ education and several special areas need to be created.”⁵¹¹ The support of such a high level government official to the idea of community participation and NGO involvement speaks of the broader attitude of the bureaucracy towards CSOs.

This openness towards CSOs was evident in the manner in which MVF initiatives were accepted by the bureaucracy. MVF had first started its collaborative effort with the officials who are the lowest link in the bureaucratic chain: school teachers. When MVF first started its mobilization in Shankarpally *mandal* in Ranga Reddy district in 1991, the main task of volunteers was to withdraw children from the workforce and get them admitted to government schools. The national coordinator of MVF says, “When we first started taking children to schools, our volunteers faced the resentment of teachers who were already struggling with poor infrastructure and high student-teacher ratios. That is when we realized that we would have to regularly interact with the state bureaucracy if our campaign was to be successful.”⁵¹² It is this very strategy of collaboration that was evident in the cottonseed campaign in Uyyalawada as well.

⁵¹⁰ Interview with Dr. Shantha Sinha, New Delhi, July 3, 2012.

⁵¹¹ Interview with The Principal Secretary of Primary Education (SSA), Hyderabad, March 17, 2012

⁵¹² Interview with National Coordinator MVF, Secunderabad, February 20, 2012

The schools in Shankarpally became the arena of collaboration between MVF and the state bureaucracy. Since MVF actively interacted with the community through household surveys and community meetings, they conveyed the problems that child laborers and first generation learners encountered in accessing the schooling system to the local education bureaucracy. The local bureaucracy responded proactively by adapting the guidelines to ease the admission of first generation students into schools. In 1995, the MEO of Shankarpally passed a circular that a child should be admitted to school anytime during the academic year to allow children who missed admission during the agricultural season to attend school. He also passed an automatic promotion policy: once syllabus for a particular year was completed, all children from a particular grade would be promoted to the next grade so that teachers and students were not discouraged by repeated failures. The onus of issuing transfer certificates was passed on to the headmaster of the primary school instead of the parent since children whose parents could not acquire transfer certificate failed to join middle school and dropped out. This single intervention alone nullified the number of drop-outs from fifth grade to sixth grade.⁵¹³ The innovations at Shankarpally presented a good example of bureaucracy-CSO collaboration where CSO conveyed local demands to state officials, and the state officials responded by adapting government regulations.

The local bureaucracy also drew from the culture of community participation. The ex-MEO said, “I passed a circular that any community meeting of the *mandal* should be held in the village school, so that the villagers could see the condition of the school themselves. We encouraged the teachers to convey their problems in community meetings.”⁵¹⁴ As a consequence, many communities took steps to improve the schools. Thousands of school-buildings in Shankarpally were built by the community. Further, lively debates and discussions were held during *Gram Sabha*⁵¹⁵ meetings where officials from the Education Department and teachers debated with parents on issues such as child marriage and the value of educating girls.

The participation of the community galvanized the government school teachers into action. Teachers were so encouraged by the involvement of the community that worked extra hours to follow up on absentee students, give special coaching classes to former child laborers, and designed special curriculum for children who had missed school to learn quickly. These special coaching classes formed the germ of the Residential Bridge Course (RBC) Camps which have evolved as one of the most successful innovations of MVF. After a transitional period in the RBCs, they are admitted in local government schools at an age-

⁵¹³ Interview with M.Seshadri, ex-MEO, Shankarpally mandal, Shankarpally, February 27, 2012

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁵ Meetings led by the *panchayat* in which the entire village participates.

appropriate class. The efforts at Shankarpally demonstrated how practical problems that stopped children from coming to school were resolved by making schools accessible.⁵¹⁶

The strategy of forming a social consensus on education in the community through the collaboration of CSOs and the local bureaucracy soon started showing results. In 1992, at the time of the first general survey, only 56.7 percent of the children in Shankarpally were attending school. By 1994, 86.7 percent in the *mandal* children were attending school.⁵¹⁷ By 2004-05, the percentage of children in Shankarpally attending government schools rose to 97.5 percent.⁵¹⁸ In 1991, there were only twenty-six schools in Shankarpally, as a result of the campaign, thousands of school-buildings were constructed from community funds.

6.10.2 The Ripple Effect of Bureaucracy-CSO Collaboration

The cooperation of the bureaucracy was critical not just in MVF's success in Shankarpally, but also in scaling its operations across the state. In 1995, a central team consisting of the Principal Secretary of Primary education of Government of India, UNICEF representatives, and other officials of the central government visited village Mokilla in Shankarpally *mandal* to witness the radical transformation in the schooling system for themselves. Senior bureaucrats of the state Education Department started sending junior officers to Shankarpally on exposure visits to replicate the Shankarpally model in other *mandals* in Ranga Reddy district. Since bureaucrats are often transferred from one district to another, an official who had witnessed MVF's strategies in Shankarpally also attempted to replicate the same in other districts.⁵¹⁹ On July 12, 2000, the policies of non-detention and admission throughout the year were made applicable throughout Ranga Reddy district.⁵²⁰ Thereafter, on August 2, 2000, the Commissioner and Director of School Education of Andhra Pradesh issued a circular through which the same policies were implemented throughout Andhra Pradesh.⁵²¹

Certain political and social exigencies predisposed Andhra's bureaucracy towards readily accepting MVF's approach in the early 1990s. In 1991, Andhra's bureaucracy was trying to straddle with the issues of low literacy and explosive numbers of children in the workforce in the context of a caste-ridden and iniquitous civil society. Explaining the exigency of the time, a senior bureaucrat explains, "Census 1991 declared Andhra as having the highest percentage of child laborers in the workforce. It is one thing to know that we have

⁵¹⁶ Interview with RBC Camp-in-charge and Maredpally *mandal* Convenor, Dharur, February 23, 2012.

⁵¹⁷ Out of 10,661 children in Shankarpalli *mandal*, MVF identified 5155 school-going children and 5610 non-school going children. By 1994, 4,190 of the non-school going children began to attend schools.

⁵¹⁸ *Enabling Access of Out of School Children into Schools* (New Delhi: Action Aid, 2006).

⁵¹⁹ Interview with Hyderabad's UNICEF coordinator, Hyderabad, March 10, 2012.

⁵²⁰ Proceedings of the District Education Officer (DEO), *In Rc. No. Spl/E1/200.0* Date: 12-07-2000.

⁵²¹ Proceedings of the Commissioner & Director of School Education. *In Rc. No. 4990/DPEP/B4/ 2000* .Date: 02-08-2000

large numbers of child laborers and quite another to be declared the number one state. It made the issue of tackling child labor very urgent.”⁵²² The NCLP initiated by the central government in 1986 with an aim of rehabilitating children working in hazardous occupations had failed to make a significant impact. In this scenario, MVF demonstrated a ‘proof of concept’—they showed a workable model on the ground that was yielding results and had succeeded in involving all stakeholders in the community, especially parents and employers. MVF opened up a political space in which bureaucrats open to change were able to manoeuvre.

A critical factor in transformation of child labor in Andhra Pradesh has been ideational shift in the state on the issue of child labor and universal education. The state of Andhra Pradesh accepted MVF’s contention that child labor was a cause of poverty, rather than poverty being a cause of child labor. The shift in the mind-set of the bureaucracy is regarded as the most essential element for sustainable change.⁵²³ A senior bureaucrat in the rural development department who played an important role in incorporating MVF initiatives into state policy in his previous position as Commissioner of School Education said, “Child labor eradication as now accepted as an integral element of Andhra’s strategy for poverty eradication. It was MVF that demonstrated this link between child labor and universal education. They showed us a proof of concept of what is workable on the ground. That was their most unique contribution. In fact child labor eradication and universal education are stated objectives of the state’s Velugu program- a program for SHGs that has played a big role in financial mobility of poor women.”⁵²⁴ This change in perspective that saw child labor eradication as a prerequisite for poverty alleviation brought a sense of urgency in reducing levels of child labor.

The shift in perspective on child labor is evident from a slew of legislative initiatives on child labor and universal education. With the support of the senior bureaucrats, MVF innovations such as RBCs, automatic promotion policy, on-going admission throughout the year have all been incorporated as state-level policy. In a 2001 Andhra Pradesh Assembly Resolution, the state government accepted the nomenclature of ‘Out of School Children’ first used by MVF. Instead of denoting children working in hazardous industries as ‘child labor’, the Andhra legislature accepted that any child that was out of school is a child labor, thereby taking a radical step away from conventional policy on child labor. In 2003, Andhra passed the Child Labor and Compulsory Education Bill which declared that children’s work across all occupations should be banned. Though the Bill was never enacted into law, the drafting

⁵²² Interview with senior bureaucrat, former Commissioner of School Education, in-charge of the Indira Kranthi Patham, Department of Rural Development, Government of Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad, March 4, 2012.

⁵²³ Weiner 1991, *op. cit.*

⁵²⁴ Interview with senior bureaucrat, former Commissioner of School Education, in-charge of the Indira Kranthi Patham, Department of Rural Development, Government of Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad, March 4, 2012.

of such a Bill in Andhra Pradesh demonstrated that the issue of complete abolition of child labor and compulsory education was being discussed in policy circles in Andhra seriously. Andhra became the only state in India where the subject of child labor was transferred from the purview of the Department of Labor to that of the Education Department. A senior bureaucrat said, “It was a unique process of bottom-up policy making. MVF demonstrated solutions which were accepted by the state.”⁵²⁵

The strategy of community mobilization, so integral to Andhra’s political culture, and utilized strategically by MVF also found incorporation into state policy. Andhra was the first state where the idea of community participation, through School Education Committees (SECs), initiated in Shankarpally was incorporated into the Andhra Pradesh School Education (Community Participation) Act, April 1998. Under this Act, every school in Andhra Pradesh was required to have a SEC to monitor the status of the quality of infrastructure and education in the village. SECs have today become an integral part of the SSA and are implemented throughout India. Andhra was also one of the first states in India to create an Integrated Action Plan to Eliminate Child Labor in 2007 which had community mobilization and CSO-participation as its central tenets.⁵²⁶ Child labor eradication as an instrument for poverty eradication and community participation found permanent place in Andhra’s policy.

6.11 Evidence for H7f: Political Support

A significant boost to the idea of community participation came in 1995 when TDP unseated the Congress and came to power under the leadership of N. Chandrababu Naidu. Naidu’s philosophy of governance was founded on the principle of ‘*Praja Vaddukku Palan*’ (‘administration at the doorsteps of the people’), with the twin goals of debureaucratization, and citizen’s participation in governance.

Under Naidu, Andhra used social mobilization as an institutional mechanism to help the poor interact with government machinery so that access to public services is improved. Naidu extended his idea of community participation to the arena of child labor and elementary education as well. Weiner (1991) has mentioned that no political party in India addresses the issue of child labor. But Naidu’s personal commitment is perhaps the reason why the TDP is the only political party in India that officially mentions ‘eradication of child labor and free universal education up to the age of 15 years’ on the party’s electoral agenda. Under Naidu, the budgetary allocation to elementary education was considerably increased. It was also during Naidu’s time that the legislative initiatives to completely ban child labor were brought up in the state assembly, further institutionalizing the link between universal education and child labor.

⁵²⁵ Interview with Upendra Reddy, officer in Rajiv Vidya Mission Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, March 5, 2012.

⁵²⁶ Enabling Access of Out of School Children into Schools (New Delhi: Action Aid, 2006).

MVF's approach of eliminating child labor and starting village-level committees to oversee schools fitted right in with Naidu's agenda. Dr. Sinha reiterates the role of a supportive political leader. She says, "Though there were a number of enlightened bureaucrats at that time that supported the MVF campaign, the changes couldn't have been made so far-reaching without the leadership of Chandrababu Naidu. A bureaucracy can lead a program but it cannot assume the status of a movement without the backing of one powerful leader."⁵²⁷ The national coordinator of MVF said, "During Chandrababu's time, a mood was created throughout the state to eradicate child labor."⁵²⁸

Naidu's commitment to universal education shaped the response of the bureaucracy towards child labor. Naidu started a number of programs such as 'Back to School', *Akshara Sankranthi*, *Malliki Badiki Podam*, *Chaduvula Pandugam* meant to bring all out of school children into schools. An MVF resource person says, "When the state's Chief Minister himself conducts surprise checks on schools, the bureaucracy is bound to remain on their toes."⁵²⁹ In Andhra Pradesh, there was fortuitous meeting of minds where the civil society, the bureaucracy, and the political leadership came together to form a consensus on the complete elimination of child labor.

6.12 Conclusion: The Way Forward in Andhra Pradesh

Once the TDP lost power in 2004 elections, the momentum of the child labor movement in Andhra Pradesh has somewhat declined. The momentum that was generated by MVF and fuelled by the Naidu-led TDP government is being taken forward through a new platform—the women's self-help movement in Andhra. Child labor eradication and universal education have been incorporated as objectives of the Indira Kanti Patham (IKP, earlier known as Velugu) as part of the state-government's initiatives to incorporate child labor eradication in its poverty alleviation programs. A senior bureaucrat of the state's Education Department says, "What MVF started was the first phase of the anti-child labor movement; the SHG movement is the second phase. We have accepted that to reduce poverty, we have to fight child labor. That is why we introduced child labor eradication as an objective of the Velugu program." With 465,000 women-SHGs comprising 6.2 million women, the SHG movement has helped in further reducing child labor.⁵³⁰

The increase in the financial mobility of women through SHGs has brought about a radical shift in the discourse towards child labor and education. A World Bank study on the

⁵²⁷ Interview with Dr. Shantha Sinha, New Delhi, July 3, 2012.

⁵²⁸ Interview with MVF National Co-ordinator, Secunderabad, February 20, 2012.

⁵²⁹ Interview with MVF Resource Person, Secunderabad, February 1, 2012.

⁵³⁰ J. Deshmukh-Ranadive, "Women's Self-Help Groups in Andhra Pradesh: Participatory Poverty Alleviation in Action," in *Scaling Up Poverty Reduction: A Global Learning Process and Conference*, (Shanghai: World Bank, May 25-27 2004).

impact of the IKP movement has found that through the help of SHGs, children who were working as bonded laborers have been released. Under the IKP, residential schools for girl children from fifth to twelfth grade have been set up which enrolls 34,839 girls on their rolls. *Ammavadis* (day care centers) have been set up to facilitate women with young children to work without pulling out elder daughters from school. Within the family, women have been able to intervene with respect to education of their daughters and release of children working as bonded labor. At the community level, women groups at various levels are changing attitudes on girl child education. The influence of mothers in reducing child labor has been noted in some studies. The reduction of child labor and increase in children's education has shown that parents, especially mothers' motivation in educating their children have a decisive effect.

With the expansion of the social consensus on education, demands for increase in quality of education provided by government schools have increased. Large numbers of parents are shifting their children to private schools which are known to offer better standard of teaching compared to government schools. A bureaucrat who leads the IKP said, "It has been our experience in the field that the moment a woman experiences better financial mobility, the first thing she does is takes her child and admits him into a private school. We no longer have to convince parents to send their children to school. Now it is not a question of whether parents will invest in education or not. We have won the battle against enrolment; now we have to provide quality education."⁵³¹ Another bureaucrat in the SSA says, "In Andhra, at least in some districts, the battle against enrolment has been won. Now, the focus is on improving quality in schools."⁵³²

To meet the demand for education, the SSA is experimenting with community-managed schools in the districts of Adilabad, Khammam and Warangal districts. The entire management of these schools is delegated to community organizations.

Though child labor has reduced significantly in the two decades since 1991, and children going to school have increased, Andhra's challenges are still not over. There are still 4.7 percent children in the workforce and 2.6 percent of children are still out of school.⁵³³ Child labor in commercial agriculture and child sex trafficking have emerged as new forms of exploitation. However, the recognition that child labor eradication and universal education are preconditions to poverty-alleviation has created a paradigm shift in the state's approach to child labor. With the rapid expansion of the social consensus on education and the proactive

⁵³¹ Interview with senior bureaucrat, former Commissioner of School Education, In-charge of Indira Kranthi Patham, Department of Rural Development, Government of Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad, March 4, 2012.

⁵³² Interview with officer in Rajiv Vidya Mission Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, March 5, 2012.

response of the bureaucracy, Andhra Pradesh appears to be moving in a positive direction in the struggle against child labor.

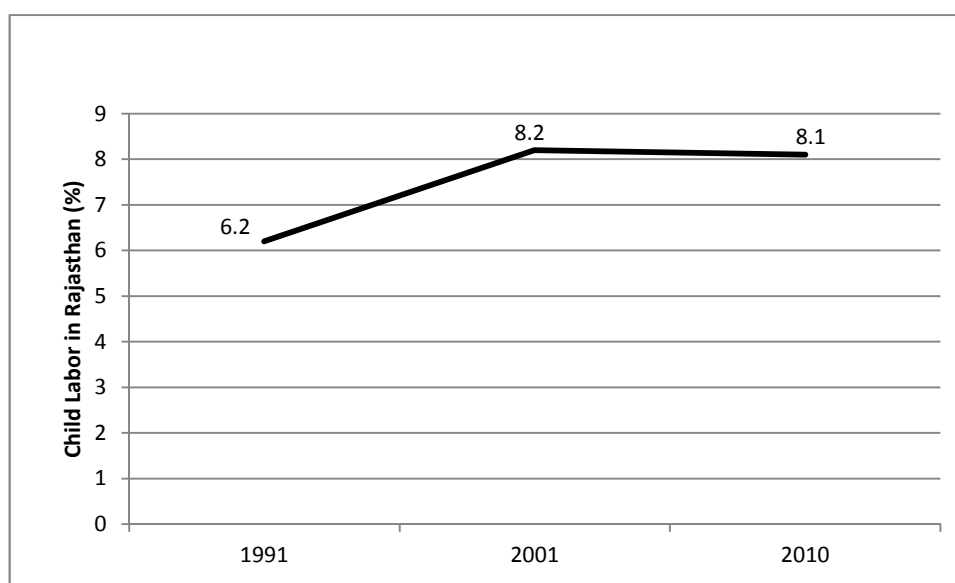
Chapter 7

Limited Social Consensus on Education: The Surge of Child Labor in Rajasthan

7.1 Introduction

According to a 2012 report of the Union Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation, Government of India, titled ‘Children in India-2012’, Rajasthan accounts for nearly ten percent of the total child labor in the country.⁵³⁴ Between 1991 and 2010, Rajasthan has witnessed an increase in child labor rate from 6.2 percent to 8.1 percent (Figure 7.1). If we include children involved in unpaid work and household chores, the child labor rate is 19.6 percent, second highest among all the states in India.⁵³⁵ An estimated 5.1 percent of the state’s child population amounting to almost 800,000 children are reported to be out of the schooling system.⁵³⁶ Traditionally, children in Rajasthan were employed in bangle-manufacturing, embroidery, carpet-weaving, brick kilns, and in the salt-making industries. However, in the past decade, large numbers of children from southern Rajasthan are migrating to the neighboring state of Gujarat to work in the hybrid cottonseed industry.

Figure 7.1: Child Labor Rate in Rajasthan (1991-2010)



Source: Census of India and NSSO surveys, various years.

⁵³⁴ *Children in India 2012: A Statistical Appraisal*, (New Delhi: Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation, GoI, 2012).

⁵³⁵ NFHS-3, *op. cit.*, pg. 50

⁵³⁶ *All India Status of Education Report 2011-2012*, (New Delhi: Pratham, 2012); “All India Survey of Out of School Children of Age 5 & 6-13 Years Age-group,” (New Delhi: Ministry of Human Resource Department, GoI, 2010).

In this chapter, I analyze trends in child labor in the hybrid cottonseed industry in Rajasthan. Rajasthan presents a striking contrast to Andhra Pradesh—in spite of a strong civil society movement against child labor in the hybrid cottonseed industry and a buffet of state-sponsored institutional measures, migration of child laborers from Rajasthan continues unabated. The two states present an interesting pair for comparative analysis, since both have similar rates of per capita income, moderate bureaucratic effectiveness, and low social consensus on education. Despite these similarities, CSO action in Rajasthan has failed to yield sustainable results in reducing child labor compared to Andhra. This chapter explores the reason behind Rajasthan's inability to stop the spiralling increase of child labor.

This study is based on fieldwork in Udaipur district in Rajasthan which is a hotbed for supply of child laborers to the hybrid cottonseed industry in Gujarat. Fieldwork was for a period of three months (July-September 2013). Like Andhra, I conducted my research in two blocks of Udaipur district: Kotra and Jhadol, both of which presented contrasting styles of civil society mobilization. In Jhadol, I observed the activities of the Dakshini Rajasthan Mazdoor Union (DRMU) that started a movement to stop child migration to Gujarat. In Kotra, I observed the activities of an NGO, Astha Sansthan that worked on a campaign on child labor in the cottonseed industry. While DRMU's main focus was on rescuing child laborers, Astha Sansthan had a more holistic approach of improving education in the tribal area of south Rajasthan.

Through comparison of the Kotra and Jhadol blocks within Udaipur, I show that the same strategies employed successfully by MVF in Kurnool in building a social consensus on education were also successfully employed by Astha Sansthan in Udaipur. The block-level analysis across two states therefore provides clear insights into the value of building a social consensus on education. It also showed that in the absence of bureaucracy-CSO collaboration, successful civil society interventions were not replicated throughout the state. The within-state analysis is valuable because it eliminates the alternative argument that the change in child labor trends witnessed in Andhra is due to factors other than CSO action, such as possible cultural differences between the northern state of Rajasthan and the southern state of Andhra. Further, a broader across-state analysis reveals that a dynamic culture of community participation and a supportive political environment towards universal education which were integral to MVF's success in Andhra were not present in Rajasthan.

For the purpose of this research, I conducted interviews and did archival research. I interviewed primary school teachers, Block Education Officers (BEOs), parents of child laborers, middlemen who recruit children from cottonseed work, government officials in the state's Labor and Education departments, trade union members, and NGO activists. In the capital city of Jaipur, I conducted archival research in the Institute of Development Studies in

Jaipur and spoke with civil society experts to understand the institutional and social context of implementation of child labor and education policies in Rajasthan.

7.2 Setting the Context: Child Labor in the Hybrid Cottonseed Industry in Rajasthan

The state of Rajasthan in the north-western India has emerged as a key supplier of migratory child laborers to the state of Gujarat. Gujarat accounts for the highest production of hybrid cottonseed in India. Studies show that in 2006-07, around 90,000 children from the poverty-stricken tribal belt of south Rajasthan were being trafficked across the border to work in the cottonseed farms in north Gujarat.⁵³⁷ The study estimated that thirty-three percent of the workforce consists of children below fourteen years, while seventy-five percent of the workforce consists of workers below the age of eighteen years. Ninety-six percent of the cottonseed farms in Gujarat employed child labor. Another survey conducted in 2010 estimated the number of migrating child laborers to be 85,000 indicating that there has not been a substantial reduction in child labor between 2006 and 2010 in the hybrid cottonseed industry.⁵³⁸

Rajasthan is a land of contrasts—though recognized as the ‘Land of Kings’ for its regal past of palaces and princely states, the state ranks amongst the lowest in terms of human development indicators among all Indian states. The state has the lowest child sex ratio, the highest gap in male-female literacy, and the second highest rate of girl child marriages in India. Since the 1980s, Rajasthan began to display improvement in its economic and social performance. Economic growth rates rose, poverty proportions noticeably reduced, literacy rates visibly improved, and there was an all-round improvement in the infrastructure. The long term trend rate of growth during 1980 to 2006 is estimated at almost six percent, putting Rajasthan among the best performing states of India.⁵³⁹ However, economic development has not necessarily been accompanied by modernization of value system as Rajasthani society continues to be bound by feudal, patriarchal and casteist norms.⁵⁴⁰ UNICEF has recognized Rajasthan as being a state with alarming rates of infant mortality, child malnutrition, infanticide, and poor literacy. The trend of children migrating to work in the hybrid cottonseed industry is reflective of the broader deprivation of children in Rajasthan.

Though south Rajasthan has traditionally been a source area for labor supply to Gujarat, the demand for child workers in the booming cottonseed industry of neighboring Gujarat has exacerbated this trend. The three districts of Udaipur, Dungarpur, and Banswara

⁵³⁷ Khandelwal, A. and Sudhir Katiyar, “*Seasonal Tribal Migration from South Rajasthan: Story of Struggle for a Better Deal*,” (Chittorgarh, Rajasthan: Prayas, 2008).

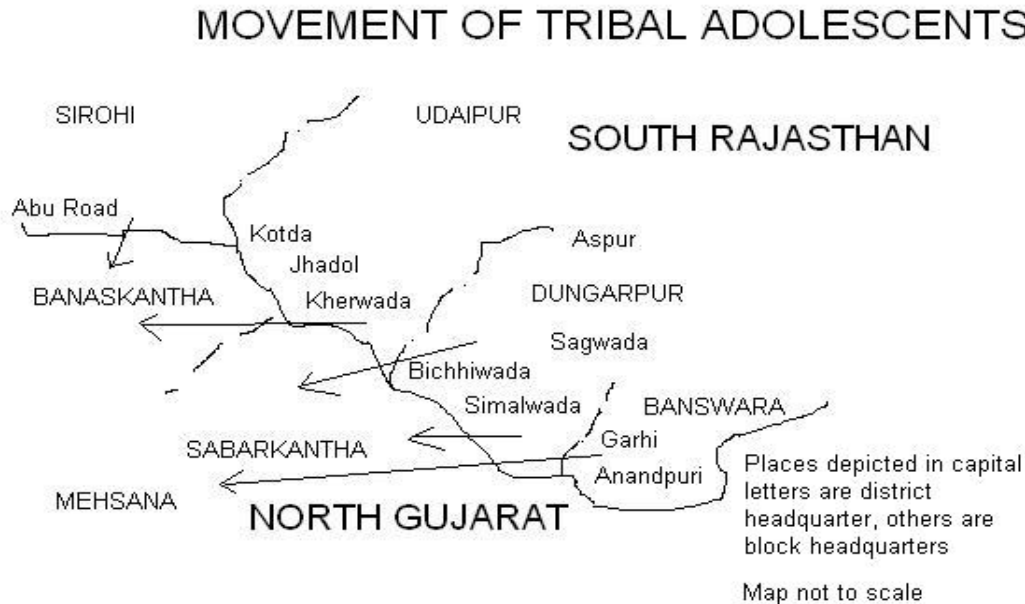
⁵³⁸ Venkateswarlu 2010, *op. cit.*

⁵³⁹ “*Rajasthan Human Development Report- 2008*,” (New Delhi: Planning Commission, GoI, 2008).

⁵⁴⁰ Vyas *et al* 2007, *op. cit.*

in southern Rajasthan bordering the state of Gujarat are hotbeds for migration of children looking for employment in Gujarat (Figure 7.2).

Figure 7.2: Map showing Movement of Child Laborers from Udaipur, Dungarpur and Banswara to North Gujarat



Source: Khandelwal and Katiyar (2008)

South Rajasthan, consisting of the districts of Udaipur, Dungarpur, Banswara and Sirohi are amongst the poorest districts of the state. Out of the total *Adivasi* population in the state, nearly forty-two percent amounting to nearly eight million *Adivasis* are concentrated in these four districts alone. The *Adivasis* of southern Rajasthan have historically been marginalized and suffer from some of the worst indicators in terms of economic development, literacy and a sharp disparity of income across rural and urban areas (Table 7.1).⁵⁴¹ Though the population in this belt is primarily dependent on agriculture, small landholdings, hilly terrain, frequent droughts, and the absence of alternate means of livelihood have compelled the *Adivasis* to seek employment in nearby towns or even in other states for generations.⁵⁴²

⁵⁴¹ A number of migration streams can be identified that originate from the south Rajasthan. The streams have developed historically through interaction of a number of factors and has its unique characteristics in terms of distance, worker skills, existence of middle men, recruitment processes, wages, work and living conditions to name a few. For instance, ginning factories of Gujarat attract workers from specific districts in South and West Rajasthan, Bihar, and UP for specific tasks. The migration stream is the obvious unit as work conditions are similar in a sector. This is the case even though there exist a large number of employers at dispersed locations in most migration streams. The employers mostly have an association. Even when they do not have a formal association, as in the case in agriculture sector, there remains pressure on the employers to subscribe to the norms followed by majority. There have been reports that employers have been threatened with monetary fine and social boycott if they step out of line and try to pay higher wages to workers.

⁵⁴² Custer *et al* 2005

Studies show that there is migration in the range of sixty-two percent to seventy-six percent from these areas to the neighbouring state of Gujrat in particular.⁵⁴³ This trend became even more pronounced with the introduction of hybrid cotton in Gujarat.

Table 7.1: Demographic, Economic and Social Indicators for Udaipur, Dungarpur and Banswara

Area	Udaipur	Dungarpur	Banswara
Area	13,419	3,770	5,037
Population (2001)	2,972,932	1,248,409	1,713,217
% Urban population (2001)	18.3	7.3	6.9
Proportion of SCs/STs (2001)	53.9	69.3	76.6
% workers in agricultural sector	63.2	75.7	85.5
% Difference between urban and rural per capita income (2006)	327.8	301	362
Literacy rate (2001)	58.6	48.6	44.6
Female literacy rate (2001)	43.3	31.8	28.4
Fertility rate (2003-04)	4.1	3.8	4.2
%Children in the age-group 12-35 months who did not receive any vaccination, 2003-04	30	43	41

Source: Bhandari and Kale (2009)⁵⁴⁴

Cotton production in Gujarat had skyrocketed since the introduction of *Bt* cotton in the last decade making Gujarat the highest cotton-producing state in India. The reason for the increase in productivity has been the extensive use of *Bt* cotton which has led to higher rates of survival of cotton crops from pest attacks and greater yield. Given the high demand for *Bt* cotton, there has been concurrently high demand for cottonseed as well. With 25,000 acres under Cotton Seed Production (CSP), Gujarat alone accounts for forty-two percent of the total acreage under *Bt* cottonseed cultivation in India⁵⁴⁵.

Since the 1970s, Gujarat has been at the forefront of adopting cottonseed hybrids. When the world's first ever commercial cotton hybrid variety, Hybrid-4 was produced by C.T. Patel, a Gujarati cotton scientist, it was adopted extensively by the farmers of north Gujarat. Eventually when *Bt* cotton was introduced in India in 2002, the prior experience of farmers in cultivating hybrid varieties, a well-developed irrigation system, the high potential for high profit margins for producers, and the availability of cheap labor in the adjoining belt of south Rajasthan turned north Gujarat into a thriving center for the cultivation of *Bt* cottonseed.⁵⁴⁶

⁵⁴³ Khandelwal and Katiyar 2008

⁵⁴⁴ Bhandari, L. and Sumita Kale, ed. *Indian States at a Glance 2008-09: Performance, Facts and Figures (Rajasthan)*. (New Delhi, Indicus Analytics, 2009).

⁵⁴⁵ Barik. *Cotton Statistics at a Glance*. (Mumbai: Directorate of Cotton Development, Ministry of Agriculture, GoI, 2010)

⁵⁴⁶ Shah, E. "Local and Global Elites Join Hands: Development and Diffusion of *Bt* cotton Technology in Gujarat." *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 40, No. 43, (2005), pp. 4629-4639.

The demand for labor in CSP in Gujarat is very high but the supply of cheap agricultural wage labor is low since Gujarat is a highly developing industrial state.⁵⁴⁷ The rationale for employing children explained by the farmers is the low procurement price paid by the companies who subcontract the *Bt* cottonseed work to the farmers. The high procurement prices can be attributed to the complete monopoly of private companies who try to procure seeds at lower prices from farmers and then sell it at high prices in the market, since the demand for hybrid cottonseed has been spiralling up since early 2000.⁵⁴⁸ Since labor costs comprise of ninety percent of capital investments in CSP, farmers try to cut costs and maintain profit margins by employing cheap migratory child labor from the adjoining tribal belt of south Rajasthan.⁵⁴⁹

Though poverty is definitely a driving force, caste and gender marginalization imposed by a heavily feudal and patriarchal Rajasthani society have compounded the status of the *Adivasis* in this area. Even within the cottonseed industry, the cleavage between laborers and employers is not merely one of class difference, but also caste difference. While the overwhelming majority of migrant Rajasthani workers in the cottonseed industry are *Adivasis*, the farmers in North Gujarat are Patels who are upper caste landlords, next only to Brahmins. The contemptuous attitude of the employers is noted in studies, “During discussions with employers, we often heard the employers boasting of how they are feeding the poor *Adivasis* of Rajasthan by providing employment. Their method of recruiting cheap labor through payment advance in cash was perceived as a favor against which there cannot be any complaint and which is only worthy of appreciation.”⁵⁵⁰

The *Adivasis* also for generations have internalized this patronizing attitude – adopting the attitude that employers are *mai-baap*.⁵⁵¹ This form of labor recruitment from within historically serving communities through cash advances fundamentally replicates more feudal forms of labor. Therefore, like Andhra, children from lower castes form the bulk of the labor force in the hybrid cottonseed industry. In Andhra, the children are mostly *Dalits* (Scheduled Castes) while in Rajasthan, they primarily belong to the historically alienated *Adivasis* (Scheduled Tribes). Forty-two percent of the children migrating for work in the cottonseed fields of Rajasthan are girls. Females report earning an average daily wage of Rupees thirty-six, compared to the male average of Rupees forty-three, but work an average

⁵⁴⁷ Khandelwal and Katiyar 2008, *op. cit.*; Venkateswarlu 2010, *op. cit.*

⁵⁴⁸ Murugkar, M., B. Ramaswamy, and M. Shelar, "Competition and Monopoly in the Indian Cottonseed Market," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 42, No. 37, (2007), pp. 3781-3789.

⁵⁴⁹ Venkateswarlu, D. Child Labor in Hybrid Cottonseed Production in Gujarat and Karnataka. (Hyderabad: India Committee of Netherlands, 2004)

⁵⁵⁰ Khandelwal and Katiyar 2008, *op. cit.*

⁵⁵¹ *Mai baap* (Hindi *lit.* mother-father) refers to someone who is like a guardian

of an hour longer than the boys.⁵⁵² Therefore, poverty of Adivasi children is further compounded by overlapping forms of social discrimination based on caste and gender.

The working conditions of child laborers in the cottonseed industry in Gujarat are similar, if not worse than the child laborers in Andhra. They work for nine to twelve hours per day in two shifts for a wage of Rupees 50 (~USD1) per day. This is less than the legal entitlement of Rupees 75 (~USD 1.5) for a ten- hour workday as stipulated under the Minimum Wages Act, 1948. The migration experience is fraught with risks and hardships. The most frequent and severe are the numerous ways in which the employer and contractor economically exploit and otherwise ill-treat adolescents. Further, accounts of sexual abuse of young girls, severe health risks posed by pesticides in the cottonseed fields, and the unsatisfactory conditions in which children work makes this occupation dangerous for young children.⁵⁵³

7.3 Civil Society Action under DRMU, Jhadol Udaipur

7.3.1 DRMU's Campaign to Stop Child Labor

The discovery of the mass exodus of children from south Rajasthan to work in the cottonseed fields of Gujarat happened by accident. DRMU, a local trade union based in Udaipur was working to secure rights of migrant laborers in south Rajasthan. DRMU started off as a trade union for 'mates', the contractors or middlemen who supply laborers to the Gujarati farmers. These mates are *Adivasis* from Rajasthani villages that worked as laborers themselves but also took up the additional task of labor-supply. The mates themselves were subject to exploitation by the rich Gujarati farmers. The farmers often cheated the mates, who were mostly illiterate. The mates were also held responsible in the case of illness or injury to any worker, since the employers refused to provide for any compensation policy.

DRMU started with the objective of getting the mates registered and issued licenses under the Inter State Migrant Workers' Act (ISMW) which protects the rights of migrant laborers. In 2006, with 34,000 mates under its umbrella, DRMU called for a strike demanding that wages of workers and the commissions of mates be increased. From July 2006 onwards, the Union set up check posts along the Gujarat-Rajasthan border to ensure that there was a complete moratorium on the movement of labor. The check-posts served as a point where mates were issued forms, identity cards, etc. before they could enter Gujarat to acquire their employers' signatures to register under the ISMW Act. During the process of registration at the border, the Union stumbled upon the fact that the mates were transporting large numbers of tribal children to work in the cottonseed fields. A DRMU survey showed

⁵⁵² Khandelwal, A. S. Katiyar, and M. Vaishnav. *Child Labor in Cottonseed Production: A Case-study in North Gujarat*. (Dungarpur, Rajasthan: Dakshini Rajasthan Mazdoor Union, 2008).

⁵⁵³ Dave, K. "Losing their Childhood in Gujarat's Cotton Fields." *India Today*, September 27, 2010.

that about eighteen percent of migratory laborers were less than ten years old and fifty-six percent were below the age of fourteen, i.e. three-quarters of the laborers being taken to Gujarat were actually children below fourteen years of age.

The Union decided to take a principled stand against child labor. It convinced the mates that it was morally reprehensible to take children to work. Further, it made poor economic sense to supply children because the Patel farmers would be forced to pay more to adult laborers if children were not available. With the mates under its wing, the Union started organizing enforcement drives along the Gujarat-Rajasthan border to stop anyone from taking child laborers across the border. The mates themselves informed Union workers when they learnt of any instance of children being taken across the border. An ex-mate who is now a full-time DRMU staff says, “The mates were in competition with one another. The ones who were cooperating with the Union and incurring losses by not recruiting children did not want their fellow-mates to benefit either.”⁵⁵⁴ It was more economic incentive rather than altruism that prevented the mates from recruiting children.

Initially, the Union was very successful in organizing the mates and stopping the recruitment of children because the traffickers mistook DRMU’s mobile units for the local police. DRMU’s strategy was to conduct night-raids along the border with mobile vans and take the rescued children to the police station. Once the media got wind of the issue, DRMU received widespread media attention. Meanwhile, the Gujarati farmers also buckled under pressure and large delegations of seed farmers from Gujarat visited the Union’s office. On August 5, 2007, the seed farmers signed an agreement with DRMU stipulating rise in wages for adult laborers and a complete ban on the employment of child labor.⁵⁵⁵

This initial success however did not translate into higher wages and commissions as DRMU had hoped. The process of acquiring licenses for the mates under the ISMW Act got caught in a lengthy bureaucratic tangle with the state of Gujarat demanding high fees for registering the workers. The mates started getting restless because their strategy of strike meant prolonged economic losses. The Patel farmers started offering incentives to the mates. Driven by economic necessity, many of the mates gradually started losing faith in the Union’s movement. Most of the mates returned to the business of supplying laborers. Gradually, as the mates dropped out of the movement, DRMU’s campaign against child labor also started losing steam. The mates started recruiting children once again.⁵⁵⁶

Meanwhile, members of the DRMU started receiving threats for their blockade against the transport of children from two local groups—the big contractors and the transport mafia. The big contractors were middlemen who had several mates working under

⁵⁵⁴ Interview with DRMU member, Udaipur, August 7, 2013.

⁵⁵⁵ Khandelwal *et al* 2008, *op. cit.*

⁵⁵⁶ Interview with Project Co-ordinator, DRMU, July 4, 2012.

them. DRMU's anti-child labor campaign caused the big contractors huge economic losses. Further, the Gujarat-Rajasthan border is home to a large transport-mafia who are primarily involved with the smuggling of alcohol from Delhi via Rajasthan into Gujarat, since the latter is a 'dry state.' The trafficking of children presented another lucrative business opportunity to the transport mafia. Many of these vehicle owners take hundreds of thousands of rupees in advance from Gujarati farmers for supplying laborers. Unlike the mates, the big contractors and vehicle-owners are mostly non-tribal, and do not have any interest in the well-being or wage rates of the *Adivasi* laborers. Their interests were severely harmed by the Union's campaign against child labor.

When DRMU first started its activities in 2006, the taxi drivers, the seed organizers and even the employers were confused with the identity of Union members. They mistook DRMU members to be representatives of the local administration. But once they realized their mistake, they started threatening DRMU members. The taxi-owners' association vehemently protested against the Union's activities. Ironically, the taxi-owners' association alleged that since DRMU was an organization of mates who used to earlier transport child laborers, the Union was actually a promoter of child labor. In a show of concern towards children, the taxi owners' association started a Child Rights Protection Front on its own. DRMU's mobile units which tried to stop the taxi owners from transporting children were physically attacked. DRMU members in Dungarpur were lynched and their office in Dungarpur faced repeated threats.⁵⁵⁷ Eventually, the Union had to shut down its office in Dungarpur and move the office to Udaipur city.

By the time I went for fieldwork in 2012, the number of mates registered with the Union had reduced to a trickle and the Union was valiantly trying to stay afloat. With the meagre resources at its disposal, it was still trying to conduct mobile raids. At meetings of the Union, less than ten mates showed up. They were trying to marshal resources to conduct raids in the 2012 cottonseed season, but none of the mates were informing the Union of the transportation of children. Meanwhile, children continued to migrate to Gujarat for work.⁵⁵⁸

7.3.2 Response of the Local Bureaucracy to DRMU's Campaign

The constant media spotlight on the issue, the incriminating photographs of children rescued by the Union from crowded vans in the middle of the night, and the attention from the international human rights community forced the Rajasthan government to acknowledge that migration was taking place on a massive scale.⁵⁵⁹ In September 2007, the Chairperson of the NCPCR herself visited Rajasthan to assess the situation. In a letter to the Labor Secretary,

⁵⁵⁷ Interview with DRMU member, July 25, 2013

⁵⁵⁸ Interview with DRMU member July 23, 2013.

⁵⁵⁹ Khandelwal *et al* 2008, *op. cit.*

Government of Rajasthan, she laid down a detailed series of steps required to be taken by the district administration in the migrating districts.⁵⁶⁰

The Government of Rajasthan responded with an array of initiatives due to pressure from the NCPCR, the media, and the human rights community. In a circular dated July 16, 2008, the state government accepted that there is ‘child trafficking’ across the Gujarat-Rajasthan border. DRMU had campaigned vigorously to show that the conditions under which children were made to work in the cottonseed industry constituted trafficking for labor. Therefore, the Government of Rajasthan’s acknowledgment that child trafficking was taking place across the Gujarat-Rajasthan border was a significant victory for DRMU. So far, trafficking for labor is not explicitly prohibited under Indian law.⁵⁶¹ The Government’s circular notes that trafficking of children is prohibited under Article 21A, Article 24 and Article 39 of the Indian Constitution.⁵⁶² In principle, the Government of Rajasthan took a larger ‘right to life’ approach in this situation, not bound by a straitjacketed interpretation of the law which does not explicitly prohibit trafficking for labor.

Further, an Action Taken Report of the Labor Department issued in June 2008 reported that several Special Child Labor Schools have been established in border districts. It recommended that *Bt* cotton should be recognized as a ‘hazardous occupation’ by adding it to Part A of the Schedule attached to the CLPRA, 1986. It also recommended a joint and effective enforcement of the ISMW Act and the CLPRA by Labor Inspectors of Rajasthan and Gujarat. It planned to involve *panchayats* and NGOs to campaign against the migration of children for labor. The District Collectors of Udaipur, Dungarpur and Banswara were instructed by the Planning Secretary of the Government of Rajasthan to set up mobile patrolling units to stop child trafficking.⁵⁶³ A Child Tracking System (CTS) under SSA was established to track each child and to ensure that children were enrolled in school. A child helpline was also proposed to be started by the district administration in collaboration with a local NGO, the District Commissioner’s office, and the Labor Department. The Education Department took up the responsibility of extending the reach of residential schools, migratory hostels, and bridge camps.

In 2008, the Government of Rajasthan adopted a Special Protocol to prevent the migration of children to Gujarat. To ensure that the issue of child trafficking was taken very seriously, senior officials of the state Police Department, the Education Department, the Tribal Welfare Department, and the Woman and Child Welfare Department were made

⁵⁶⁰ Y. Dube, *Gujarat Visit Report to Assess the Child Labour and Child Trafficking Situation in the Bt Cotton Seeds Farms of Gujarat*, (New Delhi: NCPCR, GoI, 2011).

⁵⁶¹ *Child Labor in Cottonseed Production: Investigation and Advocacy*. (Udaipur: Prayas Center for Labor Research and Action, 2012)

⁵⁶² *Ibid.*

⁵⁶³ “*Action Taken Report for Child Trafficking to Gujarat- 2008*,” (Udaipur: Labor Department, Government of Rajasthan, 2008).

members of a District Task Force (DTF) against child labor. The Protocol laid down that under the DTF, the police would conduct rescue operations, the Department of Women and Child Welfare would provide support to the rescued children and represent the case to the district Child Welfare Committee, the Education Department would admit them directly to government schools, and the district administration would shortlist NGOs who would conduct awareness camps and support in rehabilitating the rescued children.⁵⁶⁴

A state-level Anti –Human Trafficking Unit with a broad mandate of curbing trafficking for prostitution, human organs, and exploitative labor was set up in 2009. The headquarters of the unit are located in Udaipur. The six districts of Banswara, Dungarpur, Pratapgarh, Udaipur, Rajsamand are within the Udaipur division of the anti-trafficking unit. Since there is no state level anti-trafficking law in Rajasthan, offenders who traffic children across the border are booked under Sections 370, 371, 374 and 34 of the Indian Penal Code, 1870 and Sections 23, 24 and 26 of the Juvenile Justice Act, 2000.⁵⁶⁵ The rehabilitation of the rescued victims is the responsibility of the Child Welfare Committee of Udaipur District.

Further, the DC of Udaipur is making efforts to stop the trafficking of children across the border. The District Commissioner of Udaipur has initiated a ‘Child Tracking System’ by which children migrating for cottonseed work in each village are tracked down by name and the head-teacher and school-teacher are made responsible for enrolling each child into school. Efforts are being made to improve enrolment in government livelihood schemes like the ‘Widow Pension Scheme’ and ‘Palanhar Scheme’ (for orphans) to improve the economic condition of the Adivasis.⁵⁶⁶ The Government of Rajasthan has also started the Rajasthan Mission of Livelihoods which is attempting to teach employable skills to the *Adivasi* youth.

Since the children are trafficked to another state, the cooperation of Gujarat is critical in stopping the migration stream. However, the Government of Gujarat has been more lax in its approach to the problem of child labor in the cottonseed industry. When the issue first appeared in the newspapers, government officials flatly denied that there was child labor in the cottonseed industry in Gujarat.⁵⁶⁷ When DRMU approached the administration as well as the MNCs on whose behalf most of the farmers undertake production, they either kept on

⁵⁶⁴ “*Special Protocol to Combat Trafficking against Child Trafficking*,” (Udaipur: Labor Department, Government of Rajasthan, 2008).

⁵⁶⁵ Sec. 370- 374 of the Juvenile Justice Act, 2000 lays down the law and punishment with respect of ‘Buying or disposing of any person as a slave’ and Sec. 23-26 of Juvenile Justice Act, 2000 lays down ‘punishment for cruelty to juvenile or a child.’

⁵⁶⁶ . “*Potential Market Assessment of Tribal Rural Livelihoods Project*,” (Udaipur: Rajasthan Mission of Livelihoods, Government of Rajasthan, 2011).

⁵⁶⁷ Kumar, Saurav. 2007. “Childhood Lost in Bt Cotton Fields.” *The Indian Express*.

refuting the presence of child labor or simply ignored the claims of the Union.⁵⁶⁸ The Rural Labor Commissioner, Gujarat said, “Children are not employed in cotton fields.”⁵⁶⁹ Officials of the Rajasthan Labor Department said that in joint meetings, officials of Gujarat Labor Department were forceful in denying the presence of child labor. The absence of cooperation from officials of Gujarat has made it even more difficult to stop the migration of children.

7.3.3 The Bureaucracy’s Response: Gap between Intention and Action

In the course of my fieldwork in Rajasthan, I discovered that though there were so many initiatives on paper, the bureaucracy had taken little concrete action. The stipulations in the Special Protocol regarding rescued children were indiscriminately flouted. Once the children were rescued from raids, they were returned to their parents with a mild warning. The Protection Homes supposed to be established by the Child Welfare Committee (CWC) for rescued children in Udaipur were non-functional. The Protocol says that rescued Adivasi children will be admitted to schools and hostels run by the Tribal Development Department. In practice, the real focus so far has been on rescuing children only. No concrete effort has been made by the local administration to converge rescue with rehabilitation and mainstreaming into schools.

A senior official in the Labor Department of Udaipur categorically said that although the Special Protocol looks good on paper, practical implementation of the Protocol is not feasible. The main issue is the failure to allocate resources to stop child trafficking. For instance, the Special Protocol mandates that a household survey of children be conducted to assess the scale of child migration, but no funds had been allocated to the Labor Department to conduct such a survey. The Government of Rajasthan has not made appointments in the Labor Department of Rajasthan since 2001 and the staff and resources were already stretched. In fact, the posts of Labor Commissioners in the neighboring districts of Banswara and Dungarpur were lying vacant and officials from Udaipur were covering these districts on a part-time basis.⁵⁷⁰ The Labor Commissioner said that since liberalization, the recruitment of staff in the Labor Department was very low. Since MNCs wanted flexible labor laws, state governments were unwilling to invest very much in the Labor Departments.⁵⁷¹ With limited

⁵⁶⁸ One of the crucial reasons for consistent denial on the part of Gujarat could be out of purely political considerations. In the first place it could be for the fact that much of the CSP is illegal and is being debated at national and international level. At the same time it is beneficial to farmers.

⁵⁶⁹ Kumar, S. June 21, 2007. “GALU Gears Up to Stop Child Labour on Bt Cotton Farms in North Gujarat.” *Ahmedabad Newslite*.

⁵⁷⁰ Interview with senior official of the Labor Department, July 5, 2012 He explained that with the adoption of liberalization, labor issues have become a major roadblock for state governments seeking to attract foreign investors. Therefore, the priority for recruiting staff for the Labor Department is very low for the Government.

⁵⁷¹ The proliferation of exploitative working conditions in the post-liberalization period in the wake of government’s reluctance to enforce labor legislations is discussed in more detail in Nooruddin & Sokhey 2012

staff and resources, the Labor Department officials have little incentive to follow up on child migration.

Further, the CLPRA itself creates roadblocks for Labor Department officials in acting against child labor since employing children in agriculture is not prohibited by law. Pecuniary action against employers is a bigger challenge because Rajasthan Labor Department does not have jurisdiction against Gujarati farmers. Even if children are stopped in the course of migrating, officials cannot act against employers unless employers are arrested in the course of employing a child. In the 2011 season, thirty-three mates had been arrested and twelve vehicles were seized, but the offences are easily bailable since the law on trafficking children for labor is still vague.⁵⁷² Once the contractors and mates were released, they went back to transporting children again in the next season.⁵⁷³

Further, none of the NCLP schools under the Labor Department were functional in Udaipur at the time of this research. The NCLP schools are meant for children in hazardous occupations and trafficking has been recognized in the ILO Convention No. 182 as one of the ‘worst forms of labor.’ Though the Government of Rajasthan recognizes that trafficking is taking place in this region, all the NCLP schools in Udaipur were defunct. There were sixty NCLP schools in Udaipur but they had all been shut down. A Labor Department official said that the Central Government is contemplating the overhaul of child labor policy and therefore, the fund-allocation was on hold. This effectively means that the *only* program available for children working in hazardous conditions in Udaipur was completely non-functional. Senior officials in the Udaipur Labor Department did not know when the NCLP schools would be functional again.

Meanwhile, even in 2012, children continued to be taken to work in the cottonseed fields of Gujarat. DRMU surveyed 1,414 households in forty-three villages in Jhadol block. Out of the 3,983 children surveyed in the six to eighteen years age-group, a total of 600 children had gone to Gujarat for both the 2010 and 2011 seasons, i.e. fifteen percent of the adolescents surveyed in Jhadol block alone had gone to work in the cottonseed fields. In a public meeting, the Chairperson of the Rajasthan Commission of Protection of Children’s Rights stated that 30,000 to 40,000 children had migrated to Gujarat in 2011-2012.⁵⁷⁴

The failure to allocate funds and systematically converge the efforts of various departments has thwarted plans to stem the flow of child laborers into Gujarat. A Labor Department official expressed his frustration at the process. He said, “Senior officials from NCPCR visit the sites of migration for a day or two and send us circulars about steps we should take to stop child labor. Then, senior state government officials start pressurizing us to

⁵⁷² Figures supplied by Head of the Anti-Trafficking Cell, Udaipur, July 25, 2012.

⁵⁷³ Interview with Head of the Anti-Trafficking Cell, Udaipur, July 25, 2012.

⁵⁷⁴ “Weak Laws Allow Child Labor in Agriculture.” July 12, 2012. *The Hindu*.

fulfil some randomly set targets. But no separate budget is sanctioned for these activities. How can we implement these initiatives if there are no funds?”⁵⁷⁵ An NGO activist said, “The government drafts protocols and makes statements only to placate the public when media reports are published. Such kind of rhetoric makes the government look good both to the NCPCR and human rights activists. Once the initial momentum fades and media stops publishing stories on the issue, the situation swings back to status quo.”⁵⁷⁶ Notwithstanding elaborate institutional measures from the government, and a mass campaign by DRMU, child laborers continue to migrate to work in the hazardous conditions in the cottonseed fields of Gujarat. This suggests that a purely punitive approach to stopping child labor does not yield sustainable results. Further, pressure from only CSOs or the media leads to superficial changes, but bureaucratic efforts towards child labor are lackadaisical in the absence of a demand from the community. In the following section, I shall analyze the impact of community’s pressure on the bureaucracy in the neighboring block of Kotra.

7.4 Civil Society Action under Astha Sansthan, Kotra Udaipur

7.4.1 Astha Sansthan’s Campaign to Universalize Education

While DRMU’s actions against child labor in Jhadol block were focused mainly on rescuing children, another NGO in neighboring Kotra block in Udaipur had a broader mandate. Astha Sansthan has been working in Kotra for the past twenty-six years on improving the livelihood, and nutritional and educational status of the *Adivasis*. It focuses on broader issues of relevance to *Adivasis* such as rights to natural resources, right to livelihood, *panchayati raj*, drought relief, migration, and violence against women. Like MVF in Andhra, Astha focuses on collective mobilization of people and building people’s groups. The organization’s emphasis on grassroots mobilization is captured in its principles of organizing the poor into independent people’s organizations, encouraging women’s participation in public affairs, advocacy with the government to bring about policy change, and mobilizing grassroots action to influence policy.

Like MVF in Andhra, Astha focuses on improving primary education in *Adivasi* areas, especially of *Adivasi* women. It is also the only NGO in Rajasthan that conducts a budgetary analysis to analyze how much of the state’s budget is being spent on children. The organization first started mobilizing against child labor for cottonseed migration in 2006. An officer of Astha said, “The issue of child labor is closely related to other issues related to *Adivasis* like land rights, right to livelihood, and education. Our approach is to make the *Adivasis* self-reliant. Educating *Adivasi* children is an important part of that approach.”⁵⁷⁷

⁵⁷⁵ Interview with senior official of the Labor Department, Udaipur. July 5, 2012

⁵⁷⁶ Interview with official of the Labor Department, Udaipur. July 8, 2012

⁵⁷⁷ Interview with Kotra coordinator of Astha Sansthan, July 6, 2012 Udaipur.

Once Astha delved into the issue of tribal schools, they realized that there were a plethora of issues related to the education system that they needed to address. High dropout rates, high failure rates, poor quality of education, a curriculum which was very alien to the lives of *Adivasi* children were some of the issues that Astha was confronted with.

Astha has adopted a multi-pronged approach to tackle the issue of education in the *Adivasi* region. In the analysis below, I categorize Astha's strategies in accordance with the strategies of CSO mobilization stated in *H7a-H7d*, i.e. I analyzed whether Astha mobilizes parents (*H7a*), local groups (*H7b*), works on creating accountability mechanisms with schools (*H7c*) and collaborates with the local bureaucracy (*H7d*). If Astha adopts the same strategies as MVF in Andhra, we should expect that it should also succeed in creating a social consensus on education. Consequently, Astha's mobilization should reduce child labor and increase school enrolment in its area of operation.

7.4.2 Testing H7a: Convincing parents to send children to school

Astha volunteers work with parents to convince them to send their children to schools. One of the key strategies of Astha for education of *Adivasi* children is to admit them into government residential hostels. Like MVF in Kurnool, they found that the task of bringing older children who had never gone to school or had dropped out was the most difficult. Therefore, under a special group of the organization known as the Tribal Development Forum (TDF), they started a seven-month long condensed crash courses for *Adivasi* girls in the age-group of nine to fourteen years who had never gone to school. This is similar to the model MVF had started with RBCs in Kurnool. The idea was to prepare girls to enter government schools in the sixth grade once they had completed the condensed courses. Between 2008 and 2011, 650 *Adivasi* girls had been mainstreamed into government schools. Every year, Astha also educates 100 tribal girls who have never gone to school.

Like MVF, Astha attempts to strengthen the government schooling system. They have initiated interventions for quality education in thirty government schools in the *Adivasi* region, conducting literacy programmes for the leaders of *panchayats* and elected women representatives. They also conduct trainings for young educators. Further, Astha has created a 'model' whereby they provide academic support classes in thirty select primary schools in Kotra. Astha is working on strengthening the government schooling system to stop the supply of children to work in the cottonseed fields.

7.4.3 Testing H7b: Mobilizing local groups

Astha's basic ideology is to bring about decentralization of power, by mobilizing a large network of local civil society groups with the aim of empowering people and ensuring

accountability of government institutions. Initially, the organization created groups in villages, but they soon found that the groups should have a consistent structure. The organization started a group called the Tribal Development Forum (TDF) in 1993. One of the primary tasks of this group was to build pressure on the district administration to implement universal education in the tribal area and to solve the problem of migration due to unemployment. Today the TDF network, consisting of 7,554 members, has expanded to thirty-one village councils in Kotra block. They inform government officials of the status of infrastructure in government schools in the area. A member of TDF in a Kotra village said, “We work on livelihood issues of *Adivasis*, especially rights to forest resources. However, the issue of education is closely connected with the development of *Adivasis*. So TDFs now try to monitor the status of the government schools in the tribal habitations.”⁵⁷⁸ The TDF provides a platform ‘Milan Mela’⁵⁷⁹ for the voluntary organisations of Southern Rajasthan to share experiences and to raise current challenges. More than 5,000 people from different organisations take part in this annual event.

Besides the TDF, other local organizations supported by Astha are The Tribal Women’s Awareness Association, Ekal Nari Shakti Sangathan (also known as The Association for Strong Women Alone), Rajsamand Women’s Forum, Gordwad Tribal Association, and The Vagad Laborers and Farmers’ Association. The overarching purpose is to create self-reliance among the *Adivasis*. Though these groups focus on a particular aspect of tribal rights, education of tribal children is an integral part of their mandate. The Association for Strong Women Alone believes that improving the status of *Adivasi* women and involving them in local governance institutions is critical for improving the status of both women and children in the area. One of the problems identified by the organization during their work in the field was that widows or separated women had a difficult time raising their children—many children from single-parent homes were sent to work in the cottonseed fields. Such networks at the grassroots-level have improved public awareness required to universalize education.

7.4.4 Testing H7c: Accountability of Government Schools

Astha created accountability mechanisms to conduct verification of 257 schools in 25 Gram Panchayats in 5 blocks in Udaipur district. In twenty-two village assemblies, the organization is monitoring the activities of government functionaries such as regularity of teachers and *aanganwadi* workers. It conducts physical verification of infrastructure facilities as well as teaching status to ensure that the RTE Act is being complied with. Many irregularities found during Astha’s surveys were

⁵⁷⁸ Interview with member of TDF, Udaipur, July 28, 2012.

⁵⁷⁹ Hindi *lit.* Get-together Fair

presented to the district administration. It has also reported its findings to the RCPCR and the NCPCR. This kept the pressure up on schools. Under pressure from Astha, a government hostel for *Adivasi* students was started in Kotra. It organized trainings for school teachers and headmasters to improve knowledge about the RTE Act. In villages where monitoring mechanisms have been set up, the activists report that the quality of education has improved and children going to work in cottonseed farms have declined.⁵⁸⁰

7.4.5 Testing 7d: Collaboration with the Bureaucracy

In order to stop children from migrating to work in the *Bt* cottonseed fields, Astha worked with the local bureaucracy to set up check-posts at five points on the border. In the year 2007-08, 300 child laborers were stopped from crossing over to work in Gujarat. In 2009-2010, fifty-nine children were rescued. This time the organization collaborated with the Education Department and linked these children to the SSA's campaign. Also, the TDF in collaboration with the local BEO surveyed and found that seventy-six children had dropped out from school and gone to work in Gujarat. Volunteers convinced their parents that whenever the children returned home they must link the children to residential camps for the child laborers. In 2010-11, sixty-three children were rescued and cases were filed by the organization against five middlemen. A staff member of Astha said, "We have mostly collaborated with setting up check-posts along the border. We plan to build a more comprehensive model of linking the rescued children to schools."⁵⁸¹ Though Astha has collaborated to some extent with local bureaucrats, it is not as extensive as MVF's collaboration in Uyyalawada.

Astha's failure to collaborate with the bureaucracy is also reflective of a broader distrust of CSOs and the bureaucracy. Asked about the collaboration of NGOs and local bureaucracy in Udaipur, a senior official who is also a member of the DTF on Child Labor said, "I do not have a positive attitude towards NGOs. Out of the 4,000 NGOs in Udaipur, only a handful of NGOs are actually engaged in constructive work. Even if they may state in media platforms that they are interested in cooperating with the government, in reality they like to keep an arm's distance from the government. They receive funds from foreign agencies, have their own agendas, and are afraid of being accountable."⁵⁸² A senior government official stated that he had requested the NGOs in Udaipur to give him a list of villagers in their respective areas of operation so that he could enrol them in the government's Social Welfare Schemes, but none of the NGOs had submitted such a list to him.⁵⁸³ The ex-

⁵⁸⁰ In the absence of any systematic studies in this area, I could not verify these claims.

⁵⁸¹ Interview with Astha volunteer, Udaipur, July 15, 2012.

⁵⁸² Interview with District Commissioner, Udaipur, July 16, 2012.

⁵⁸³ Interview with District Commissioner, Udaipur, July 16, 2012.

Chairman of the NCLP for Rajasthan, who had extensive experience of working with NGOs that ran the NCLP schools, said, “Only a handful of NGOs do good work, but most need constant monitoring and some won’t perform even with monitoring.”⁵⁸⁴The BEOs interviewed were dismissive of the role of NGOs. A BEO said, “Some NGOs actually don’t want *Adivasis* in their area to become literate because if they do, then these NGOs will run out of work and run out of sponsors.”⁵⁸⁵

A personal experience during fieldwork in Kotra was telling of the low confidence that line officials had of NGOs. During a visit to a primary school in a village, the BEO who had somehow got wind of my visit showed up at the local school. He asked me, “Why have you come here? You NGO *wallahs*⁵⁸⁶ have nothing better to do but come for inquiry and publish false reports.” When I clarified that I was not representing an NGO but was an independent researcher, he immediately apologized. He explained that a local NGO had published a report alleging that a government school teacher openly admitted in a public hearing that government teachers were irresponsible and verbally abused the students. The BEO was admonished by senior officials in the Education Department for this report. When the BEO called the said teacher for inquiry, the teacher said that the NGO had falsely exaggerated what he had said in the hearing. He had only said that some teachers came late because of absence of public transport. The BEO complained that government officials faced repeated harassment from the false or exaggerated reports of NGOs. The lack of trust and hostility between NGOs and line officials of government departments appeared to be pervasive. This was in stark contrast to the collaborative effort of NGOs and the local bureaucracy in Andhra Pradesh.

7.4.6 Impact of Astha’s campaign: Maldar village

Unlike in Uyyalawada where I had data to measure the impact of MVF’s activities, in Kotra, such systematic data-collection has not taken place. Therefore, for the purpose of assessing Astha’s impact, I am presenting the case study of Maldar village.

Ninety *Adivasi* families inhabit the village of Maldar in Kotra block. They enrolled their children in the local government school but the teacher was transferred and the newly appointed teacher never came to the school. More than fifty school-going children were forced to graze cattle and engage in household chores. These children were unable to attend the school in the neighboring village since it was three miles away. The people of the village

⁵⁸⁴ Interview with senior official from Labor Department, Udaipur, July 10, 2012.

⁵⁸⁵ Interview with Block Education Officer, Udaipur, July 12, 2012.

invited representatives of the TDF to address the problem of the non-functional school. In turn, the TDF members facilitated a meeting with the BEO on September 17, 2011. The news about the teacher's absence was also published in the local newspaper and this brought immediate attention to the issue. On the very next day, the BEO and the village council chairperson visited the school to verify the situation. With immediate effect, the BEO removed the errant teacher and appointed a new teacher. Today, there are no out of school children in Maldar. Village assembly members are monitoring the teaching in the village school.

However, in Kotra, villages like Maldar are more the exception than the norm. The Maldar success story has not found large-scale replication in other villages in Kotra. The Maldar example shows that the same kind of mobilization and accountability mechanisms which were successful in Uyyalawada in Andhra can also be successfully replicated in Kotra in Rajasthan. Astha's campaign in Kotra is yielding results but only in small pockets across the block.

7.5 Connecting the Andhra and Rajasthan Cases to Hypotheses

Table 7.2 summarizes the outcomes of CSOs' strategies of mobilization in four blocks across the two states of Andhra and Rajasthan. The table shows that in Uyyalawada in Andhra Pradesh where MVF deployed all the aforementioned strategies of mobilization, child labor has declined considerably in a sustainable manner. In neighboring Dornipadu where no CSO action was evident, child labor had spiralled upwards. Rajasthan presents an interesting contrast. In Jhadol where DRMU's campaign brought about a large number of government policies to tackle child-trafficking to Gujarat, child labor continues unabated. On the other hand, in Kotra where Astha Sansthan focused on mobilizing parents, local groups, and creating accountability mechanisms in schools, child labor did decline in specific villages. Astha's strategies of mobilization which were similar to MVF's in Uyyalawada brought about similar results in Kotra, but the key difference between Astha and MVF was the difference in collaboration with the bureaucracy. While MVF's strategy of collaborating with the bureaucracy allowed successful initiatives to be incorporated into state policy, Astha's low level of collaboration with the bureaucracy limited its impact to a small localized area.

Table 7.2: Connecting the Rajasthan and Andhra Cases to Hypotheses

<i>Hypotheses</i>	Andhra Pradesh		Rajasthan	
	<i>Uyyalawada (MV Foundation)</i>	<i>Dornipadu (No CSO)</i>	<i>Jhadol (DRMU)</i>	<i>Kotra (Astha Sansthan)</i>
H7a: Mobilizing Parents	√	X	X	√
H7b: Mobilizing Local Groups	√	X	X	√
H7c: Accountability in schools	√	X	X	√
H7d: Collaboration with the bureaucracy	√	X	Conflict	X
Outcomes	-Decrease in child labor -Decrease in cottonseed acreage -Increase in retention rate in schools	-Increase in child labor -Increase in cottonseed acreage -Poor quality of schools	-Rescued children went back to work -Continued migration of child laborers	-Decline in child labor in small pockets. -Increase in cottonseed acreage

The block-level analysis showed clearly that strategies of mobilization that worked in Andhra could be successfully replicated in Rajasthan as well. However, there appear to be larger forces at work that have prevented the bureaucracy and CSOs from working together in Rajasthan. In the section below, I describe how the absence of a culture of community participation and the erratic political support towards universal education at the state-level has hampered the decline in the rate of child labor.

7.6 State-Level Analysis

The difference between Andhra and Rajasthan in building social consensus on education can be attributed to difference in socio-political context in the two states. Rajasthan has implemented some of the most innovative education programs such as the Shiksha Karmi and the Lok Jumbish which have elicited community participation as an integral component. However, as I shall describe in greater detail later, these programs have gradually lost steam and the community participation dimension has been vastly diluted. Though Rajasthan has recognized that building a social consensus on education through community participation is critical to bringing children to school, such an idea has failed to take off at the state-wide level. In 2011-2012, Rajasthan had the highest rates of out of school children (5.1 percent) with 795,089 children reported to be out of the schooling system.⁵⁸⁷ With a 70 percent literacy

⁵⁸⁷ *All India Status of Education Report 2011-2012; All India Survey of Out of School Children of Age 5 & 6-13 Years Age-group, 2010.*

rate in 2011, the state has the second-lowest literacy rate in the country, second only to Bihar (67.8 percent). Its female literacy rate of 52.7 percent is the lowest in the country.⁵⁸⁸

I attribute Rajasthan's failure to build a social consensus on education on the top-down and elitist nature of its education programs and the absence of a broader culture of community participation in the state. The absence of mass participation has affected the education sector—the historical idea that education is an exclusive preserve of the elite has precluded community participation and continued to hamper the goals of child labor eradication and universal education in Rajasthan. Similarly, the absence of political support in Rajasthan for elimination of child labor has also hampered the issue.

7.7 Evidence for H7e: Culture of Community Participation

In the past decade, civil society in Rajasthan is credited with bringing about three major successes that have spread throughout India: the right to information, the right to work, and the right to decentralized management of water.⁵⁸⁹ Two of these civil society campaigns that started in Rajasthan went on to become nationwide movements that translated into national laws such as the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005 and the Right to Information Act, 2008. The success of these movements gives the impression of a dynamic grassroots participation in Rajasthan, but such a conclusion must be drawn with caution.⁵⁹⁰ Though one cannot undermine the mass impact of these campaigns, it would be premature to conclude that these stand-alone campaigns have created a genuine culture of community participation in the state. The campaigns in Rajasthan did not take on the character of broad-based social movements like those in Andhra since their mass base was limited to small geographical areas and were restricted to specific issues.⁵⁹¹ Unlike in Andhra, where social movements were led by the plebeian classes and relied on large-scale mass participation, the social campaigns in Rajasthan have mostly been led by elites and are not entirely inclusive in character.

The absence of social movements that challenge hierarchical social relations have aided the persistence of feudal and patriarchal consciousness in Rajasthan.⁵⁹² Caste continues to be significant with regard to social relationships, marriage, occupational pursuits, and in influencing people's livelihood choices and strategies.⁵⁹³ Rajasthan has the highest crime rates against *Dalits* in the country.⁵⁹⁴ Huge indebtedness among *Dalits* has resulted in bonded labor where their position to bargain for wage is considerably reduced. Disputes relate to land

⁵⁸⁸ Census of India 2011

⁵⁸⁹ Bhargava 2007

⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹² Rajvanshi 2005

⁵⁹³ Vyas *et al* 2007

⁵⁹⁴ Zafar, A. "Steep Rise of Violence against SCs, STs in Rajasthan." March 09, 2014. *India Tomorrow*.

reforms and distribution of surplus land, irrigation rights, use of common pastures, and allotment of house sites. The absence of a vibrant civil society has exacerbated the intergenerational transmission of poverty and deprivation among the *Dalits*. In fact, Rajasthan was on the verge of a caste war in 2004 among two main caste groups (the Gujjars and the Meenas) on the issue of reservations in government jobs.⁵⁹⁵ Unlike Andhra which has had an intense civil society movement against caste atrocities since the pre-independence period, the historically marginalized groups in Rajasthan have not been included in mainstream civil society campaigns. Lower castes in Andhra have made their presence felt in political parties like the TDP and the CPM, but representation of the lower castes in governance and politics in Rajasthan is still quite low.⁵⁹⁶

Similarly, civil society movements in Rajasthan have not adequately reflected women's issues. Women in Rajasthan participated in the national movement, but thereafter, the impact of the women's movement has almost been minimal. A women's movement in Rajasthan in the 1980s attempted to address issues related to the violence of women, the unequal relationships at home and in the workplace. Though the movement managed to draw attention to certain high profile cases of *sati*, rape and sexual harassment in the workplace, the impact of these campaigns in changing unequal gender relations has been short-lived.⁵⁹⁷ The women's movement has ebbed in the state and has failed to challenge prevailing patriarchal norms to bring about equitable participation in civil society.⁵⁹⁸

In fact, studies confirm that some problems related to women have accentuated.⁵⁹⁹ Since 2000, the child sex ratio has worsened due to female feticide. Child marriage and teenage pregnancies are the norm in the larger part of rural Rajasthan. Rajasthan has a higher gender-gap in literacy than any other country in the world. The status of women's movement in Rajasthan is different from the one in Andhra where women have led very powerful movements like the anti-*arrack* movement in the 1980s. Though it would be an overestimation to say that gender barriers and caste hierarchies have disappeared or substantially declined in Andhra, caste and gender barriers to education have blurred owing to inclusive civil society movements.

The non-inclusive nature of civil society mobilization in Rajasthan could be attributed to the manner in which civil society has historically evolved in Rajasthan. Prior to independence, Rajasthan consisted of the twenty-two states of Rajputana which were ruled by Rajput princes. The most prominent civil society movements in the pre-independence period

⁵⁹⁵ Parihar, R. "Caste in Conflict: Caste Cauldron between the Gujjars and Meenas." June 11, 2007. *India Today*.

⁵⁹⁶ Bhandari, P. "Rajasthan Politics: Its Caste Politics All the Way." October 13, 2013. *The Times of India*.

⁵⁹⁷ The movement addressed issues like Bhanwari Devi rape case, Roop Kanwar sati case and issues of sexual harassment at the workplace. The Women's Development Program, a collaborative effort of government and NGOs attempted to correct the gender imbalance in Rajasthani society and had an effect of strengthening the women's movement. However, the movement was shortlived.

⁵⁹⁸ John 2005

⁵⁹⁹ Vyas *et al* 2007

were the *Praja Mandals*, the *Kshatriya* limited to members of a particular caste. The *Praja Mandals* which organized separately in each of the twenty-two princely states in urban areas were founded by urban elites from ritually high castes who had been introduced to Western political ideas and forms of political protest in the British-administered provinces of India through education, travel, kinship and trade. The *Kshatriya Mahasabha* was a caste association of the ruling elite and recruited mostly from Rajput *jagirdars* (landlords). The *Kisan Sabhas* formed across small pockets in the state were almost exclusively an organization of the *Jat* peasants, but later also included *Sirvis* and *Vishnois*—the main *sudra* (Scheduled Castes) castes of Rajasthan.⁶⁰⁰ Thus the three main independent civil society movements in the pre independence period were ascriptive membership-based organizations drawn from among the elites.

The initial movements were not directed against the old order nor associated with the nationalist movement in the British Provinces, but included such activities as the creation of educational and social uplift institutions, protests against the export of foodstuff from the state, and demands for additional positions for local men in the administrative services of the state. They were directed at protecting the status quo instead of questioning hierarchical caste-based relationships. This was in marked contrast to Andhra Pradesh which had seen an active communist movement in the Telengana region in the pre-independence period. In the post-independence period, active Naxalite and *Dalit* movements have questioned unequal class or caste relations in the state. However, such a political discourse to question the caste-class divisions hasn't taken root in Rajasthan.

Even in the post-independence period, the trajectory of civil society in Rajasthan has largely been elite-oriented.⁶⁰¹ With independence, there was competition among elite civil society groups as to who would fill the new positions of power that had opened up in the government after independence. The Congress Party units in the districts, which were formed on an *ad hoc* basis in 1949, were limited initially to those activists who had "invested" in the protest movements and almost all of whom were from urban areas. The Congress elites sought to extend their base of political support in the rural areas by purposively co-opting the *Jat* and *Rajput* elites of the erstwhile *Kisan Sabhas*, *Praja Mandals* and *Kshatriya Mahasabhas*.

An expansive network of linkages was formed where the urban-based Congress built linkages with the established rural elite to garner support in the rural areas.⁶⁰² The politicization of civil society in Rajasthan has led to a fairly high degree of circulation of elites within the political system. Though dominant high caste leaders have continually found

⁶⁰⁰ and were Jodhpur, Bikaner and Shekhawati area of Jaipur State and developed autonomously from the urban movements, although in two areas there were leadership links between the *Praja Mandals* and the *Kisan Sabhas*.

⁶⁰¹ Bhargava 2007

⁶⁰² Sisson 1966; Sisson 1971

representation on state and district level bodies, the availability of "non- political" but politically important roles are also determined by ascriptive status and relations of kinship.⁶⁰³ These include the institutions of *Panchayati Raj*, the State Cooperative Union, the State Cooperative Banks and finally positions within the state bureaucracy. The co-optation of leaders of erstwhile civil society movements into the Congress system has undermined the autonomous character of civil society.⁶⁰⁴ This is different in Andhra where factions of civil society have steadfastly maintained their autonomy from the state. In fact Andhra's CSOs, particularly the NGO sector, has been instrumental in questioning the development discourse of the state.

Historically, there have only been sporadic social reform movements to address the inequitable social relations but they were limited in scope and have had little enduring effect. For instance, in the year 1923, the *Arya Samaj* initiated efforts for social reform of the sweeper community in the state. The *Harijan Sevak Sangh* formed by Gandhi during the national movement worked among the *Dalits* in Rajasthan. The *Praja Mandals* opposed bonded labor. A number of caste organizations like *Marwah Mehtar Sudhar Parishad*, the *Marwah Lok Parishad* and *Mehtar Sudhar Parishad* have worked among their respective castes. However, each of these movements was issue-specific and did not involve a broader questioning of inequitable social relations. Nor have these movements pushed for land reforms which have been the primary focus of caste movements in Andhra Pradesh.

In fact, Rajasthan's civil society consists of a plethora of caste associations that protect the interests of specific castes.⁶⁰⁵ These caste organizations have been associated with negative externalities in that they are undemocratic and often consist of self-designated 'elders' with vested interests to protect. Further, the dispersed demography of *Dalits* all over the state and intra-caste hierarchy even amongst the *Dalits* themselves has precluded solidarity among the *Dalit* movements in Rajasthan. An expert on civil society in Rajasthan says, "The notions of purity and pollution are far deep-rooted and requires a larger social reform movement in the state, but there is no civil society group even in its infancy to initiate this."⁶⁰⁶

Since the 1980s, civil society in Rajasthan has witnessed the emergence of a large NGO sector. The 1980s drew attention to Rajasthan as a poor drought-prone zone and as a state with worse human development indicators than sub-Saharan states. This brought about a lot of foreign donor funds into Rajasthan and led to the explosive expansion of the NGO sector. NGOs were also seen as an important actor to facilitate community participation. A large number of initiatives were started in the areas of watershed development, sanitation,

⁶⁰³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰⁵ Rudolph and Rudolph 1960; Jaitley and Sharma 2006

⁶⁰⁶ Bhargava 2007; p. 276

health, education, and drought mitigation. However, even these initiatives failed to create a permanent ethos of participative democracy in the state. Most of these initiatives were donor-funded independent programs that were separate from the mainstream government departments and failed to create a sustainable change in the bureaucracy and the state. Once donor funding dried up, many of the programs collapsed.⁶⁰⁷

Notwithstanding the elite nature of civil society in Rajasthan, there have been successful campaigns in the state. The 1990s saw a large number of campaigns like the Right to Information (RTI) campaign by the *Mazdoor Kisaan Shakti Sangathan* (MKSS), the right to food campaign, and right to water campaign. Though these campaigns have brought massive change on specific issues, it is yet to create a sense of empowerment for the marginalized groups. Given the weak capacity of the state, and the failure of any political party to programmatically champion inclusive development, a genuine culture of community participation is still elusive. In recent years, the state government has asserted greater control over the NGO sector. GONGOs (or government sponsored NGOs) has become the norm in Rajasthan with the government contracting out development projects to the NGO sector.

This is in marked contrast to Andhra where the state is building collaborative networks with the NGO sector. Bhargava (2007) says that the social campaigns and the CSOs in Rajasthan are reminiscent of the national movement in that they do not make a frontal attack on feudalism or patriarchy. They focus on getting funds from the government and utilizing it in small scale projects. In contrast, the NGO sector in Andhra has played a vital role in bringing dynamism into civil society campaigns against the government's post-liberal development model. In fact, many activists in Andhra are drawn from the erstwhile communist movements in the state. Having worked for decades in remote villages, they are experts at community mobilization and have a high degree of identification with the problems of the poor. However, in Rajasthan, NGOs are formed by those who have traditionally had access to education and resources. This means that most are formed by higher castes. The lower castes, especially the *Adivasis* who live isolated lives in rural areas find little identification with these NGOs.⁶⁰⁸

Though civil society in Rajasthan has provided means to bring about institutional change in the state, the absence of a mass base has failed to build people's power. The state is not seen as an arena of political contestation but as a provider of social goods. Civil society, rather than being autonomous, actually functions within the terrain charted out by the state. There remains an unfinished agenda of social transformation. Bhargava (2007) argues: "The civil society effort to build a democratic consciousness...still remains on the margin and there is a big and frightening silence on their part. The near absence of social reform and people's

⁶⁰⁷ Ramachandran 2001

⁶⁰⁸ Interview with NGO activist from Gayatri Seva Sansthan, Udaipur, July 13, 2013.

movements in the state show that chance and circumstances could dominate for a long time in the feudal patriarchal and casteist mind-set of the people of Rajasthan.⁶⁰⁹

7.7.1 *The Impact of Low Community Participation on the Social Consensus on Education*

The absence of a culture of community participation has adversely impacted the building of a social consensus on education. In the following analysis, I show how the poor culture of community participation is related to the failure of government educational interventions in the past through programs such as Shiksha Karmi and Lok Jumbish to improve the status of education. Despite such interventions, Rajasthan remains a state where education among *Dalits*, *Adivasis*, and women remains abysmally low. The absence of a culture of community participation also provides the context within which we may be able to understand the failure of civil society campaigns in Udaipur to stop child labor and universalize education.

Traditionally, education has been the exclusive preserve of the higher castes in Rajasthan.⁶¹⁰ Educational institutions in the pre-independence period were founded either by kings in their respective principalities, or by the communities. The Hindu *Pathshalas* and Muslim *Makhtabs*, mainly sponsored by parents, were informal arrangements in comparison to the ‘royal’ schools, and either existed as a source of income for the teachers, or out of the teachers’ sense of moral obligation. The ruling elite believed that education, being too dangerous to be extended to “low” castes, had to be imparted only to Brahmins and, at the most, trading communities.⁶¹¹ This attitude often transcended personal preference and was reflected in their states’ policies. Education in pre-independence Rajasthan was, therefore, based on patronage, either by the royalty or by influential members of the local community. While it did affirm the key role of public provisioning of education, its sphere was limited both in terms of the area covered, and the skills taught, as the students and teachers were mainly either from the royal or noble households or were “beneficiaries” of occasional munificence.⁶¹²

The poor performance in the education sector continued in the post-independence period up until the 1990s. According to the 1991 census, Rajasthan ranked the lowest in overall literacy with a literacy rate of 38.8 percent. The male literacy rate was 44 percent and the female literacy rate was 20.4 percent.⁶¹³ However, between 1991 and 2001, Rajasthan made rapid strides in the education sector. The progress made is particularly reflected in rapid increases in literacy and enrolment in elementary education. In 2001, the literacy rate of

⁶⁰⁹ Bhargava 2007; p. 261

⁶¹⁰ Clarke and Jha 2006

⁶¹¹ *Ibid.*

⁶¹² Bajpai and Dholakia 2006

⁶¹³ Census of India 1991

Rajasthan increased to 60.41 percent, with male literacy rate at 75.7 percent and female literacy rate at 43.9 percent.⁶¹⁴ This was the highest leap in the literacy rate of any state within a decade, with female literacy increasing by over 20 percentage points. Even dropout rates decreased from 77 percent in 1989 to 54 percent in 1998 at primary level and from 80 percent to 60 percent at upper primary level.

Deaton and Dreze (2000) refer to the impact of ‘public action’ on improvements in education in the 1990s decade in Rajasthan. Four programs in Rajasthan were credited with bringing about rapid increases in literacy: i) Shiksha Karmi ii) Lok Jumbish iii) Women’s Development Program (WDP) and iv) the campaign for the right to information by the MKSS. While the Lok Jumbish and Shiksha Karmi were directly related to universalization of elementary education, the WDP and the MKSS had peripheral impacts on the improvement of education. All of these programs, except the MKSS campaign were run by the government and were largely funded by foreign donors.

The Shiksha Karmi and the Lok Jumbish were started by donor funding from a Swiss agency known as Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) in the late 1980s. The Shiksha Karmi project was initiated in 1987 as a collaborative venture between the GoI, the Government of Rajasthan, and SIDA. Shiksha Karmi, which literally means ‘education advocate’, sought to address the problems of teacher absenteeism and low attendance in remote rural areas of the state where government primary schools were either non-existent or dysfunctional.⁶¹⁵ The concept of Shiksha Karmi rests on the assumption that local youth, who enjoy the support of the community, could play a powerful role in convincing parents to send children to school. The main strategy of the Shiksha Karmi program was to identify youth from the local community with some basic education and train them to teach children in Shiksha Karmi day schools, *prehar pathshalas* (schools of convenient timings) and *aangan pathshalas* (courtyard schools). The *prehar pathshalas* were particularly designed to accommodate working children who could not attend school at regular timings. NGOs were involved in the program to ensure right selection of Shiksha Karmi workers. Local *gram panchayats* were trained to administer the Shiksha Karmi program. Thus decentralized management and community participation were the core principles of the Shiksha Karmi program.

The Shiksha Karmi program came to be regarded as one of the most successful primary education programs in India. A total of 2,700 day schools, 4,335 *prehar pathshalas*, and 97 *aangan pathshalas* were established in 2,697 villages in 32 districts in the state. The project catered to 202,000 students (including 84,000 girls) and created employment for 6,085

⁶¹⁴ Census of India 2001

⁶¹⁵ Ramachandran and Sethi 2001

youth by training them as Shiksha Karmis.⁶¹⁶ It created community mobilization through the activation of 2,137 VECs who monitored the schools and recruited Shiksha Karmis. NGOs provided on-going training and support and also participated in community mobilization. The learning levels of students in these schools were found to be comparable to students in regular government schools. Thus, community participation in selection of education workers and management of schools was successful in bringing children into the schooling process.

Close on the heels of Shiksha Karmi, the Lok Jumbish project was another program launched to universalize elementary education in 1992. Lok Jumbish was centred on the premise that participatory planning was the key to creating a comprehensive education system tailored to meet local needs. The central strategy of Lok Jumbish was the participation of community in the process of school mapping and allocation of resources to the local school. The mapping exercise involved diagnosing the coverage of present education service, projecting the number of students to be enrolled in each village or hamlet, defining the norms governing the creation of schools, and creating a local operational plan.⁶¹⁷

The idea of school mapping originally started in France and was conducted by the school administration. The French model was based on the assumption that once schools and teachers are supplied, students would inevitably come to school. However, in Rajasthan, the community was made responsible for the school mapping exercise. The Rajasthan bureaucracy modified the French model since it recognized that in Rajasthan, the problem was not so much supply, as demand for education. Therefore, the Lok Jumbish especially focused on creating demand in the community by relying on genuine participation at the local level.⁶¹⁸ Hence, like the Shiksha Karmi program, Lok Jumbish was also designed to bring about a sense of ownership in the community towards the local school. This indicates the widespread recognition of the importance of creating a demand for education by building a social consensus on education in the community.

Between 1992 and 1997, Lok Jumbish program was extended to 9,755 villages across Rajasthan. A total of 4,006 school mappings were completed during this period based on which 383 primary schools and 454 new Shiksha Karmi Schools were opened. A total of 14,691 boys and 31,148 girls were trained in schools known as Sahaj Shiksha Kendras.⁶¹⁹ The program identified the special needs of adolescent girls who had missed school and set up 3,703 residential condensed courses known as Mahila Shikshan Vihars to address their educational needs. What was remarkable was the network of community groups that were

⁶¹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶¹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶¹⁸ Govinda 1999

⁶¹⁹ Ramachandran 2001

mobilized under this program. A total of 4,420 core teams and 2,816 women's groups were formed.

Thus, it is evident that all the programs that sought to universalize education in Rajasthan had community participation as a central component. It was understood that without the involvement of the local community, parents could not be convinced to send children to schools, nor could accountability of schools be ensured.⁶²⁰ Though both Shiksha Karmi and Lok Jumbish started out with a positive zeal, the enthusiasm generated by these programs gradually petered out. In 1997, when SIDA withdrew funding to both programs in the wake of India's nuclear tests the enthusiasm for these programs waned.

With the withdrawal of donor funds, the community participation aspect of the programs suffered the biggest impact.⁶²¹ The Shiksha Karmi program was subsequently supported by the British Department of International Development but the community participation dimension was significantly diluted.⁶²² In Phase III of the Project after 1997, in-built systems were given more importance than participation. Currently, Shiksha Karmi has been incorporated into the SSA but its original community participation dimension has been eliminated.

Similarly, the community driven decision making structure and processes followed in the Lok Jumbish were never really adopted in any of the projects that followed.⁶²³ Lok Jumbish's empowerment agenda for women alienated high caste leaders and some powerful (high caste) bureaucrats. In the new phase of the project, the empowerment agenda of Lok Jumbish was withdrawn. A similar fate befell Women's Development Programme (WDP) of Rajasthan. Upper caste patriarchs did not welcome this project, which involved hundreds of very poor women. The very fact that a high caste was challenged in a rape case against a lower caste WDP worker was cause enough for the upper caste leaders of Rajasthan across party lines to refuse to support the project. As a result it was neglected and let to decay after donor funds were withdrawn in 1993.

None of these projects were adequately locked in, institutionalized, or scaled up in spite of their initial success in bringing about visible change in the primary education sector. Vimala Ramachandran, who evaluated the Shiksha Karmi project in Rajasthan, wrote:

“Sustainability has remained a big issue in Rajasthan. Programmes and projects have a tendency to be identified with the founders. Given the overall administrative and political environment in the state-societal commitment for basic education, women's development, empowerment of *dalits*, and other backward/disadvantaged classes and communities cannot be taken for granted. Top level political or across the board administrative commitment is not visible for the above issues. As a result, individual administrators with personal zeal/commitment introduce programmes with an agenda of equality and empowerment. Often these projects are seen as something on the sidelines. The rest of the mainline is at best dismissive. In a feudal social,

⁶²⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶²¹ Govinda 1999

⁶²² Ramachandran 2001

⁶²³ Ramachandran 2001

political and administrative climate, commitment to individuals is given precedence over commitment to an idea or a goal. As a result, such out-of-the-way projects tend to get caught in conflicts.⁶²⁴

The impact of withdrawal of community participation angle had an adverse impact on the elementary education sector. The progress made in education in the decade of the 80s and 90s was reversed. In the late 1990s, there was an obvious regression in the literacy scene in the state. Enrolment rates declined and enrolment decline for girls began earlier than for boys. Even dropout rates in Rajasthan began to increase. This trend has continued in the 2000s as well. Even in 2009, the drop-out rate for girls is seventy-four percent at the primary level, highest among all the states in India.⁶²⁵ Even though funds were invested through subsequent programs such as the District Primary Education Program, the problems of marginalization of girls and lower caste students remain.

The CRC Report for Rajasthan 2000 refers to the impact of the absence of a culture of community participation:

“The school and the community are inseparable. Truly they have been made for each other to serve the cause of mutual benefit. But by and large, their mutual relations have not been as healthy as they should have been. Teachers have no contact with the people and the people have developed an attitude of no concern towards the school, except to send their children to school. They feel that they cannot influence the working of the school. There are examples where teachers have done wonders and been able to enrol cent percent children in the school, irrespective of the prevalent poverty in the village. They have also been able to get public cooperation for infrastructural facilities. There is no denying the fact that the people would meet the needs of the school if the schools too would meet their needs.”⁶²⁶

A serious fall-out of the absence of a culture of community participation is the failure to build community-based accountability channels. Unlike in Andhra where community-based accountability-mechanisms such as CRPFs, TFCRs, and women’s SHGs monitor schools, such channels of accountability are not proactive in Rajasthan.

The prevailing accountability mechanisms in the schools are the VECs at the village-level and the School Development Management Committees (SDMCs) at the school-level that are required to be set up under the SSA. Even these formal institutional structures have failed to make a significant impact. A study of VECs in Rajasthan in 2000 showed that sixteen percent of the villages surveyed did not have a VEC. In villages where VECs were established, forty percent were not functional. The headmasters in thirty-one percent of the schools surveyed said that the VECs were not useful.⁶²⁷ A 2012 study of the performance of SDMCs in fourteen states showed that they were not performing optimally in Rajasthan. The percentage of female representation on average is twenty-nine percent which is below the required norm of thirty-three percent. More than eighty percent of the members in SDMCs said that they had not received any training, and thirty-seven percent said that they were not aware of their functions under SDMC. The SDMCs key role is to mobilize the community—

⁶²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 2248

⁶²⁵ Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Rajasthan

⁶²⁶ Mehta 1993, p.78

⁶²⁷ *Social Assessment Study of District Primary Education Program (Rajasthan): Integrated Report 2000*

only eleven percent of the SDMCs claimed to have received any contribution from the community, one of the lowest among all fourteen states surveyed.⁶²⁸

The inadequate accountability mechanisms have affected the quality of schooling in Rajasthan. Currently, the main primary education program in the state is the SSA. A Comptroller and Auditor General's Report (2008) of the operation of SSA in seven districts in Rajasthan noted that delay in allotting funds, shortfall in achieving targets, lack of basic facilities had ensured that SSA in Rajasthan has failed to achieve its main objective of getting hundred percent enrolment of children in schools.⁶²⁹

An investigation by the NCPCR (2012) made the link between child labor and the schooling system in Rajasthan clear. The Report says that the discussions in the field as well as secondary source data reveals that while there is a systematic mobilization of children for the labor market, there is no such social mobilization for getting children back into school.⁶³⁰ Unlike the social mobilization process in Andhra, there have been no large scale movements in Rajasthan to withdraw children from child labor and send them to school. The stimulation towards universal education in Rajasthan has either come from donor funds or from senior bureaucracy. Unlike Andhra where policy change towards eradication of child labor and universal education came as a result of a bottom-up process of grassroots mobilization, such a process has not taken place in Rajasthan. It is little surprise then that even in 2012, three years after the passing of the Right to Education Act, five percent of children in Rajasthan continue to stay outside the schooling system and more than eight percent children continue to work—in the absence of a strong consensus among parents to send all children to school, many are sent to work to make something productive of their lives.

7.7.2 The Impact of Low Community Participation on Bureaucratic Effectiveness

In the Andhra case study, I documented the bureaucracy's flexibility and openness in collaborating with local NGOs, especially to reach remotest locations and hard-to-reach populations like adolescent girls, or child labor. The absence of a culture of community participation has hampered bureaucracy-CSO collaboration in Rajasthan. Though CSOs were initially stakeholders in Shiksha Karmi and Lok Jumbish, their current role in the attempt towards universalization of education is much smaller compared to the role played by CSOs in Andhra Pradesh.

In Rajasthan, the bureaucracy-CSO relationship has gone through upheavals. Clarke & Jha (2005) argue that the move towards decentralization of education in the 1980s and 1990s was “developed consensually with civil society through a process of negotiation,

⁶²⁸ Singh 2011

⁶²⁹ “Rajasthan Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan Short of Target: CAG.” April 6, 2007. *The Indian Express*

⁶³⁰ Divyakar and Nayak 2012

contestation, and acceptance”⁶³¹The government, CSOs, and social movements were able to forge a common vision of the goals of educational reform that emphasized participation, empowerment, and equity. They argue: “The surge from the grassroots appears to have played a critical role in the development of this consensually driven vision that shaped educational reform in Rajasthan during the 1980s and much of the 1990s. Bureaucrats and politicians, two of the most powerful networks in the state, unofficially subscribed to this fluid or negotiated ideology driven by civil society.”⁶³² However, given the absence of any institutional or ideological change in the mainstream bureaucracy, this negotiated ideology of empowerment and equity proved to be short-lived.

The bureaucracy-CSO collaboration for universal education was contested and ultimately rejected when there was a change of regime in 1998. The new government in 1998 adopted a more bureaucratic approach towards the universalization of education, which involved marginalizing independent CSOs. The programs for universal education began to be monitored by state-sponsored CSOs and academic organizations affiliated to the state rather than autonomous and independent agencies, which in turn contributed to the deteriorating quality of the programs. Thus, “in the process, the new vision increasingly resembled the state’s view of education rather than a commonly shared perspective of the past.”⁶³³

The absence of a culture of community participation also explains the absence of trust between the bureaucracy and CSOs in Rajasthan. A senior researcher, who runs the GO-NGO Collaboration Center in the Institute of Development Studies, Jaipur says, “In many areas in Rajasthan, CSOs working for many years run them like their own personal fiefdoms. They get funds from foreign donors and refuse to be accountable to the bureaucracy. Many CSOs are also dependent on the government for funds, so they cannot question the government.”⁶³⁴ Such a negative perception of CSOs has hampered bureaucracy-CSO collaboration in Rajasthan.

This is in contrast to Andhra where CSOs have been able to carve out a space for themselves in interactions with the bureaucracy. This openness can be attributed to the proactive people’s movements and the experience of the bureaucracy in interacting with these pressures from below. A Political Science professor of Osmania University in Hyderabad said, “In states such as Andhra and Tamil Nadu, the bureaucracy is a well-oiled institutional framework and they are known to have taken up their own agenda independent of political actors, for instance, food programs, welfare programs, etc. The system itself is very mature which has evolved over time in interaction with social movements. These states have had a

⁶³¹ Clarke and Jha 2006. p.243

⁶³² *Ibid.*

⁶³³ Clarke and Jha 2006 *op. cit.*, p. 252

⁶³⁴ Interview with researcher at the GO-NGO Collaboration Center, Jaipur, September 2, 2012

history of intense social movements which have been able to carve a space for interaction within the bureaucratic domain.”⁶³⁵

Unlike in Andhra, where formal structures of collaboration are being conceived to institutionalize the bureaucracy-CSO collaboration and the attitude of bureaucrats towards CSOs is complementary, in Rajasthan, bureaucrats shy away from giving free rein to CSOs. The openly dismissive attitude towards CSOs is reflected in the Rajasthan government’s CRC Report (2000) which evaluates the primary education system in Rajasthan:

“NGOs can also help in universalization of education and act as a watchdog. Unfortunately there are only few such agencies especially working in rural areas. People also do not have any knowledge of them or their role. Only 3% of the parents are of the view that NGOs can garner support for education. Only 0.3% felt that NGOs can act as watchdog. On the whole, at present NGOs have no role in primary education except to establish primary schools, which they are doing in the urban areas for the sole purpose of money-making. On principle, voluntary agencies with a pious purpose can make a difference but in reality, the situation is different and the rural areas are starving directly in this regard.”⁶³⁶

Further, expert on civil society in Rajasthan, Bhargava (2007) refers to this same lack of trust in his evaluation of Shiksha Karmi and Lok Jumbish:

“Responding to voices from below on a sustained basis was beyond the extant capacities of the state, and the programs collapsed, at least in spirit. The experiments proved that a Leviathan state works with an iron hand likes uniformity in norms, rules and regulations, and discredits flexibility and diverse opinions. The fait accompli of other programmes with an interface with NGOs in the 1990s and 2000s has been similar or even worse. The state fails to recognize the comparative advantages of working together with NGOs. Far from taking benefit from them, they would like the state to be an extended arm of the government (or even contractors), which a few refuse, but there are many who would succumb to such a treatment and invariably join hands with the rentier class of the state.”⁶³⁷

Though CSOs have their own share of grouses against the bureaucracy, they are reluctant to be openly critical of the government because the most common kind of bureaucracy-CSO relationship in Rajasthan is where Governments funds the CSO to implement government schemes.⁶³⁸ An NGO activist said that they have to pay bribes to bureaucrats to get approval for schemes. There is intense competition among the NGOs to get the largest share of the funding-pie and often funding goes to those NGOs with the closest political connections.⁶³⁹

CSOs in Rajasthan exhibit a general inability to work with the lower ranks of the bureaucracy.⁶⁴⁰ CSOs enter into agreements with senior bureaucrats, while dynamics at the lower levels are left to sort themselves out. This neglect rarely works in favor of collaboration. Such perceived links between CSOs and senior bureaucrats also results in increased alienation of line officials. In Andhra, it was the other way round: the MVF movement started with collaboration with the lower levels of the bureaucracy such as teachers and headmasters and block-level education officers. In fact, it was the successful

⁶³⁵ July 3, 2012

⁶³⁶ DPEP: SAS Report 2000 *op. cit.*, p. 97

⁶³⁷ Bhargava 2007 *op. cit.*, p. 261

⁶³⁸ Arya 1999

⁶³⁹ Interview with NGO staff of local NGO, Jaipur, September 5, 2012.

⁶⁴⁰ Arya 1999

collaboration at the lower ranks of the bureaucracy that attracted the attention of the senior bureaucracy. In Rajasthan, it is rare for collaborative initiatives to be institutionalized or made formal and hence they last only as long as the individual government officer remains in the post. On the other hand, in Andhra the NGO-state collaboration has been formally institutionalized within the state's Education Department.⁶⁴¹

The tenuous relationship between the local administration and the bureaucracy has reduced the efficacy of initiatives designed to stop child labor in Rajasthan. CSOs lose out on the benefits the administration can provide in terms of providing legitimacy to their activities, and scaling up of innovations. The bureaucracy also loses out the opportunity to reach out to the village communities through the platform of civil society groups. The absence of synergistic efforts between the government and civil society has in turn, hampered the task of building a widespread social consensus on education.

In Chapter 6, I showed how there was an attitudinal shift in the bureaucracy's perspective on child labor—that the state of Andhra has accepted that child labor is a cause of poverty (rather than poverty being a cause of child labor), and has consequently made child labor elimination an important component of its poverty alleviation programs. Unlike in Andhra, where elimination of child labor and universal education are seen as two sides of the same coin, this link in Rajasthan has at best been tenuous in policy. The changes to elementary education policies in Rajasthan were shaped by senior bureaucrats who drew from the national policies on education, mainly the 1986 National Policy on Education 1986, the National Adult Education Program (1978) and the National Literacy Mission (1988). As such the changes that were introduced to universalize education in Rajasthan were mostly imposed from above.

Further, programs like the Shiksha Karmi and Lok Jumbish failed to create transformation in the attitudes of the mainstream bureaucracy towards the ideal of universal education. Obviously, this has allowed the permissive attitude towards child labor to also continue. Both the Shiksha Karmi and the Lok Jumbish programs were administered by autonomous societies led by a senior bureaucrat, but largely run by locally recruited paraprofessionals. This structure was conceived in order to create flexibility and openness in administering the education programs. However, the special institutions set up under these programs remained islands of sorts and failed to create a dent in the mainstream educational bureaucracy.⁶⁴² These autonomous projects had a different work culture—officers travelled abroad, had access to vehicles, and were governed by more liberal rules than the officers of the state bureaucracy. The constant comparison with the “inefficient mainstream” created jealousies and pitted the officers of the special programs against the bureaucrats in the formal

⁶⁴¹ Interview with District Commissioner, Udaipur, July 13, 2012.

⁶⁴² Ramachandran 2001

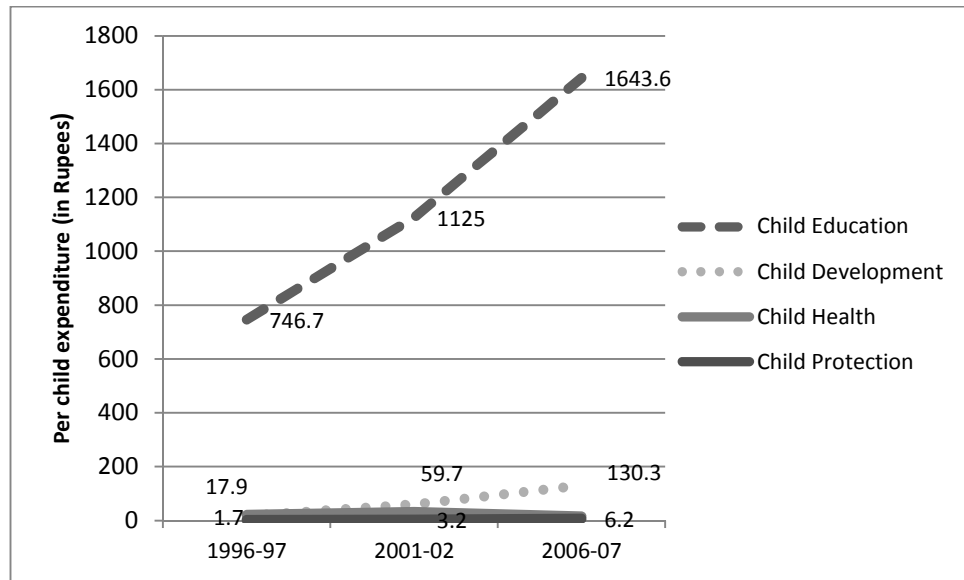
system. So when the programs lost donor funding, the mainstream bureaucracy was only too eager to take over the reins. Clarke and Jha (2006) argue, “The state’s educational bureaucracy which had chafed at the independence displayed by societies responsible for running programs, such as Shiksha Karmi and Lok Jumbish, now flexed their muscles to regain lost ground.”⁶⁴³ This might explain why notwithstanding the Shiksha Karmi and Lok Jumbish Programs in 1990s, there was no fundamental reorientation of the mainstream bureaucracy’s attitudes towards child labor and universal education.

The attitude that prevails in the mainstream bureaucracy is to tackle poverty first, and then, child labor. A senior bureaucrat of the Udaipur district administration said, “This region is so poor. Unless we deal with poverty, there is no point in focusing on education.” This attitude is pervasive in policy as well. In 2008, the Government of Rajasthan enacted the ‘Rajasthan Child Policy’ with the main objectives of “creating a secure, safe and reliable environment for every child to grow, develop and survive with dignity without any discrimination or prejudice.” The goals set out in the policy are to ensure nutrition and food security of all children, to ensure that all children get quality education up to the secondary (high school) level, to protect children from all forms of abuse and exploitation, to ensure adequate health care, to provide care for children with HIV and AIDS, to provide access to safe drinking water and sanitation, and to ensure coordination between concerned stakeholders and child participation.” Child labor elimination does not find mention in the Rajasthan Child Policy. Unlike Andhra which came up with a bill to eliminate all child labor and universalize education way back in 2000, Rajasthan passed a policy to ban all child labor only in 2010.

The explicit link between child labor and universal education made in the education policies in Andhra is not made in Rajasthan. All child related issues, including child labor, are under the aegis of the Department of Social Empowerment. In Andhra, child labor eradication is under the Education Department. Further, given that child labor levels are increasing in Rajasthan, the budget allocation towards child labor is abysmally low. Table 7.2 shows a breakdown of budgetary expenditure on child centred programs in Rajasthan between 1996 and 2007. Though overall expenditures on child centred programs have improved, the highest amount of expenditure has been on education, but child protection, which covers child labor receives the lowest amount of funds.

⁶⁴³ Clarke and Jha 2006 *op. cit.*, p. 252

Figure 7.3: Per Child Expenditure on Child-centred Programs in Rajasthan Budget 1996-97 to 2006-07



Source: Rajasthan: Tracking Public Investments in Children, 2011

The culture of low community participation creates a tenuous relationship between CSOs and the bureaucracy. This has impeded the bureaucracy from marshalling the potential of CSOs to reach out to Adivasis in the remote rural areas and adopt localized solutions. Further, CSO innovations have not achieved widespread dispersion. Even programs that supported community participation such as Shiksha Karmi and Lok Jumbish have been weakened and the top-down imposition of these programs has failed to create an ideological shift in the attitudes of the mainstream bureaucracy. As such, Rajasthan government continues to adopt the traditional line that poverty alleviation is a precondition to eradicating child labor.

7.8 Evidence for H7f: Political Support

In Chapter 6, I described how the Telugu Desam Government under Chandrababu Naidu in Andhra Pradesh urged the bureaucracy to push the anti-child labor agenda forward. A similar consensus towards universal education was evident in the 1990s in Rajasthan which enabled the Shiksha Karmi and Lok Jumbish to be launched. Like in Andhra, the vision of education that drove Rajasthan's education policy in the 1990s was broadly shared by both the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the two prominent political parties in the state. Indeed one of the most striking features of educational policy in Rajasthan was its bipartisan nature. Chief Ministers of both the Congress and the BJP remain committed to a vision of education that emphasized community participation, female empowerment, and working in close association with Rajasthan's NGOs. This in turn greatly facilitated education

reform in the state.”⁶⁴⁴ NGOs created a positive environment for success of these projects by contesting traditional ideologies that placed less emphasis on the education of children from lower castes and disadvantaged communities. The development of a common vision for education in Rajasthan upholding empowerment and equity (and shared by state and NGOs alike) supported the effective implementation of the public action initiatives during this period.

However, the 1998 state elections resulted in a fracturing of the bipartisan consensus that had developed in education policy in the past two decades. The new regime under Congress Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot undercut the decentralized and debureaucratized trajectories of educational projects in the state. The 2004 government centralized the recruitment of teachers at primary and upper primary level which was so far decentralized to the district level. Recentralization of teacher recruitment in the state is an example of how bureaucracy and state level politicians succeed in reversing the delegation of power to local government bodies. The new regime adopted a more bureaucratic approach to implement its vision which involved marginalizing independent CSOs. The program began to be monitored by state-registered CSOs and academic agencies rather than independent agencies. This contributed to the deteriorating quality of the programs. Thus it is evident that the same trend towards decentralization and participatory governance in education that was encouraged by the TDP government in Andhra Pradesh could not be created in Rajasthan.

It is the same absence of political support that was evident even at the block-level on the issue of child labor in the hybrid cottonseed industry in Udaipur. DRMU activists alleged that local politicians from a particular political party have strong linkages with the transport mafia; as such they virulently oppose any effort to stop the recruitment of children. In contrast, in Kurnool district in Andhra, the elected representatives at the local level supported the anti-child labor campaign. Interviews with MVF activists across Kurnool revealed that they did not receive any undue pressure from politicians. Though some of them may have been apathetic, activists in Kurnool did not report any confrontation with political activists. In fact, many elected representatives utilized the anti-child labor platform to garner the support of the community.

Further, officials in Rajasthan claim that the reluctance of Gujarat government officials to cooperate on the issue of child labor is due to political pressure. With cotton fast becoming a political issue in poll-bound Gujarat, the state’s Chief Minister is very protective of the interests of cotton farmers. The Chief Minister introduced insurance policies to protect cotton farmers and even criticized the Prime Minister when cotton exports were banned by the central government for a limited period. An official from the Labor Department of Udaipur

⁶⁴⁴ Clarke and Jha 2006 *op. cit.*, p. 244

said, “If a bureaucrat from Gujarat admits officially that there is child labor in the cotton-fields of Gujarat, he might lose his job.” An admission that child labor exists in cotton production in Gujarat is unacceptable since it would go against the interest of Gujarat’s cotton farmers who are an important vote-bank for the Chief Minister. Without Gujarat’s cooperation, the child trafficking issue in the cottonseed industry becomes all the more difficult to resolve.

7.9 Conclusion: The Way Forward in Rajasthan

In the past decade, there appears to be a revival of interest within the Rajasthan government involving the community in order to bring all children to school. In 2010, the state for the first time banned the employment of children across all occupations. As mentioned earlier, a Special Protocol on Migrating Children and District Task Forces are set to be established to deal with the issue of migrating children. In June 2012, the Chief Minister of Rajasthan, Ashok Gehlot launched the *Nanhe Haath Kalam Ke Saath*⁶⁴⁵ (NHHKS) campaign in collaboration with UNICEF to mark the ‘World Against Child Labor Day.’ A key aspect of the NHHKS campaign is to create a linkage to the community to government schemes and programs. It focuses on building child protection systems in the village, increase quality of education through teacher training, promote activity based learning, and mobilize *panchayats* and SDMCs to form vigilance mechanisms to prevent the migration of children for work. While UNICEF supports the state government with funds, the main implementation process is outsourced to local NGOs. The UNICEF coordinator of the NHHKS campaign said, “Till the time there is a social sanction against child labor, it is a big challenge to stop the process. That is why social mobilization for education is an important aspect of the NHHKS campaign.”⁶⁴⁶ The importance of a social consensus on education is recognized widely.

In this chapter, I showed that a purely punitive approach to rescuing child labor does not create sustainable results. CSOs that have focused on building a social consensus on education have been more successful in reducing child labor than CSOs that solely focus on rescuing children who go to work. Though CSO mobilization can play a key role in building a social consensus on education, the role of CSO’s collaboration with the bureaucracy is critical in ensuring dispersion of grassroots initiatives. Given the historically elitist nature of community participation in Rajasthan and the elitist bias in education, building a social consensus on education has been an intense challenge in the state. The attitude that poverty must be eliminated before all children have access to education continues to prevail—as such the commitment to universal education remains tenuous. On the other hand, Andhra Pradesh

⁶⁴⁵ Hindi *lit.* ‘Small Hands Holding Pens’

⁶⁴⁶ Interview with UNICEF officer, Udaipur city, July 6, 2012

showed that an attitudinal shift which envisions child labor eradication and universal education as precursors to poverty-alleviation can achieve sustainable declines in child labor. The success of Indian states in reducing child labor hinges, not on addressing poverty alone, but on their *genuine* commitment to universalizing education.

Chapter 8

Conclusion: Understanding Parental Motivation

8.1 Summarizing the Argument

Why have certain Indian states, not necessarily the wealthiest, seen a decline in rates of child labor, while child labor increases in other states? Why do poor parents in some states send their children to school while those in other states send their children to work? The theory developed in this dissertation answers those questions by focusing on the bureaucratic effectiveness (supply of educational facilities and quality of teachers) and the normative importance that parents place on education. Since bureaucracies implement education laws in the social context of a state, states that have high discrimination against lower castes or girl-children, will undercut the bureaucracy's efficacy in implementing education policy.

This theory is tested two ways: using national level survey data and comparative case studies. The findings in this study show compelling evidence that controlling for income, bureaucratic effectiveness in the delivery of education is correlated with the aggregate child labor rates at the state-level. At the individual-level too, parents' individual experience of bureaucratic effectiveness in schools is significantly associated with parental decision to send a child to work. Bureaucratic effectiveness is also significantly correlated with dropout rates, absenteeism rates and learning outcomes—factors that have been frequently associated in studies on child labor in pushing children into the workforce. Besides bureaucratic effectiveness, social consensus among caste groups, and the social consensus on female education emerges as significant predictors of child labor at both the state and the individual-level.

The case studies of child labor in the hybrid cottonseed industry in the two states of Andhra and Rajasthan sought to build on the national analysis by examining the over-time variation in the formation of a social consensus on education by CSOs. Within this broad context, the case studies examined the causal mechanisms through which bureaucratic effectiveness and social consensus affect parental motivation in sending children to work. The results of the controlled intra-state comparison of two blocks in Andhra found that child labor significantly declined in the block where a local CSO focused on mobilizing parents and community institutions to send all children to school, and to improve the accountability of the schooling system. Poverty was found to be less of a binding constraint on parents than the availability, accessibility, and quality of education available to the community. The Andhra case study also demonstrated that the collaboration of CSOs with the bureaucracy works to the benefit of both—while the former gains legitimacy from bureaucratic support, the latter gains insight into grassroots problems from CSOs' groundwork.

Further, the state-level analysis showed that Andhra's rich history of social movements had created a culture of community participation and a plethora of vibrant grassroots style organizations which opened the doors for local CSOs to build community-level linkages to ensure that schools function well, and children in the community are protected. The vibrant culture of community participation also explains the bureaucracy's openness and flexibility in incorporating innovative grassroots interventions into state policy. The demonstration of an efficacious model centred on accessible education has enabled the state to adopt a paradigmatic shift towards child labor—that poverty is not so much an obstacle to child labor, as educational deprivation is, and eliminating child labor is an essential step towards mitigating poverty. This attitudinal shift has created a new urgency in tackling child labor with child labor eradication being integrated into the poverty alleviation strategies of the state.

The Andhra case-study is compared to trends in child labor in Rajasthan, a state that has witnessed intensive civil society mobilization like Andhra, but has failed to generate comparable decline in levels of child labor. Intra-state comparison of two blocks within Rajasthan showed that CSOs that focused solely on rescuing children succeeded in attracting media attention and galvanizing the state to pass institutional measures, but such initiatives did not translate into actual reduction of child labor. However, strategies of mobilization that involved building a social consensus on education were successful in reducing child labor even in Rajasthan. The Rajasthan case study also demonstrated that the extensive CSO-bureaucracy linkage that led to the perpetuation of social consensus on education in Andhra was not evident in Rajasthan. This demonstrated conclusively that the effect of decline in child labor as a consequence of building a social consensus on education was not unique to one state, and could be replicated across states. Strengthening the schooling system and weakening the social sanction for child labor has a net effect of increasing parental motivation for education.

Further, an analysis of the development of civil society in Rajasthan showed how the elitist character of social movements has precluded the formation of widespread community participation in Rajasthan. The absence of a culture of community participation is also reflected in the implementation of elementary education. Though Rajasthan has been home to some innovative elementary education projects, these projects have been implemented in a top-down fashion and have failed to bring about attitudinal transformation in the mainstream bureaucracy. As a consequence, Rajasthan follows the conventional norm that poverty causes child labor and therefore the link between elementary education and child labor remains tenuous in policy.

8.2 Theoretical Implications and Areas for Future Research

8.2.1 Child Labor and Educational Deprivation: A Comparative Perspective

While this dissertation presents a comparative study of several states within one country, its central argument resonates with the obstacles in reducing child labor in other functioning democracies. Scholars argue that compulsory education is a precursor to child labor eradication—the instances of western industrial democracies (e.g. USA or Germany), post-communist regimes (e.g. North Vietnam, Cuba), or imperial regimes (e.g. Japan, South Korea) are presented as illustrations of how compulsory education predated child labor elimination. Such studies fail to take into account a key difference of such regimes with developing democracies—i.e. the difference in the compliance with laws. While western industrial democracies, post-communist regimes and western industrial democracies have enforced compliance through punishment of parents, countries such as India are reluctant to impose a legal duty on parents to send children to school. Even India's RTE Act passed in 2009 imposes a duty on the state to provide free education to all children in the age-group of five to fourteen years, but falls short of penalizing parents who fail to send their children to school.

The influence of the prevailing legal regime on the compliance with child labor and universal education laws is undermined in studies on child labor. This dissertation presents an opportunity to examine how adherence to universal education and child labor laws is implemented in a developing democracy with a history of poor compliance with social legislation. Countries such as Brazil, Zambia, Nepal, Peru, and the like face much the same issues with child labor as India. Even if they have universal education laws or laws prohibiting child labor below a minimum age, they face the problem of compliance. The critical question when we look at comparative evidence that is relevant for India is how does one eliminate child labor in democracies, where neither ideology nor compulsion have forced the journey towards universal education and child labor elimination. Therefore, the influence of the legal regime should be taken into account in comparative research on child labor.

Further, studies on child labor in African and Latin American countries have shown similar results as studies in India—the ambiguous correlation of poverty and child labor, and the strong correlation of educational deprivation.⁶⁴⁷ As in India, scholars have also found that rates of child labor are higher at times when children have better work opportunities as measured by local labor market conditions, or when farm-size increases, thereby casting doubt on the traditional, simplistic view that poverty is the main factor which pushes children into the labor market. Though it is undeniably the children of the poor who go to work, the effect of poverty does not emerge in a very clear-cut manner in empirical studies on child

⁶⁴⁷ Coulombe, 1998; Canagarajah and Coulombe 1998; Canagarajah and Nielson 2001; Grootaert, 1998; Binder and Scrogin 1999; Levison and Moe 1998; Knaul, 2001

labor, irrespective of geographical location. This indicates that analyses on child labor in other countries need to turn its attention to variables other than income that emerge in studies on child labor.

A consistent finding in empirical studies on child labor in Africa and Latin America is that parents with low education levels, regardless of income, are more likely to put their children to work.⁶⁴⁸ Children of parents who worked as child laborers, everything else equal, are about three percent more likely to work in urban areas, and eleven to fourteen percent more likely to work in rural areas than children of parents that had not worked as children.⁶⁴⁹ Studies have also found that educated mothers are more likely to send their daughters to school than mothers with no education.⁶⁵⁰ There is therefore strong indication that even in countries, other than India, child labor may be a function of family tradition, rather than a necessity of family survival—when parents themselves have not gone to school, they place a lower value on education than if they have gone to school. This clearly brings to light the critical necessity of ensuring that at least one generation of children are sent to school. These studies from other countries echo the findings of this dissertation that educated parents may have a strong multiplier effect on stopping child labor: once government and CSOs ensure that one generation of children go to school, as educated adults they will automatically ensure that their children go to school. Therefore, the possible avenues of building a social consensus on education should be explored in research on other countries as well.

Like in India, poor public education systems are cited as major contributors to child labor in Africa and Latin America.⁶⁵¹ Most empirical studies on child labor use measures of school distance, or attendance data to measure the quality of public schools. The effect of schooling quality can be analyzed more soundly if a composite variable such as a ‘Bureaucratic Effectiveness Index’ is created to capture the infrastructure, teachers’ presence and management of schools as was done in this dissertation. Since education of parents is such a consistent determinant of child labor, it is extremely important to analyse the quality of education available in the community. In the absence of a variable that properly measures schooling quality, it is possible that child labor is wrongly attributed to income constraints, whereas the reality may be that children are going to work because the quality of education is poor.

Studies of child labor in Africa and Latin America have found that culture has an impact on the prevalence of child labor. These cultural variables largely represent attitudes towards education, somewhat akin to the concept of the ‘social consensus on education’ that I use in this dissertation. Traditions and attitudes are highly correlated with the religion and the

⁶⁴⁸ Parikh and Sadoulet 2005; Ersado 2004

⁶⁴⁹ Parikh and Sadoulet 2005

⁶⁵⁰ Emerson and Souza 2003; Wahba 2005

⁶⁵¹ Brown 2006

ethnic group to which the individual belongs, and indicators for these are included in some of the surveyed studies. For instance, a World Bank study found that indigenous children in Latin America are far more likely to work than non-indigenous children, regardless of income. In Latin American countries with large indigenous populations, such as Bolivia, Peru, Guatemala, and Ecuador, children make up a large percentage of the workforce.⁶⁵² Studies from other countries affirm the finding of this dissertation that economic rationality, although desirable at the macro-level, does not necessarily guide decisions at the micro-level. Other types of rationality, which are rooted in sociological circumstances or the access to educational facilities, might be as important in guiding decisions at the micro-level. Such attitudinal factors are rarely integrated into empirical models of child labor. Though cultural attitudes are undoubtedly hard to measure, excluding a variable that has consistently emerged as definitive in qualitative studies introduces the risk of omitted variable bias. This dissertation makes a beginning by including the ‘social consensus on education’ variable. Future studies on child labor should pay more attention to this relatively understudied determinant of child labor.

Indeed, despite the prevalence of arguments emphasizing the importance of education, there remains a significant shortage of empirical analyses of the specific mechanisms through which such educational deprivation affects child labor. Any assessment of the generalizability of the argument presented here about the salience of educational deprivation would benefit from some of the tools of analyses used in this dissertation, from surveys to multi-level field work, to be replicated in democratic countries in other regions of the world where compliance with child labor and universal education laws has remained a persistent problem.

8.2.2 *Disaggregating the State: The State-in Society Approach*

The issue of child labor has largely been undermined in the electoral domain in Indian politics. Other such interest based issues like women’s movement, environment movement, movement against big dams etc. do not find reflection in the agenda of political parties, since they find it easier to mobilize for votes on identity lines based on caste or religious identity. However, it leaves the space open for how such policies therefore evolve and are implemented. In spite of the absence of such issues from the electoral arena, who are the actors that push for change? What are the political and social dynamics that mould these issues in the public arena? In this study, I examined the role of two actors, the bureaucracy and civil society—in fact, I showed that the collaborative role between both has played a definitive role in moulding child labor policy in India. But in the larger scholarship of functioning of democratic states, what analytic framework would help us to study such

⁶⁵² Tuttle 2006

policies? I find that the state-in-society approach would help us to engage with the issues of authority and legitimacy that implementation of such policies would inevitably bring to the forefront.

In most studies on state-society relationships, the state should be seen as an organization maintaining a special autonomous status; it has been, in fact, the locus of change. This has remained the premise of social and political theories right up to the present, expressed in statism, structuralism, rational choice, neorealism and more.⁶⁵³ In the press and in everyday speech, the state is represented as if it is a coherent, integrated and goal-oriented body. Studies emphasize the overall coherence of the state, its singular mind-set. State leaders push the idea that the state as a coherent and purposeful entity is an embodiment of the nation, the people, and its rules. In social science analysis, states have appeared as tight-knit purposeful organizations with autonomous goals, using violence and legitimacy as successful tools in maintaining social control and implementing policy. This emphasis on monopoly masks situations in which authority is fragmented and contentious. The monopolistic image of the state posits an entity having two kinds of boundaries: territorial boundaries between the state and other states; and social boundaries between the state—its public actors and agencies—and those subject to its rules. The state is not only separated it is elevated.

On the other hand, the state-in-society approach captures “practices”, (routinized performative acts) that question the image of a coherent controlling state and neutralize the territorial and public-private boundaries. Practices set out in state codes have a normative standard. However, the state-in-society approach contends that no one set of practices or one monolithic image constitutes the state. In fact, the state is composed of many parts, fights battles on many fronts, and the conflicting norms of officials of its distinct parts may lead to diverse practices by the states’ parts or fragments. Each of these parts may ally with one another, as well as with groups outside, to further their goals. These alliances, coalitions, and networks have neutralized the sharp territorial and social boundary that the monolithic portrayal of the state has acted to establish, as well as the sharp demarcation between state as preeminent rule maker, and the society as the recipient of rules. This approach also warns against force-feeding hypotheses and argues that studies that present a very stylized picture of the state often trap social and political life into a narrow and constructed world of rigor. The focus on static independent variables (such as fixed preferences, structures and institutional arrangements) has a tendency to over-determine the present state of affairs, and they may also ignore how the effects they spawn may in turn transform them. One must focus not only on the structural factors what Migdal (1988) calls the *nomos*, but also the narrative, the resistance and struggle, cooperation and coalitions that transform events.

⁶⁵³ Migdal 1988; Migdal 2001

The state-society approach has been utilized by studies that deal with central issues in comparative politics: ethnic or communal conflict, the relationship between social movements and the state, and drawing lines of the state. Niall O Murchu's study of the Palestinian conflict in the 1920s and the Northern Ireland conflict in the 1990s argues that despite the powerful image of the British state, local British agents in both cases formed alliances with local agents of one group which led to fuelling of ethnic conflict. Also in Israel, the alliance between the judiciary and the women's movement emboldened the court, shifted the bases of its legal reasoning, and eventually raised its strength within the Islamic state. This study set out how social movements, even ones that are fairly small, could interact with a part of the state, the bureaucracy or the judiciary, and bring about a change in the balance of power among state institutions.⁶⁵⁴

Such an analytic framework of social formations interacting with a particular arm of the state is helpful to study the implementation of interest-based issues in the Indian context. Though engagement with the judiciary or the bureaucracy has not become a substitute of popular action, the general trend in India is that when social movements seek government support, they have done so in India in the bureaucratic or judicial arena. The child labor movement's strategies in this regard also fit into the state-in-society model. I showed how the bureaucracy-civil society alliance on child labor is not an end in itself, but has brought a paradigmatic change in the approach towards child labor. Deriving from this complex interaction, we can further hypothesize on how the net benefits of these interactions might vary across states in India, depending on the context of each state. For instance, improving the bureaucratic effectiveness in the delivery of education in states which already have a high social consensus on education (such as Meghalaya, Nagaland etc.) might reduce child labor and improve school attendance much more rapidly than states in which the social consensus on education is low, such as Bihar or Madhya Pradesh. A systematic comparison of such interactions at the state-level is yet to be undertaken and is likely to yield substantial insights into variables that are usually overlooked in analyses that adopt a monolithic approach to the state.

The state-in-society framework allows scholars to examine the transformative effect that such alliances or conflicts can have on state bureaucracies. Usually bureaucracies are viewed as rigid, inflexible institutions rife with red-tape. In fact the new trend towards bureaucracies outsourcing developmental work to CSOs is seen as reinforcement of the premise that the state cannot reform itself. However, evidence to the contrary suggests that the state can allow participatory impulses to exist. Studies have shown how top-down functioning bureaucracies have reformed in Sri Lanka, Kenya and the Philippines and have become

⁶⁵⁴ Examples cited in Migdal (2001)

participatory and effective institutions', the normal traits associated with the voluntary sector.⁶⁵⁵ These studies demonstrate how the comparative advantages of the scale of government intervention and the knowledge and experience of participatory techniques of the NGO sector have created a new synergy. Such amorphous changes cannot be fitted within the framework of a state as a monolithic rigid entity that is separate from the societal sphere. An analytic framework that allows the disaggregation of the state into parts and allows for the formation of conflict and cooperation with social formations provides a more conceptually eclectic approach for scholars of democratic politics to study the implementation of interest-based issues, especially the relatively under-studied sphere in which bureaucracies and civil society actors interact.

8.2.3 Situating Civil Society Organizations in Socio-political Context

This dissertation also offers some specific lessons for scholars of civil society. Among the social groups that are regarded as components of civil society, NGOs have become acquired special prominence since the early 2000s. The world is being swept by a nongovernmental, associational, or quiet revolution that at least one analyst believes may prove to be as significant to the latter twentieth century as the rise of the nation-state was to the latter nineteenth century.⁶⁵⁶ In the move from inefficient states to efficient markets, NGOs hold a distinctive mediating position, especially as they are increasingly seen as positive agents of development. In this context, there is a great need to critically examine the changing relations between NGOs and state agencies, since this would have a great bearing on the way in which we conceive of the process of social change and the roles of different social actors within it.

This dissertation sheds light on two critical aspects of civil society-state interaction that has received relatively less attention in the literature and deserves to be explored further by scholars of civil society: first, though the literatures on community participation and NGOs have developed separately, the mediating role of NGOs between the community and the state has not been well-developed; second, the literature largely views NGOs as fixed and generalizable entities- instead of treating the NGO sector like a black box, it is necessary to contextualize them within evolving socio-political processes. I discuss each of these issues below:

⁶⁵⁵ Thompson 1995

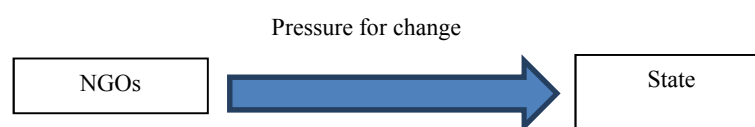
⁶⁵⁶ Salamon 1994; Edwards & Hulme 1992, Fisher 1997

i) *The Intermediate Role of the Community in the Theory of State-NGO Relationship*

State-NGO relationships in India have undergone peaks of cooperation and troughs of conflict.⁶⁵⁷ In the post-independence period, this relationship was marked by cooperation between Gandhian welfare-oriented organizations and the newly emerging state. NGOs were limited to providing relief and supportive function to state-led development plans but did not question existing power relations. In the 1970s and 80s, there was an increased antagonism between the two sectors as newly emerging youth-action groups, particularly leftist groups, questioned the urban-based development model of the Indian state. New laws like the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (1976) were enacted to assert greater control over the role and funding of NGOs. Since the 1980s, the Indian state has adopted a new policy of promoting NGOs as service-delivery organizations on behalf of the government while strongly restricting the role of empowerment oriented NGOs.⁶⁵⁸

Despite the oscillating nature of the relationship, scholars identify certain propositions as definitive of state-NGO relationship in India. The trajectory of relationship is largely determined by the munificence of the state, with NGOs' role limited to that of a "shadow state"⁶⁵⁹: a parastatal apparatus charged with the responsibility for providing services that were previously provided by the public sector.⁶⁶⁰ The Indian state supports welfare and modernization oriented NGOs, but is not accommodating of empowerment oriented NGOs.⁶⁶¹ Although broad contextual forces may shape the voluntary sector at the national level and define its aggregate character, local politics and local agents are fundamental to explaining patterns of voluntarism across national territories, such as metropolitan regions.⁶⁶² This is shaped by the federal nature of the polity which brings NGOs in close contact with the local bureaucracy and democratically elected *panchayat* bodies at the grassroots level. State-NGO relationship at the local level is generally characterized by hostility of local elites towards NGOs.⁶⁶³

Figure 8.1: Conceptualization of State-NGO relationship in current literature



⁶⁵⁷ Sen 1999

⁶⁵⁸ For a detailed historical account of NGO-state relationships in India, see Sen (1999) and Tandon (2002)

⁶⁵⁹ Wolch 1990

⁶⁶⁰ Kudva 2005

⁶⁶¹ Sen 1999

⁶⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶⁶³ *Ibid.*

The current literature envisages state-NGO relationships in the manner represented in Figure 8.1. It examines the determinants of the conceptually direct relationship between NGOs and the state.

The case-studies in this dissertation highlighted an important missing link in the theoretical literature on state-NGO relationship – the central role of community participation. There has been a proliferation of studies on the importance of community participation following the trend towards decentralization and participatory governance since the 1990s. In the era of decentralization and debureaucratization, both state and non-state agencies like the World Bank are promoting community participation as an ideal for participatory governance. Putnam (1993), through his comparative study of Italian regions showed that a participatory civic culture was instrumental to good governance, while others like Sen (1999) argued that by enlarging the normative goals of empowerment, equity and human agency, participation builds ‘capabilities’ and far outweighs efficiency as a goal. Based on these perceived benefits of community participation, the Indian state also is increasingly relying on the idea of community participation to fashion development interventions, like joint forest management committees, women’s self-help groups, etc. that utilize pre-existing social networks or create new ones.⁶⁶⁴ On the other hand, a separate strand of literature on NGOs cites how NGOs, by virtue of their closeness to the community, their familiarity with local issues, their flexibility to experiment with new innovations on a small-scale are well-placed to build networks, generate awareness, and mobilize collective efforts to manage local resources.⁶⁶⁵ However, the current state-NGO literature doesn’t tie these two strands of literature to analyse how community participation mediates the relationship between the NGO and the state.

I conceptualize the state-NGO relationship to be mediated by the role of the community as shown in Figure 8.2.

Figure 8.2: The Intermediate Role of Community in State-NGO Relationship



This dissertation showed that community participation is critical in shaping state-NGO relationships. It highlights the central role of community participation as a mediating factor in state-NGO relationship. The collaboration of state-NGOs turns on the ability of NGOs able to empower communities to generate sustainable community based solutions tailored to the local context, their creation of an inclusive agenda that mitigates inherent

⁶⁶⁴ Govinda and Diwan 2002; Saha 2011; Singh 2011; Uphoff *et al* 1998

⁶⁶⁵ Mencher 1999; Kudva 2005

socio-economic disparities, and their ability to engage with the local bureaucracy in a constructive manner. Simultaneously, the replication of innovative practices of NGOs turns on the openness and flexibility of the bureaucracy to incorporate workable solutions into policy. The study of state-NGO relationship in the Indian context especially needs to focus on the attitudes of *both* NGOs and the bureaucracy, especially for interest-based issues like children's rights, women's rights, or environmental rights which don't find reflection in the agenda of political parties. Further research is required to establish whether the alternative theoretical proposition of the centrality of community participation is applicable in other policy contexts.

This study suggests that the political economy of the state and its historical impact on community participation should be explored in studies on state-NGO relationship. In this case, the history of social movements had an impact on the membership, the mobilization strategies and the attitude of NGOs' members. Further, the background in community participation also orientated the bureaucracy towards accepting community participation. It suggests state as an intermediate unit of analysis, going beyond the village-level or the country-level as units of analyses. Therefore, a regional mapping of NGO-state relationship in India could unearth important systematic linkages between the political economy of development, the history of civil society mobilization in a state, and the current status of state-NGO relationship.

ii) Opening the Black Box of NGOs

The rise of NGOs is one of the central processes in the sphere of development since the 1980s. This period also coincides with the demise of developmentalism as a project of the nation-state and the rise of neoliberal market state. Political scientists have written extensively on the role of voluntary associations in building vibrant civil societies and their impact on the relationship between society and the state.⁶⁶⁶ Some activists and analysts are reconsidering the relationship of NGOs to social movements and their ability to both empower people and contribute to alternative discourses of development and democratization.⁶⁶⁷ However, scholars suggest that the literature on NGOs is replete with sweeping generalizations; optimistic statements about the potentials of NGOs for delivering welfare services, implementing development projects, and facilitating democratization; and instrumental treatises on building the capacity of NGOs to perform these functions. NGOs have become the favoured child of official development agencies, hailed as the new panacea to cure the ills that have befallen the development process.⁶⁶⁸

⁶⁶⁶ Bratton 1989; Chazan 1992; Clark 1995; Farrington et al 1993; Fox and Hernandez 1992

⁶⁶⁷ Escobar 1992, Wignaraja 1993a

⁶⁶⁸ Edwards & Hulme 1996, p. 3

Given their privileged position in the arena of development, NGOs have been perceived as apolitical organizations. The description of NGOs as part of a voluntary, non-profit, independent, or third sector that is separate from both market and state contributes to the image of these associations as part of a segment of society that is separate from politics. The development apparatus sees NGOs as mechanisms for implementing technical solutions rather than political solutions.⁶⁶⁹ A similar problem occurs even in the Indian context as well. At the Arkleton Trust Lecture on NGOs and Civil Society in 2001, the President of the Indian Sociological Society, Professor B.S. Baviskar commented on the perceptions that NGOs are apolitical entities:

“By and large, scholars have not given the phenomenal growth of NGOs the critical attention that it requires. There are hardly any systematic studies of their membership. What is the socio-economic background of the activists associated with them? Similarly, there are no attempts to analyse the NGOs as organisations. What is the dynamic and the process of decision making within them? We know almost nothing about the power relationships within these groups and associations nor do we know about the forms and channels of participation that affect the power relationships (Fisher 1997: 456). The literature on NGOs mainly consists of broad descriptive histories and sometimes generalised accounts of their achievements in the form of evaluation studies.”⁶⁷⁰

This dissertation contextualises NGOs and social movements in the socio-political context of Indian states. Since the NGO sector acts as a key factor in mediating the channelization of resources from the state to the community, it does not operate in political or institutional vacuum. It is deeply influenced by the political economy of the state in which it operates. Current literature on NGOs either focus at the macro-level of the nation-state or at the micro-level, mainly the locality in which the NGO operates as the unit of analysis. The dimension of regional politics is underplayed.⁶⁷¹ It therefore opens up space to study the contextually contingent nature of civil society organizations at the state-level.

8.3 Parental Motivation for Education: Looking Ahead

As a logical corollary of the finding that educational deprivation is a key determinant of child labor, the central variable that emerges from this study that affects the decision on whether or not to send children to school is parental motivation. Studies which have analyzed the issue of child labor through the lens of education policy argue that it is not parental motivation, but the attitudes of the middle class and the elites in India. Such top-down analysis places the solution to India’s child labor problem at the hands of those very bureaucrats and policymakers who are accused of paying lip service to the cause of universal education and child labor since independence. However, none of these studies focus on *how* such an attitudinal change might come about in the bureaucracy.

However, this dissertation finds that while bureaucracy plays an important role in shaping and implementing policy, what is critical towards making concrete changes on the

⁶⁶⁹ Ferguson 1990

⁶⁷⁰ Baviskar 2002

⁶⁷¹ *Ibid.*

ground is changing the perception of parents towards education. The assumption that has guided child labor policy is that parents would send their children to school and not to work if they had sufficient economic resources. This dissertation instead makes a case for flipping around this assumption with the alternative assumption that parents would send their children to school if a good quality school was made a feasible option. This alternative option would further be strengthened if scholars conduct research on how far children's income is actually necessary for the survival of families—the extent of income that children contribute to their families, the time allocation of children, and a state-wise systematic study on how far poor schooling quality deters parents from sending children to school.

Further, child labor data is mostly inferred from Census or NSSO data which do not collect data based on categories in the Child Labor Act—for instance, there is no data source for knowing how many children work in the 'worst forms of child labor'. Without reliable data, the task of systematic analysis on child labor and designing effective interventions has been made more difficult. Further, systematic state-wise data collection on the extent to which children work full-time, part-time, or in household chores (with age, gender and occupational distribution) would simplify the task of policy-making on child labor.

While it is undeniable that law plays a critical role, in the case of India it is only one step in the process—what is more important is whether or not the law succeeded in changing the incentive structure of parents. If parents are motivated to send their children to school, the absence of laws against child labor is not a barrier; if parents are not motivated, no law is enough. In calculating the rationality of parents' decision making choices, it is not only economic rationality that must be taken into account, but also other social and institutional factors that play into parents' decision making calculus. The conclusion of this dissertation strongly supports taking such a view of parents in poor families.

Certain policy recommendations can be made on the basis of this study to change the incentive structure of parents: a) By introducing the RTE Act, India has taken a step in reducing the costs of schooling for poor parents. Earlier, the government only covered school fees. Studies found that parents often found the costs of buying school supplies, uniforms, textbooks etc. prohibitive, especially if they had more than one child. But the RTE provides not just free schooling, but also uniforms, textbooks and cooked midday meals; b) Another policy measure that would reduce the costs for parents and the state in bringing children in remote locations to schools is the building of residential schools. It is difficult for the state to supply schools in isolated hamlets in states like Rajasthan, Assam, or hilly states that have difficult geographical terrain. Residential schools are a cost-effective measure for the state to keep children in a safe environment; c) The concept of bridge schools that help children who have 'missed the boat' so to speak, is absolutely imperative to draw child laborers and dropouts back into the schooling system. Though such schools have been set up in most

states, they have to be expanded in scope and scale; c) Another step would be to increase the costs for employers to employ children. The Child Labor Bill proposed by the Cabinet proposes an across-the-board ban on child labor and makes employing children a non-cognizable offence. However, the efficacy of this policy will only be determined by how far Labor Departments in the states actually make it costly for employers to employ children. States have to design policies keeping their specific socio-political context in mind.

While numerous such policy recommendations can be put forward, this study concludes that what matters is how effectively such policies are implemented on the ground by state-bureaucracies. That is why CSOs can build a key role by demanding accountability from the education system and facilitating the entry of first-generation learners into school. This study predicts that with the education of one generation, demand would be created for better educational facilities in subsequent generations. This should create a 'virtuous cycle' whereby states will be compelled to invest more in quality education which would further reduce incentives for parents to send children to work.

Appendix 1

Measuring Child Labor

The IHDS asked individual respondents the following questions: i) How many hours per day did [the child in question] usually work in the farm? ; ii) How many hours per day did [the respondent] work for wages or salary in work other than household farm-work or household business? ; iii) How many hours per day did [the respondent] work in the family business? ; iv) How often did [the respondent] help to take care of animals? For each of i, ii, iii the respondent stated the approximate numbers of hours. The three options for response to question iv were ‘never’, ‘sometimes’ or ‘always’. I created a dichotomous variable called *childlabor* which I coded as 1 if a child worked at least 1 hour in response to questions i, ii and iii. I also coded the variable as 1 if the child responded that she helped to take care of animals ‘sometimes’ or ‘always.’ If the child had not worked for even an hour, the variable *childlabor* was coded as 0.

Appendix 2

Measuring Index of Bureaucratic Effectiveness

The *BE_Index* variable is an additive index composed of the following variables in the IHDS dataset:

- a) *CS4*: “How far is school or college from home?” *CS4* is a good indicator of availability of schools. *CS4* is a continuous variable with values ranging from 1 to 50, each value representing distance in kilometres. Distances less than 1 kilometer are also coded as 1. The Education Department guidelines mandate that every village habitation should have a primary school within 1 kilometer and a middle school within 2 kilometers. I created a dichotomous variable ‘*schooldist*’ which is coded as 0 if *CS4* had a value of 1, and coded as 1 if *CS4* had a value greater than 1.
- b) *CH4*: “Are most teachers at the [respondents] school present regularly?” This variable is a good indicator of teacher presence in schools. *CH4* is a dichotomous variable coded as 0 if the answer is ‘No’ and as ‘1’ if the answer is ‘Yes.’ I renamed this dichotomous variable as ‘*facultyattend.*’
- c) *CH5*: “Is the [respondent’s] class teacher present regularly?” This variable is a good indicator of teacher presence, and is particularly relevant for single-teacher schools in which variable *CH4* may be irrelevant for a school that has only one teacher. *CH5* is a dichotomous variable coded as 0 if the answer is ‘No’ and as ‘1’ if the answer is ‘Yes.’ I renamed this dichotomous variable as ‘*teacherattend.*’
- d) *CS12*: “Does the [respondent] receive free grains or midday meals at school?” The Midday Meal Scheme is a widespread school meal programme in India which started in the 1960s, and is now implemented in government elementary schools across all states in India. It involves provision of free lunch on working days in schools. The key objectives of the midday-meal programme are: protecting children from classroom hunger, increasing school enrolment and attendance, improved socialization among children belonging to all castes, addressing malnutrition, and social empowerment through provision of employment to women. The midday-meal scheme has been found to have significantly increased attendance rates of children. Since it is one of the oldest incentive schemes by the government, this variable is a good indicator of the efficiency of the school management. The *CS12* variable is coded as 0 if the respondent did not receive any midday meals at school, as 1 if she received only uncooked grain, as 3 if she received only porridge, as 4 if she received a variety a meals. I created a dichotomous variable ‘*middaymeal*’ which I coded as 0 if the value of *CS12* is 0 (i.e. did not receive any midday meals), and as 1

if the value of *CSI2* is 1, 3, or 4 (received uncooked grain, received porridge, or received a variety of meals).

- e) *CSI5*: “In the last one year, did [the respondent] receive free uniform from the school?” Distributing free uniforms is also an incentive scheme and has been made compulsory in all schools under the Right to Education Act, 2009. *CSI5* is a dichotomous variable coded as 0 if the answer is ‘No’ and as ‘1’ if the answer is ‘Yes.’ I renamed this dichotomous variable as *freeuniform*.

I constructed the Bureaucratic Effectiveness Index by creating a new variable *BE_Index* by adding up all the aforementioned component variables, with each component variable having equal weightage. The sum gave me a value that indicates the average bureaucratic effectiveness experienced by each child in the 5-14 age group.

$BE_Index = schoolist + facultyattend + teacherattend + middaymeal + freeuniform$

Appendix 3

Measuring Social Consensus among Caste-groups

I describe how I measure the *SC_Caste* at the individual-level and state-level below:

- a) *SC_Caste*: To measure consensus among caste-groups, I use the variable *TR3* in IHDS dataset that measures whether the different caste groups in a community/village/neighbourhood get along. The question corresponding to *TR3* is “Is there conflict among the castes or communities in your village?” *TR3* is coded as 1 if there is a lot of conflict among caste-groups, 2 if there is some conflict and 3 if there is little or no conflict among the caste-groups in the village. I measure social consensus at the individual level by the levels of consensus among the caste-groups in the village. I generated a dichotomous variable *SC_Caste* to capture whether there is consensus among the caste-groups in the village. *SC_Caste* is coded as 1 if *TR3* indicates that there is no conflict among the caste-groups in the village. *SC_Caste* is coded as 0 if *TR3* is 2 and 3, i.e. there is high conflict or some conflict among the caste-groups in the village. Therefore, *SC_Caste*=1 indicates high social consensus among caste-groups, and *SC_Caste*=0 indicates low social consensus among caste-groups. I collapsed the *SC_Caste* variable, by state to obtain average measures of social consensus among caste groups in the state. I call the new variable *SC_Caste_st*.

Appendix 4

Measuring of Social Consensus on Gender

- b) *SC_Gender*:** To measure social consensus based on gender, I use the variable *GR17* in the IHDS dataset which corresponds to the question “Do you think girls should be as educated as boys or does it make more sense to educate boys more?”: *GR17* is coded as 1 if the respondent says that girls should be as educated as boys, 2 if the respondent says that boys should be educated more, and 3 if the respondent says that girls should be more educated than boys. I generated a dichotomous variable *SC_Gender* to capture whether there is social consensus among respondents on the issue of educating children, irrespective of gender. *SC_Gender* is coded as 1 where *GR17* is 1 or 3, i.e. when respondent says that girls should have same or more education as boys, while *SC_Gender* is coded as 0 if *GR17* is 2, i.e. when respondent says that boys should be educated more than girls. Therefore, *SC_Gender*=1 indicates high social consensus in favour of female education, while *SC_Gender*=0, indicates low social consensus in favour of female education. I collapsed the *SC_Gender* variable, by state to obtain average measures of social consensus on female education in the state. I call the new variable *SC_Gender_st*.

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Interview with Sarpanch, Peapully *mandal*, February 8, 2012.

Interview with MVF Resource Person, Arvind, Secunderabad, February 9, 2012.

Interview with MEO, Uyyalawada *mandal*, March 6, 2012

Interview with State Coordinator AITFCR, D. Prakash, Secunderabad, March 6, 2012.

Interview with Ex Child Labor, currently Sakshar Bharat education coordinator K. Anjeya, Maredpally *mandal*, February 23, 2012.

Interview with former child laborer, Kiran, Secunderabad, March 3, 2012

Interview with parents of former child laborer, Maheshwaram *mandal*, March 3, 2012.

Interview with Sarpanch, Maredpally *mandal*, Dharur, February 23, 2012.

Interview with CRPF convenor, Tandur *mandal*, R. Srinivas, Dharur, February 24, 2012

Interview with Headmaster and MEO-in-charge, Shankarpally *mandal*, February 27, 2012.

Interview with Human Rights Officer, MNC for hybrid cottonseed, Hyderabad, March 15, 2012

Interview with parent of child laborer, Dornipadu *mandal*, Hyderabad, March 20, 2012

Interview with Member of AISF, Dornipadu *mandal*, March 25, 2012

Interview with Sarpanch, Dornipadu *mandal*, March 25, 2012

Interview with Cottonseed farmer, Dornipadu *mandal*, March 15, 2012

Interview with teacher, primary school, Dornipadu *mandal*, March 15, 2012

Interview with Headmaster, primary school Dornipadu *mandal*, March 15, 2012

Interview with parent, Dornipadu *mandal*, March 16, 2012

Interview with MVF volunteer, Dornipadu *mandal*, March 25, 2012

Interview with MEO, Dornipadu *mandal*, March 9, 2012

Interview with Independent Researcher on child labor in hybrid cottonseed industry, D. Venkateswarlu, Hyderabad, March 5, 2012

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Interview with former Chairperson of NCPCR, Dr. Shantha Sinha, New Delhi, July 3, 2012.

Interview with ex-MEO, Shankarpally mandal, M. Seshadri, Shankarpally, February 27, 2012

Interview with RBC Camp-incharge and Maredpally *mandal* Convenor, R. Srinivas, Dharur, February 23, 2012.

Interview with Hyderabad's UNICEF coordinator, Murali Krishna, Hyderabad, March 10, 2012.

Interview with senior bureaucrat, former Commissioner of School Education, in-charge of the Indira Kranthi Patham, Department of Rural Development, Government of Andhra Pradesh, T. Vijay Kumar, Hyderabad, March 4, 2012.

Interview with officer in Rajiv Vidya Mission Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Upendra Reddy, Hyderabad, March 5, 2012.

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Interview with DRMU member July 23, 2013.

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Interview with Head of the Anti-Trafficking Cell, Udaipur, July 25, 2012.

Interview with Kotra coordinator of Astha Sansthan, Sarfaraz, Udaipur, July 6, 2012.

Interview with member of TDF, Udaipur, July 28, 2012.

Interview with Astha volunteer, Udaipur, July 15, 2012.

Interview with District Commissioner, Udaipur, July 16, 2012.

Interview with Block Education Officer, Udaipur, July 12, 2012.

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