

India's Crackdown on Child Labour: Telangana, Bihar, and Rajasthan Lead Rescues in 2024-25

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Child Labour in India Latest News

- Telangana, Bihar and Rajasthan have emerged as the top three states in India for child labour rescues as well as for the number of arrests in child labour-related cases in 2024-25, a study by a network working in the field of child rights has shown.

Introduction

- India witnessed a major surge in efforts to curb **child labour** in 2024-25, with **over 53,000 children rescued across the country**.
- A recent report from the child rights network **Just Rights for Children (JRC)** in collaboration with the **Centre for Legal Action and Behaviour Change (C-LAB)** sheds light on the scale of exploitation and the systemic challenges in eliminating child labour.

- The top three states in child labour rescues were **Telangana, Bihar, and Rajasthan**, accounting for a significant share of the nationwide crackdown.
- The report, titled *“Building the Case for Zero: How Prosecution Acts as a Tipping Point to End Child Labour”*, also offers a comprehensive roadmap for effective legal, educational, and rehabilitative interventions to break the cycle of exploitation.

Scale of the Rescue Operations

- Between April 1, 2024, and March 31, 2025, JRC, through its network of over 250 NGOs, coordinated **38,889 rescue operations** across **24 states and union territories** in partnership with law enforcement agencies.
- This led to the rescue of **53,651 children**, a large majority of whom were engaged in the **worst forms of child labour**.
- The top five states by number of rescues were:
 - **Telangana**: 11,063 children
 - **Bihar**: 3,974 children
 - **Rajasthan**: 3,847 children
 - **Uttar Pradesh**: 3,804 children
 - **Delhi**: 2,588 children
- These states also accounted for the highest number of arrests in child labour-related offences.

Alarming Trends in Exploitation

- The report reveals that nearly **90% of rescued children** were employed in sectors categorised under the **worst forms of child labour** as per ILO Convention 182, ratified by India. These included:
 - Spas and massage parlours
 - Orchestra troupes
 - Domestic labour
 - Informal entertainment services
- In many instances, children were subjected to **sexual exploitation, pornography, and prostitution**, underscoring the urgency for focused legal intervention.

Legal and Enforcement Actions

- Following the massive rescue operations:
 - **38,388 FIRs** were registered
 - **5,809 arrests** were made, **85%** of them related to child labour
- Telangana, Bihar, and Rajasthan not only led in rescue numbers but also in arrests, suggesting a stronger enforcement mechanism compared to other states such as Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, where **enforcement gaps** were noted despite high rescues.
- The findings reiterate that **prosecution serves as a deterrent**, building public awareness and reducing the impunity with which exploiters operate.

Recommendations from the Report

- **Launch of a National Mission to End Child Labour**, with dedicated financial and human resources.
- Creation of **district-level Child Labour Task Forces**.
- Establishment of a **Child Labour Rehabilitation Fund**.
- Formulation of a **comprehensive national rehabilitation policy**.
- **Compulsory education till 18 years**, extending beyond the current RTE mandate (up to 14 years).
- **State-specific policies** aligned with local socio-economic challenges.
- **Zero-tolerance policy** on child labour in **government procurement**.
- Expansion of the list of **hazardous occupations and processes** under the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act.
- Extension of the **SDG 8.7 deadline to 2030** to realistically target the eradication of all forms of child labour.

Global and National Commitments

- India is a signatory to the **ILO Convention 182**, which mandates the elimination of the worst forms of child labour.
- Although India has made strides in legal reforms and enforcement, the report calls for **greater institutional convergence** and stronger judicial and social frameworks.
- The JRC emphasised that *“justice for children trapped in the worst forms of child labour will only be achieved when the culprits are punished and robust mechanisms for the protection and rehabilitation of victims are in place.”*

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/child-labour-rescues-india/>

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