

**Child Labour in the Cotton Industry of
Uzbekistan: A Sociological Study**

Thesis

Submitted to the University of Kashmir for the
Award of the Degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
in
Sociology**

By

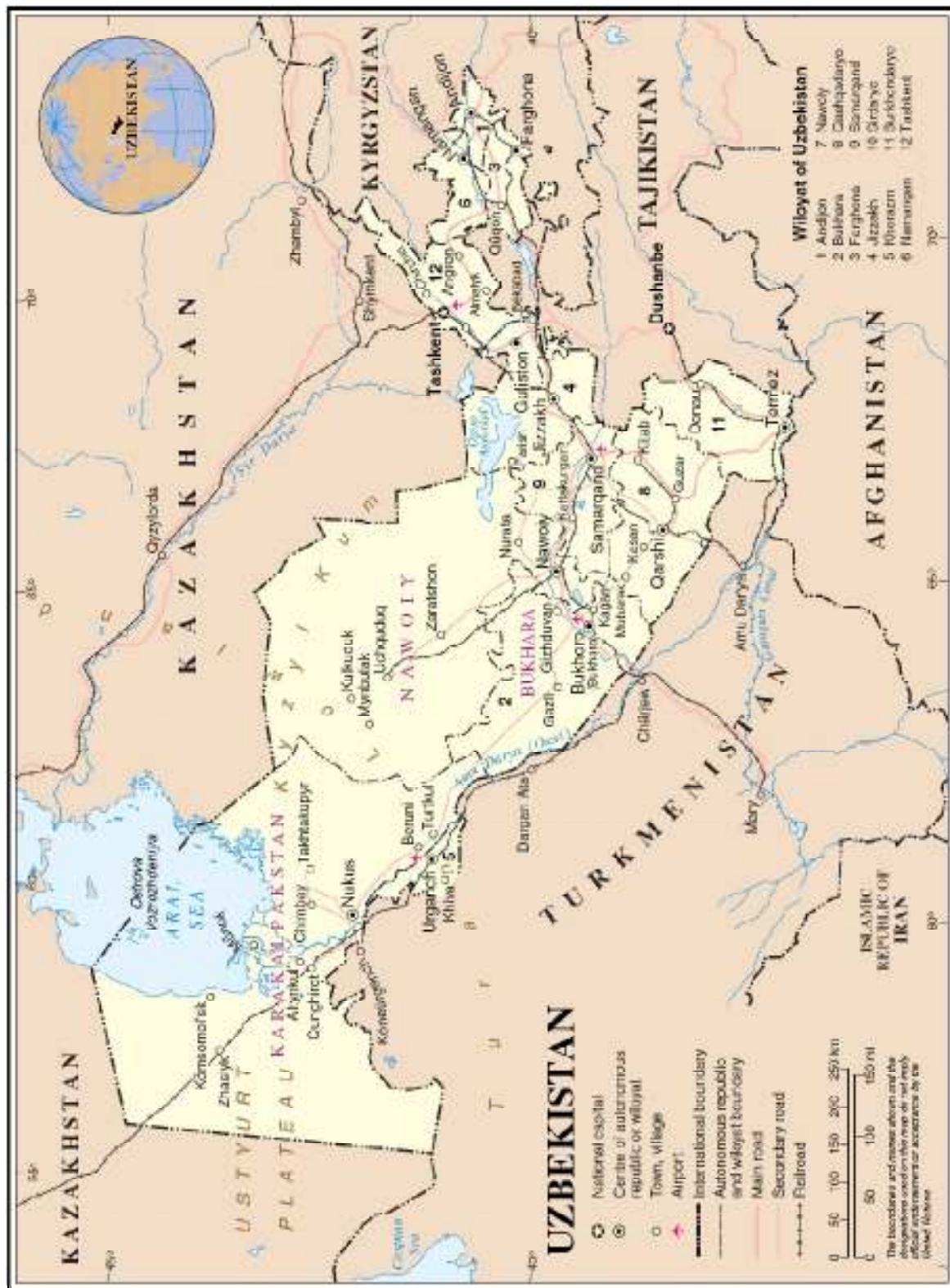
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Declaration

I solemnly declare that the thesis entitled, **“Child Labour in the Cotton Industry of Uzbekistan: A Sociological Study”** submitted by me in the discipline of Sociology embodies my own contribution. It is a genuine piece of research work and has been completed while taking into account all the necessary requirements laid down for the purpose. This work which does not contain any piracy has not been submitted, so far, for the award of any degree in this university or anywhere else.

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Certificate

Certified that the present research work entitled “**Child labour in the Cotton Industry of Uzbekistan: A Sociological Study**” submitted by **Bilal Ahmad Bhat**, Centre of Central Asian Studies for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology, is a bonafide work and has not been submitted elsewhere for the award of any other degree to the best of my knowledge.

We recommend that the thesis be placed before the examiner for evaluation for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in the discipline of Sociology of the University.

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LETTER OF CONFIRMATION

This letter confirms that Mr. Bilal Bhat, Ph. D. Student of the Kashmir University, visited Uzbekistan to make research on local cotton industry by invitation of the Institute of History of Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan in October-December, 2010.

During his staying Mr. Bilal Bhat every day worked at the Library of the Institute. Also, he collected and copied materials (books, articles, Ph.D. thesis abstracts) related to his topic of research in the Fundamental Library of the Academy of Sciences, one of the biggest library in Uzbekistan.

To make his research, Mr. Bilal Bhat visited few cities and provinces in Uzbekistan: Samarkand, Namangan, Fergana, Andijan and Khiva.

He also made interview with few scholars of the Institute who are experts in the cotton industry issues.

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Preface

Uzbekistan, with its enormous potential of natural resources like oil, natural gas, water, gold and minerals, has made it as one of the most potential investment countries in the globalized world after its separation from Soviet Union. The available natural resources have not been exploited yet by the state of Uzbekistan due to its lack of skilled manpower, sophisticated technology and marketization which could have sustained the ever growing population of the country if utilized properly. On the other hand agriculture which comprises around 40 percent of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) of Uzbekistan has turned black and white from coloured in the Post-Soviet era due to the decline in the sophisticated technology and manpower put into place and practice by the Russians. And the cotton industry, which constitutes around 47 percent of the agricultural production of Uzbekistan, gives billions of dollars in annual return. Due to the downsizing of skilled manpower and technology the cotton cultivation which was earlier in the pre-Soviet era practised by machines is now done by hand and often with the use of school children.

Uzbekistan- the fifth largest exporter and second largest producer of cotton in the world- mostly cultivates cotton by the dint of child labour- mainly school children. From the first week of September every year schools are closed down for two to three months and all the children and teachers, irrespective of age and gender, are ordered by the autocratic state administration to take part in cotton-picking. Daily quotas are assigned to everyone by the supervisors and farm directors and those who do not meet the set quotas are bound to face punishment. The forced labour of children by the state of Uzbekistan is unique in its dimension and magnitude in the sense that in the rest of the world there are reasons like poverty, illiteracy etc. responsible for child labour but in Uzbekistan it is completely state-controlled to meet the totalitarian interests.

Though the magnitude of the problem has been expanding in that more and more children turn to be working children, the amount of attention that the problem receives from the government and various non-governmental agencies is not in tune with its size because the tender-aged school going boys and girls who are part of the problem are not in a position to present their case before the concerned authorities as the administration in itself is fully responsible for this inhuman institution of child labour in Uzbekistan. Thus, the traditional nature of the problem becomes a limiting factor for its solution.

Amidst the plethora of literature on working children, the present work on the same subject is distinguished by its extensiveness and holistic treatment. Not only that a considerable number of child labourers were interviewed but their employers and parents were also interviewed to make the study multidimensional in character. In-depth interviews of human rights activists, senior citizens, government officials and social workers were also taken into consideration to make the findings of the study more viable. The case studies at the end of the findings chapter help to provide a holistic picture of the problem.

I am sure this work will provide a very valuable addition to the existing literature on child labour in the cotton industry of Uzbekistan, besides being useful to those directly working with such children.

Bilal Ahmad Bhat

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I have accumulated a large number of debts in preparing this work. While a brief acknowledgement here in no way writes them off, it is a small courtesy whose sentiments are sincere. Without my supervisor's (Dr. Tareak Ahmad Rather, Sociology Unit, Centre of Central Asian Studies, University of Kashmir) sustained attention, searching discussion, and painstaking comment on various themes, the study would never have become what it is. Prof. G. R. Jan, Director Centre of Central Asian Studies and Ex-Director, Prof. G. M. Mir also deserve special thanks for their timely assistance.

Prof. M. A. Kaw, Director Area Study Programme, Centre of Central Asian Studies assisted and supported in clearing my case for visa at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Uzbekistan for field work in Uzbekistan rooted through Institute of History, Academy of Sciences. I thank Prof. Kaw for taking personal pains while assisting and supporting me for administrative and academic purposes. I am thankful to the Area Study Programme of Centre for financing my field study in Uzbekistan. I express heartfelt and most sincere gratitude to Prof. Vallery Khan, Vice-Director on International Relations, Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences, Republic of Uzbekistan for his parental treatment, help, cooperation and suggestions in different capacities. I am also thankful to the family members of Prof. Vallery for their generous support and help. I am equally thankful to Prof. Azad Shamatonov of the Department of South Asian Languages, Institute of Oriental Languages; Prof. Ismat Bekmuratov, Dean Faculty of Economics, Institute of Oriental Studies, Tashkent and to Prof. Gafurov, Economist from the Fergana University for their generous support and help. I feel much obliged to Prof. B. A. Dabla, Head Department of Sociology and Social Work, University of Kashmir for extending his services of the vast understanding of research and the useful suggestions he gave by opening his heart from time to time. The numerous libraries and their staff have very kindly helped to provide assistance with regard to this research work particularly The Fundamental Library of Uzbekistan, Tashkent; English Library of the Institute of History, Academy of Sciences; Library of the Faculty of Economics, Institute of Oriental Studies, Tashkent; Ulegbek Library, National University of Uzbekistan and the Libraries of the University of World Economy and Diplomacy, Namangan University, Fergana University, Andijan University, Samarkand

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I appreciate all help and cooperation, I got from faculty members and students of the various national and state institutes of Uzbekistan particularly Institute of History, Academy of Sciences; Department of South Asian Languages, Institute of Oriental Languages; Faculty of Economics, Institute of Oriental Studies; University of World Economy and Diplomacy; University of World Languages; Pedagogical University, Tashkent; Fergana University; and Lal Bahadur Shastri Centre for Indian Culture of the Embassy of India in Uzbekistan, Tashkent, who inspite of their busy schedule, spared time for finishing various types of information for the completion of this work, I am much beholden to Dr. Nasir Raza Khan (Director) of the Lal Bahadur Shastri Centre for Indian Culture and to Nargiz Apaa (English teacher) of Tashkent who gave me good initial advice and very helpful introductions. Nor do I forget my kind apartment hosts, Dilnora, Timur and especially her daughter Camila who helped a lot in translation of English into Russian of Mirabad district, Tashkent and other members of their family for their selfless devotion, love and a congenial retreat.

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My parents frequently met my flashes of temper when things were not going well with a tolerance and understanding that I did not deserve, I hope now to be able to make amends. They have also given me the stamina and the patience to see the job through. This venture would not have been possible but for love, sacrifice, patience and encouragement of my parents. I have no words to express my thanks to them. Lastly I record my sincere and grateful thanks to all those authors and writers from whose writings I have been benefitted.

Bilal Ahmad Bhat

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Abbreviations

<i>AFDE</i>	Association of Farm and Dekhkan Economies
BBC	British Broadcasting Service
CCAS	Centre of Central Asian Studies
CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
<i>CM</i>	Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRU	Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan
EJF	Environmental Justice Foundation
EU	European Union
FSU	Former Soviet Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
<i>GRP</i>	Gross Regional Product
GSP	Generalized System of Preferences
HDI	Human Development Index
HRSU	Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan
HRWCA	Human Rights Watch in Central Asia
ICAC	International Cotton Advisory Committee
IFIs	International Financial Institutions
ILO	International Labour Organization
ILRF	International Labour Rights Forum
IWPR	Institute of War and Peace Reporting
<i>MDG</i>	Millennium Development Goals
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys
<i>MLSP</i>	Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Uzbekistan
MTPs	Machine Tractor Parks
NAP	National Agricultural Production
<i>NGO</i>	Non-Government Organization
<i>RUz</i>	Republic of Uzbekistan
<i>TEA</i>	Temporary Employment Agency
TFR	Total Fertility Rate
UN	United Nations
<i>UNDP</i>	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO Organization	United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Emergency Fund
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Russia
<i>UTC</i>	Urban-type Community
UzSSR	Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The prevalence of child labour is not a recent phenomenon. In the ancient times children were put to arduous labour in houses and in the fields. Performances of tasks like tending of cattle, collection of grass and fuel etc. by children relieve the adult members of the family for more productive work. There was no social labour against children working along with their parents. It was this factor of child labour which strongly established family and kinship ties in occupations. In the urban areas, because of their poverty many parents cannot make any investment in their children's development and are also reluctant to support them. They want their children to find work for themselves as early as possible.

In developing countries, children have always been the responsibility of the primary institution of society, viz. family. The traditional care lavished on children, has suffered erosion because of new constraints and consequently abuse and exploitation of child has become common place. The plight of the child has been further aggravated by the endemic and entrenched poverty. In spite of the constitutional measures and number of welfare development schemes for them, a sizeable proportion of child population is still working as wage labourers/apprentices, paid/unpaid both in urban and rural areas in very deplorable and inhuman conditions.

The problematic aspect of child labour became more pronounced with the advent of industrial era. Being in the labour, such children are denied educational opportunities; their physical, mental and intellectual development is hampered. The working children generally remain unskilled, underpaid, under-privileged throughout life, their physical and social mobility get restricted and vicious and cumulative cycle of poverty, ill-health, under employment and unemployment also get strengthened.¹

Child labour problem with multidimensional implications is one among the many crucial problems faced by the developing nations. In the early phase of industrialization child labour suffered most brutal and unprecedented exploitation in the western world though its intensity has considerably been lessened in the advanced industrial nations now. Normatively child labour has serious consequences and

¹ Punecha, L. B. 2006. *Child Labour: A Social Evil*. New Delhi: Alfa Publications. pp. 2,5,33.

implications for children, parents and families and as such it has been recognized as a social evil.²

Concept of Child Labour

Defining child labour is not as simple and straightforward as it may appear because it encompasses three difficult-to-define concepts “child”, “work”, and “labour”. Childhood can be defined in terms of age. In some societies, age may not be a sufficient basis for defining “childhood”. The fulfilment of certain social rites and traditional obligations may well be important requirements in defining “adult” and “child” status. In still others, the integration of children into socio-economic life may begin so early that it may be virtually impossible to identify clearly the different life phases. Besides, in the absence of an effective age record system, even applying an agreed legal definition becomes highly problematic. However, in the context of child labour, a working definition of a “child” may be a person below the general limit of fifteen years or in special circumstances fourteen years, set by the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No.138).³

The term child labour is often defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development. It refers to work that:

- Is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children:
and
- Interferes with their schooling:
 - by depriving them of the opportunity to attend school;
 - by obliging them to leave school prematurely; or
 - by requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work.

In its most extreme forms, child labour involves children being enslaved, separated from their families, exposed to serious hazards and illness and/or left to fend for themselves on the streets of large cities-often at a very early age. Whether or

² Satyarthi, Kailash and Bupinder Zutshi. 2006. *Globalisation, Development and Child Rights*. New Delhi: Shipra Publications. pp. 8, 11, 12, 29, 30.

³ Bhat Bilal. 2011. *Rehabilitation of Child Labour: Problems and Prospects*. New Delhi: Shipra Publications. p.14.

not particular forms of ‘work’ can be called ‘child labour’ 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.⁴

According to Francis Blanchard (former director of ILO) “Child Labour includes children prematurely leading adult lives, working long hours for low wages under conditions damaging to their health and to their physical and mental development, sometimes separated from their families, frequently deprived of education and training apprentices that could provide them a better future”.⁵

According to Homer Folks, the chairman of the US National Child Labour Committee, the term ‘child labour’ is generally used to refer, “any work by children that interfere with their full physical and mental development, the opportunities for a desirable minimum of education and of their needed recreation”.⁶

UNICEF has given a comprehensive formulation in its attempt at defining child labour:

1. Starting full-time work at an early age,
2. Working too long within or outside the family and unable to attend school,
3. Work resulting in excessive physical, social and psychological strains upon the child as in the case of sexual exploitation and dangerous work as military service and mining,
4. Work on the street is unhealthy and dangerous,
5. Inadequate remuneration for working outside the family, as in the case of the child workers in carpet weaving.
6. Too much responsibility at too early an age as in the domestic situation.
7. Work does not facilitate the psychological and social development of the child

⁴ Janet Hilowitz, Joost Kooijmans, Peter Matz, Peter Dorman, Michaele de Kock, and Muriel Alectus. 2004. *Child Labour: A Textbook for University Students*. Geneva: International Labour Office. p.16.

⁵ Gathia, Joseph. 1998. *Approaches to Combating Child Labour in India*. Caritas India Quarterly: Vol. 48(4). p. 12.

⁶ P. Anandharajakumar. 2004. *Female Child Labour*. New Delhi: APH Publishing Corporation. pp.4-5.

8. Work that inhibits the child's self esteem.⁷

The problem of child labour is not a concomitant feature of modern society only; in fact the problem has been there since the very dawn of human civilization. The reasons responsible for this phenomenon are varied and have been changing as the years rolled on. Avenues of child labour over the years have broadened. As a matter of fact, the problem is vexed and widespread and is not a characteristic feature of any particular type of economy. It is prevalent even in highly advanced countries of the world, though in a disguised form.

A *child* is defined as an individual under the age of 18 years, based on the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999 (No. 182). Since it is commonly accepted that a child under 5 years of age is too young to be engaged in work (although there are cases of exploitation or abuse by adults) or to start schooling,⁸ we considered only the child population aged 5-17 years for the purpose of our estimates.

Not all work performed by children is equivalent to “child labour” needing abolition. Work in the sense of ‘economic activity’, is a statistical definition:

- Acceptable form of work by children (which may be regarded as positive), on the one hand, and child labour that needs to be eliminated, on the other,⁹ and between;
- Various forms of child labour and the WFCL, which require urgent action for elimination.

A Brief History of Child Labour

Although “child labour” as a social issue emerged as a consequence of the industrial revolution, children have always worked. They carried out tasks in the home, participated in agriculture, and learned crafts from an early age. This activity

⁷ Daman Ahuja & Mahavir Jain. 1998. *Economics of Child Labour- A Myth*. Kurukshetra: Vol. 46 (8). p. 4.

⁸ UNESCO, *International standard classification of education (ISCED)*, Paris, 1997, which states that the customary or legal age of entrance to primary schooling is not younger than five years.

⁹ Note that child labour figured prominently on the agenda of the 18th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS), held at the end of 2008. The objective was to develop and adopt a set of global standards for child labour data collection and measurement, including agreed global statistical indicators on child labour and its worst forms.

was taken for granted, and there were no debates over whether children should play a role in the economy.¹⁰

All of this changed with the recruitment of children for industrial production beginning with Britain in the eighteenth century. The situation of children in British mines and textile mills was the target of several parliamentary investigations in the early nineteenth century, and the plight of youthful chimney sweeps. Young children who cleaned the inside of coal burning chimneys, in the process acquiring serious respiratory diseases, challenged the conscience of the country.

Over time, legislation was introduced which gradually outlawed many of these activities, beginning with the introduction of Half-Time Working in conjunction with the Factory Acts of 1833 and 1844. The purpose behind this system was to restructure child labour so that it no longer interfered with education (Hobbs and McKechnic, 1997). Beginning with the Education Act of 1918, regulation sought the removal of all younger children from the labour force; this approach was extended by the Young Person's Act 1933, which embodied the modern approach of age limits and hazardous orders.

Nevertheless, there has been a debate surrounding how consequential these legislative actions really were. On the one hand, many children continued to engage in economic activities prohibited under law, and inspectors either failed to recognise infractions or they turned a blind eye to them (Hobbs and McKechnie, 1997). On the other, while the prevalence of child labour in Britain certainly declined over the span of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, many scholars have tended to downplay the role played by legislation compared with other changes in society. Some, such as Fyfe, believe that the increasing availability of education and the greater importance attached to it by most British families, was the primary factor at work. In most cases, agitation and action by politicians, trade unionists and by entrepreneurs has led to legislative and concrete action to reduce the incidence of child labour during the closing decade of the 19th century and the early decades of the 20th century.¹¹ Others such as Nardinelli, hold that rising family income encouraged families to withhold their children's labour (Nardinelli, 1990). Unravelling these factors is difficult since

¹⁰ ILO. 2004. *Child Labour: A Textbook for University Students*. Geneva: International Labour Office-International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour. pp. 40-41.

¹¹ Ibid. p. 41.

they were contemporaneous and deeply interrelated. The British experience was echoed by other industrialized countries, although each has a distinctive history (Cunningham and Viazzo, 1996).¹²

In Kautilya's Arthshastra, there is also a mention of employment of children in India in the form of slavery. During this period (3rd century B.C.) child slaves, who were less than eight years of age, were known to be working in many nobles' houses. During the medieval period there were certain crafts which totally depended on the employment of children. As such, children were normally placed as trainees under artisans and craftsman. Even now this tradition continues especially in carpet, cotton and silk weaving industries. These industries employ a large number of children to perform various activities related to these industries.¹³

The phenomenon of child labour was prevalent all over the world, in the pre-industrial revolution phase, though it had an altogether different nature and magnitude. During the post industrial revolution phase, child labour became a growing phenomenon upto the first half of this century in industrialized countries. In case of developing countries, it still continues to grow. With the economic recession, this problem was expected to become more acute. It has started making its appearance in industrialized countries. It is also witnessed in the third world, in general and in India in particular, as a result of persistent poverty and the population explosion.¹⁴

Rapid urbanization has made the problem of child labour more visible because of its association with work outside the family context and high rate of rural-urban migration of both the family and individual types. In case of a developing country, the children mainly work in small manufacturing units as cheap labour. We also find that due to technical innovations in the urban sector, children are often forced into street trades turning child labour into casual labour.¹⁵

Child Labour at the Global Level

Child labour is a pervasive problem throughout the world. Industrialized economies especially of Europe, North America, and Australia etc. have by now

¹² Cunningham. H. 1991. *The Children of the Poor*. Oxford: Blackwell.

¹³ S.N. Mishra, Sweta Mishra. 2004. *Tiny Hands in Unorganized Sector- Towards Elimination of Child Labour*. New Delhi: Shipra Publications. p. 38.

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 39.

¹⁵ Ibid. p. 5.

reduced employment of children to a considerable extent; they are yet not fully out of the phenomenon of child labour. Some of them have some child labour originated from social problems, educational systems and poverty. But the problem of child labour as faced by developing economies today has indeed serious dimensions. Africa and Asia together account for over ninety percent of total child employment. Though there are more child workers in Asia than anywhere else, a higher percent of African children participate in the labour force. Child population working in the developing countries start work at a younger age, sometimes but not always within the family. The variety of jobs they do is greater than in the developed countries, and less recognised by the authorities. They enjoy fewer legal or other protections, if any, and no training to help them deal with the health and other hazards of their work, and they are often helpless to counter poor treatment and exploitation by their employers (or by their families). All in all, children in developing countries work much harder than those in industrialized countries, for less reward and most often foregoing the benefits of schooling. Some even have to create their own jobs, which they do by working on the streets or scavenging for garbage.

The young workers in the developed countries are in a better position. Perhaps their biggest advantage is that many of them manage to combine work with schooling, and one reason for this is the heavy emphasis on school attendance by the local authorities. Africa has the highest proportion in the world of working children (nearly one third), whilst Latin America, with its high levels of urbanization, has the largest population of “street children”. And in many Asian countries children comprise over ten percent of the work force. Yet it is remarkably persistent and remains widespread in much of the developing world, including in the booming parts of the world economy. A 2003 survey by the International Labour Organization(ILO) suggested that there are 246 million child labourers (aged 14 years or less) in the world and that as many as 180 million of them are engaged in hazardous activities that put them at direct physical risk.

India has the largest number of child labourers in the world. The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) estimates that there are more than thirty five million such children, accounting for fourteen percent of the children in the five to fourteen years age group. Other unofficial estimates are much higher, ranging between 60 and 125 million child labourers. Mean while, the census data for 2001

suggests a much lower incidence, with 12.5 million child labourers identified, which would be less than five percent of the relevant age group. This represents a declining incidence compared with the 1991 figure of 6.4 percent of the children between five and fourteen years. Out of the total population of child labourers in India females constitute 46.26 percent whereas male child labourers made it 53.74 percent.

Trends in Children's Work¹⁶

The table below shows, incidence of work among children.

Table 1.1
Estimates of various forms of children's work, 2000 and 2004

Age Group		Child Population		Working Children		Child Labourers		Children in Hazardous Work	
		2000	2004	2000	2004	2000	2004	2000	2004
5-17	No. (millions)	1531.4	1566.3	351.9	317.4	245.5	217.7	170.5	126.3
	Incidence (Percent of age group)	100.0	100.0	23.0	20.3	16.0	13.9	11.1	8.1
	Percent change from 2000 to 2004	–	2.3	–	-9.8	–	-11.3	–	-25.9
5-14	No. (million)	1199.4	1206.5	211.0	190.7	186.3	165.8	111.3	74.4
	Incidence (Percent of age group)	100.0	100.0	17.6	15.8	15.5	13.7	9.3	6.2
	Percent change from 2000 to 2004	–	0.6	–	-9.6	–	-11.0	–	-33.2
15-17	No. (million)	332.0	359.8	140.9	126.7	59.2	51.9	59.2	51.9
	Incidence (Percent of age group)	100.0	100.0	42.4	35.2	17.8	14.4	17.8	14.4

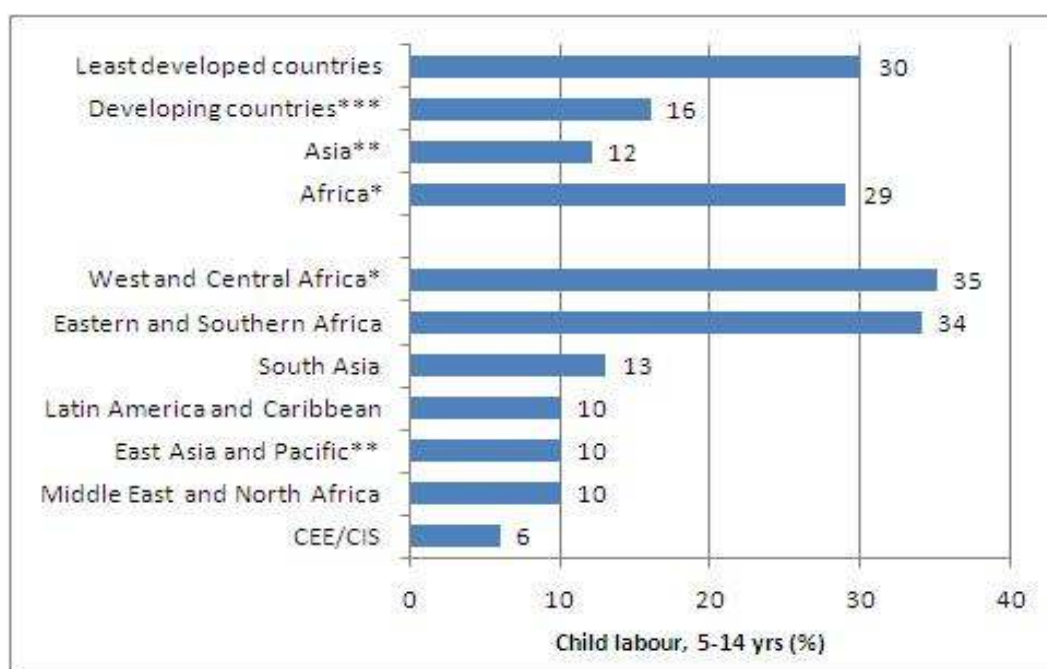
¹⁶ Note that “child labour” is a narrower concept than that of “working children” or “economically active children”. It includes all working children 5-11 years of age; excludes those in the 12- to 14-year age group engaged in “light work”; and, from among the 15- to 17-year-olds, includes only those in hazardous work or other WFCL. For more details see SIMPOC (2004).

Percent change from 2000 to 2004	–	8.4	–	-10.1	–	-12.3	–	-12.3
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Source: International Labour Office. 2006. *Global Child Labour Trends 2000 to 2004*. Geneva: ILO.

Millions of children work to help their families in ways that are either harmful or exploitative. But one in six children 5 to 14 years old, about 16 percent of all children in this age group, is involved in child labour in developing countries. In the least developed countries, 30 per cent of all children are engaged in child labour. These children are put to work in ways that drain childhood of joy and crush the right to normal physical and mental development, and often interfere with children's education.

Chart 1.1: Children aged 5–14 engaged in child labour (%), by region (1999–2008)



Source: UNICEF SOWC 2010

* Excludes Nigeria

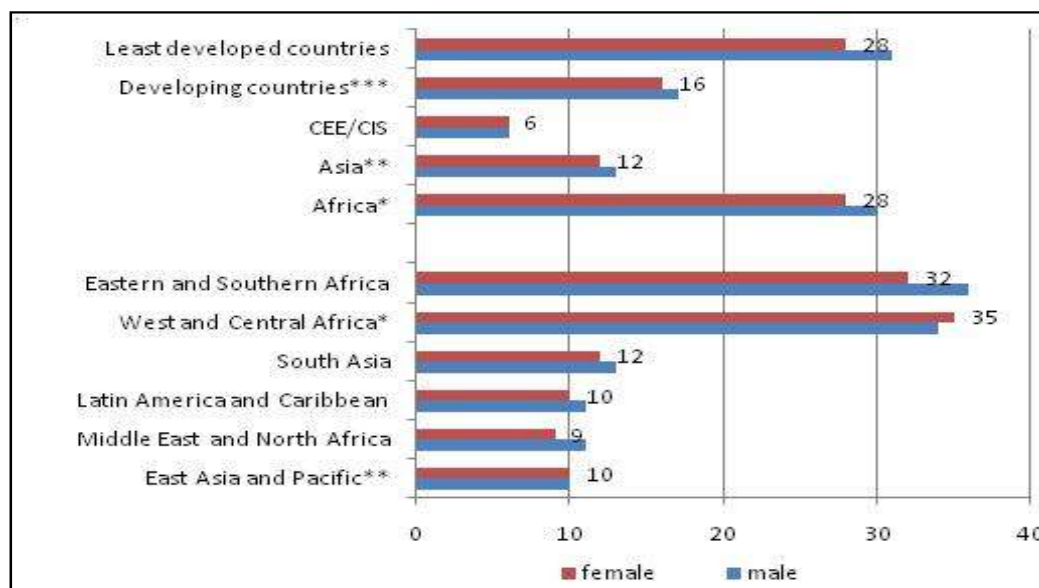
** Excludes China

*** Excludes Nigeria and China

Around 1 in 3 children aged 5–14 in Africa labours, compared to only 1 in 20 in the Central and Eastern European/Commonwealth of Independent States (CEE/CIS) region. Children living in the poorest households and in rural areas are

most likely to be involved in child labour. Boys are more likely to be engaged in child labour than girls because the former are more likely to be engaged in economic activity. Those burdened with household chores are overwhelmingly girls.

Chart 1.2: Children aged 5–14 engaged in child labour (%), by gender (1999–2008)



Source: UNICEF SOWC 2010

* Excludes Nigeria

** Excludes China

*** Excludes Nigeria and China

A review of national data on child labour shows that children work throughout the world, but child labour is most prevalent in Africa. Ensuring that all children go to school and that their education is of good quality are keys to preventing child labour.

Sectoral Distribution of Children's Work

The indicator for employment by sector- based on the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities, Revisions 2 (1968) and 3 (1990)- breaks employment down into three broad groupings of economic activity: agriculture, industry, and services.

- The agricultural sector comprises activities in agriculture, hunting, forestry, and fishing. Children's work is primarily concentrated in agriculture-

agriculture accounts for more than two-thirds (69 percent) of all working children in the age group 5 to 14.

- The industry sector comprises mining and quarrying, manufacturing, construction, and public utilities (electricity, gas and water). Industry accounts for 9 percent of working children.
- The services sector consists of wholesale and retail trade; restaurants and hotels; transport, storage, and communications; finance, insurance, real-estate, and business services; and community as well as social personal services. Services account for 22 percent of working children.

Globalization and Child Labour

The process of international integration of economic activities through liberalizing international trade has pushed more workers into the informal sector of both developing and developed countries. In the developing countries, more than in the developed countries, this has led to the economic exploitation of children in the production of goods both for the export and the domestic market. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), more children are possibly involved in the urban informal sector than in the agricultural sector, because of fast growing migration into the cities and the decentralization of production units.

One of the recent research shows that children are less likely to work in countries with more international trade. The negative association between trade and child labour holds even when considering only poor countries' trade with high-income countries. It also holds up for trade in unskilled-labour intensive products. Quite simply, child labour is less prevalent in countries that trade more because countries that trade more are richer, and children work less in richer countries. Yet, child involvement in the production of products for export is not evidence that the export opportunity causes children to work. (Eric Edmonds, July, 2007).

Some economists and social scientists perceive that globalization increases child labour and marshals several reasons for this. They argue that decentralized production process and intensified competition over wage costs leads to an increase in the number of employed children. Secondly, the weakening of trade unions has also result in falling of real wage of workers and the absence of alternative gainful employment children are pushed to the workplace at tender age. Some on the basis of

cross-country empirical investigations argue that globalization does not necessarily increase child labour. Either it reduces or at best has no significant effect on child labour. This is so as globalization process increases the real wage rate of largely uneducated workforce relatively to the educated workers. The increase in real wages makes the poorer families less poor and enables them to finance the investment on education of their children and thereby complements the other ongoing effect, aimed at combating the problem of child labour. Thus for a developing country, with large uneducated force, trade expansion seems to help in reducing child labour. The last group of opinion makers takes an electric position by saying that the relationship between trade and child labour depends upon the type of activities in which a country specializes, and the macro economic policies it pursues.

Child Labour in Central Asia

Child labour is prevalent in almost all Central Asian States, but in different ways and to different degrees. Tajikistan uses child labour as a ‘lifeline for their families’ who are forced by extreme poverty to take their children out of school and put them to work on the family farm or marketplace. As is common in all Central Asian States, the Tajik government makes pronouncements against the practice, but does nearly nothing to curb its actual use. Tajikistan has a relatively young and rapidly growing population, with 48 percent fewer than 18 years of age. Most families in Tajikistan have many children. The growing economic hardship has lead families to increasingly count on the income derived from children’s informal work, mainly performed in the street after school hours. Children usually work in the market places, streets and other public places, which increases their vulnerability to prostitution and trafficking. According to unofficial estimates, 45-55 percent of children from the 10-14 age groups, especially from low income families are engaged in physical labour and this percent is increasing in Dushanbe and other large cities in Tajikistan. The research done by different agencies including Asian Development Bank, UNICEF, UNESCO, etc. shows that children in terms of wages, work, working conditions, and health conditions are getting exploited immeasurably. According to the report, the Tajik legislation contains provisions on the minimum employment age, as well as the protection of children under 18 from labour conditions that might endanger their health, safety or morals, in line with the international legal standards. Nonetheless, in reality, there is a clear disparity between the law and the practice.

The Kazakh legislation contains provisions on the employment of minors, such as the age limit, safety measures and various safeguards, although many children work illegally, particularly in the rural areas. The types of labour performed by children include subsistence farming, work in private enterprises, family business and others. One of the main reasons of the employment of children is the low living standards of the population. The socio-demographical and economic situation in Kazakhstan is conducive to the use of cheap child labour, both during the agricultural season irrespective of the educational process and by family and criminal business. The analysis of the legal instruments of the Republic of Kazakhstan, dealing with or relevant to child labour is showing that, irrespective of the magnitude of the problem and the significant number of both domestic and international legal provisions in force, children's rights (including labour ones) are not properly protected.¹⁷

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the use of child labour in Kyrgyzstan has become widespread, especially in the southern regions, where tobacco, rice and cotton are cultivated.¹⁸ Furthermore, the labour of children is traditionally used in irrigating, weeding and harvesting work. Almost all the children living in rural areas work on plantations and help their parents in performing all types of labour, including those that may pose health hazards. The use of children in markets has become frequent due to the emergence and growth of unregulated trading activity and markets. Children are involved in transporting (unloading) and sale of goods and luggage on the streets and in the markets, in addition to collecting bottles and aluminium. There are also children involved in tobacco growing work as house servants- they clean, wash, etc. They also gather firewood and work in gardens. Child labour in Kyrgyzstan is caused by general unemployment situation, easy handling of the children than adults, unaware about their rights, causing fewer problems, complaining less and more adaptability. They are also the easiest to sacrifice when difficulties arise. Child labour in Kyrgyzstan is largely the result of cultural, historical, social and economic conditions. Children have to work, along their parents and siblings, in order to contribute to their families' income, starting with the age of five.

¹⁷ Bilal Bhat. May 2011. "Socioeconomic Dimensions of Child Labour in Central Asia: A Case Study of the Cotton Industry in Uzbekistan" New York: M.E. Sharpe, *Problems of Economic Transition*, vol. 54, No. 1, May 2011, pp. 84-99.

¹⁸ Ibid.

An overview of the Turkmen legislation of labour rights of minors shows that the state is party to main international legal documents regulating this issue. Provisions on the labour, performed by minors are contained in Article 179 which stipulates ‘persons 16 years of age and below are not allowed to enter a labour contract. Pupils including those from junior grades, have to work, throughout the cotton picking season in Turkmenistan. Child labour is used for weeding during summer holidays. Many families cannot provide for their children, due to lack of employment or wage arrears. Thus begging, prostitution and various crimes have become widespread among children, as a result of scant payment for their work, their parents poverty and lack of education.¹⁹ Due to stringent employment rules and regulations in Turkmenistan the problem of unemployment is expected to continue due to limited development of the private sector.

The use of child labour in Uzbekistan has largely stemmed from the difficulties of the post-Soviet transition period, which have been conducive to the use of children’s labour. As a consequence of the deteriorating economic conditions, the traditionally large families have not been able to cover the education expenses of all children. The rising unemployment has reduced the levels of average income, especially in rural areas, where employment has large seasonal character. Poor and socially vulnerable families have not been able to maintain an appropriate quality of life.

Child Labour in the Cotton Industry of Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan in 1991 emerged as a sovereign country after more than a century of Russian rule - first as part of the Russian empire and then as a component of the Soviet Union. Positioned on the ancient Great Silk Road between Europe and Asia, majestic cities such as Bukhara and Samarkand, famed for their architectural opulence, once flourished as trade and cultural centers’. Uzbekistan is the most populous Central Asian country and has the largest armed forces. Uzbekistan is one of the world’s biggest producers of cotton and is rich in natural resources, including oil, gas and gold. However, rigid political control is mirrored in the tightly centralized planning of the economy. Economic reform has been painfully slow and poverty and unemployment are widespread. According to ILO report children of school going age

¹⁹ Ibid.

in Uzbekistan are working in different sectors of the economy. Large numbers of school age boys are working as potters. Young girls from the countryside are also sent to cities to work as domestic helpers as the money they earn is lifeline for their families.

In all regions of Uzbekistan, government officials mobilize children in an attempt to ensure that state cotton quotas are met. Schools are closed down, and children as young as seven are sent to the fields to pick cotton by hand. Headmasters are given quotas which dictate how much each student is to harvest. And those who fail to meet their targets, or who pick a low quality crop, are reportedly punished with detentions and told that their grades will suffer. Children who run away from the cotton fields, or who refuse to take part, can face expulsion.

Statistics on children employed in the cotton sector in Uzbekistan are difficult to obtain, but the London-based rights group Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF) says around 200,000 children work in the major cotton-producing region Fergana.²⁰ Fergana is one of the fertile regions in Uzbekistan and is about 420 km east of capital Tashkent. It is impossible to estimate the exact number of children forced to pick cotton. But tens of thousands are likely to be involved each year. According to UNICEF in 2000, an estimated 22.6 percent of Uzbek children aged between 5 and 14 worked at least part-time, primarily in cotton harvesting.

In Soviet times up to two thirds of Uzbekistan's cotton was harvested by machine. Nowadays this figure has dropped to just 10 percent. Instead, the majority of Uzbek cotton is gathered by hand, often by children. According to reports from nine of Uzbekistan's twelve territorial units, (Jizzakh, Fergana, Namangan, Syr Daria, Surkhandaria, Bukhara, Khorezm, Tashkent and Samarkand provinces) by the third week of September local governments and school administrators sent children as young as the seventh grade (ages 13-14), and in some cases as young as fifth grade (11-12) out to the fields to pick cotton. By the end of September, pressure to bring in the harvest before rains led local officials to order the smallest school children, from first grade on, to labour on the harvest. In Fergana, schools are closed and children are sent out from September, though a week earlier forcing children to sign statements that they would remain in school after the end of semester. Experts

²⁰ Environmental Justice Foundation. 2005. *White Gold: The True Cost of Cotton, Uzbekistan, Cotton and the Crushing of a Nation*. London, UK: EJF.

suggested that the statements are intended to give local government officials plausible deniability if the children's presence in the fields was challenged.²¹

In Namangan, human rights defenders observed children from several schools, some as young as eleven, picking cotton. Every day local government officials and bureaucrats from the local education department visit the fields to check up on the number of pupils out picking, and to make sure that harvest targets are being met. Similarly the Samarkand provincial government also sent its school children out to pick cotton in September. Children as young as 13 are forced from their classrooms, though high school, junior college as well as university students (ages sixteen and above) are also sent out to the fields for several weeks.²²

Children recruited to pick cotton in their vicinity are able to return home to their families in the evenings. But older children and those conscripted to work in the more remote cotton farms are forced to sleep in makeshift dormitories on farms, or ironically, in classrooms, often with poor living conditions, at times drinking irrigation water and with insufficient or poor quality food. Some children recount living in barracks with no electricity, windows or doors. After weeks of arduous work and poor accommodation children can be left exhausted and in poor health. Human Rights Organisations confirmed eight deaths of children working in the Samarkand region over a two year period.²³ Many more suffer with chronic diseases including intestinal infections, respiratory infections, meningitis and hepatitis.

While it is certain that the Uzbek regime exploits children in forcing them to take part in the annual cotton harvest, it is less clear how much the children are paid. Some claim to receive US \$5 for five days' work. Others report receiving just 15 US cents for the same period of labour. In 2001, the Uzbek NGO, Tahlil, estimated that payment for 1 kg of cotton ranged from 1.5 US cents at the beginning of the season to 1.0 US cent at the end. In 2004, children in the Fergana region reported that an average day's harvest of 10 kg of cotton would earn them 38 US cents. For the Uzbek

²¹ Group of Human Rights Defenders and Journalists of Uzbekistan. 2008. *Forced Child Labour in Uzbekistan's 2007 Cotton Harvest: Survey Results*. Tashkent. Available at: <http://www.laborrights.org>.

²² International Labour Rights Forum and Human Rights Defenders in Uzbekistan. 2008. *Forced Child Labour in Uzbekistan's 2008 Spring Agricultural Season*. Washington DC. Available at: <http://www.laborrights.org>.

²³ *Elderly people, breastfeeding women ordered to pick cotton in Samarkand Region*. Uznews.net, 16.10.2008.

regime, forced child labour is undeniably cheap and immensely profitable. A child may be paid, at best, 3-4 US cents per kg for a commodity that is valued at US \$1.15 on the global marketplace. Once the cotton harvesting begins many schools are closed down as children, some as young as ten, are sent to the fields to pick cotton by hand for up to three months. They receive little, if any, pay.

Under the Soviet Union, forced labour was accompanied by some care for the health of children, the quality of their nutrition, and development of the rural social infrastructure. The Paris-based group Human Rights in Central Asia reported, “now forced labour is compensated neither by decent payment, nor through public funds. Every year, starting September, schools across the country are closed for more than two months. Students are forced to pick cotton by order of central and local authorities. Children work at least eight hours daily on the cotton fields, sometimes without rest for days. They inhale dust, laden with residues of chemicals, pesticides and defoliants used in the fields before the cotton harvest”.

The use of children ensures maximum profits to the ruling elite, which benefits from the supply of cotton to western consumers. The use of child labour violates international laws and conventions to which many governments of cotton-producing countries are signatories. Children’s normal education is interrupted to serve the interest of the small elite who benefit grossly from the high profits from trading cotton on the world market, reported Initiative Group of Independent Human Rights Defenders of Uzbekistan based in Tashkent. As a result of forced child labour, children cannot learn in schools and colleges during the academic period, and lag behind in the school curriculum, while some children fall sick from hard work and exhaustion.

The refusal to collect cotton can be punished by expulsion from the educational institution. The students are beaten up by school staff for refusing to work for the cotton harvest. Child labour provides more than half of the cotton produced in Uzbekistan. Payment to the children is negligible. There are tens of thousands of children forced to work in the fields each year. Children are being used as cheap labour force by a government which imposes Soviet-style cotton quotas, and which is unwilling to pay a decent living wage to cotton farmers and labourers, thereby ensuring that children are used instead of adults. The practice violates the UN convention on the rights of a child. The convention provides that children have a right

“to be protected from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous, or to interfere with the child’s education, or to be harmful to the child’s health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.”

As forced labour on the cotton harvest prevents children from attending school for over a third of the academic year, it clearly violates the children’s right to an education. Work on the harvest and exposure to pesticides and defoliants is also demonstrably detrimental to children’s health, Human Rights Watch (2001) in Central Asia reported.²⁴ Cheap clothing and other cotton items in the developed world are being subsidised by child labourers in poor cotton producing countries.

Cotton Monoculture: Historical Background

Uzbekistan's cotton monoculture is a legacy of Soviet rule. The centrally planned Soviet economy aimed to make the USSR as a whole self sufficient. To this end certain republics became highly specialized producers of certain commodities for consumption within the Soviet market and in certain cases export for hard currency. The Soviet regime concentrated on growing cotton in Uzbekistan at the expense of all other crops. As a result of this cotton monoculture Uzbekistan continues to suffer from a variety of economic, political and ecological deformities. Not the least of which has been the drying up of the Aral Sea and the poisoning of the surrounding land with salt.

Already in the 1860s in response to the loss of the Southern US as a source of cotton, the Tsarist regime sought to promote the cultivation of cotton in what is now Uzbekistan to provide raw material for its textile mills. In 1925 and 1926, Soviet land reform eliminated the problem of landless peasants cultivating other people’s lands in the region. However, most of the small plots now owned by Uzbeks remained too small to be economically viable. The inability of Uzbek farmers to make a living from these parcels of land facilitated the collectivization of agriculture in the early 1930s. Unlike European areas of the USSR, strong class antagonisms between the formerly landless peasants and the former land owning class of *bais* remained muted. Many *bais* retained positions of notable influence in rural communities despite the confiscation of much of their wealth during the land reform campaign. To remove this influence which the Soviet government correctly connected with opposition to

²⁴ Human Rights Watch. 2000. *Human Rights Watch World Report 2000: Uzbekistan*. Geneva: HRW.

collectivization, the OGPU forcibly deported over 12,000 families from their homes to places as far away as Ukraine and the North Caucasus. The collectivization of agriculture ensured state control over the rural Uzbek economy. In the following decades, the Soviet state used this control to turn the Uzbek countryside into one large cotton plantation.

The Soviet government sought to expand the production of cotton in Uzbekistan by expanding its planted acreage at the expense of food crops and the intensive use of fertilizers. Expansion of cotton cultivation required massive irrigation. Unpaid *corvee* labour built the canals that provided this irrigation including the 270 km long Great Ferghana Canal constructed in 1930. Other forms of forced labour also contributed to cotton cultivation at this time. By 1934, 20,100 inmates in the *Sazlag* complex of corrective labour camps in *Chirchik* worked on cotton farms. By the end of the 1930s, the USSR had become self sufficient in cotton.

Cotton cultivation in Uzbekistan continued to receive a priority throughout the Soviet period. It also created significant distortions in the region's economy. By the early 1980s the USSR had become a major exporter of cotton. It accounted for over a fifth of the world's production and lagged only behind China in total output. Although Tajikistan and Turkmenistan contributed to Soviet cotton production, Uzbekistan remained the center of cultivation in the USSR with 70 percent of production. Uzbekistan became heavily dependent upon harvesting raw cotton for the USSR and had to acquire almost everything else including textiles from other regions of the USSR. Cotton in Uzbekistan at this time employed 40 percent of its total labour force and generated 65 percent of the republic's total economic output. The rapid expansion of this crop, however, proved unsustainable. It could not grow fast enough to fully employ and provide a rising standard of living to the increasing Uzbek population. The economic conditions of the predominantly rural Uzbek population thus stagnated and started to decline, a trend that accelerated rapidly after the collapse of the USSR. The Soviet emphasis on the production of raw cotton to the exclusion of other economic activities impeded economic diversification, industrialization and urbanization. Thus leaving Uzbekistan relatively backwards compared to Russia and other European areas of the USSR.

Cotton monoculture also wrecked havoc on the Uzbek ecology. The expansion of cotton cultivation in Uzbekistan required the massive diversion of scarce water

resources for irrigation. Cotton farms drained so much water from the Amu Darya and Sir Darya rivers that they could no longer replace the water that evaporated from the Aral Sea. As a result the Aral Sea shrank significantly and rendered much of the nearby land infertile due to excess salinity. The overuse of pesticides also posed environmental dangers. Finally, the failure to practice crop rotation led to massive soil erosion in Uzbekistan. The environmental degradation caused by cotton in Uzbekistan has caused serious health problems among many of its rural inhabitants. Despite being a noticeable problem since the 1980s, neither the Soviet government nor Islam Karimov regime made any serious attempt to address its root causes in the cotton industry.

Today the cotton farms remain state property. The workers on these farms receive only a small fraction of the money earned by the state by the sale of cotton to western companies. It returns very little of this to the people of Uzbekistan in the form of social services such as education and health care. Both of which have deteriorated significantly since the collapse of the USSR. Child labour mobilized by local officials during the harvest season remain wide spread. This practice has further retarded education in Uzbekistan. The cotton monoculture of Uzbekistan remains in need of serious reform. Toothless suggestions have not improved the situation. Only the force of threatening sanctions against the crop unless there are serious reforms is likely to improve the situation

Population Growth and Unemployment

Uzbekistan in 1991 emerged as a sovereign country after more than a century of Russian rule- first as part of the Russian empire and then as a component of the Soviet Union. Positioned on the ancient Great Silk Road between Europe and Asia, majestic cities such as Bukhara and Samarkand, famed for their architectural opulence, once flourished as trade and cultural centres. The country's political system is highly authoritarian, and its human rights record widely decried.

Uzbekistan is the most populous Central Asian country and has the largest armed forces. There is no real internal opposition and the media is tightly controlled by the state. The country is one of the world's biggest producers of cotton and is rich in natural resources, including oil, gas and gold. However economic reforms have been slow and poverty and unemployment are widespread.

Two thirds of the population of Uzbekistan lives in the countryside. At the beginning of 2002, the population of Uzbekistan reached approximately 25.1 million inhabitants, which amounts to about 40 percent of the total population of Central Asian countries. This is largely the result of the previously high fertility rate, and subsequent population growth. For many years, the Government of Uzbekistan encouraged women to have many children in order to increase the population size of the country. Those who had seven or more children were traditionally glorified as “mothers-heroines.” They were also the recipients of a number of benefits offered by the state, such as financial bonuses, housing allowances, extensive paid maternity leave, child allowances etc. The total fertility rate (TFR), however, dropped from 5.7 in 1970 to 2.4 per person in 2002.²⁵

Rapid population growth produces a young population, which implies a higher burden on the society, as only a small proportion of its working population is enrolled in the labour force and produces goods and services in order to support the non-working categories of the population. The available data reveals that about 38.7 per cent of the total population of the country is below 16 years of age, despite declining from 43.1percent in 1991. The highest number of children and teenagers reside in rural areas (67.6 per cent), particularly between the ages of eight and 15 (72.4 per cent).²⁶

Many children live in regions with high rates of both population density and unemployment, such as Fergana, Kashkadarya and Samarkand. Furthermore, it is necessary to mention that, in some regions, such as Kashkadaya, Surkhandarya, Djizak and Samarkand, there are higher than average numbers of children. The lowest number of children lives in Tashkent, where they account only for 27.5 per cent from the total number of inhabitants. It is evident, that in Uzbekistan most children live in the countryside, which is due to the national tradition of having large families and to children’s duty to support parents in the old age. In rural areas, children under 16 years old make up 41.8 per cent of the total number of the population, against 33.1 per cent in urban areas.²⁷

²⁵ State Department of Statistics. 2002. Population of the Republic of Uzbekistan 1991-2001. Tashkent. p. 79.

²⁶ Ibid. pp. 35-43.

²⁷ State Statistical Agency. 2003. “Uzbekistan in Numbers 2002 – Statistical Overview”. Tashkent. p.35.

Demographic, social and economic factors create objective preconditions for the use of child labour in the countryside. In rural areas, 31 per cent of families have 6-7 members, and 11 per cent of families have nine and more members. Currently, 136 children are born per one hundred women of reproductive age, with 152 children in rural areas.²⁸ During the transition to market economy, it has been observed that the number of children has decreased in both urban and rural areas, as the political and economic changes had demographic implications. Moreover, approximately 27 percent of the population lives below the poverty line and thus cannot satisfy their basic needs. In rural areas, approximately 35 percent have a higher chance of becoming poor, and 58 percent - the poorest (UN, 2003).

According to the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the state guarantees to all citizens the right to free education. The general secondary education is compulsory and includes I-IX grades. In addition, the Law "On Education" guarantees equal rights to education irrespective of sex, language, age, race, nationality, religion, social origin, occupation and duration of residence in Uzbekistan (Article 41). Nevertheless, it should be noted that in the post-Soviet period, in the more impoverished regions, the school attendance rates have decreased.²⁹ Many poor households cannot afford textbooks, clothes and other items. Children have to miss school and to support their parents financially.

According to the Law "On Employment of the Population," the unemployed are defined as able bodied persons over 16 years of age, who have no employment or income, are registered at the local labour assistance office as seeking employment, are prepared to work and/or to enrol in vocational training and retraining courses, and to improve their professional skills. According to official data, the unemployment rate in Uzbekistan is 0.4-0.5 per cent (the lowest rate among the Commonwealth Independent States), although this indicator does not reflect the real situation in the labour market. The results of an analysis of family budgets, carried out by the World Bank, using ILO methodology, placed the real rate of unemployment in Uzbekistan at 5.8 per cent (in urban areas – 5.3 per cent, in rural ones– 6.2 per cent).³⁰ In

²⁸ A.V. Gonorskya. 2002. "Maintenance of the Full Employment of the Labour Force, Using the Potential of Non-governmental Organizations". Tashkent. p. 50.

²⁹ UNICEF. 2003. "Social monitoring – Analytical Material".

³⁰ World Bank. 2002. "*Labour Market and Unemployment in Uzbekistan*". Available at: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org>.

Uzbekistan, unemployment affects mostly the youth, as more than 50 per cent of the population are young people between 16 and 25. About 13 per cent of young people in this age group are unemployed in both rural and urban areas.³¹ They are generally graduates of high and technical schools, colleges and other educational institutions.

Today, Uzbek children work side by side with adults. They carry out the most unskilled work, such as cleaning houses and offices, washing cars, hauling goods in markets, helping parents or relatives in retail trade and in addition are working in the agricultural sector. There are no exhaustive and reliable statistics on the number of working children. Nearly 10 percent of children between the ages of 14 and 17 - the age group most likely to be involved in the “black” labour market - are not included in the official statistical data.³² Children between 10 and 15 years of age are employed for all types of work by virtue of their development, when compared to children from the 5-9 age groups.³³ The high level of employment demonstrates that children between ten and 15 years of age perform work suitable for and on a par with adults, as vendors, waiters etc. One of the main reasons of participation of children in labour markets is their wish to earn money and thus assist their parents. Children have become a cheap and dependable source of labour in the country’s shadow economy.

During the Soviet period, the cotton industry was central to country’s economy and the state frequently resorted to the labour of school children due to time constraints associated with cotton picking. When the country became independent, the state policy on agriculture was reassessed – the number of cotton fields were reduced and producers became more interested in independent entrepreneurial activities. Nevertheless, the use of child labour in cotton fields continued. As school authorities do not have any effective instruments to force children to go to cotton picking, they resort to softer methods of persuasion. Cotton picking is paid work. In 2001, the payment for 1 kg of picked cotton ranged from 22 soms at the beginning of the season to 15 soms at the end of the season. Working hours depend on the age of children. Pupils pick cotton between September and the end of November, as schools are closed during the cotton-picking season.³⁴ Recently, governmental procurement quotas were introduced for some agricultural crops that have strategic significance for the national

³¹ Tashkent Centre for Social Research “Tahlil”. 2002. “*Child Labour in Uzbekistan*”. p.9.

³² Ibid.

³³ Source: www.ucw-project.org.

³⁴ Tashkent Centre for Social Research “Tahlil,” .Op. Cit. p. 75.

economy. Rural students play the role of the labour reserve that ensures that the government quotas are reached. Presently, children are employed in cotton-picking in an organized manner only after the best part of the cotton has been picked and when work in cotton fields does not yield substantial earnings for agricultural producers. At the beginning of the cotton picking season, agricultural producers do not allow other people to work in the cotton fields.

Convention on the Rights of the Child

The General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on 20th November 1989. It bears the opinion regarding protection of children everywhere against exploitation, neglect and abuse. The Convention draws attention to four sets of civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights of every child. These include (1) The Right to Survival; (2) The Right to Protection; (3) The Right to Development; and (4) The Right to Participation. Article 23 of the Convention says, ‘All States should work to end such child labour practices and see how the conditions and circumstances of children in legitimate employment can be protected to provide adequate opportunity for their healthy upbringing and development.’³⁵ The UN is conscious of the fact that the rights of the children are violated across the globe. It is probably in this backdrop that a world conference was organized and sent a strong message to all those countries where children’s rights are abused the most.

World Conference on Human Rights

The World Conference on Human Rights organized by the UN in Vienna, Austria from 14th to 25th June 1993 reiterated the principle of “First Call for Children”³⁶ and, in this respect it underlined the importance of major national and international efforts, especially those of the United Nations Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF), for promoting respect for the rights of the child to survival, protection, development and participation. It called on states to integrate the Convention on the Rights of the child into their National Action Plans.³⁷

³⁵ UNICEF. 2004. *The State of the World’s Children 2004*. New York: UNICEF. p. 7.

³⁶ See UNICEF. 1990. *First Call for Children: World Declaration and Plan of Action from the World Summit for Children*. New York: UNICEF.

³⁷ Ibid. p. 6.

The World Conference on Human Rights urged all states, with the support of international cooperation, to address the acute problem of children under difficult circumstances. Exploitation and abuse of children should be actively combated, by addressing their root causes. Effective measures are required against harmful child labour. The conference supported all measures by the United Nations and its specialized agencies to ensure the effective protection and promotion of human rights of the female child. It urged states to respect existing laws and regulations and remove customs and practices, which discriminate against and cause harm to the female child. It recognized the important role played by NGOs in the effective implementation of all human rights instruments and, in particular, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Veina Declaration and Programme of Action, 1993).³⁸

As early as 1921, when the International Labour Organization (ILO) passed the first Minimum Age Convention, the world has attempted to protect children's right to an education and to prevent any child labour which would prejudice their school attendance.³⁹ The ILO's Minimum Age Convention 138 of 1973⁴⁰ set the standard for the minimum age for admission to employment as 15 years, or in special cases where economic and educational facilities are insufficiently developed, 14 years; light work not harmful to the child or prejudicial to his or her attendance at school is permissible after age 12. Since 1990, with the entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of the Child,⁴¹ the child's right to be protected from "any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education" (Article 32) and his or her right, on an equal, non-discriminatory basis to "primary education compulsory and available free to all" (Article 28) have gained the status of internationally recognized norms, while imposing an obligation on the 192 states parties to the Convention to realize these rights for the children under their jurisdiction.⁴²

³⁸ P. Anandharajakumar. Op. Cit. pp. 13-14.

³⁹ "Children under the age of fourteen years may not be employed or work in any public or private agricultural undertaking, or in any branch thereof, save outside the hours fixed for school attendance, the employment shall not be such as to prejudice their attendance at school." Article 1 in: ILO. 1921. C10: Minimum age (agriculture) convention. <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/cgi-lex/convde.pl>.

⁴⁰ June 26, 1973, 1015 U.N.T.S. 297, entered into force June 19, 1976 (Convention 138).

⁴¹ G.A. res. 44/25, annex, 44 U.N. GAOR Supp. (No. 49) at 167, U.N. Doc. A/44/49 (1989), entered into force Sept. 2, 1990.

⁴² UNICEF. 2000. *First Call for Children: World Declaration and Plan of Action from the World Summit for Children, Convention on the Rights of the Child*. New York: UNICEF.

The United Nations Declarations emphasized on child welfare having applications to every social condition, by conferring specific rights to children through social legislation prohibiting any discrimination.⁴³ The year 1979,⁴⁴ was designated as International Year of the Child (IYC) by United Nations which gave importance on the co-operation of the Nations in common tasks of meeting the basic needs of the children, i.e. nutrition, health, education, maternal protection, family care, equal society status and protection from racial and other forms of discrimination.⁴⁵ This was a challenge to the conscience of mankind and to the community of nations.

The Convention No. 138 of 1973 of ILO emphasized that each member for which the convention was in force undertakes to pursue a national designed to ensure the effective abolition of child labour and to raise regressively the minimum age for admission of children to employment of work. The same convention also recommended for special attention for working conditions of young persons below 18 years, in terms of fair remuneration, limited working hours, prohibited night work, weekly and annual holidays with leave, coverage by all social schemes, maintenance of satisfactory standards of health, safety, etc. ILO has adopted five conventions for making medical examination of young persons, a condition precedent for employment. This is to ensure fitness of the young persons for the employment where he/she is to be employed.⁴⁶

Legal Provisions against Child Labour in Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan has adopted a number of laws, on Youth Policy, on Labour, and on Children's Rights. These statutes set limits and restrictions on the use of child labour. Legally, children are only allowed to work after age of 15. Before this age they can be employed only in the context of school-related activity, and for no more than 15 days.⁴⁷ In all cases, children are not allowed to work more than four hours per day.

⁴³ Elisha Chanlett and G.M Morier. 1968. *Declaration of the Rights of the Child*. Vol. XXII. International Child Welfare Review.

⁴⁴ In 1976, the General Assembly proclaimed 1979 as the International Year of the Child. The general objectives were to promote the wellbeing of children, drawing attention to their special needs and encouraging national action, particularly for the least privileged and those at work. It was only during the IYC that international attention became fully re-focussed on the problem of child labour. The IYC acted as a spur to international agencies and civil society actors alike.

⁴⁵ De Savza, Alfred (Ed.). *Children in India*. OXFAM India. p. 66.

⁴⁶ Kofi Annan. 2001. *We the Children*. New York: UNICEF. pp. 80-82.

⁴⁷ <http://www.cottoncampaign.org/frequently-asked-questions>.

Article 37 of the Constitution of Republic of Uzbekistan guarantees all citizens the right to work, in appropriate conditions, and to choose their employment freely. The social and labour rights of citizens are contained in two basic documents – the Labour Code (1995) and the Law “On Employment of the Population” (1992, revised in 1998). According to the Law “On Employment,” all citizens have “equal opportunities in the realization of their right to work and to a free choice of employment, irrespective of sex, age, race, nationality, language, social origin, property and official position, religion, membership in public associations, or other circumstances that have no negative impact on the ability of persons to work and the results of their work” (Article 5).⁴⁸

According to Article 77 of the Labour Code, children have the right to be employed at the age of 16, when they finish their primary education (nine grades), which is compulsory under the Law “On Education.” Also, all citizens, between the ages of 16 and 64 (16-60 years for women and 16-64 for men) are considered able-bodied and thus, part of the labour force. According to international law, all persons under 18 years are minors, which is compatible with the Civil Code of Uzbekistan which stipulates that children attain maturity at 18, when they are granted the right to vote and run for public office.

Uzbekistan Legislation and International Human Rights Commitments

Economic exploitation is prohibited in both Constitution and Labour Code of Uzbekistan. Namely, Article 37 of the Constitution of Uzbekistan prohibits forced labour, except as punishment under the sentence of a court, and the Labour Code of Uzbekistan sets 16 as a minimum age for admission to employment, although children aged 14 are permitted to work after the hours of study in light work, as long as it poses no hazards to their health or moral development, with the permission of a parent or guardian.⁴⁹ Article 241 of Uzbekistan’s Labour Code prohibits the use of child labour, “which can damage [their] health, safety and morality”. Article 8 of the Labour Code states that “the Republic of Uzbekistan directly prohibits child labour during education periods, if such activity is not related to the major subjects or part of

⁴⁸ G. Tansibekova and V. Kosteckii. 2004. *Passport of the Young Citizen*. George Soros Foundation. p.64.

⁴⁹ See U.S. Embassy- Tashkent, *unclassified telegram no. 3730*, October 15, 2002. See Article 77 of the Labour Code as cited by U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2003: Uzbekistan*, Section 6d.

an internship, or if outside the education period based on an individual or collective volunteer action.

A joint legal resolution issued by the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Health, and registered by the Ministry of Justice in September 2001 (No. 1040), lists cotton picking and other forms of child labour on a national list of unfavourable working environments prohibited to workers less than 18 years of age.⁵⁰ The rights of a child to education and to health are also stipulated in Uzbek laws “on Education” and “on Protection of Public Health”. However these regulations are not enforced. In practice, the economic exploitation of school-age children is widespread and organized by the government itself.

The US Department of State’s Human Rights Report for 2006 stated that the Government of Uzbekistan did not effectively implement laws and policies to protect children from exploitation in the workplace. According to the report: A 2001 government decree prohibits those under age 18 from engaging in manual cotton harvesting and other jobs with unhealthy working conditions; however, in rural areas children often help to harvest cotton and other crops. The large scale compulsory mobilization of youth and students to help in the fall cotton harvest continued in most rural areas. Such labour was poorly paid. There were occasional reports from human rights activists that local officials in some areas pressured teachers into releasing students from class to help in the harvest and in many areas, schools closed for the harvest.⁵¹ The State Department’s Trafficking in Persons report released in June 2007 also confirmed that men and women are trafficked for the purpose of forced labour in agriculture and designated Uzbekistan as a Tier 3 country.⁵²

The main law enforcement agencies in Uzbekistan are the Prosecutor General and the Ministry of Interior. The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection does not have legal jurisdiction over child labour enforcement.⁵³ The laws provide for criminal and administrative sanctions to punish violators of child labour laws. However sanctions were not adequate to deter violations related to the cotton harvest, and in

⁵⁰ US Department of State. *Foreign Labour Trends Report: Uzbekistan 2006*. <http://www.state.gov>.

⁵¹ US Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Rights and Labour, “*Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2006: Uzbekistan*.” <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78848.htm>

⁵² US Department of State, “*Trafficking in Persons Report*,” June 2007. <http://www.state.gov>.

⁵³ U.S. Embassy- Tashkent, *unclassified telegram no. 2056* cited by US Department of Labour. Bureau of International Labour Affairs. See at: <http://www.dol.gov>.

any case were not enforced. There were no reports of prosecutions or administrative sanctions resulting from any inspections.⁵⁴

Uzbekistan is also a party to numerous international human rights and labour rights treaties. Since its independence in 1991, Uzbekistan has ratified all six major UN international human rights treaties, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child.⁵⁵ Article 32 of this Convention recognizes the right of a child “to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child’s education or to be harmful to the child’s health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.”

But the ground realities are quite contrast. It was evident by the observations made by UN committee on the Rights of Child in April 2006. In its operational past the statement goes: “we are deeply concerned at the information about the involvement of the many school age children in the harvesting of cotton resulting in serious health problems such as intestinal and respiratory infections, meningitis and hepatitis.”⁵⁶

Uzbekistan has ratified several International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions, including Convention 29 on Forced Labour, and Convention 105 on Elimination of Forced Labour. However, it has failed to ratify Convention 138 on the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment of 1973 or Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour of 1999.

In 2005 the Government of Uzbekistan submitted its first report concerning ILO Conventions No. 29 and 105 to the ILO Committee of Experts. The Committee has issued a Direct Request to the Government of Uzbekistan for more information concerning the use of forced labour. Unfortunately none of these documents are publicly available.⁵⁷

In 2004, representatives from the Government of Uzbekistan participated in an assessment mission to gather preliminary information about the child labour situation

⁵⁴ Ibid.n.26

⁵⁵ <http://www.ohchr.org>.

⁵⁶ Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child: UZBEKISTAN, Forty-second session. CRC/C/UZB/CO/2, 2 June 2006.

⁵⁷ The ILRF requested copies of the submission and response from the ILO Committee in Geneva in August 2006 and was informed that these documents were not available to the public.

in Central Asia.⁵⁸ Subsequently the US Department of Labour provided funding to ILO-IPEC for a sub-regional project to enhance the capacity of national institutions to eliminate the worst forms of child labour and to share information and experiences across the sub-region.⁵⁹ However there has been no positive change in the situation in cotton harvesting in Uzbekistan since the initiation of that project.

The Government of Uzbekistan has officially denied the existence of forced child labour in cotton harvesting. In private, however, some Uzbek officials do admit the use of forced child labour in the cotton harvest.⁶⁰ In a 2004 interview with journalists from the Institute of War and Peace Reporting, an official from the Jizzakh regional administration privately admitted that the use of child labour was widespread and that the cotton industry couldn't survive without it.⁶¹ On October 16, 2006, according to an Uzbek senior official, Cotton Fair in Tashkent collected exports contracts for 1.7 million tons of cotton fibre. However according to local informants interviewed by ILRF staff, lack of agricultural infrastructure and a corrupt subsidiary system discourage farmers from cultivating cotton. The potential social ramifications and economic inefficiencies have led the World Bank and the UNDP to urge the Uzbek government to change its agricultural policy, particularly in cotton cultivation. Until now the Uzbek Government has made little or no effort to liberalize the sector.⁶²

In light of the serious violations of internationally recognized workers' rights identified in this petition, and the failure of the Government of Uzbekistan to undertake any meaningful steps to address these issues, it is clear that the country's benefits under GSP should be revoked. Uzbekistan's practice of using state-orchestrated forced child labour in national cotton production is a clear and substantial breach of its commitments under ILO conventions prohibiting forced labour. These practices are also clearly in conflict with ILO Convention 182 prohibiting the worst

⁵⁸ The mission was lead by ILO-IPEC and took place in June 2004. See ILO-IPEC, *CAR Capacity Building Project: Regional Program on the Worst Forms of Child Labour*, project document, RER/04/P54/USA, Geneva, September 2004, 1. The Government of Germany provided funding in 2003 to carry out these activities. ILO-IPEC Official, Active IPEC Projects as of May 1, 2004, USDOL Official, 2004.

⁵⁹ Countries participating in the sub-regional project are Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. See ILO-IPEC, *CAR Capacity Building Project*, vii.

⁶⁰ Uzbekistan: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2003, United States Department of State (2004) <http://www.state.gov>.

⁶¹ Further Growth in Uzbek Child Labour, Institute of War and Peace Reporting (18 June 2004) <http://www.iwpr.net>.

⁶² Ibid.n.6; also confidential reports on economic constraints in the cotton sector from Uzbek activists on file at ILRF.

forms of child labour. Uzbekistan has neither ratified ILO 182 nor otherwise undertaken meaningful actions to prohibit the practice of forced child labour in the substantial and economically significant cotton sector.

Uzbekistan has signed and ratified ILO conventions: No. 29, (the 1930 Forced Labour Convention) and No. 105 (The 1957 Abolition of Forced Labour Convention). These documents were ratified in 1992 and 1997 respectively. However, neither aforementioned national laws, nor Uzbekistan's ILO commitments, have curbed widespread use of forced child labour.⁶³

Until 2008, two other important ILO conventions, No. 138 (Minimum Age Convention, 1973), and No.182 (Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999) were unrecognized by the Uzbek government. Finally, in March 2008, the Parliament (Oliv Majlis) ratified these two conventions. In September 2008 the Cabinet of Ministers adopted a resolution and the National Action Plan aimed for the implementation of Convention 182 and Convention 138. But these documents didn't stipulate cooperation with ILO and any mechanism of independent monitoring of how the conventions are being implemented. A few weeks after the resolution school children were, as usually, taken for cotton harvest. That fact demonstrated that the rule of law is nonexistent in Uzbekistan, and none of ILO conventions ratified by Uzbekistan are considered seriously by its government. None of them have affected the real situation. Nor the ratification obviated the need for further pressure on the Uzbek government to end the use of forced child labour.⁶⁴

Child Labour and School Achievement

While education itself is clearly significant for the development of an individual and for the well being of the society, it may be less obvious why education is important in the context of child labour. Widespread child labour is closely associated with poverty. The family may depend on the contribution a working child makes to the household income, and place more importance on that income than on education. A poor family may be unable to afford school fees, uniforms or other costs. Moreover, when a family has to make a choice between sending either a boy or girl to school, it is often the girl who loses out. While child labour is often a much needed

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

contribution to the income of the family, education may be so costly that the decision whether to send a child to school or to work will be difficult for many poor parents.

A child who is in school full time is more likely not to engage in child labour. Hence, expanding access to free and compulsory education is crucial to reducing child labour, as is the provision of quality education. Access to education is a necessary but not sufficient element as the challenge is to retain children in school. Only quality education can ensure that they stay in school. Quality means that teachers are recruited in adequate numbers to avoid high student teacher ratios in classrooms. Teachers and educators need to receive the training required to make them effective. Relevant curricula are also essential for an education of quality. Finally, no good education can be provided if classroom conditions are deplorable and students lack the necessary books, equipment and other educational materials. Children who receive quality education are more empowered to escape from poverty and, as adults, are more likely to send their children to school.⁶⁵

Myron Wiener and others hold the view that the universal extension of state-funded education in Europe, North America and Japan has been the most powerful instrument for the abolition of child labour. “No country has successfully ended child labour without first making education compulsory. As long as children need not attend school, they will enter the labour force”. Policy makers in most countries believe that mandatory education is a prerequisite for the eventual abolition of all forms of child labour.⁶⁶ Wiener refuted the popularly accepted explanations given by scholars on child labour, viz., low economic development of the nation, poverty, high birth rate and size of family.⁶⁷

The expected return to education is an important factor in the parents’ considerations. However, the true benefits of schooling, such as increased future wages may often not be known to families, and even if they are, weighing up value against private costs is not an easy task. Even if parents are aware that the returns to education could be significant, the cost of schooling can be so high that the children are removed from school and pushed into works.⁶⁸ The benefits of going to school are

⁶⁵ Ibid. p.2.

⁶⁶ Myron Weiner. 1990. *The Child and the State in India: Child Labour and Education Policy in Comparative Perspective*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

⁶⁷ Agarwal, Babita. 2007. *Child Labour in India*. Jaipur India: ABD Publishers. p. 60.

⁶⁸ <http://www.savethechildren.org.uk>

mostly long-term, and will mainly affect the child, rather than the parent. On the other hand, the costs have to be born by the parents, and these costs are due in the short term. A comparative study of child labour and schooling in Africa found that one way to reduce child labour and increase incentives to keep the children in the educational system is to improve access to credit, which the family can pay back later.⁶⁹

Education of good quality is a key element in the prevention of child labour. Children with no access to education have little alternative than to enter the labour market. Child labour is also one of the main obstacles to education for all, since children who are working full-time cannot go to school. The academic achievement of children who combine work and school often suffers, and there is a strong tendency for these children to drop out of school and enter into full-time employment.

When education is compulsory and attractive, it can help to reduce child labour. There is need to develop an integrated policy and programme of action to provide quality free and universal education that is relevant and accessible to children in poor families such as those to which the majority of child workers belong. Child labour concerns should be explicitly addressed and integrated into such a policy and programme of action; a holistic approach is necessary. Quality education should be provided for children at least upto 15 years of age to stem the flow of children into the labour market and to provide working children and former working children with educational opportunities. A recent study estimates that worldwide an additional US 16 billion dollar per year would be required to achieve universal primary education of decent quality by 2015 (Matz, 2003).⁷⁰

Table 1.2

Annual expenditure on basic education and other items

S.No.	The World's Priorities (annual expenditure)	
1	Basic Education	6 bn
2	Ice Cream in Europe	11 bn

⁶⁹ Martin, Gunther and Caglar. 2003. *Child Labour in Europe and Central Asia*. Preliminary results of polls sponsored by UNICEF, with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, April 2001.

⁷⁰ International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour. 2003. *Combating Child Labour Through Education*. Geneva: ILO.

3	Perfumes in Europe and USA	12 bn
4	Pet foods in Europe and USA	17 bn
5	Business entertainment in Japan	35 bn
6	Cigarettes in Europe	50 bn
7	Alcoholic drinks in Europe	105 bn
8	Narcotic drugs in the world	400 bn
9	Military spending in the world	780 bn

Source: UNDP, Human Development Report 1998

This table indicates that the world can surely afford to invest more money in the well-being of its children. However, while universal access to education is affordable in global terms, there are many countries, particularly in Africa, for which the costs of financing the types of education programmes are too high. These countries must rely on increased donor assistance from the developed countries to meet the present educational challenges.

NGOs can play an important role in this regard. It is imperative to link education with the individual's life, need and ambitions so as to make him a powerful instrument of social, economic and cultural transformation, and to fulfil national objectives through him. This is possible only when education is linked with productivity. Simultaneously it could develop truly indigenous life style that could go with modernization. Above all education could develop a sense of cooperation and could formulate a character through stress on social, moral and spiritual values.⁷¹

⁷¹ Babita Agarwal. Op. Cit. p. 69.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

In the modern period with the advent of new industrial culture the practice of child labour has assumed an alarming proportion only to attract the attention of social workers, philanthropists, and social activists to its various negative aspects. It was never a problem till children were used as helping hands. The need for more production at cheaper costs and the motive to earn more and more results in using the helping hands as working hands. Various social and human rights organizations took serious notice of this practice which attracted attention of the government, parliamentarians and social scientists. This chapter will make a modest attempt to review the efforts of social scientists, NGOs and many others who have made an attempt to analyze this problem. Our endeavour will be to draw inferences from these studies and see how they can help us in understanding the problem under observation.

The Global Level Studies

The study by Mamadani in Punjab, India (1972) was probably the first to clearly articulate the view that peasants need high fertility for the economic benefits gained thereby. Mamadani also clearly made the connection between poverty and the economic gains of child labour, as well as those from grown up children. Mamadani's style is polemical and the anecdotal nature of the data seriously detracts from the work as empirical or scientific. On the other hand, it must be said that Mamadani's study made a forceful statement of the problem and showed the usefulness of an anthropological approach to data collection.

An influential study of Cain in Bangladesh (1977) used data collected on the time-use of inhabitants from an agricultural village to support the conclusion that male children become net producers at an early age and more than cancel the costs they incur by 15 years. Activity is divided into 'enabling' labour and productive work, but the possibility of joint production is not contemplated. More importantly, the net result of the labour of children (such as baby-sitting and collecting fuel) in terms of adult members' activities thus enabled is not measured.

The problem of integrating the economic context into the study design is hinted at but never adequately taken into account. For example, Cain acknowledges

that for the 23 percent of households with no land, the chances of children finding wage employment were 'limited' and, at the same time, that most farming families hired labour at least occasionally. Hence, some kind of labour market must have existed in the study area which would compete with a household's supply of child labour. Cain in fact alludes to this but does not systematically attempt to link hired labour with family supplied labour. Furthermore, as Lindert (1983) points out, the wage rates used in the study tend to exaggerate the value of child labour since peak-season rates were employed. Also missing in this study is any reference to schooling to how education may compete with child labour in the use of children's time. Altogether these calculations lead to an overly bright picture: children produce more than they consume by 13 to 14 years of age and become net assets by their early twenties. Furthermore, since there are no obvious externalities to cloud this picture (since villages are largely closed economic systems), over the years Bangladesh should have grown ever more prosperous.

The two related studies on Indonesia and Nepal (Nag et al., 1977) which use somewhat different data collection techniques have a similar objective of trying to determine the economic value of children by measuring child labour. The study reported economic activity and recorded that a distinction is made between 'directly productive' and 'household maintenance' work. In general, except that longer periods of field study eliminated the problem of peak-season bias. Furthermore, expressing child labour in terms of a proportion of an adult labour standard, as has been done in these studies, has the additional draw back of obscuring the possibility of adult unemployment. To the extent that adults are underemployed, child labour could be replaced without cost to the household as a whole if better uses of children's time arose. In view of the fact that few of the criteria listed are satisfied, little confidence can be placed in the tentative conclusion reached by the discussed studies, namely, that children have net positive economic value to their parents.

Leah Levin (UNICEF) in their study in 1978 on child labour in Morocco's carpet industry observed that, "Morocco's laws prohibit the employment of children below 12 years of age and make a maximum working week for any age of 48 hours". The anti-slavery society team visited 62 factories of carpet weaving in Morocco. Except in 8 factories they found that all factories had employed little girls and in 28 of these factories about one-third of the workforce was found to be constituted by

these girls of fewer than 12 years to fewer than 8 years of age. These children worked for more than 48 hours a week and some even more than sixty hours a week. Pay was found low for these children and even some of them did not get any emoluments.

The survey of children at work by Mendeleivich (UNICEF) in 1979, tried to highlight the problem of child labour in India and its causes. In fact, the problem of child labour in India may be seen as the result of traditional attitudes, urbanization, industrialization, migration, and lack of schools or the reluctance of parents to send their children to schools, etc. In the ultimate analysis main causes are extreme poverty and agriculture being the main occupation of the majority of population requiring more hands. Child labour is essentially a problem of the poor and destitute families, where parents cannot afford to provide education to their children. They treat children as additional hands who can supplement the family income which is inadequate. These people are struggling to get the minimum basic requirements of life and which most of the times took the childhood of the children in their families.

The study on Mexico conducted by Shuman, 1982, for which it was impossible to obtain more than an abstract, examines an *ejido* (communal village) in southern Mexico. This is the only relevant Latin American research that we know of. The study links fertility to the 'perceived relative value of children' and finds no significant relationship.

Of all the research reviewed here, only Lindert (1980, 1983) has taken cost data (other than presumed consumption of staple foods, as in Cain's investigation) into account as well as direct opportunity costs to parents. The overall finding is that in this setting, described as relatively 'affluent', children are never net assets. As noted by Lindert, the net cost of parents would be even higher if less conservative estimates of costs were used or if peak-season wages (the only ones available) were not used. It must be pointed out, however, that this study uses presumed average costs. It is impossible to say, therefore, for a given family whether children were or were not net assets: this may be affected by the household type, the economic context of the family or by what adults do with the time 'supplied' to them by their offspring. Nor, as in the majority of studies reviewed, is any connection made to fertility.

The research on Tanzania by Kamuzora, 1984, is the study based on African data. Basically a time-allocation survey, the author uses as a starting point the idea

that in Africa land is plentiful and abundant. Thus an economic context entirely distinct from the earlier Asian research is apparently being observed here. Perhaps because the original purpose of the survey was not related to child labour, the age groups used (5-9, 10-19, 20+) are not very illuminating. Even so, an odd finding is that boys aged 5-9 years contribute marginally more work than do youths aged 10-19 years. This leads to the thought that the definition of economic activity may have included activities that would have been classed as ‘enabling’ or ‘household’ tasks in other studies. Or, more probably, schooling may be subtracting from the labour input of the group aged 10-19 years.

Apart from presenting a breakdown of time allocation by these broad age groups, little else is contributed to the problem of child labour and fertility. What, superficially, appears to be evidence of excess supply of labour is countered by the not altogether convincing statement that ‘in a peasant economy the demand for labour determines its supply’. Although no cast data were collected, the author suggests that the preference for school attendance over child labour in a context of poverty indicates that costs outweigh benefits.

Central Asian Studies

The study “*Labour Laws and Employment Practices, affecting children in Central Asia*”⁷² is based on a baseline survey by International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2004) in five Central Asian countries which include Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. While surveying the labour laws and employment practices affecting children in Kazakhstan the study examines the gaps and errors as well as present recommendations. The Kazakh legislation contains provisions on the employment of minors, such as the age limit, safety measures and various safeguards, although many children work illegally, particularly in the rural areas. The types of labour performed by children include subsistence farming, work in private enterprises, family business and others. One of the main reasons of the employment of children is the low living standards of the population. The socio-demographical and economic situation in Kazakhstan is conducive to the use of cheap child labour, both during the agricultural season, irrespective of the

⁷² International Organization for Migration (IOM). November 2004. *Labour Laws and Employment Practices, Affecting Children in Central Asia*. Vienna, Austria: IOM and Technical Cooperation Centre for Europe and Central Asia.

educational process and by family and criminal business. The analysis of the legal instruments of the Republic of Kazakhstan, dealing with or relevant to child labour is showing that, irrespective of the magnitude of the problem and the significant number of both domestic and international legal provisions in force, children's rights (including labour ones) are not properly protected.

The study further discloses the official statistics of Kyrgyzstan which puts forth that children and teenagers constitute 38.1 percent of the Kyrgyz population. The 1999 population census data indicated that 55.3 percent of the population was poor and 80 percent lived in rural, predominantly in mountainous areas. These areas are primarily inhabited by the unemployed, elderly and impoverished families with children, which is particularly conducive to the employment of minors in the Kyrgyz Republic.

The report points out that since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the use of child labour has become widespread, especially in the southern regions, where tobacco, rice and cotton are cultivated. Furthermore, the labour of children is traditionally used in irrigating, weeding and harvesting work. Almost all the children living in rural areas work on plantations and help their parents in performing all types of labour, including those that may pose health hazards.

The use of children in markets has become frequent due to the emergence and growth of unregulated trading activity and markets. Children are involved in transporting (unloading) and sale goods and luggage on the streets and in the markets, in addition to collecting bottles and aluminium. There are also children involved in tobacco growing work as house servants- they clean, wash, etc. They also gather firewood and work in gardens. The study divulges from the 2001 ILO published report "child labour in Kyrgyzstan" which states child labour as caused by general unemployment situation, easy handling of the children than adults, unaware about their rights, causing fewer problems, complaining less and more adoptability. They are also the easiest to sacrifice when difficulties arise. Child labour in Kyrgyzstan is largely the result of cultural, historical, social and economic conditions. Children have to work, along their parents and siblings, in order to contribute to their families' income, starting with the age of five. The author declares that in order to eradicate child labour completely is an unrealistic goal at this stage of Kyrgyz Republic's

economic development, the creation of a coordination agency on child labour, consisting of state, international and non-governmental organizations.

The report points out that Tajikistan is mainly an agricultural economy-more than half of the working population is employed in the agricultural sector, followed by the service and manufacturing sectors. Tajikistan has a relatively young and rapidly growing population, with 48 percent fewer than 18 years of age and a rate of natural increase of population just under 2 percent per annum. Most families in Tajikistan have many children. Moreover parents, and children, grandparents, daughters-in-law and sons-in-law very often live together in traditional family units. The growing economic hardship has lead families to increasingly count on the income derived from children's informal work, mainly performed in the street after school hours. Children usually work in the market places, streets and other public places, which increases their vulnerability to prostitution and trafficking. Although the Tajik legislation provides for free education for everyone, almost all the schools charge their students for textbooks and meals, and some have even introduced fees to supplement (or replace) the wages of the teachers, unpaid by the state.

According to unofficial estimates 45-55percent of children from the 10 to14 age group especially from low income families are engaged in physical labour and this percentage is increasing in Dushanbe and other large cities in Tajikistan. The study discloses that research done by different agencies including Asian Development Bank, UNICEF, UNESCO, etc. shows that children in terms of wages, work, working conditions, and health conditions are getting exploited immeasurably. According to the report, the Tajik legislation contains provisions on the minimum employment age, as well as the protection of children under 18 from labour conditions that might endanger their health, safety or morals, in line with the international legal standards. Nonetheless, in reality, there is a clear disparity between the law and the practice.

About Uzbekistan the report refers to the measures taken by the government to prevent the unregulated use of child labour by creating appropriate organizations and mechanisms. The use of child labour has largely stemmed from the difficulties of the post-Soviet transition period, which have been conducive to the use of children's labour. As a consequence of the deteriorating economic conditions, the traditionally large families have not been able to cover the education expenses of all children. The rising unemployment has reduced the levels of average income, especially in rural

areas, where employment has a large seasonal character. Poor and socially vulnerable families have not been able to maintain an appropriate quality of life. Some parents have not acted in the best interest of their children by denying them the opportunity to study.

The report **‘The Curse of Cotton: Central Asia's Destructive Monoculture’**⁷³ February 2005, discusses the cotton industry in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan as contributes to political repression, economic stagnation, widespread poverty and environmental degradation. The study further points out that without structural reform in the industry, it will be extremely difficult to improve economic development, tackle poverty and social deprivation, and promote political liberalization in the region. If those states, Western governments and international financial institutions (IFIs) do not do more to encourage a new approach to cotton, the pool of disaffected young men susceptible to extremist ideology will grow with potentially grave consequences for regional stability.

The economics of Central Asian cotton is simple and exploitative. Millions of the rural people work for little or no reward for growing and harvesting the crop. The considerable profits go either to the state or small elites with powerful political ties. Forced child labour and other abuses are common. The industry relies on cheap labour. School children are still regularly required to spend up to two months in the cotton fields in Uzbekistan. Despite official denials, child labour is still in use in Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. Students in all three countries must miss their classes to pick cotton. Little attention is paid to the conditions in which children and students work. Every year some fall ill or die.

Women do much of the hard manual labour in cotton fields, and reap almost none of the benefits. Cash wages are minimal and often paid late or not at all. In most cotton-producing areas, growers are among the poorest elements in society. Not surprisingly, young men do everything to escape the cotton farms, forming a wave of migrants both to the cities and out of the region.

The environmental costs of the monoculture have been devastating. The depletion of the Aral Sea is the result of intensive irrigation to fuel cotton production.

⁷³ International Crisis Group. 28 February 2005. *The Curse of Cotton: Central Asia's Destructive Monoculture*. Bishkek/Brussels: ICG.

The region around the sea has appalling public health and ecological problems. Even further upstream, increased salinisation and desertification of land have a major impact on the environment. Disputes over water usage cause tension among Central Asian States.

Reforming the cotton sector is not easy. Structural change could encourage the growth of an industry that benefits rural farmers and the state equally but economic and political elites have resisted. Land reform has been blocked in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan and has moved too slowly in Tajikistan. Farmers still have no permanent ownership of the lands they work and no real say in the choice of crops they wish to grow or to whom they sell their produce.

Central Asian cotton is traded internationally by major European and U.S. corporations; its production is financed by Western banks, and the final product ends up in well-known clothes outlets in Western countries. But neither the international cotton trading companies nor the clothing manufacturers pay much attention to the conditions in which the cotton is produced. Nor have international organizations or International Financial Institutions done much to address the abuses. U.S. and EU subsidy regimes for their own farmers make long-term change more difficult by depressing world prices.

The report also discusses that cotton monoculture is more destructive to Central Asia's future than the tons of heroin that regularly transit the region. Although the international community has invested millions of dollars in counter-narcotics programs, very little has been done to counteract the negative impact of the cotton industry. Changing the business of Central Asian cotton will take time, but a real reform of this sector of the economy would provide more hope for the stability of this strategic region than almost anything else the international community could offer.

On the murky underside of Central Asia, there are underage prostitutes for sale on the streets with few rights and fewer opportunities delineates the study '**Lost Children of Central Asia**'⁷⁴ by the Institute for War and Peace Reporting London. Child prostitutes may be virtually invisible in the Central Asian Republics, but they

⁷⁴ Institute for War and Peace Reporting. *Lost Children of Central Asia: Underage Prostitution in Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan*. London: An IWPR special investigation. Saule Mukhametrakhimova, Project Coordinator.

are there in discreet clubs, private homes converted into brothels, and hanging around on street corners. In a wide-ranging investigation conducted in four of the five countries— Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan – IWPR discovered that teenage girls are bought and sold as commodities, and in some cases shipped off to become sex slaves in the Gulf. A high premium is placed on virginity, but the average price of sex with a minor ranged between one and 10 US dollars. Some of the worst cases involve parents selling their own daughters for gain or out of sheer desperation. Mostly girls aged between 11 and 16 – although many start earlier, and some boys are involved, too – these adolescent children are very much the victims of the tumultuous changes these countries have undergone since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Many come from impoverished rural families left unable to cope by years of economic decline. Others, from broken homes or abusive family environments, have fallen through a social safety-net worn thin by lack of government spending.

All four countries covered by this report categorically outlaw sex before the age of consent, 16, and any adult involved with a minor would face a lengthy spell in jail. Prostitution is not criminalised in these states, but living off a prostitute and coercing a minor are. So there are legal mechanisms that can be used to target those who exploit child prostitutes. While some argue that the legislation is incomplete, the main problem seems to be enforcement. IWPR reports of corruption in both the judiciary and the police. In addition, where law-enforcement agencies are doing their best to protect minors in the sex trade, they are often badly under-resourced. Oddly—in a region where the cultural norm is that sex is only permissible within marriage—there appears to be a slight mismatch between criminal and civil law, with marriage generally permitted only at 17 or 18 except in extenuating circumstances. The trade in underage prostitutes is also the reverse side of a process of liberalisation of some aspects of personal life, leading to what some observers see as a crisis in traditional ethical standards in the face of the worst laissez-faire attitudes imported from the West. Across Central Asia, IWPR contributors went to places frequented by prostitutes and spoke to young people involved in the trade, as well as pimps, police, doctors, human rights groups, and others familiar with this hidden world.

Central Asia is a region where family ties are traditionally strong, and both society and regional governments take a dim view of prostitution - all the more so

when minors are involved. So how is it that 11- and 12-year-old girls are ending up on the street? Part of the reason is economic – all these countries experienced major downturns after the Soviet Union broke up, and unemployment became a major problem for the first time. Simultaneously, the state-funded services and benefits that provided a basic safety-net for vulnerable parts of the community were badly eroded by the collapse of government revenues. Children from orphanages are at high risk of going into prostitution. With few opportunities they become easy prey for pimps.

One of the most worrying aspects of child prostitution in Central Asia is the sale of children by their own parents. There are three gradations – in the first, a girl may be given away to some local man, even a relative, for a fee. This phenomenon is associated with extreme poverty in rural regions. In some cases, the girl becomes a second or third wife. There is a tradition of polygamy in the region, although it is banned by law, but in these cases - because of the coercion of minors - the practice is closer to slavery than marriage. Some girls are dispatched abroad, mainly to the Gulf States, for prostitution. IWPR identified cases in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

The government of Uzbekistan, in what may be an implicit recognition that there is a problem– recently pledged to sign an optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, covering the trafficking and prostitution of children, and paedophile pornography. Enforcing the laws as they stand remains a challenge for the region's police forces. Police lack the resources to deal with the problem– and alarmingly, a proportion of them are involved in taking kickbacks.

The report '**Central Asia: Child Labour Alive And Thriving**' by *Gulnoza Saidazimova*⁷⁵ delineates that While some children toil out of necessity for their families, in some countries the use of child labour is a state policy. As World Day against Child Labour is marked as part of continuing efforts to stamp out the practice around the globe, there are hundreds of thousands of underage children in Central Asia skipping school to work as unskilled labourers in cities or on farms. Children, some of them as young as 7 years old, can be found working at virtually every bazaar in Central Asia. They sell anything from food to clothing and cosmetics, and preteen boys often push carts in outdoor markets while young girls from the countryside offer

⁷⁵ Radio Free Europe. June 12, 2008. <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2008>.

to work as housekeepers. The money they earn is often a lifeline for their families. Poverty is the main reason because of which these kids leave school and work in the fields.

Officials in Central Asia have long denied that children are forced to work. Many contend that the kids are helping their parents after school and that it is rural residents themselves who send their children into the fields to earn much-needed cash. In many rural areas, particularly in places like Uzbekistan, it is the government that forces children to pick cotton. The practice has been in existence since the Soviet era and continued till the Central Asian countries gained independence in 1991-even after they joined international agreements banning child labour.

Human rights activists say that cotton brings cash to the state coffers as well as to the pockets of the ruling elite in some countries. The use of children in cotton picking has become a national- some 200,000 Tajik children are forced to do hard and harmful work with the number increasing during the main harvest season. In Uzbekistan, the use of child labour in the cotton sector is a state policy. As the cotton harvest begins in September, schools are shut down and thousands of children are bussed to fields, sometimes with a police escort. They pick what is dubbed the "white gold" that brings around \$1 billion in annual exports for Uzbekistan. In Turkmenistan as well, child labour is widely used during the cotton harvest, although the country is a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. It also passed laws in 2002 and 2005 prohibiting the employment of children under the age of 16 and regulating a child's right to protection from exploitation. The late Turkmen President Saparmurat Niyazov frequently issued statements on the necessity of ending child labour, but the situation remained largely unchanged throughout his presidency. In Kazakhstan, children work in cotton and tobacco fields and as unskilled labourers in urban areas. In recent years, children from neighbouring Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan have been working in Kazakhstan along with their parents.

Child Labour Studies in Uzbekistan

The study **“Invisible to the world: the dynamics of forced child labour in the cotton sector of Uzbekistan”** by **Deniz Kandiyoti**⁷⁶ declares that policy debates on child labour have evolved towards more child-centred perspectives. Distinctions

⁷⁶ Deniz Kandiyoti. 2008. *Invisible to the World: The Dynamics of Forced Child Labour in the Cotton Sector of Uzbekistan*. London: SOAS, University of London.

are made between children's work, which is locally valued including by children themselves, and child labour, which is exploitative and detrimental to the child's well-being and future prospects.

The central objective of this policy paper is to provide an evidence-based assessment of the recruitment of school-age children for the cotton harvest in Uzbekistan. It draws on the results of a survey administered in six rural districts in 2007 that examines the scale and mechanisms of recruitment, the conditions of work and the consequences for children's welfare. The findings point to widespread compulsory recruitment of children for the cotton harvest for up to two months, which results in interruptions in schooling as well as exposure to conditions of work that merit close examination in light of the criteria set by the ILO Convention 182.

Child labour in Uzbekistan is symptomatic of a systemic failure to establish a system of incentives that could stimulate the growth of agricultural incomes and the lack of initiatives to reduce dependence on cotton exports. Although the mobilization of child labour for cotton harvests has its institutional and organizational roots in the Soviet command economy, its current persistence is best explained with reference to a combination of factors: a partial process of agrarian reform that continues to tie private farmers into compulsory crop-sowing and procurement quotas, a sharp decline in farm mechanization since independence and a short harvesting season that creates labour bottlenecks at peak times. The sharp increase in seasonal or more permanent labour migration from rural areas to wealthier neighbouring countries, mainly Kazakhstan and Russia, is both a response to increasingly precarious rural livelihoods and a further cause aggravating dependence on alternative sources of cheap labour.

The study shows that 86 percent to 100 percent of the schools in the districts under study were subject to compulsory recruitment of children between grades 5 to 9 (ranging between the ages of 11 and 14). The number of days they were employed on the cotton fields ranged between 51 and 63 days without weekend breaks and under detrimental sanitary, health and nutritional conditions. Non-written directives to recruit children are conveyed by local authorities to schools and local farmers. Farmers are charged with paying harvesting wages and providing transportation and other amenities. The children's wages are received by school administrations and teachers who distribute the pay weekly.

The report clearly shows that children's involvement in compulsory agricultural labour results in significant losses in schooling, in the widening of rural-urban gap (since the burden falls disproportionately on rural children), a deterioration of human capital with aggravated consequences for the inter-generational transmission of poverty and the consequent erosion of social trust in the state's capacity to provide welfare for its citizens.

The practice of child labour in Uzbekistan represents a distinctive case. Global patterns suggest that it is generally families and/or employers who tend to be the major initiators and beneficiaries of children's work. Uzbekistan represents a rare instance of state-sanctioned mass mobilization of children's labour. The principal beneficiaries are not households or primary producers but state-controlled trading companies higher up the value chain. Their exclusive control over cotton export revenues and their ability to appropriate the profits generated by the disparity between domestic and international market prices gives them a stake in the maintenance of the current procurement and labour control regime.

The research divulges that in order to assess the scale of child labour in Uzbekistan, major international institutions with a mandate to safeguard child and labour rights have mainly relied on instruments such as the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), conducted with technical support from UNICEF and UNFPA. Seasonality effects (due to surveys carried out in summer and at the end of winter instead of during the harvest season) have resulted in significant biases, leading to an underestimation of the scale of child labour. International NGOs have relied on smaller scale but more reliable studies.

The main conclusion of this report is that child labour is not simply a response to rural poverty at the household or community level but is an intrinsic feature of the current operations of the cotton sector in Uzbekistan and part and parcel of its methods of labour control. As a consequence, the process of eradication of child labour can only become feasible as a component of a broader package of reforms in agricultural policies. Currently, hundreds of thousands of children appear to be involved in harvesting activities and are responsible for a substantial proportion of the cotton harvested. A path of agrarian reform that releases primary producers from the administrative dictates of central government, that stimulates the growth of agricultural incomes and that diversifies the economy in ways that promote

alternative employment would obviate the need for coercive means of labour control, including recourse to child labour, and restore citizens' confidence in their government's ability to safeguard their welfare.

The group of human rights defenders in Uzbekistan in collaboration with the International Labour Rights Forum, December 2009, developed a report "**Pick All the Cotton: Update on Uzbekistan's Use of Forced Child Labour in 2009 Harvest**"⁷⁷ based on information gathered by human rights defenders within Uzbekistan from September through November 2009. Although Uzbekistan has signed two International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions against child labour and two ILO conventions on forced labour and being also a signatory of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, information from throughout the cotton growing regions shows that the government continues to promote the mass mobilization of children to harvest cotton. While the Government of Uzbekistan refused to allow the ILO or any other credible international observer access to the country, reports from local human rights activists indicate that schoolchildren and college students were forced to work in the cotton fields for more than two months, missing school from September until the beginning of December.

Due to continued international attention to, and criticism of, Uzbekistan's practice of forced child labour, the authorities have sought to minimize the publicly visible evidence of their involvement in the practice this year. Thus they stopped overseeing the safe transport of children to and from the cotton fields. Unless they brought drinking water from home, children were forced to drink unhealthy water from canals and ditches. They ate their food sitting on the grounds beside the cotton fields, where pesticides and herbicides are widely used. There were no medical personnel attending to their health needs and the physicians themselves have also been mobilized to pick cotton. This year it was nearly impossible for children to obtain permission to leave the cotton fields even for reasons of illness or poor health.

While in many developing countries child labour is driven by poverty, in Uzbekistan the situation is entirely different. This year, there is clear proof that senior officials of the Government of Uzbekistan ordered that Uzbek schoolchildren be

⁷⁷ Group of Human Rights Defenders in Uzbekistan and International Labour Rights Forum. December 2009. *Pick All the Cotton: Update on Uzbekistan's Use of Forced Child Labour in 2009 Harvest*. ILRF.

forced to work in the cotton fields. The orders to mobilize schoolchildren come from local governments, which in turn received instructions from the central authorities in Tashkent. All these instructions were given orally.

The study divulges that in September 2009 according to a farmer in the Bukhara region, in early October all farmers received a telegram signed by the Prime Minister stating that: "By October 15 of this year, all farms that have not fulfilled their contractual obligations for the sale of raw cotton will be singled out. Separate explanatory talks will be held with those farmers who have not fulfilled the harvest plan. Above all, the harvesting of cotton must be organized using each hour of clement weather. *Khokims*, prosecutors and departments of internal affairs of districts must take under control those farms where cotton has not been picked and organize the final cotton harvest. In those cases where farms have not complied with their contractual obligations, a schedule will be made to levy damages from them. Under the law, their land lease will be revoked." There were also reports that local administrations created divisions charged with mobilizing schoolchildren and their teachers to participate in the cotton harvest. The study discloses that on September 27, more than one thousand students of Bukhara State University were forcibly sent to pick cotton under threat of expulsion. A signed and sealed letter sent to students who failed to show up for the harvest stated that: students who do not take part in field work without valid reason will be expelled. In connection with this, I urge you to appear immediately for the cotton harvest. Otherwise, I warn you that you could face expulsion. S.S. Raupov, Dean of the Humanities Faculty of the Bukhara State University."

In 2009, the government of Uzbekistan became increasingly hostile toward efforts to gather information about its child labour practices, and increasingly hostile toward international proposals for an assessment or technical assistance mission by the ILO. Under ILO procedures, international employers and trade unions brought forward information related to forced labour in Uzbekistan's cotton sector and requested an ILO review of the country's compliance with its commitments to ILO conventions on forced labour.

The report reveals that data from the past several weeks indicate that Uzbekistan has been able to sell all its cotton from this season's harvest at world prices. World cotton fibre prices rose by percent in 2009 compared to 2008. Between

August and November 2009, prices rose from 54 US cents per pound to 72 US cents per pound. At the October 2009 cotton fair held in Tashkent, the Uzbek government managed to sell most of its cotton, thus for now weakening the impact of the ban declared by a number of Western retailers. As a result, the government of Uzbekistan has restored confidence that it may continue to exploit school children without concern of sanctions.

Strong sales of cotton at high prices in 2009 have created incentives for the Uzbek state trading companies to pick all cotton from the fields. During the last period of the cotton harvest the cotton gins buy cotton from farmers for the lowest prices. Due to this, and because of the low yields of the end of the harvest, the only labour force available to do this poorly paid work are children and students. Uzbekistan, with its massive unemployment, was and is economically able to eliminate forced child labour. The country already has several laws on the books that would, if respected, ban children's forced labour during the cotton harvest, including longstanding statutes on the rights of children and provisions of the labour code on the minimum age and conditions of children's work. Yet despite these laws, over the past decade, analysts conclude that the government has only intensified its reliance on forced child labour to bring in the cotton harvest.

Uzbekistan is the world's sixth largest producer of cotton, and the third largest exporter reveals the study "**We Live Subject to their Orders**"⁷⁸, a three-province survey of forced child labour in Uzbekistan's 2008 cotton harvest. For decades, it has used the forced labour of its school children starting in the early primary grades, college and university students, and civil servants, to harvest that cotton by hand. Unlike child labour in agricultural sectors in some other countries, this practice is organized and controlled by the central government. Each fall, shortly after the start of the school year, the government orders schools to close and school administrators to send the children out to the fields, where they remain until the cotton harvest is brought in. The current report is based on seventy-two interviews in three different provinces with participants in the fall 2008 harvest.

⁷⁸ International Labour Rights Forum and Uzbek Human Rights Group. 2009. *We Live Subject to their Orders- A Three-Province Survey of Forced Child Labour in Uzbekistan's 2008 Cotton Harvest*. Tashkent-New York: ILRF.

Since gaining independence in 1991, Uzbekistan's authoritarian government has become more reliant on the use of forced child labour to harvest cotton due to lack of investment or economic reforms in agriculture. The international community paid little attention to this issue amidst Uzbekistan's other severe human rights problems, until local activists in 2004 and 2005 began to call on the world to boycott the cotton, harvested by children, which is exported and sold around the world. These calls began to have an effect in 2007 and 2008, with international brands and retailers including Tesco, Walmart, Target, Levi Strauss, Gap, Limited Brands and Marks and Spencer agreeing to ban Uzbek cotton from their supply chains. In 2008 and early 2009, Uzbekistan signed two ILO conventions against child labour in response to this international campaign.

After September 21, schoolchildren as young as fifth grade (eleven years old) in the three provinces surveyed were sent out to pick cotton, and most remained in the fields upto November. Orders clearly came from provincial governors (*khokims*) to district governors, and from there to district education departments, to individual schools. Schools were assigned quotas to fulfill, and principals of schools that did not meet the quotas were threatened with dismissal. The consequences for children and families who objected to taking part, or for children who did not work to their teachers' satisfaction, were severe: beatings were commonplace. Community government officials, local police officers, and even local prosecutors all pressured parents with an array of tools: denial of pensions or social welfare payments, cut-offs in electricity, gas or water service, arrests, beatings, temporary detention and even threats of criminal prosecution.

The paper reveals that in the fall 2008 harvest children as young as nine, but mostly age 11-14, performed arduous work under hazardous conditions for full work days and then were transported back to their local schools and allowed to go home for the night. Children fourteen and older were housed in unsanitary field sheds for the duration of the picking season. There were no days off. Though the government set a recommended rate of pay, farmers often underpaid the pupils, and school administrators withheld portions of it with impunity. Children were largely responsible for bringing their own food and water; many drank from irrigation canals in the fields. Injuries and illnesses were commonplace, and those reported by survey respondents included viral hepatitis infections and other diseases transmitted by

contaminated food and water, and injuries sustained while children were transported to the fields in unsafe tractor-pulled carts intended to transport raw cotton. No compensation was provided to the families of injured children; on the contrary, those that complained were threatened with repercussions. Aside from the risks to children's health and well-being, rural children's education was severely curtailed.

The field interviews clearly show that parents, children, teachers and even farmers whose livelihoods are aided all deplore the forced labour of children. This suggests root causes of the problem in Uzbekistan are not poverty, tradition or lack of schooling, as can be true in other countries. The problem is rooted in the nature of the industry and state control over rural populations. Respondents noted that the large numbers of unemployed people in their communities could be mobilized to pick cotton only if it paid a reasonable wage; thousands of Uzbek citizens migrate to neighbouring countries each season to do the very same work that they disdain at home because it is so poorly paid. Children, however, are more easily subject to state pressure.

The government's action in delaying its mobilization of children in the 2008 harvest clearly shows that the practice, if the government so desires, can be stopped. Efforts that suggest the need to educate farmers, parents or teachers are misguided and risk deflecting attention from the problem's real root causes. The international community needs to vastly increase its efforts to monitor the cotton harvest and hold the Government of Uzbekistan accountable to end forced adult and child labour divulges the report.

The study "**Uzbekistan: Forced Child Labour in Uzbekistan's 2008 Spring Agricultural Season**"⁷⁹ purports to offer proof that Tashkent, despite ratifying two international agreements designed to discourage the use of child labour, is continuing to send school-age children into the fields.

"Children suffered heatstroke, burns and a variety of infectious diseases from poor working conditions," the report stated. "School hours were truncated. And for some periods schools were closed altogether to spur children into the fields." The report, prepared by the International Labour Rights Forum and Human Rights Defenders of Uzbekistan, focused on conditions in two districts in cotton-growing

⁷⁹ International Labour Rights Forum/Human Rights Defenders in Uzbekistan. 2008. *Uzbekistan: Forced Child Labour in Uzbekistan's 2008 Spring Agricultural Season*. <http://www.crin.org>.

areas. Researchers declined to specify the areas in order to protect those interviewed from possible government retaliation. "The government has increased pressure on those it suspects of transmitting any news regarding child labour," the report said. Parents who tried to keep their children in school and out of the fields were subjected to official pressure, the report said. A favourite tactic, according to the report, was public humiliation during meetings of neighbourhood committees, or *Mahallas*. "Those families [that] fail to send their children to pick cotton are criticized; people speak out very negatively against such families," the report cited one parent as saying. "Therefore, not everyone is brave enough to express dissatisfaction."

While the report documented the use of child labour only during the spring planting season, school children are believed to be widely involved in the ongoing gathering of the harvest. Photos posted on the news website Ferghana.ru in early October showed young people in the fields with bags full of cotton slung over their shoulders.

Uzbekistan has sought to counter the economic pressure applied on Tashkent through the boycott of Uzbek cotton by leading US and European clothing companies by reorienting its cotton exports to Asian and Middle Eastern markets. Evidence that the government is feeling the effects of the boycott is inconclusive so far. At the Fourth Annual Cotton Fair, held in Tashkent, Uzbek officials signed deals worth approximately \$1 billion to export 950,000 tons of cotton fibre. The chief purchasers included China, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, South Korea and the United Arab Emirates, according to the pro-government website Gazeta.uz.

The report "*Child Labour and Cotton Picking in Uzbekistan*" by **Erkin Ahmadov**⁸⁰, 2008, discusses the issue of using child labour for picking cotton which has been on the table for a long time in Uzbekistan. However, the existence of forced child labour as such was strongly rejected by the Uzbek authorities, claiming that "children work in the agricultural industry on a legitimate and secure basis, as all other kids in the world".

The four associations that signed and sent the letter of discontent to the Uzbek authorities control 90 percent of the cotton production volumes sold in the US and other States of the world. Therefore, it is their assumption and a plausible outcome

⁸⁰ Erkin Ahmadov. 2008. *Child Labour and Cotton Picking in Uzbekistan*. USA: Silk Road Studies Programme, Central Asian and Caucasus Institute, Johns Hopkins University.

that if Uzbekistan decides to maintain its current labour policy, the result will be a full boycott of Uzbek cotton exports, resulting in a significant reduction of export revenues.

The prospect of such losses may have convinced the Uzbek authorities to consider the consequences of international discontent. A conference addressing the issue of forced child labour in Uzbekistan was held on August 11, 2008. It brought together the representatives of several Western States' embassies, the International Labour Organization, and UNICEF. The option of revising Uzbekistan's status as a country included in the common system of trade preferences was one of the key issues considered at the conference.

Soon after the conference, on 12 September 2008, the head of Uzbekistan's government, Shavkat Mirziyoev, signed a resolution "On measures for implementation of the Convention on minimal age of employment and the Convention on banning, and applying immediate measures for the eradication of grave forms of child labour ratified by the Republic of Uzbekistan". Both Conventions were ratified in April 2008, and now the government has approved a National plan of action for their implementation. As such, it demands ministries and departments "to provide control over the banning of forced child labour and following the norms and regulations on the labour conditions of minors".

In light of all the issues that child labour brings into discussion, it is remarkable to note that the practice as such was common and acceptable for many years. In spite of internal discontent and calls for prohibition by the international community, very little has been done to abolish or eradicate child labour. Now that important economic interests are at stake, it seems that the children of Uzbekistan are provided with a legal basis to protect their rights. However, in a country that gets its major sources of income from cotton exports and desperately needs "free hands" to do the work, it seems to be quite difficult to secure the rights and freedom of the most vulnerable, as their economic conditions do not allow them to leave aside even such a hard earned and small income.

“Forced labour in Uzbekistan’s cotton industry”⁸¹, July 2009, by **Anti-Slavery International** discusses the State-sponsored forced labour, underpins Uzbekistan’s cotton industry. In the absence of mechanized harvesters, around 90 percent of Uzbek cotton is harvested by hand. Public employees, members of the public, together with children and students are forced to work alongside paid farm workers to ensure that state cotton quotas can be met. Regional government officials mobilize children as free or cheap labour during the cotton harvest in an attempt to ensure that state cotton quotas are met. It is impossible to ascertain the exact numbers, but estimates by human rights groups suggest that hundreds of thousands of children are involved each year. The cotton harvest begins in mid September and takes place over a 2 to 3 month period. Children are also used to manually weed the fields and tend the cotton plants during the growing season. There are reports of children being compelled to apply pesticides to the growing crop. Headmasters are given quotas which dictate how much each student is to harvest. Those who fail to meet their targets, or who pick a low quality crop, are reportedly punished with detentions and told that their grades will suffer, or are beaten. Children who run away from the cotton fields, or who refuse to take part, can face expulsion from school. After weeks of arduous work and poor accommodation children can be left exhausted and suffering from ill-health and malnutrition. Children receive little or no pay for their labour. Some are not paid anything once deductions for food, supplies and transport are made. Parents note that payment often falls far below the costs of replacing clothes damaged while picking cotton.

In April 2006, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child stated in its concluding observations that it is “deeply concerned at the information about the involvement of the many school-aged children in the harvesting of cotton resulting in serious health problems such as intestinal and respiratory infections, meningitis and hepatitis”.

One third of Uzbekistan’s workforce is employed in cotton production. The Uzbek government rigidly controls all aspects of the industry. The Government acquires cotton by means of compulsory state purchase and holds a monopoly over the country’s exports of cotton. Inputs such as chemical fertilizers and pesticides are

⁸¹ Anti-Slavery International. July 2009. *Forced Labour in Uzbekistan’s Cotton Industry*. Anti-Slavery: Today’s Fight for Tomorrow’s Freedom.

state-controlled, farmers are told when to sow their crop, and how much they must produce. Annual cotton quotas are set for each region and regional governors (*Hokims*) are appointed directly by the President to ensure the delivery of their quota. Quotas are rigorously enforced. Private farmers are routinely threatened with eviction should they fail to follow the orders of the local administration and reports of state orchestrated arrests and beatings as common.

It is clear that state-sponsored forced adult and child labour remains a profound and widespread problem in Uzbekistan, despite government denials and action taken in recent months. There is a vast disparity between legal commitments made to eradicate forced labour and their practical implementation, as witnessed by the continued use of forced labour in the most recent autumn 2008 cotton harvest. Journalists and human rights defenders exposing the issue have been subject to harassment and arrest. Independent monitoring of the harvest has been very limited, and only undertaken at personal risk to journalists and human rights defenders. The study concludes with the suggestions to Government of Uzbekistan for the eradication of the problem which include publicly renounce forced and child labour in the cotton industry of Uzbekistan and take urgent action to end this practice; put in place a comprehensive national action plan to end forced labour in the cotton industry and commit all resources necessary to the implementation of this action plan; invite an ILO high-level mission to Uzbekistan during the upcoming harvest; implement its commitments under ILO Conventions No. 29, No. 105 and No. 182; allow independent journalists and human rights defenders unrestricted access to document the situation during the 2009 cotton harvest.

The report “**Request for Review of the GSP status of the Republic of Uzbekistan, for Violations of Worker Rights**,”⁸² by International Labour Rights Fund delineates Uzbekistan’s eligibility under the Generalized System of Preferences Program (Country Practice Petition) was submitted to the Office of the US Trade Representative in response to Federal Register Notice Regarding the Initiation of the 2007 Annual GSP Product and Country Eligibility Practices Review and Change in Deadlines for Filing Certain Petitions. The Republic of Uzbekistan is among the eligible beneficiaries for the US Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) under the

⁸² International Labour Rights Fund. June 2007. *Request for Review of the Generalized System of Preferences status of the Republic of Uzbekistan, for Violations of Worker Rights*. Washington, DC: The Office of the United States Trade Representatives.

Trade Act of 1974, which also lists cotton and cotton made products as commodities and goods subject to GSP rules. Uzbekistan is listed as one of the countries to be included in the Department of Labour's annual report on trade beneficiary countries' implementation of international commitments to end the worst forms of child labour. There are significant and growing concerns regarding Uzbekistan's deteriorating human rights record, both directly and indirectly linked to cotton production and International Labour Rights Fund.

The government of Uzbekistan has not only failed to enforce its laws against forced and compulsory labour, but also continues to deny the existence of the problem. When asked to comment on forced child labour in the cotton industry the Uzbek authorities often call it a patriotic act by the Uzbek youth to collectively gather one of the main export productions of country – cotton.

About the Soviet Legacy the study delineates that the cotton monoculture in Uzbekistan at the expense of all the other crops is a legacy inherited from the former Soviet Union. The Soviet regime had designated certain of its republics as highly specialized producers of certain commodities. Uzbekistan was designated as a major producer of raw cotton. In order to expand the production of cotton in Uzbekistan, the Soviet Administration increased its planted acreage with massive irrigation and intensive use of fertilizers. This led to the forced labour of millions of people on state-owned farms. In the 1930s, thousands of special settlers (Karachais, Crimean Tatars, Meskhetian Turks, Russian Germans and many others) were deported to Central Asia and were forced to cultivate cotton. By the end of 1930s the USSR had become self-sufficient in cotton.

The mass mobilization of children was one of the characteristics of cotton production during the Soviet regime. Rural schoolchildren from the 9th grade (14 years old) and above were forced to pick cotton up to two months every year. Public employees, including doctors, teachers, accountants and many others were also mobilized and forced to harvest cotton. After Uzbekistan achieved independence from the former Soviet Union, the situation deteriorated significantly. Now the mobilization involves children at a younger age than ever before, due to significant drop in the level of mechanisation in cotton harvesting, which has decreased from 50percent prior to independence to just 10percent now.

Although local authorities say that children are picking cotton voluntarily, out of patriotic feelings, university authorities and school principals force students to join farmers in the fields in the beginning of the season. “If you fail to show up at the cotton field, you will be kicked out of the university, or you may pay \$100 to the faculty dean” says a student at the Tashkent Agricultural University who wishes to remain anonymous while interviewing.

It is difficult to quantify the number of children involved. One estimate has been provided by UNICEF, who suggests that 22.6 percent of children ages 5 to 14 years in Uzbekistan were working in 2000. Estimates prepared by Uzbek human rights defenders working regionally suggest that around 200,000 children may be involved in cotton harvesting in the Ferghana region, and 60,000 in Jizzakh provinces. Habib Mamatov, an official responsible for the cotton harvest of Kashkadarya region, in a public interview with Tribune-Uz stated that 39,656 university and college students as well as 44,385 high school and middle school students were involved in the 2004 cotton harvest campaign. Extrapolating from this figure, a rough estimate for the whole country suggests that over one million children, a third of them fewer than 15 years of age, are recruited to pick cotton each year. For their arduous work children are paid very little or nothing. According to EJF, some children working in the Ferghana region stated that they worked from 7 a.m. until 5 p.m. in return for 8 to 16 US cents. Moreover, although these figures represent the official wages, in reality many youths receive no actual cash at all. Students are assessed the cost of their meals which in practice may leave the students in debt by the end of the harvest season.

Children’s health and safety is also placed in jeopardy by the practices of the Uzbek government in compelling labour for cotton harvests. Children are often housed in temporary barracks, apart from their families. Buildings are often semi-dilapidated, without electricity, and sleeping quarters are commonly overcrowded; in some cases children are reportedly forced to sleep out in the open. Access to water is also a problem. After weeks of hard labour in the cotton fields, often without access to clean drinking water, adequate nutrition or accommodation, many Uzbek children suffer from illness and malnutrition. Some reportedly acquire chronic diseases such as intestinal and respiratory infections, meningitis and hepatitis. Inadequate clothing renders others susceptible to rheumatism and other problems associated with

exposure to damp and cold conditions. According to UNDP's 2006 Human Development Index (HDI) report, indicators of life expectancy, access to improved sanitation and water along with education have been constantly decreasing in Uzbekistan.

In extreme cases children die during the harvest. In 2004, one human rights organisation confirmed eight cases of children and students who died while working as cotton harvesters in Samarkand. According to an investigation by the Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR), some local authorities are so desperate to meet regional cotton production targets that they are reluctant to send sick children to the hospital because they need their labour to complete the harvest. The most disturbing health hazards associated with child labour in the cotton industry is exposure to toxic pesticides.

Forced child labour also has a substantial negative impact upon the education of the country's rural schoolchildren. From the age of seven, children living in rural areas can expect to lose up to three months of their education every year as they are sent to the fields. This represents a loss of up to one third of the time available for study each year. Rural children are said to lag behind their urban peers in schooling, due to participation in the cotton harvest.

It is considered one of the most exploitative industries in the world discusses **Nick Mathiason** in his study "**Uzbekistan forced to stop child labour**"⁸³, 2009. In Uzbekistan, gangs forcibly remove hundreds of thousands of children from schools, order them to pick cotton in the searing heat and live in squalid conditions on pitiful wages. Blended by manufacturers thousands of miles away, Uzbek state-controlled cotton is sold to the world's biggest retailers, making the repressive regime the third biggest exporter of "white gold" and earning the government \$1bn. But, in what has been described as a major breakthrough, a decision by some of the world's biggest clothing businesses has forced the Uzbek government to sign International Labour Organization conventions that commit the country to stop using child labour in its state-sponsored industry.

Steve Trent, director of the Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF), said: "This is a major step forward. Virtually nothing persuaded the government to change

⁸³ Nick Mathiason. 2009. *Uzbekistan forced to stop child labour*. www.guardian.uk.co/profile/nickmathiason.

course. But the actions of retailers and campaigners are definitely now having an impact. But the key question that remains is whether the Uzbek government will implement the conventions. They need to allow independent monitoring and work with civil society, which are basic requirements of the conventions they have signed up to and ratified. They are not doing this so the jury is out."

"We became aware of real problems in Uzbekistan," said Alan Wragg, Tesco's clothing technical director. "Government-organized forced child labour literally forced kids out of school into vans. It's awful. The fact that its industry is sponsored by the government and there's 40percent unemployed in the country makes it worse. So when we became aware of this, we told our suppliers not to use Uzbek cotton in the supply chain." Until recently that was not easy because most cotton garments are blended from a number of different countries and it was hard to work out where cotton was sourced. But new technology developed by Oxford-based firm Historic Futures now offers retailers the ability to track and trace all items that make up a garment. By uploading receipts on individual components within entire supply chains onto a secure network, retailers can accurately trace where their products come from.

It is alleged that children are taken from their homes in the autumn to harvest cotton and prepare the fields for sowing and weeding the plants. According to a range of authoritative campaigners and journalists including the BBC, children work up to 11 hours without protective clothing, adequate rest or water leading many to suffer heat stroke.

The Uzbek government disputes that its cotton industry sponsors forced child labour, saying that this claim has been spread by cotton-producing countries that are losing market share. It adds that its monitors ensure the best international standards are adhered to. The London insurance market plays a key role in providing cover for the repressive military junta's port and aviation interests. Without insurance, campaigners say, the junta would be starved of cash and so be more likely to embrace the international community.

The report by Asia Child Rights⁸⁴, wing of Asian Human Rights Commission **"Uzbekistan: Focus on child labour in southern cotton sector"** shows Uzbekistan

⁸⁴ Asia Child Rights Weekly Newsletter, 27 October 2004. *Uzbekistan: Focus on child labour in southern cotton sector*. Vol. 3, No. 43. <http://acr.hrschool.org/mainfile.php/0201/>.

as one of the five top cotton producers in the world where thousands of children are labouring to bring in the crop. Critics of the practice say it impacts negatively on the health and education of young people. Authorities claim it is an economic necessity to employ children during the harvest. Cheap, if not free, child labour is widely used in the country, particularly during the September to November season.

The study discloses that picking cotton rather than studying has an impact on the education and health of the young people, though this is denied by government officials. Out of a quarter of a million Uzbeks who are currently working in the cotton fields of Kashkardarya province alone, 39,656 are vocational and high-school students along with 44,385 secondary school students. Young people are usually found picking the crop for at least 10 hours per day, in all weathers. They live in so called "shiypan" (small tents or old buildings), often under squalid conditions.

"Starting from 4 September, even 11-year-old children were sent to the fields. They get paid US .5 to 3 cents per kg of cotton," said Jura Muradov, head of the Nishan district department of Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan (HRSU), adding that they were not provided with transport and had to walk five or six km every morning. Those who do earn often don't get paid. Abdumalik Ermatov, a teacher at the Al Horezmi school in the Nishan district, told IRIN that children at the school were still waiting for wages from the previous cotton harvesting season. "Last year, 120 children from our school participated in cotton harvesting. They gathered 6.93 mt of cotton on the "Iris Bobo" farm. Whatever children earned but up to now we have not been paid what we earned," he said. Furthermore, the officially announced rate for cotton, which is 3.6 cents per 1 kg, is violated everywhere.

Shukhrat Ganiev and Sukhrobjon Ismoilov in their study "*Child Labour and Cotton Picking*"⁸⁵ reveal that cotton remains a major agricultural crop in Uzbekistan and, most rural communities, including the children within them, have become pawns in government policies which stress high yields of cotton to constitute huge gains in the national budget. Forty-three percent of Uzbek cotton is exported to Asia and nineteen percent to Europe. The government artificially forces prices to be as cheap as possible –employing approximately 450,000 children all over the country

⁸⁵ Shukhrat Ganiev and Sukhrobjon Ismoilov. 2008. *Child Labour and Cotton Picking*.

to keep costs down. Local governments and educational institutions help the central government push children at secondary schools, colleges, lyceums, institutes and universities to cotton pick.

Cotton production in Uzbekistan is based on exploitation of the population. Millions of poverty stricken rural residents work in cotton fields for scanty payment or even free of charge. Forced child labour and other types of abuses are considered commonplace. High profits then get divvied up between small groups of state elites with powerful political connections. Such an economic system is viable only under political repression, normally triggering the mobilization of mass labour working below market prices. The political regime in Uzbekistan is regarded as one of the most repressive in the world. No democratic elections are held. Opposition activists and human rights defenders are persecuted. Lack of public mass media lets most abuses go unexposed. All levels of the governments, including local governments, are involved in these abuses because accountability and responsible governance do not exist. The cotton magnates in Uzbekistan are interested in maintaining this corrupt and non-democratic political regime.

The cotton industry revolves around using the cheapest labour possible, and in most cases, this means employing children. In Uzbekistan, school-aged children are regularly involved in forced cotton picking. They spend up to two months out of the school year in cotton fields. Educational institutions and local governments condone students missing classes in order to participate in cotton picking. Living and work conditions for children involved in cotton picking are often cruel and inhuman, with most suffering degrading treatment at the hands of their overseers. Each year children involved in forced cotton picking become ill or die

Review of Books on Child Labour, Central Asia and Uzbekistan

The study, *Child Labour in The Indian Sub-Continent-Dimensions and Implications*,⁸⁶ 1991, by **Ramesh Kanbargi**, an eminent Sociologist, highlights that though the ultimate goal of governments in less developed countries is to totally eradicate child labour, the existing socio-economic and cultural factors, along with the conceptual, definitional and measurement problems associated with child labour

⁸⁶ Ramesh Kanbargi. 1991. *Child Labour in the Indian Subcontinent: Dimensions and Implications*. New Delhi. Sage Publications.

pose a serious hindrance in achieving these goals in a reasonable time. The author points out that today child labour is almost non-existent in the industrialized countries where it was prevalent during earlier times. However, the predominance of child labour in many third world countries continues to be quite pronounced. By and large, the greater the importance of agriculture and related activities, the greater is the use of child labour. Besides agriculture, cottage industries, handicrafts and other similar activities are not generally covered by a minimum age at entry or other protective legislations. The continued existence of child labour in many third world countries is also partly due to the inadequate educational opportunities in these countries. The developed countries can afford greater investment in education for their children and can keep them in school for more years. In addition in countries where most people live at subsistence or below subsistence levels, children are often forced to work to supplement family income. The author concludes that children work because people have children, rather than people have children because children work. The author quotes Ceteris Paribus, the less the number of competing obligations (such as school) and the greater the opportunity, the more time will be spent performing such household tasks. But many other factors are likely to be involved, including cultural dispositions. It is premature to conclude that child labour motivates high fertility in less developed countries and even less justified to claim that poor rural families need child labour to survive.

B.K. Sharma, 2007, in '*Socio-Economic Profile of Child Labour in a Developing Economy*'⁸⁷, writes that in the developing countries children work for subsistence whereas in the developed ones they work for pocket money. One of the unique characteristic of child labour is that employers consider it as source of cheap labour and measures of quick profits. Employers prefer children because they can be paid less and exploited more. Low wages paid to the children give them a competitive advantage not only in the national market but also in the international market. In rural areas the children of marginal farmers and landless labourers are generally found to be working in various agricultural operations right from their early childhood. They work as helpers during sowing, harvesting and threshing operations. Children from the families with little or no land are more likely to be in the labour market. There is positive relationship between the schooling of the child and age of

⁸⁷ B. K. Sharma. 2007. *Socio-Economic Profile of Child Labour in a Developing Economy*.

entry in the employment. Child labour not only deprives the working children of the basic schooling and vocational training but also forces them into the ranks of unskilled workers who have to receive low wages throughout the working life. A study has found that the producers would like to stop production rather than hire adult workers because of great reduction in profits.

Although multifarious causes are responsible for a wide spread of child labour in the developing countries, the extreme poverty of the household is the main cause. Another important cause of child labour is the widespread unemployment among the adults from the lower income strata of population. Besides, inadequate, irregular or no family income is also responsible for child labour. UNICEF's criteria for child labour exploitation has also been discussed which included full time work at too early an age, too many hours spent in working, work that exerts under physical, social or psychological stress, work and left on the streets in bad condition, inadequate pay, too much responsibility, work that hampers access to education, work that undermines children's dignity and self esteem such as slavery or bonded labour and sexual exploitation, work that is detrimental to full social and psychological development.

D. C. Nanjunda, in the book '*Child Labour and Human Rights: A Prospective*,⁸⁸ discusses the recent trend in the global system for evaluating the development of any country not in terms of their military or economic strength or the splendour of their capital cities and big public buildings, but also in terms of human development or the well being of its citizens. Against this backdrop, the existence and perpetuation of child labour has been one of the main limiting factors standing in the way of human development in almost all the developing countries. The issue of child labour is a worldwide phenomenon and it exists in almost all the countries of this planet. Meanwhile it is very sad to write that India is one among the nations in the world, which has the unique distinction of being a large employer of child labour. Since child labour is a more complex natured problem a balanced approach is needed to solve this issue with an interactive role from all concerned people and the agencies. The author suggests that it is the right time for all to be highly and really think regarding ensure of better social, political and economic lives to all sections of the society, at least in the interest of human rights in this new millennium. Apart from the normal style, this book contains some thematic discussion on child labour

⁸⁸ D. C. Nanjunda. *Child Labour and Human Rights: A Prospective*. New Delhi. Kalpaz Publications.

and human rights. Each chapter written is based on grass root experiences of the author. That is the creamiest part of this book. Each and every chapter of this book gives a different outlook on the problem to the readers. This book is highly useful to academic people, anthropologists, policy makers, NGOs, research students, development agencies and others, interested in studying the growing problem of child labour.

The study *'Markets and Politics in Central Asia'*⁸⁹ by Gregory Gleason with a special focus on structural reform and political change, is a comparative study of economic and political development in Central Asia. Gregory brings a clear, lucid analysis of the impact of the economic reforms on the countries political liberalization. Generalising from the experience of the Central Asian States, the book argues that economic reform and political liberalization should be viewed as an interconnected process, linked in terms of policy cycles. Breaking with traditional analysis, this provocative study shows how markets and politics are closely related in Central Asia.

With separate chapters on each country along with comparative, analytical sections, this authoritative book is an essential contribution to an ongoing debate. The five sister countries of Central Asia have been now from last two decades striving to carry out market and political reforms.

The present study is about the relationship between economic and political reform. It focuses on the initial stage of the transition from communism to national government in the countries of Central Asia. The transition began about 1990 and accelerated during the mid; to late 1990s. Gleason discloses that the action of government influences a broad sphere of activities ranging from ideological or normative concerns to social and cultural issues.

The study addresses a question of both theoretical and practical importance which importantly includes the effects economic reform efforts had on political liberalization in the countries of Central Asia. While the concepts of structural reform and political change have played key roles, most structural reforms involve changing agencies, changing their powers and authorities, changing their practices and

⁸⁹ Gregory Gleason. 2003. *Markets and Politics in Central Asia-Structural Reform and Political Change*. London: Routledge.

tendencies, and making sure that they do what they are intended to do and not other things.

The logic of the argument presented in this book is straight forward and describes the general context of Central Asia in terms of the administrative, economic and political legacy of the Soviet period. The study also outlines the post-communist reform agenda and broadly defines the qualitative and quantitative measures used for purposes of comparison and analysis. The author has equipped his studies by case studies carried out on all five republics. The case studies start with a country profile, that is, with a description of the broad features of the country. Each case study has a section that describes the country's policies of economic and political reform, analyzing the structural reform policies that were implemented, and evaluating the political impact these policies had. The analysis in all case makes reference to the effects of reform in terms of statistical data describing outcomes.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Composition of the Problem

The resurgent interest in child labour has been accompanied by a combination of new international conventions, new actors, new investment, new research, new information, new ideas, and expanded activity in a wide variety of developing country's economic and social settings. One result of this movement is increased diversity of both thinking and action. Both the literature and meetings on child labour are now marked by vigorous debate in regards to a number of important issues. Even among recognized experts, both researchers and activists, there is wide and often heated disagreement even over such basic matters as what constitutes child labour, what causes it, how it affects children and society, and how best to deal with it. The diversity of viewpoints should be encouraged, and that the creative tension between them can, if constructively managed, generate more effective action and cooperation against abuse of children in and through their work.

A review of the 'child labour' literature and experience reveals four highly generalized lines of thinking that can be thought of as: (1) a labour market perspective, (2) a human capital perspective, (3) a social responsibility perspective, and (4) a child-centered perspective.⁹⁰ It is suggested that each of the most important positions now encountered in current national and international discussion of 'child labour' tend to fit into one of these perspectives more easily than any of the others, and can be profitably understood in that context. The first two perspectives are of an economic orientation, while the latter two tend to emphasize social and cultural factors.

The Labour Market Perspective

This perspective, the dominant international paradigm of government child labour intervention for nearly a century, is fundamentally driven by mostly western cultural notions of childhood as properly a work-free period and by anxiety about the potential impact of child workers on adult labour markets. While concern about workplace hazards on children's health and development has also been a factor, and

⁹⁰ <http://www.spp.umich.edu/rise/workingpapers/wp.html>

has even been emphasized in political rhetoric, policies and programmes generated under this conceptual framework have been designed primarily to separate children from work until at least mid-adolescence, rather than to make their workplace safer or more conducive to their development.

The 'labour market perspective' takes a particular view of children, envisaging them as essentially innocent, ignorant of the world and incompetent to fend off its evils or even to recognize their own best interests. They are depicted as helpless victims, or potential victims, dependent on protection and rescue by adults. This is primarily a modern Western notion of childhood that is historically and anthropologically unusual not only for the radical division it draws between childhood and adulthood, but also for valuing children's helplessness rather than usefulness, and artificially extending their dependency to an advanced age by deliberately delaying instruction in certain life skills essential to survive, make one's living, or raise a family (Zelizer, 1985; Boyden, 1997; Boyden et. al, 1998). Such a view of childhood leaves children free of responsibility and obliges adults to take decisions on behalf of the young that children, owing to their incompetence by definition, are deemed unqualified to take for themselves. There also is a built-in assumption that what is best for adults probably is good for their children as well.

The Human Capital Perspective

This approach views the work of children through the lens of national economic development. It regards child labour as a product of economic underdevelopment, and suggests that the remedy is to eliminate poverty and its causes. At the macroeconomic level this entails raising the Gross National Product, and at the microeconomic providing enhanced income options for the poor. It conceives of the child labour problem in terms of work and working conditions that undermine children's eventual contribution as adults to national economic development and their own economic progress, and makes no objection to children's work, per se. However, a "human capital perspective" would worry about work that stands in the way of children receiving an education, and for this reason economists and others working within it have produced a considerable literature looking at the relationships between children's work, education, and lifetime earnings. The interpretation of findings from literature, which appear ambiguous, is currently a matter of intense discussion. This perspective promotes policies and activities to

develop in children the skills, attitudes and other capacities--the 'human capital'-they need to contribute to economic development and become prosperous adults. It judges children's work according to whether it contributes to or detracts from this objective, opposing work that deprives children of education, for example, but approving apprenticeships or other work arrangements that transmit skills.

The decision to educate one's children has an inter-temporal asset, as discussed by many authors, most notably Becker (1974). Baland and Robinson (2000) make a particularly direct connection of human capital formation to child labour when evaluating the efficiency characteristics of household decisions.⁹¹

The Social Responsibility Perspective

This perspective regards the work of children in the context of social rather than economic development. It arises out of concern about social inequality, many types of discrimination, unjust concentrations and use of economic and political power, cultural alienation, dysfunctional family and community relationships, social irresponsibility, and the deterioration of values and moral fibre. The central concern is with the 'exclusion' of disadvantaged groups from full participation in the protection, benefits and opportunities of society, and the proposed remedy is greater social inclusion of those being excluded or marginalized.⁹²

The Child-Centered Perspective

Unlike the other conceptual frameworks discussed above, 'child-centered' interventions in child work have children as their primary clientele, putting their interests first and foremost without filtering them through prior adult agenda. Unsurprisingly, this perspective is most associated with organizations for the defence of children. It is prominently represented at the international level by UNICEF and international child rights organizations such as the Save the Children Alliance, and at the national level by a huge number of non-governmental and community organizations promoting children's rights and welfare. It is driven by concern about conditions that impair children's growth and violate their rights. Accordingly, it conceives of child labour as that work which undermines children's well-being and individual and social development, and it judges the appropriateness of any work

⁹¹ D. K. Brown, A.V. Deardorff and R. M. Stern. 2002. *The Determinants of Child Labour: Theory and Evidence*. University of Michigan; School of Public Policy. p. 9.

⁹² Myron Weiner. 1991. *The Child and the State in India*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

according to its effect on a child. Work is broadly defined to include much more than economic participation; for instance, girls working in their homes are included in the focus. The purpose of intervention in children's work is to guarantee their rights, welfare and development.

Theory of Inequality, Productivity, and Child Labour

A recent theoretical literature has linked reductions in income inequality to reductions in child labour in countries that are relatively well-off, but has not explored how income distribution affects child labour in very poor countries. We show that while in higher-productivity countries with child labour, a more equal income distribution will reduce or eliminate child labour, in low-productivity countries, a more equal distribution of income will exacerbate child labour. Econometric specifications studying child labour among 10- to-14 year olds yield results generally consistent with these predictions. Policy actions that aim to bring about more equality so as to reduce child labour will likely not have the desired effect unless a country in which they are taken is sufficiently wealthy (Rogers and Swinnerton, 2001).

Karl Marx

The result of buying children and young persons of under age by the capitalist is physical deterioration and moral degradation. Karl Marx provided detailed brief for the General Council on social issues likely to meet with immediate agreement. Child labour was deemed such an issue. Marx's position on child labour as "a progressive, sound and legitimate tendency, although under capital it was distorted into an abomination" met with no opposition.⁹³ Marx believed that no child under nine years of age should work. He then divided older children into three age groups- of 9-12, 13-15, and 15-17 years- and suggested that they should be allowed to work two, three and six hours per day, respectively. Marx was a supporter of part-time education, and was sceptical about the role of the state in education (he had Prussia in mind).⁹⁴

Theoretical Explanations of Child Abuse

A number of explanations have been given by scholars to explain the motivational factors in child abuse. Of these, the important ones are: (1) psychiatric

⁹³ Quoted in S. Padover (ed.). 1975. *Karl Marx on Education, Women and Children*. New York: McGraw-Hill. p. 91.

⁹⁴ Ibid. p. 33.

explanation; (2) socio-cultural explanation which includes (a) social situational explanation, (b) social habitability explanation; (3) resource explanation; (4) social interactional explanation; and (5) social learning explanation.⁹⁵

The psychiatric explanation was propounded by scholars like Steele and Pollock (1968), Kempe (1972), Gelles (1973), and Parke and Collmer (1975). It links with child abuse factors such as mental illness and personality defects or intra-individual abnormalities. It also links abusive parents' own childhood experiences to the individuals' weak personality development and poor self control (Wolfe, 1987: 45). The thesis that personality disorder is responsible for child abuse was further advanced by reports that abusers often had a propensity for impulsive and/or anti-social acts that extended beyond the preventive role. A parent, according to this explanation, may abuse his/her child due to unmet emotional needs (that signify discontentment, anger or irritability), an inability to balance the child's needs and capabilities with own (parental) expectations, or emotional scars from their ability to care for their own offspring (Wolfe, 1987: 45).

This explanation initially drew support from many fields, including lawmakers and public-interest groups because it directed most of the responsibility for abusive behaviour squarely at the individual involved, and absolved society from blame in contributing to the risk of child abuse through lack of education, adequate housing, family support programmes, employment opportunities, and so on. However, recent researches have disproved the role of psychopathology in child abuse. The socio-cultural explanation, given in the 1960s, maintained the external forces or socio-demographic variables within the society caused child abuse. This explanation includes three sub-explanations: social situational, social habitability and social control.

The social-situational explanation proposes that abuse and violence arise out of two factors: structural stress and cultural norms. As the social structure in which a parent lives becomes more stress ridden (or is perceived as more stressful), the greater becomes the possibility that family violence will surface as an attempt to gain control over irritating, tense events. Cultural sanctioning of violence as an appropriate conflict resolution technique further provides a foundation for the use of corporal

⁹⁵ Babita Agarwal. 2007. *Child Labour in India*. India: ABD Publishers. pp. 110-114.

punishment in child rearing. If a parent was frequently exposed to harsh physical punishment as a child, he/she may have greater propensity towards viewing such behaviour as normative and inhibition against physical force may be lessened (Bandura, 1973). Steinmatz and Strauss (1974) have maintained that factors such as low income, unemployment, isolation, unwanted pregnancy and conflict with spouse/in-laws cause structural stresses which combined with cultural acceptance against children at home. The major problem in this explanation, according to Fieldman, (1982) is that it is unable to account for the finding that given the same set of deprivation or adverse conditions, many parents do and others do not abuse their children.

The social hospitality explanation was proposed by James Garbirino in 1977. According to him, the nature of child maltreatment depends upon the quality of the environment in which the person and family live, or the level of family support in the environment. The lesser the family support the greater the risk of maltreatment of children. The social control explanation was propounded by Gelles in 1973. According to him, parents use violence against their children. Violence is used when (1) the cost of being violent is to be less than the rewards, (2) the absence of effective social control over family relations decreases the cost (of one member being violent towards one another), (3) family structures reduce social control in family relations and, therefore, reduce the costs and increase the rewards of being violent (Gelles and Comell, 1985: 121). Gelles (1973) has maintained that certain types of children-like the handicapped, ugly, demanding, premature- are at a greater risk of being abused by their parents. This is because the parent perceives the cost of parenthood to outweigh the rewards; he uses violence against his children. Ivan Nye (1979) like Gelles, had also earlier accepted the application of Peter Blau's theory, in explaining child abuse. He has proposed that child beating is less common in families that have relatives and/or friends nearby.

The explanation has been criticized on the ground that: (1) It is preposterous to assume that relations between parents and children are based on reciprocity and that parents' treatment of children is determined in terms of calculations of rewards and costs. (2) Assuming it is so, why do all the parents not make such calculations and only a few do it, that is, why do all the parents not beat their children and only some parents indulge in child beating?

The resource explanation was given by William Goode in 1971. According to it, the use of force by an individual depends upon the extent to which he can command or master the resources- social, personal and economic. The more resources a person has, the less he/she will use force in an open manner. Thus, a father who wants to be dominant person in the family but has little education, low prestige job, low income and lacks interpersonal-skills may choose to violence against his children to maintain the dominant position.

The social Interactionist explanation was given by Burgess in 1979. It approaches the etiology of child abuse in terms of the interplay between individual family and social factors in relation to both past (for example, exposure to abuse as a child) and present (for example, a demanding child) events. The parents' learning history, inter-personal experiences and intrinsic capabilities are regarded as predisposing characteristics presumed to be important contributors to an abusive pattern. In this explanation, the potential role of a child in provoking abuse is also acknowledged. The interactional explanation, thus, is not necessarily limited to observable behaviour alone (like parental criticisms or displays of anger) but includes cognitive and effective processes too (like intelligence, attitudes) that may mediate behavioural changes.

Theoretical Models/Perspectives on Social Problems

Every science, including sociology, accumulates knowledge through interplay between theory and research. A theory is a set of statements that explains the relationship between phenomena. The key role of theories is to tell us why something occurred. They help us organize the data from research into a meaningful whole.⁹⁶

As theory provides a point of view for the study of specific problems, an attempt is made here to introduce some of the relevant theories with the ultimate aim of applying them in the empirical data analysis and discussion.⁹⁷ Major theories covered are:

1. Structural Functional Theory;
2. Conflict Theory;

⁹⁶ Thomus, J. Sullivan. 2000. *Introduction to Social Problems*. Fifth Edition: Allyn and Bacon. p. 9.

⁹⁷ P. Anandarajakumar. Op. Cit. pp. 20-26.

3. Exchange and Reference Group Theory;
4. Production Relations.

1. Structural Functional Theory: Structural functionalism has its family tree in the work of early sociologists, especially Emile Durkheim and Max Weber. Among modern-day scholars, it is most closely associated with the work of Talcot Parsons and Robert Merton.

The term “structure” and “function” refer to two separate but closely related concepts. Structure can be compared to the organs or parts of the body of an animal, and functions can be compared with the purposes of these structures. Like a biological structure, a social system is composed of many interrelated and interdependent parts or structures with specific functions. Central to an understanding of social structures is the concepts of “status” and “role”. Simply defined, a status is a socially defined position. Status is both ascribed and achieved.

Each social system performs certain functions that make it doable for society and the people who comprise that society to exist. Each serves a purpose that leads to the continuation or firmness of the larger society. The functionalist perspective assumes that these social systems have an underlying tendency to be in symmetry or balance; and system that fails to fulfil its functions will result in an imbalance or disequilibrium. In acute cases, the entire system can breakdown when a change or failure in any one part of the system frequently provokes changes elsewhere in the system.⁹⁸

According to Merton, a social system can have both manifest functions and latent functions. Manifest functions are intentional and recognized; latent functions are neither intentional nor recognized. Merton recognized that not consequences of systems are functional-that is, they do not lead to the maintenance of the system. Some lead to unsteadiness or the collapse of a system. These consequences he termed dysfunctions. Robert Merton’s theory of functional alternatives provides one way to avoid such dysfunctions. Functional alternatives are other ways to achieve the intentional goal.

⁹⁸ Ibid. pp. 20-26.

2. Conflict Theory and its Application: The conflict perspective in modern sociology derives its brainwave from the work of Karl Marx who saw the struggle between social classes as the ‘engine’ of history and the main source of social change. Among its latest proponents are such people as Mills, Lewis Coser (1956) and Dahrendorf. They share the view that society is best understood and analyzed in terms of conflict.

Karl Marx began with a very simple assumption: the structure of society is determined by economic organization, predominantly the ownership of property. Inherent in any economic system that supports inequality are forces that generate revolutionary class conflict.

The browbeaten classes sooner or later recognize their submissive and inferior status and revolt against the dominant class of property owners and employers. In conflict theory, it is assumed that societies are in a continuous state of change, in which conflict is a permanent trait, “conflict” does not necessarily imply utter violence; it includes tension, competition and disagreement over goals and values.

Conflict theory tells us to look for the hidden strains and frustrations, mainly between those in power who make the verdict by those involved does not mean the absence of conflict. Conflicting relationships is neither always explicit nor always expressed by individuals. The employees might not openly express their discontent because they may feel that they are powerless to change the situation. Infact, many sociologists have suggested that people fail to express dissatisfaction not because they feel powerless to change things, but they may not be aware that things could be better than what it is, or because they are resigned to the situation. However, there are some clues that could help one to recognize conflict.

Like structural functionalism, conflict theory is used by sociologists to (1) Explain the relationship between the parts of a social system and the inequalities that exist between these parts; (2) Discover and explain the sources of the conflict; and (3) Help create techniques to deal with conflict.

3. Production Relations: The social relations which men enter into the course of producing material wealth of a society as its fundamental, both in determining the structure of society and its development. The relations of production are the relations not between the human produce and nature, but between the human beings themselves

as they occupy different places in society as a result of the division of labour, which is the basic character of human population.

According to Marx the relations of production form the economic structure of society. And this economic structure is the base not only for the other aspects of economic life, such as distribution and consumption, but also for the whole of the society with its other structures. Marx even identified the relations of the production with the relations of property as their legal expression.⁹⁹

In Marxist theory, the mode of production can be defined as the labour process-forces of production, the relationship between the workers and the owners of the means of production, and between the workers and the product. Secondly, the mode of production is itself reproduced through the interactive process of economic, ideological and political mechanisms intrinsic to itself, and through its subordination of or by other modes of production. Thirdly, the mode of production embodies contradictions at each of these points which both drive it forward and develop the conditions for its own disintegration through the development of class struggle and of class alliance involving those enmeshed in the surrounding modes of production.¹⁰⁰

Relations of exploitation or, to be more precise, the relations of surplus appropriation, are central to relations of production. This is the relation through which the immediate producers are alienated from the control of surplus of their labour.¹⁰¹

4. Exchange and Reference Group Theory: Exchange Theory is generally acknowledged to have been formulated by George Homans and developed by Peter Blau, with subsequent refinements by Richar Emerson and others.¹⁰² This perspective is based on the belief that life is a series of exchanges involving rewards and costs. In economic exchanges, people exchange money, goods, and services, hoping to profit or at least break even in the exchange. Exchange theory assumes that people seek rewarding statuses, relationship, and experiences and try to avoid costs, pain and punishments. Given a set of alternatives, individuals choose those from which they

⁹⁹ Weilenga, Bastiaan. 1991. *Introduction to Marxism*. Bangalore: Centre for Social Action. pp.26-27.

¹⁰⁰ H.C. Srivastava and Chaturvedi, M.K. 1986. *Rural Middlemen-Network of Patronage*. New Delhi: Ashish Publishing House. p. 113.

¹⁰¹ Venkatesh B. Athreya, et. al. 1990. *Barriers Broken- Production Relations and Agrarian Change in Tamil Nadu*. New Delhi: Sage Publications. p. 13.

¹⁰² Randall Collins. 1997. *Theoretical Sociology*. India: Rawat Publications. pp. 338-348.

expect the most profit, rewards, or satisfaction and avoid those that are not profitable, rewarding, or satisfying. When the costs exceed the rewards, people are likely to feel angry and dissatisfied. When the rewards exceed the costs, they are likely to feel that they got a good deal. Both parties are more likely to be satisfied with the interaction if there is perceived equity in the exchange, a feeling on the part of both the rewards were worth the costs.

There are two different schools of thought in the exchange theory perspective. George Homans believed that behaviour could be explained in terms of rewards and punishments. In exchange theory, the rewards and punishments are the behaviour of other people, and thus involved in exchanges assume that their rewards will be proportional to their costs. Peter Blau is the advocate of a different school of exchange theory. Blau argued that the exchange is more subjective and interpretative and that the exchanges occur on the symbolic level. As a result, money may be a just reward only if it is defined by the receiver as such, and psychic rewards of satisfaction with doing a good job or of pleasing someone may be as important as money, gifts, or outward responses of praise. Both agreed that all exchange involves a mutually held expectation that reciprocation will occur. If resources or exchange criteria are unequal, one person is at a distant disadvantage and the other has the control and power over the relationship. If there is indeed an imbalance of rewards and costs to one or all of the parties, then there must be some form of negotiation to restore the necessary balance of exchange.

Organizations engaged in exchanges are governed by their relative resources and by the norms of reciprocity and fairness. The society as a whole becomes stratified by the same kind of differentiation that characterizes its individuals. Overall solidarity is generated by “generalized media” of exchange: norms or laws, which codify the principles of exchange into abstract principles. Individuals learn these norms when socialized into society’s system of common values. Possessions of these norms then make it possible for exchanges to take place at a distance, instead of through direct interaction.¹⁰³

Reference Groups according to George Herbert Mead and Robert Merton serve two kinds of functions. (1) Set standard for the behaviours of the individual. The

¹⁰³ Ibid. pp. 338-348.

individual takes the standards and value judgments of the reference groups and shapes his attitudes and behaviour in accordance with them. Such reference groups are called as “normative” reference group and (2) provides a frame of comparison relative to which the individual evaluate himself and others. They provide a context for evaluating the relative position of the individual and others. Such groups are known as “comparative” reference groups.

Using the Theoretical Perspectives

The major elements of each perspective and its view on social problems have been outlined in the following table. The perspectives should be seen as three different “tools”, each of which is useful in analyzing particular social problems.¹⁰⁴

Table 3.1

An outline of the sociological perspectives

	Functionalism	Conflict Theory	Interactionism
View of Society	A system of interrelated and interdependent parts	Made up of groups struggling with one another over scarce resources	Individuals in face to face interaction create social consensus
View of the Individual	People are shaped by society to perform important functions for society	People are shaped by the position of their groups in society	People are symbol manipulators who create their social world through social interaction and consensus
View of Social Change	The social system tends to resist change as disruptive	Change is inevitable and continuous	Change occurs when there is no shared consensus about expected behaviour and newly found consensus develops
View of Social Problems	Caused by dysfunctional activities or disorganization in the social system	Arise when group believes its interests are not being served and works to overcome perceived disadvantage	Arise when a condition is defined as stigmatizing or disruptive of normal social expectations
Key	Integration, interdependence,	Interest, power, dominance, conflict,	Interpretation, consensus, shared expectations,

¹⁰⁴ Thomus J. Sullivan. 2000. *Introduction to Social Problems*. Fifth Edition: Allyn and Bacon. pp. 15-16.

Concepts	stability, equilibrium	coercion	specially created reality
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Constructing Social Problems

Use of the theoretical perspectives can be illustrated by looking at an important element of the study of social problems: how a social condition becomes a social problem. The existence of a condition alone, even when the condition produces negative consequences, does not make it a social problem; to become a social problem, it must be so defined by some group (Best, 1994; Holstein and Miller, 1993; Spector and Kitsuse, 1987). This process of social definition or construction involves a number of elements: how and why groups identify conditions as problems, how the groups develop an understanding of the causes of the problems, and how situations are developed and implemented. Each of the three perspectives contributes to our understanding of this process.¹⁰⁵

From the *functionalist perspective*, the social construction of social problems depends, at least in part, on the extent of social disruption or social disorganization produced by a social condition. Conditions that are more disruptive are more likely to be defined as social problems by significant groups or large numbers of people. But many social conditions disrupt the lives of only some people, and these conditions may be defined as problems by some groups but not others.

The *conflict perspective* helps us recognize that elites and others with access to resources or power play a greater role in this process of social definition: it is the condition that negatively affect their values and way of life that are most likely to be defined as social problems. So, definitions of social problems are constructed out of the clash of competing interest groups.

The *Interactionist perspective* recognize the importance of symbols and social meanings in shaping human life, and it points out that defining a “condition” as a “problem” is a matter of attaching certain negative meanings to the condition. The process of interpretation is central to human social life, and people have to interpret a set of objective conditions as something that is ‘bad’ or ‘negative’ before they will act on it.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid

This brief illustration of constructing social problems demonstrates how using the three perspectives can provide a more complete understanding of a topic. This social construction process is complex and continuous, and the resulting social definitions are constantly shifting and changing.

Chapter 4

Research Methodology

Cotton farming is swelled out to entire Uzbekistan including the heart of Uzbek cotton oblast Kashkadarya, Samarkand, Bukhara, Khourizm, Sukhandarya, the autonomous Republic of Karakalpakistan, Namangan, Fergana, and Andijan, etc. It was not possible to include all the population of Uzbekistan primarily because of geographic location of the various oblasts and of time constraints. The main focus of the study was Namangan, Fergana, Kashkadarya and Samarkand. We also found the opportunity to have some case studies from Urgench and Khiva of the Khoerizm oblast of Uzbekistan which falls in the north-western side of the country. These oblasts are having a huge agricultural land and most of the population is engaged in farming.

The economic problems involved in the employment of children in the cotton cultivation of Uzbekistan are in no way less significant. Cheapness of the child labour in the cotton industry of Uzbekistan has led to the forced child labour in abundance by the state. This has also resulted in their low level of schooling and a greater number of dropouts. The legal problems involved in the employment of children in cotton cultivation are: (1) what should be their minimum age (2) what should be the field in which they may be employed (3) what should be the nature of their work (4) what privilege should be afforded to them in matters of leave and holidays (5) what should be their duration of work (6) what protection should be afforded to them in matters of health, safety and welfare.

The employment of school children in the cotton industry of Uzbekistan is quite widespread and common. Their working conditions are also very unsatisfactory, especially during sun drenched days, where they have to work in dusty, dingy, congested and dirty atmosphere. The inhuman aspect of the problem of the child labour has been attracting the attention of social scientists, researchers, human rights activists and social workers across the globe. The reports of different groups and bodies mostly of foreign basis do mention the problem of the child labour in the cotton industry of Uzbekistan and their treatment is often casual and limited in scope. A number of surveys conducted on the use of children in the cotton cultivation by the autocratic state of Uzbekistan do not present an integrated picture of the problem. As

there is an increasing tendency to view the institution of child labour as welfare approach rather than purely economic orientation, no study of this nature has so far been carried out in the cotton sector of Uzbekistan. The present study is basically an attempt to fill up this gap.

The significance of present study has the following basis:

- 1) Children are the most valuable asset of any nation and mankind owes to the child the best it has to give.
- 2) Fundamental rights and the directive principles of state policy adumbrated in the constitution of Uzbekistan which prohibits employment of children below fifteen years of age in any sort of work, protects the tender age of children from abuse, forbids their exploitation and ensures justice and human conditions.
- 3) Children are engaged in various types of employment but Uzbek children are mostly engaged in cotton industry.
- 4) Children employed in the cotton cultivation are very badly exploited not only by the state machinery but by parents as well. The work and the working conditions qualitatively as well as quantitatively are harmful, injurious for their proper physical growth and mental, intellectual, emotional and educational development.
- 5) Since Uzbekistan is known for its cotton through out the world, the demand of it in the local as well as outside market is very heavy. Because all the control of cotton rests with the State of Uzbekistan the employers prefer to employ children due to various reasons such as easy availability, cheapness, easier supervision, lesser employee-employer's problem, etc.
- 6) Though there is abundance of research studies on the child labour in general but, no sincere efforts have been made so far to study the school children working in the cotton industry in Uzbekistan in particular from sociological point of view.

Definition of the Terms Used

Since there is a lot of dispute regarding the age range of the child as revealed by various studies on child labour both at the country as well as international level. In

case of Uzbekistan and most Central Asian Countries the term child worker denotes a person in the age group of six to fifteen years engaged in mental and physical work, in full time employment for the sake of reward or remuneration of earning at one's own house or at employer's working centre without any scope of attending school. The term child labour and child worker have been used interchangeably in the study. It is a matter of common knowledge that no child below the age of six years can take up paid employment due to his tender age. No employer will also like to employ them for obvious reasons. Though the upper age-limit varies in different Countries and Acts, the age of fifteen years subject to certain conditions is the minimum age required to work anywhere in any sector. We have also fixed the upper age limit at fourteen years.

Relevance of the Study

The present study is enveloped by huge number of issues, be it at the personnel or individual level or at the social level. Among the important social issues, the life conditions of child labourers in different sectors of the economy deserve special mention because these children suffer in all aspects of life whether it is physical, mental, moral, hygienic, educational, etc. The pathetic condition of these child labourers in the present day Uzbekistan has increased from last two decades. They not only suffer physically but they are economically exploited ruthlessly, which affects them in other aspects of life both at meeting personnel as well as domestic needs.

The education of children has got affected in a large number of cases. Children instead of attending school and enjoying their childhood are engaged in earning a livelihood, often in harsh circumstances. The problem is aggravated by the poverty of families and the demand of the employers for cheap and docile labour. The income accruing from child labour may be a pittance but it somehow helps the family to carry on. Economic compulsions weigh heavily on the consciousness of poor parents while colluding with the child's employer in violating the law and putting the child under risk of human exploitation. During harvesting season the involvement of these innocent souls increases drastically particularly in cotton prone areas due to economic and other factors. The problem thus formulated is stated as:

Hypothesis

On the basis of the earlier studies, personal observations, discussions with intellectuals and available reports on child workers in general and Uzbekistan in particular, certain hypothesis were framed to be tested by this study. These hypotheses are as follows:

1. Although much has been achieved since independence, the ability of children in Uzbekistan to exercise their rights remains under threat.
2. Child labour in the cotton sector of Uzbekistan is not the result of poverty or ignorance but is a result of deliberate coercive policy adopted by the government of Uzbekistan.

Objectives

The study broadly followed the following objectives.

1. To study the conditions under which children work in the cotton fields.
2. To investigate the health hazards of these children who are exposed to dust, chemicals, pesticides, defoliants which are constantly used in abundance in the cotton fields before the collection of cotton.
3. To analyze the national legislation about children and labour rights as well as the norms of international law in the prevailing practice of child labour in Uzbekistan.
4. To provide ameliorating recommendations and suggestions for the solution of the problem in greater Uzbekistan.

Universe

The sovereign and independent Republic of Uzbekistan, located in the middle of Central Asia, in the basin of the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers was formed in the wake of the collapse of the former Soviet Union. Uzbekistan functioned mainly as a raw resource base, had an unequal economic exchange, and has to follow the dictates of central authorities in Moscow. With the acquisition of independence, it became necessary to choose a form of government and a strategy for social and economic development that would ensure a transition to market relations. Uzbekistan's territory covers 447, 400 square kilometres. Before it acquired

independent statehood, the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic (Uzbek SSR) consisted of one autonomous republic (Karakalpakistan) and twelve oblasts: Tashkent, Syrdarya, Jizakh, Fergana, Namangan, Andijan, Kashkadarya, Sukhandarya, Samarkand, Bukhara, Khorezm and Navoi.

The total length of the state boarder is 5, 300 kilometres, a significant portion of which runs through deserts and plains. Only in the east does boarder cross through valleys, canyons, and mountains (which are partially covered by snow and glaciers). Here Uzbekistan shares a border with Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. In the north the republic has an extremely lengthy border with Kazakhstan. In the west, the border mainly follows the Amu Darya River and sets the boundary with Turkmenistan. In the south, the republic shares a common border with Afghanistan. Two-thirds of the territory of Uzbekistan consists of desert, semi-desert areas, and steppe. The remainder is covered by fertile valleys. The climate in the north is moderate, yet also has sharp continental contrasts (with hot summers and snowless but cold winters); in the south, it is warmer, closer to fitting the criteria for subtropical. The level of precipitation is relatively low.

Uzbekistan has a well-developed agriculture, which accounts for 37.2 percent of the GDP (compared to 25.4 percent from industry, 10.4 percent from construction, and 27 percent from the service sector). Cotton is the main agricultural crop; Uzbekistan is the fourth largest producer of cotton in the world. In 1991 it produced 4, 646, 000 of raw cotton, a decline of 422,000 tons from the previous year. But from 1995 the production of cotton has increased to a considerable extent and the production of 2010 was more that 80, 00000 tons. The sharp fall in the water level of the Aral Sea has led to noticeable change in the volume and geography of participation and has also resulted in the formation of dust and salt storms.

The population of Uzbekistan has very deep historical roots and considerable ethnic complexity. These roots are many centuries old and define the integrity, unity, and interaction of the entire process of demographic and social development for the peoples of Central Asia. In 1991, the territory of Uzbekistan encompassed 20.7 million inhabitants which jumped to 28.3 million in 2010, who represented more than one hundred and thirty different nations and nationalities. The largest ethnic groups included Uzbeks (70 percent), Russians (9 percent), Kazakhs (4 percent), and

Karakapaks (2 percent).¹⁰⁶ The settled way of life for the native population and the high level of agriculture have historically predetermined the dominant proportion of rural population in Uzbekistan (60 percent), a low level of mobility, and a strong attachment to home areas. It is no accident that a popular saying holds: “if you loose your family or kin, you will weep for seven years. If you loose your native land, you will weep for your entire life.”

From ancient times, people in the east have believed that children make a family strong. Therefore the Uzbeks (by religious confession), like all Muslim peoples, believe it a pious deed to have as many children as Allah sends. Hence, in Uzbekistan, for example, in 1992 the natural growth rate of the population (per 1, 000 inhabitants) was 26.6 (compared to 26.9 in Turkmenistan, 25.6 in Tajikistan, 21.4 in Kyrgyzstan, and the lower rate of 11.8 in Kazakhstan). These indices are striking when compared with data for the European countries- for example, 2.2 in the United Kingdom, 0.9 in Germany, and 3.8 in France. According to data from the Central Statistical Administration of the former Uzbek SSR, the size of the average family in Uzbekistan was 5.5 individuals (compared to 3.2 in the European republics of the former Soviet Union). The high birth rate has meant a significant increase in the population of Uzbekistan, which now ranks only behind Russia and Ukraine among the states of the former Soviet Union. This demographic characteristic of Uzbekistan has also affected the social structure: 43.1 percent of the population is under the age of fifteen (compares to 24 percent in Russia and Belarus, and 33.2 percent in Kazakhstan).

The economy of Uzbekistan was shaped and developed to satisfy, first and foremost, the “all union” interests of the USSR as a whole. This meant a multifaceted exploitation of its minerals and raw materials, energy, land, water, labour, and other resources. The general economic plan of the Soviet Union predetermined the place of Uzbekistan in the so-called “all-union market”. Concretely, this meant specialization in the production of materials that the Soviet Union deemed strategically important. These included agricultural products (raw cotton, the cocoons of silkworms, ambary stalks, fruits, vegetables, karakul or Astrakhan lambskin, wool, etc.) and industrial goods (wool fibres, threads of raw silk, mineral fertilizers, machinery and equipment

¹⁰⁶ There are 5.5 inhabitants per km² in Kazakhstan, 10 in Turkmenistan, 28 in Kyrgyzstan, 49 in Tajikistan, and 64 in Uzbekistan; detailed annual figures available on <<http://perspective.usherbrooke.ca>>.

for the preliminary processing of products from the cotton industry, and semi-finished goods from gold mining and chemical industries). The struggle to make the Soviet Union self-sufficient in the production of cotton proved an onerous experience for the Uzbek people, for it resulted in the creation of a one-sided agricultural system. In 1990, for example, cotton represented 54 percent of the total area of sown acreage, a proportion that was still higher in certain areas (e.g., 68 percent in Andijan Oblast, 62 percent in Bukhara oblast, and 60 percent in Bukhara oblast).

As a result of Moscow's predatory policy, cotton production dominated all other sectors, with industry itself being dedicated primarily to servicing the cotton complex. Moreover, all sectors were oriented towards providing the Soviet market with such goods as semi-processed chemicals, cotton fibre, semi-processed copper and gold, and the like.

Sampling

A sample, as the name implies, is a smaller representation of a larger whole. The observation of some phenomenon in complete detail would involve such a mass of data that analysis would be slow and tedious. Moreover, to analyze large quantities of material is wasteful when a smaller amount would suffice.

In the present study, multi-stage sampling was used. In the first stage Tashkent and Fergana were selected because of:

1. More land under cotton cultivation.
2. Employment of a large number of children in the cotton cultivation.
3. Easy accessibility.

Non-probability sampling technique was used for the present study. In many research situations including the present one and also those where there is no list of persons to be studied (e.g. alcoholics, wife battering, migrant workers and so on), probability sampling is difficult and inappropriate to use. In such researches, non-probability sampling is the most appropriate one. Keeping in view the above criterion we found the non-probability sampling the most appropriate to get the desired results.

Non-probability sampling procedures do not employ the rules of probability theory, do not claim representativeness, and are usually used for qualitative

exploratory analysis. The five types of non-probability sampling which were used in the present study for the collection of data from the respondents are: convenience, purposive, quota, snowball and volunteer.

(a) Convenience Sampling: This type of non-probability sampling technique is also known as ‘accidental’ or ‘haphazard’ sampling. In this sampling the researcher studies all those persons who are most conveniently available or who accidentally come in contact during a certain period of time in the research. Same was true of the present research as other options of sampling were inapplicable due to the unique and different political structure and government administration of Uzbekistan. The researcher engaged in the study of children who came across at buss stops, in trains, at hotels and restaurants, at bazaars and especially and most importantly in the cotton fields in Tashkent oblast, Fergana Valley, Samarkand and Khoerizm oblasts of the country which is having the most autocratic kind of political structure in the world. Due to limitations of time and finance the convenience type of sampling proved to be quick and economical in the present study.

(b) Purposive Sampling: In this sampling, also known as judgemental sampling, the researcher purposely chooses persons who, in his/her judgement about some appropriate characteristic required of the sample members, are thought to be relevant to the research topic and are easily available to him. This approach of collecting data from the respondents was also used during the course of the field study as the convenience sampling was suffice to fulfil the objectives of the study. While applying this technique some of the variables were given more importance and that represented the universe but the selection of the units was deliberate and based on prior judgement.

(c) Quota Sampling: This is a version of stratified sampling with the difference that instead of dividing the population into strata and randomly choosing the respondents, it works on ‘quotas’ fixed by the researcher. The choice of the selection of the respondents rests with the interviewer. Determining quotas depends on a number of factors related to the nature and type of research. Quota sampling was also used for the collection of data as and when required and also when other techniques of data collection where proving to be less applicable and irrelevant. This kind of technique also turned to be relatively

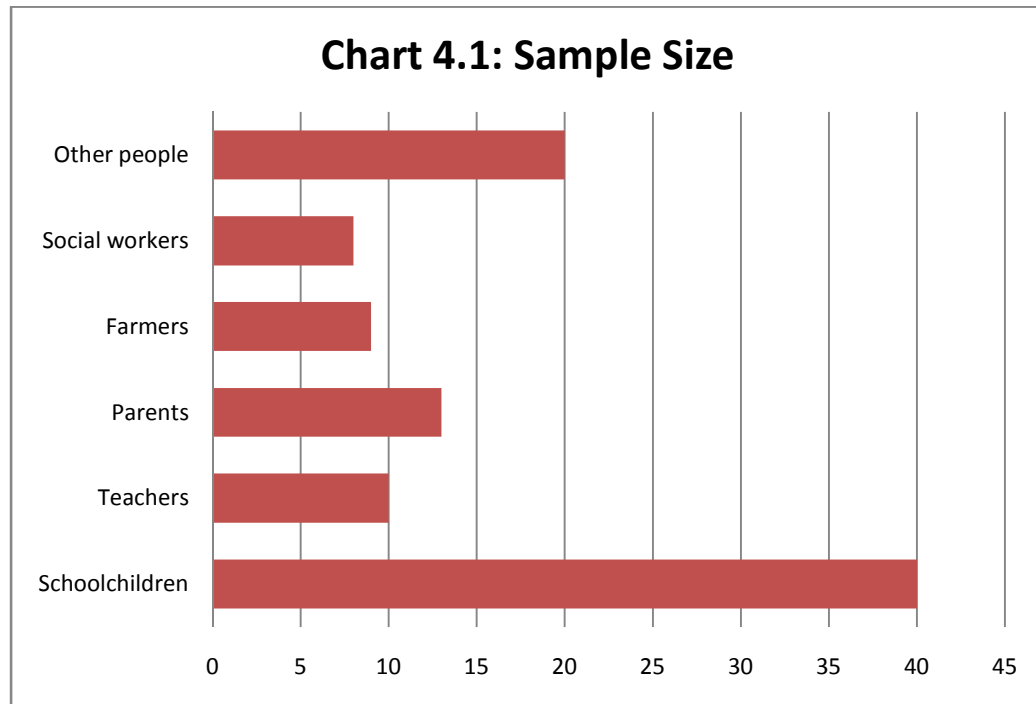
effective and was also less costly than other techniques. It does not require sampling frames and also saved some time.

(d) Snowball Sampling: In this technique, the researcher begins the research with the few respondents who are known and available to him/her. Subsequently, these respondents give other names who meet the criteria of research, who in turn give more new names. This process is continued until 'adequate' number of persons is interviewed or until no more respondents are discovered. This method again proved very useful for the present study as the researcher was not familiar with the language and culture of the people and it was not possible due to time and resource constraints to study first language and then investigate the problem. This method was employed because the target population was unknown and it was very difficult to approach the respondents in any other way. Reduced sampling sizes and costs were a clear advantage of the snowball sampling. Though chances of bias entry are more as a person known to someone (also in the sample) sometimes proved to be similar to the first person.

(e) Volunteer Sampling: This is the technique in which the respondent himself volunteers to give information he holds. This method also turned to be very fruitful for the present study. The autocratic political structure of Uzbekistan avoids its citizens to say anything against the state and its political institutions and this was true with the present research also as the topic was also political in nature. It is being considered a taboo to talk of child labour in any form in Uzbekistan as there is no child labour in practice according to the official statistics and records as Uzbekistan has banned child labour in all its forms upto fifteen years of age including the cotton industry. Uzbekistan has also signed major Conventions on the Rights of the Child (Convention number 173, 189, 199) of the United Nations which prohibit child labour in any form. This method proved to be very useful because good number of people were ready to help us voluntarily and shared a lot of information related to the institution of cotton cultivation and the use of children in its production.

The present study followed the qualitative methods of data collection, based on non-standardized interviews with open ended questions. We interviewed and interacted with eighty persons comprising of school children, parents, employers,

teachers, farmers, university professors, social workers and other local people. In addition to the interviews we also collected data from different state and non-state organizations which include especially university libraries, agricultural institutes, economic faculties, cotton institutes, state libraries, UNICEF, UNESCO, UNDP, and World Bank Offices of Uzbekistan, and from various other organizations and departments. The following chart gives a breakdown of the respondents who were interviewed in different selected provinces of the country.



Tools of Data Collection

Various tools for data collection are available for researchers. Suitability of these tools was examined for the present study. After discussion with the experienced researchers and the supervisor it was decided that the following tools would be suitable for the present study. These are:

1. Interview
2. Observation
3. Collateral contacts

Since it is an empirical study, subjects of the study were to be interviewed for getting the relevant information as stipulated by the objectives of this study.

1. Interview: Interview, is an effective, informal verbal or non-verbal conversation, initiated for specific purposes and focussed on certain planned content areas. Researcher located and interviewed those people who were most knowledgeable about child labour in the cotton industry of Uzbekistan. In most of the settings, many people were familiar with what children were doing and know a lot about their working and living conditions. These informants were teachers, community leaders, people from non-governmental organizations, social workers, students and people from voluntary organizations. Most of these people were interviewed individually when consented for. Another way for interviewing was adopted to invite these people for participation in “focus groups” which were discussion groups. These group discussions saved a lot of time and were quite productive, and the researcher got to hear a number of different perspectives and viewpoints. Other people who were interviewed were those directly involved with the working children, i.e. the children’s employers and their parents.

a) Informal, Conversational Interview: No predetermined questions were asked in order to remain as open and adoptable as possible to the interviewee’s nature and priorities.

b) General Interview Guide Approach: The guide approach was intended to ensure that the same general areas of information were collected from each interview, this provided more focus than the conversational approach, but still allows a degree of freedom and adoptability in getting the information from the interview.

2. Observation: We are aware of the limitation of the words. How the words are pronounced and the facial expressions of the respondents are extremely important to understand the communication adequately. This is possible only when the researcher notes down his observation along with words uttered by the respondents. Many things which can not be said are expressed bodily which can be observed and noted by any one. It is only for these reasons that observation has been used to supplement information collected through the interview

schedule. Observation was very useful for collecting information about the facilities available to the respondents in their work units and their home conditions. These observations were noted in the research diary for use in the analysis of data.

- 3. Collateral Contacts:** Collateral contacts were also used to supplement and corroborate the information. In this process, the researcher contacted friends, neighbours, village heads, elderly and educated people of the villages and towns and co-workers of the respondents and the relevant information was noted down.

Sometimes the researcher or interviewer “broke the ice” first by showing friendliness, showed an interest in their music or their pastimes, and so on. Acting out, story telling and sometimes participated in free time activities with them proved very useful methods of eliciting information and gaining their confidence, especially where people are not used to share information related to sensitive themes like one under investigation.

Preparation of the Interview Schedules

The available published and unpublished literature was consulted and discussions were held with the research guide/supervisor, social scientists and other knowledgeable persons to have proper understanding of the different aspects of the problem. After developing some idea about the political and economic structure of Uzbekistan, cotton industry, child labourers, their working conditions, family background, legal and other aspects of the problem, various available related interview schedules were collected. After that each aspect was broken into a number of parts so that the necessary information could be collected.

In the next phase, every possible question was noted separately in each sub-area of the study. These questions were arranged in a particular sequence. Afterwards, the structure of the questions was critically examined and many of them were replaced in order to make it easy for the respondent to understand the proper meaning. Some questions were open-ended and others were close ended, giving possible alternative answers so that the tabulation will not become very difficult. To overcome the limitations of the close ended questions, all possible answers were accommodated in the schedule.

The schedule for the teachers, school children, child labourers, parents and employers was divided into several sections. Like the schedule for child labourers in the first section contains the general information regarding name, age, sex, address, education, religion, etc. In the same way other sections include the working conditions, wages, health conditions and facilities available in the cotton fields, role of government organizations and non governmental organizations, etc.

The schedule for parents was prepared with a view to gather some information which was a bit difficult to be gathered from the child workers because of their limited knowledge of this complex phenomenon and most importantly to verify the information given by the child workers. This schedule was further divided into several sections which included general information, socio-economic background, and parental awareness, working conditions, wages, health conditions, and suggestions on eradicating child labour and so on.

The interview schedule for employers was also prepared with a view to understand the hidden causes of employing children and also to know their awareness about the labour laws and perception about the child labour. For the suitability of analysis and to put questions in systematic manner, the schedule was again divided into several sections which included general information, employer's views about child labour, working conditions in the cotton fields, suggestions for elimination of child labour, etc.

Collection and Analysis of Data

Plan of data collection was formulated to have more reliable information and responses to various questions. To start with, as planned earlier, the researcher went around the towns and villages of cotton growing areas of Uzbekistan and met various important persons including the parents and neighbours of the school children working in the cotton fields to collect the basic information. The purpose of the study was explained but at times was kept hidden due to fear of the authorities who treat it a taboo to talk on child labour. For the convenience of the respondents, as and when required, the objectives were clarified to allay their fears and suspicion. A research diary was also used to take care of those responses which were not in purview of interview schedule. Observations were noted and the interviews terminated with the acknowledgement of gratitude for their cooperation.

After collecting information from the field, though limited the schedules were edited and rechecked in order to put all the information in proper and suitable order. Statistical calculations such as aggregation, percentage, average, mean, etc. were made in order to draw inferences about the nature of the problem and present the findings accurately. An attempt was made to establish relationship between different variables such as age, sex, education, religion, occupation, income, etc. Data was analyzed/interpreted systematically with logic and in the light of the facts of other studies.

Precincts of the Research

Interviewing children, a mainstay of child labour research, has its own rules and recommendations. Children were not always giving consent willingly to interviews, and it was also ethically wrong to force them to participate. Neither could we ever place them in a situation where they could have risk of punishment from the state officials and most importantly by the directors of the academic lyceums, colleges and universities or for that matter from the parents for simple reason of sharing information or experience with a stranger.

Since the units of the sample were widely scattered, so we couldn't afford to take a large sample because of time constraints, we decided to have a sample of three oblasts only. Thus, its findings can not be generalized. Despite the best effort made by the researcher to establish purposive rapport, it is easier said than done. The researcher also faced problem while travelling from one oblast to another due to shortage of time. It is note worthy that the officials were quite apprehensive of the interviews as they considered the researcher as a human rights activist investigating and collecting information about the abuse of child labour in the cotton industry of Uzbekistan.

Fear and anxiety compelled many children to remain silent which led to incorrect answers in many cases. Much has to be elicited, therefore, through observation. The researcher always tried to eschew the perceived notion which may mis-represent the findings. Some of the parents hide the information that the child was not an earning member but tried to pose that they send the child to work so that he may not be a victim of any anti-social element.

The difficulties involved in carrying out interviews were substantial. Firstly, there were communication problems, as the interviewer was not able to speak the language of the interviewee. Majority of people in Uzbekistan speak Uzbek and Russian which the interviewer was not acquainted with and a translator was doing the job of getting the responses to both the structured and unstructured questions.

The success of the research is dependent on the 'rich' information given by the respondents. Many a time, the leading informants selected by the researchers were those who do not had much and appropriate information on the topic under study and also were unwilling to cooperate and respond. The atypical or marginal informants within the selected group of respondents didn't provide adequate information. Some times the respondents shared the wrong information due to the fear of being caught by the police and authorities for simply sharing the truth with a foreign researcher.

Child Labourers in the Cotton Fields of Uzbekistan





Chapter 5

Child Labour in the Cotton Industry of Uzbekistan (Findings of the Study)

1.1. Cotton in Uzbekistan: Uzbekistan is the second largest exporter of cotton in the world, selling over 800,000 tones of cotton every year. Europe is its major buyer. But while the former Soviet Republic is at the forefront of global cotton production, its human rights and environmental record lags far behind the rest of the world. Forced child labour, human rights violations, excessive pesticide use, the draining of an ocean and severe poverty are all rife in cotton production in Uzbekistan.

**Table 5.1
Cotton production in Central Asia (thousands of tonnes) and as a share of global production**

	1913	1940	1970	1980	1990	1994	1998	2000	2002	2004
Kazakhstan	11	72	91	118	102	70	55	85	105	148
Kyrgyzstan	9	31	62	68	25	18	27	27	25	40
Uzbekistan	171	457	1483	2061	1593	1248	1000	975	1033	1125
Tajikistan	11	57	240	334	256	168	110	106	165	172
Turkmenistan	23	70	287	415	437	314	197	187	148	203
Total Central Asia	225	687	2163	2996	2413	1818	1389	1380	1476	1688
World production	6296	6934	11740	13831	18970	18762	18713	19437	19437	26193
% of world production	3.5 %	10 %	18.5 %	21.5 %	13 %	9.5 %	7.5 %	7 %	7.5 %	6.5 %

Source: J. Baffes. 2007. "Cotton-Dependent Countries in the Global Context", in D. Kandiyoti (ed.), *The Cotton Sector in Central Asia: Economic Policy and Development Challenges*. London: The School of Oriental and African Studies.

Instead of using machines to harvest cotton, as is done in other major cotton exporting countries, Uzbekistan's government uses children. Uzbekistan's cotton farmers are made to suffer too. Despite producing a crop worth over US\$1billion, those forced to grow cotton receive little of the revenues generated from its sale. Official figures suggest that farmers receive around one third of the value of their

cotton. In practice many get far less. Instead, Uzbekistan's cotton exports, which represent around 60% of the state's hard currency export earnings, are appropriated by the country's totalitarian dictatorship led by President Islam Karimov.

Side by side with the human rights violations caused by cotton, is an environmental catastrophe of astonishing proportions. In order to irrigate its 1.47 million hectares under cotton, Uzbekistan's regime has all but eradicated the Aral Sea which was already in bad shapes during Soviet times. Once the world's fourth largest body of water, the Aral is now reduced to just 15% of its former volume. Appalling mismanagement of this vital water resource has witnessed the disappearance of the sea's 24 species of native fish from its waters, the drying out of associated wetlands and the creation of tens of thousands of environmental refugees; the former dependents of the Aral's ecosystem.

Such gross exploitation of a nation and its environment has only been possible within a framework of extreme control. President Karimov has eliminated any form of democratic representation; prohibited a free media, subverted basic civil liberties and institutionalized the use of torture and intimidation within the police, National Security Service and prisons. Government attitude to public protest - peaceful or not - is brutal, as most recently witnessed by the response to demonstrations in the town of Andijan in May 2005. Demonstrators were met with indiscriminate shooting leading to an estimated 700 deaths and the subsequent arbitrary arrest of activists, human rights defenders and independent journalists.

Given such conditions, the Uzbek people have been left with little option but to abide by the commands of the Karimov administration. Tellingly, those Uzbeks who have felt able to speak out are clear in their condemnation of the cotton industry and united in their view that under the current regime it does little if anything to benefit the people, but much to support a corrupt and brutal government. Despite these well known abuses, Europe remains the major destination for Uzbekistan's cotton exports. Traders continue to associate with the regime, buying cotton in exchange for a substantial hard currency income, and high street fashion outlets sell clothes manufactured from Uzbek cotton.

1.2. Trade in Uzbek Cotton: Uzbekistan is one of the "Big Five" countries that dominate global cotton production (China, USA, India, Pakistan and Uzbekistan).

However, unlike China, India and Pakistan, which each use most of the cotton they produce; Uzbekistan has a limited capacity for domestic textile production. As a result over 75% of Uzbek cotton - around 800,000 tonnes is sold on the world market every year, making Uzbekistan the third biggest cotton exporter in the world. According to data from the United Nations, the major destination for Uzbek cotton is Europe, which receives almost a third of all cotton sold by Uzbekistan. These exports have a value of around US\$350 million each year.

Companies that buy Uzbek cotton are inextricably entwined in an economic system that perpetuates poverty and supports labour practices that constitute flagrant violations of human rights. But while the realities of government corruption and forced child labour are hard to ignore, the global cotton industry has done little to address the manner in which Uzbek cotton is produced. In international markets, Uzbek cotton is sold by leading European and US corporations; its production is financed by Western banks, and the final product is sold further under famous brands in Western countries. No international corporations or clothing suppliers pay enough attention to the conditions under which the cotton is produced. Moreover, no international organizations, or international financial institutions have taken enough efforts to fight against such abuses

1.3. Changing Trends in the Cotton Sector of Uzbekistan: The reliance of the Soviet command economy in Uzbekistan on ‘cotton campaigns’ mobilized the population, including school-age children, during harvest periods is well documented. An integrated network of institutions, from regional and local administration, to schools and collective farms were involved in securing additional labour at peak times. At first glance the use of child labour in cotton harvests, relying on an existing infrastructure of institutions, may appear as a carry-over from collective agriculture. However, the evidence points to significant changes in both the *context* and the *mechanisms* of reliance on child labour in the aftermath of agrarian reforms starting after the break-up of the Soviet Union and Uzbekistan’s independence in 1991.

During the Soviet period, Uzbekistan was a region of high rural unemployment and underemployment and, compared to the rest of the Union, of low agricultural wages. These trends were aggravated further after independence when Uzbekistan’s agriculture, organized around some 940 *kolkhozy* and 1,108 *sovhozy* in 1990, was gradually de-collectivized. Collective enterprises, apart from providing

their members with jobs, also played an important role in allocating additional plots to households who were able to supplement their incomes by planting a second crop. The second crop economy also absorbed some surplus labour. Privatization policies did not only result in massive job losses but, over time, also restricted access to the second crop economy for the majority of former collective enterprise workers.

Furthermore, after independence the terms of trade for agriculture deteriorated drastically. The government, cut off from the budgetary grant it received from the USSR, was forced to find new sources of revenue. Extraction of surplus from agriculture by driving a wedge between the procurement price and the export price of cotton was a readily available alternative. By 1994, the procurement price for cotton in real terms was a fraction of what it was in 1990. The agricultural sector continues to be subject to high levels of taxation (World Bank 2005) while levels of investment in rural industries (which used to provide additional jobs during the Soviet period) have plummeted. These adverse trends have combined to deepen both unemployment and rural poverty.

1.4. Process of Agrarian Reform: Land reform is blocked in Uzbekistan. Uzbek farmers do not own the land they use; they do not even have the right to choose the crops they want to produce and the buyer they want to sell their products to. Private access to land was steadily expanded in Uzbekistan through the allocation of leaseholds to a new private farming sector that took over production from *shirkats* (collective enterprises). However, farmers continue to be tied to the state procurement system through a *shartnoma* (contract) system that specifies the particular combination of crops they are allowed to cultivate and the state delivery quotas for strategic crops, namely wheat and cotton. Producers have little control over crop allocation, access to input markets or buyers for their crops. Local *khokims* (provincial governors), who play a key role in allocating land for private farming, are still held responsible for ensuring that their region meets its procurement quotas and risk endangering their jobs if they fail to do so. While local administrators are motivated to extract as much cotton as possible from farmers, who are caught between the obligations to fulfil delivery quotas, their desire to maximize their profits and the necessity to cut their costs as far as they can. Thus, although different players in the agricultural sector do not necessarily have identical stakes over the utilization of child labour, they share a common interest in timely access to a source of cheap labour.

A much less understood and documented effect of privatization on cropping patterns has to do with the entrance of new, more powerful players into the ranks of 'new' farmers. Micro-level studies clearly suggest that their ability to farm profitably rests on their ability to negotiate activities and crop mixes that's minimize their involvement in cotton farming.¹⁰⁷ To what extent does the ability of well-connected new private farmers to evade the unprofitable cotton crop actually increase the pressures on those who are still subject to cotton delivery quotas? Does this have a bearing on methods of labour control? Do new exit strategies of both the more privileged and of the poor increase the need for coercion in securing an adequate labour supply for cotton cultivation, including the labour of children? These issues certainly merit further, in-depth investigation.¹⁰⁸ It is, however, safe to conclude that the path of agricultural reform adopted by the Government of Uzbekistan is far from having created conditions that would help eradicate forced child labour and other forms of coerced labour.

1.5. Crop Cycle: The cotton-picking season is short and starts with the maturing of cotton bolls, usually at the beginning of September. The onset of autumn rains and cold weather reduces the quality of the cotton which starts fetching lower prices as the harvesting season advances. The first two weeks of the harvesting season are critical. Farmers who are not able to pick the bulk of their cotton on time stand to lose financially. This creates pressure to harvest as much cotton as possible within a narrow timeframe. As the picking season advances, the quality, quantity and pay levels of the cotton harvest decline to such an extent that there are hardly any profits to be made from this activity. Child labourers can be made to stay on the fields until the very end of the harvest period, well beyond the point when the adult labour supply has dried up.

1.6. Cotton Farming and the Patterns of Out-Migration: The process of agrarian reform initiated a new period of hardship for rural populations (according to 2005 figures 64% of the population live in rural areas and the agricultural sector employs

¹⁰⁷ Several studies document the mechanisms new farmers use to achieve better terms for their leaseholds by negotiating more profitable crop mixes and avoiding the unprofitable cotton crop. See Trevisani (2007) Jozan et al. (2007).

¹⁰⁸ There are some indications that the pressures created by the diversion of land resources are being countered by administrative measures. The "grave shortcomings" leading to the sackings of the acting governor of the Tashkent Region, three district heads and one mayor include "the embezzlement and illegal appropriation of state agricultural lands for private use" Uzbekistan: A Purge is Underway, Posted December 17, 2008 © *Eurasianet* <http://www.eurasianet.org>.

about 32% of the workforce).¹⁰⁹ In the initial stages of de-collectivization, *shirkats* were chronically in arrears of wages. Rural households were only able to survive through a combination of livelihood activities in the informal sector and the second crop economy. As privatization proceeded and *shirkats* were dismantled rural households started to lose their toehold in the second crop economy and many joined the ranks of a casual labour force of male and female *mardikor* (daily workers). Without the direct and indirect benefits of membership in collective enterprises, the livelihoods of rural households became increasingly precarious.

The population responded to these hardships through seasonal migration to wealthier countries with a high demand for labour, primarily Kazakhstan and Russia. Experts estimate that the total number of labour migrants (legal and illegal) from Uzbekistan to varied destinations such as Russia, Kazakhstan, South Korea, Turkey, UEA and others reach 1–1.5 million and account for up to 8% of the GDP in remittances.¹¹⁰ The higher wages labourers are able to earn by becoming migrants (an approximate average monthly wage of US\$300–500 as compared to US\$200 per harvesting season in Uzbekistan) act as a magnet for able-bodied men and women who can no longer subsist in the agricultural sector of Uzbekistan.

This has increased the pressures on the operations of the cotton sector. The administration now has to combat two different types of centrifugal tendencies in order to keep up levels of production: **a)** the attempts of farmers to get out of cotton production in favour of more profitable crop mixes; and **b)** the attempts of labourers to exit Uzbek agricultural production altogether in favour of more lucrative jobs elsewhere.¹¹¹ This conjuncture has led to increasing levels of coercion and policing of both land use and of the agricultural labour force, pushing up demand for a cheap substitute labour force. The combination of factors detailed above points to a new set of constraints that condition the demand for child labour. If anything, the relative contribution of child and other forms of coerced labour to total output could increase unless the Government of Uzbekistan adopts a new mix of agricultural policies that

¹⁰⁹ Government of Uzbekistan, *Welfare Improvement Strategy Paper*, 2007, p. 21.

¹¹⁰ According to Russian Central Bank figures, migrants from Uzbekistan transferred US\$1 billion in 2006. However, it must be borne in mind that many also use informal channels for money transfers. <http://www.ferghana.ru/news>.

¹¹¹ According to some reports, although the current economic downturn is translating into a lower volume of remittances, there is no decline in the number of Kyrgyz, Uzbek and Tajik citizens seeking jobs abroad. See Erica Marat “Shrinking Remittances Increase Labour Migration from Central Asia” *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst* Vol.11, No. 3, 11 February 2009, pp.7-9.

can successfully break the vicious cycle of reliance on compulsion to keep up production levels. Likewise, diversification of the economy and decreasing reliance on cotton as a key export commodity could, in the longer term, assist in alternative job creation.

1.7. Forced Child Labour and Cotton Industry: In all regions of Uzbekistan, government officials mobilize children in an attempt to ensure that state cotton quotas are met. Schools are closed down, and children as young as seven are sent to the fields to pick cotton by hand. Headmasters are given quotas which dictate how much each student is to harvest. And those who fail to meet their targets, or who pick a low quality crop, are reportedly punished with detentions and told that their grades will suffer. Children who run away from the cotton fields, or who refuse to take part, can face expulsion.

Statistics on children employed in the cotton sector in Uzbekistan are difficult to obtain, but the London-based rights group Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF) says around 200,000 children work in the major cotton-producing region Ferghana. Ferghana is one of the fertile regions in Uzbekistan and is about 420 km east of capital Tashkent. It is impossible to estimate the exact number of children forced to pick cotton. But tens of thousands are involved each year. According to UNICEF in 2000, an estimated 22.6% of Uzbek children aged between 5 and 14 worked at least part-time, primarily in cotton harvesting.

In Soviet times up to two thirds of Uzbekistan's cotton was harvested by machine. Nowadays this figure has dropped to just 10%. Instead, the majority of Uzbek cotton is gathered by hand, often by children. According to reports from nine of Uzbekistan's twelve territorial units, (Jizzakh, Fergana, Namangan, Syr Daria, Surkhandaria, Bukhara, Khorezm, Tashkent and Samarkand provinces) by the third week of September local governments and school administrators sent children as young as the seventh grade (ages 13-14), and in some cases as young as fifth grade (11-12) out to the fields to pick cotton. By the end of September, pressure to bring in the harvest before rains led local officials to order the lower grade classes, from first grade on, to labour on the harvest. In Fergana, schools are closed and children are sent out from September, though a week earlier those same schools force children to sign statements that they would remain in school after the end of semester. Experts suggested that the statements are intended to give local government officials

plausible deniability if the children's presence in the fields was challenged.

In number of villages and towns in Namangan especially Village Giganth, we observed children from several schools, some as young as eleven, picking cotton. Every day local government officials and bureaucrats from the local education department visit the fields to check up on the number of pupils out picking, and to make sure that harvest targets are being met. Similarly the Samarkand provincial government also sent its school children out to pick cotton in September. Children as young as 13 are forced from their classrooms, though high school, junior college as well as university students (ages sixteen and above) are also sent out to the fields for several weeks (International Labour Rights Forum, Oct. 2008).

1.8. Magnitude of the Problem: Cotton vestiges a major agricultural crop in Uzbekistan and, most rural communities, have become pawns in government policies which stress high yields of cotton to constitute huge gains in the national budget. Forty-three percent of Uzbek cotton is exported to Asia and nineteen percent to Europe. All parts of cotton production, from planting to selling, are state controlled. Under this control, the government artificially forces prices to be as cheap as possible –employing approximately 450,000 children all over the country to keep costs down. Local governments and educational institutions help the central government push children at secondary schools, colleges, lyceums, institutes and universities to cotton picking.

Cotton production in Uzbekistan is based on exploitation of the population. Millions of poverty stricken rural residents work in cotton fields for scanty payment or even free of charge. Forced child labour and other types of abuses are commonplace. High profits then get divvied up between small groups of state elites with powerful political connections. Such an economic system is viable only under political repression, normally triggering the mobilization of mass labour working below market prices. The political regime in Uzbekistan is regarded as one of the most repressive in the world. Opposition activists and human rights defenders are persecuted. Lack of public mass media lets most abuses go unexposed. Cotton monoculture is more disastrous for the future of Uzbekistan than the tons of heroine which are regularly transported throughout the Central-Asian region.

1.9. Working Conditions: In cotton growing areas, school officials mainly send children to assist in preparing fields for, and tending to cotton plants. Work includes

gathering last year's cotton bushes, ploughing, planting, weeding, hoeing, and sometimes fertilizing and/or spreading pesticides. In addition, children are also sent to work on other major crops. The research delineates those children who are being made to gather mulberry leaves, used to feed silkworms, while others gathered the silk cocoons themselves. Some children are sent to harvest spring vegetable crops, such as potatoes and onions. But majority of Uzbek children are forced to work in the cotton cultivation.

As per the law, children should not work for longer hours. But in practice the law is not strictly followed anywhere in Uzbekistan. The number of hours of work in cotton sector depends upon a number of factors such as (1) Demand of cotton at a particular period of time (2) Availability of manpower including child labourers (3) The time schedule for delivery of cotton quotas. Since no study on child labour on the cotton industry in Uzbekistan has so far been undertaken in this part of the world, it is not possible to have a comparative study of the present data. However the studies so far undertaken in other parts of the world show that working hours of children are long, adequate rest intervals are missing and adequate holidays too are absent in this hectic work. While collecting data, it was observed that some child labourers reach their work place early in the morning. With a view to collect factual information on the daily hours of work, we interviewed all the sampled child labourers and the collected information reveals that the majority of child labourers 23 (57.5 percent) openly accepted that they were working ten to twelve hours every day. However the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child prescribed five and a half hours of work for the child labourers' everyday if only allowed to work in special sectors of the economy and not in contrast with the health and education of the children. Some of the child labourers informed us that their working hours were flexible whenever there is demand of quotas immediately we are put to work for longer time. On the other hand, those children who were put in the cotton cultivation with the supervisors who can sometimes be their teachers or some other officials were suffering sometimes in the sense that their working hours were neither fixed nor flexible. Even if they worked for longer hours, they were not paid extra for that inspite of meeting the requirements assigned to them for the day or for the given time. Despite all these factors around 4 (10.00 percent) of children picking cotton were having interest in the cotton cultivation for social and economic reasons. There were 34 (85.00 percent)

children who think otherwise because of their exploitation and future concern (Table 5.2).

Table 5.2
Duration of work and satisfaction with work

S.No.	Duration of Work	Number	Percentage	Satisfaction with Work	Number	Percentage
1	9-11 hours	16	40	Satisfactory	4	10.00
2	11-14 hours	23	57.5	Unsatisfactory	34	85.00
Total		39	97.5		38	95.00

Source: Field Study 2010

Children are working for long hours in the fields during the spring season. Schools are closed for a full month before the official end of the school year in order to force the children out to work. Since the sun comes up early and it gets hot, the children come out to the fields at 6:30 or 7 am. They have an hour or two for lunch, and then they come out again for work until 7 or 7:30 pm. Their working day lasts nine to eleven hours. Naturally in the days when the school is closed down and lessons are cancelled, the children together with their teachers come out for the mass *khashar*. At other times during the spring season, children are sent out to the fields once the school day is complete or after a shortened school day. School children are subject to mobilization even on the weekends, and work 11-12 hours per day or more. Children aren't supposed to have any days off. Farmers' reluctance to spend funds on gasoline requires that children must often make their way home on foot which lengthens their work day even more. Most of the school children working in the cotton fields rarely return home before 9 or 10 pm during the spring season.

Uzbekistan's climate makes spring fieldwork particularly onerous. Cotton is grown in the irrigated steppe, or semi-desert areas, where summer temperatures can reach 45 degrees Celsius (113 Fahrenheit). By late April and early May, average daytime temperatures hover around 30 degrees Celsius (86 Fahrenheit) but can reach 35 (96 Fahrenheit). Without shade, protective gear, adequate rest periods or water, heat stroke is common. While in Soviet times it was common for farmers to provide nutritious lunches for children in the fields, it is increasingly rare now for farm administrators to arrange any meals for the children who work for them. If they do,

most often children are being fed plain macaroni, or bread and tea. Usually children must bring their own food from home, which, given the low level of remuneration for this highly physically taxing work, and overwhelming rural poverty, is often a burden on families. The research divulges that eyes get full of tears when seeing malnourished children faint away in the fields, and how all the year they look so sickly and then they collapse. The stark economics of hunger of more than inadequate food, the lack of clean water and sanitation pose a huge problem during the extreme spring temperatures. In principle local governments instruct farmers to provide potable water for their workers every two hours. In practice, however, child-workers often resort to drinking water from irrigation or drainage canals. Even when farmers transport water directly to the fields, rather than drawing it from piped sources they simply truck in irrigation canal water instead. These are usually open canals that become vehicles for the distribution of human and animal solid waste and waste-borne pathogens. Children recruited to pick cotton near where they live are able to return home to their families in the evenings. But older children and those conscripted to work in the more remote cotton farms are forced to sleep in makeshift dormitories on farms, or ironically, in classrooms, often with poor living conditions, at times drinking irrigation water and with insufficient or poor quality food. Some children live in barracks with no electricity, windows or doors. After weeks of arduous work and poor accommodation children are left exhausted and in poor health.

1.10. Wages: The monthly earning of child labourers is dependent upon various factors like nature of job (skilled, unskilled or semi-skilled work), duration of working hours, nature of employment (daily wage, contract or regular), etc. The following table (5.3) indicates the income of child labourers in the cotton cultivation of Uzbekistan.

Table 5.3
Daily earnings of the child labourers

S. No.	Daily Earning	Number	Percentage
1.	1200 CYM to Rs 1600 CYM	23	57.5
2.	600 CYM to 1000 CYM	10	25.00
3.	1700 CYM and above	4	10.00

Source: Field Study 2010

The distribution of the monthly income of the child labourers brings out the fact that a large proportion of them 23 (57.5 percent) earn between twelve hundred Uzbek som¹¹² (cym) to sixteen hundred Uzbek som per day and 10 (25.00 percent) earn between six hundred Uzbek som to one thousand per day on a given quota of cotton picking.¹¹³ There were only 4 (10.00 percent) children who earn more than 1700 som per day. All the children were receiving their income in cash, some on daily basis, some weekly depending upon the type of work they were doing. Quality and quantity of work were the criteria which determine the wages, responded majority of the child labourers, their parents as well as the employers interviewed.

While it is certain that the Uzbek regime exploits children in forcing them to take part in the annual cotton harvest, it is less clear how much the children are paid. Some claim to receive US \$5 for five days' work. Others report receiving just 15 US cents for the same period of labour. In 2001, the Uzbek NGO, *Tahlil*, estimated that payment for 1 kg of cotton ranged from 1.5 US cents at the beginning of the season to 1.0 US cent at the end. In 2004, children in the Fergana region reported that an average day's harvest of 10 kg of cotton would earn them 38 US cents. For the Uzbek regime, forced child labour is undeniably cheap and immensely profitable. A child may be paid, at best, 3-4 US cents per kilogram for a commodity that is valued at US \$1.15 on the global marketplace. Each September the cotton harvest begins. Many schools are closed down as children, some as young as ten, are sent to the fields to pick cotton by hand for up to three months. They receive little, if any, pay. Payment to the children is negligible. There are tens of thousands of children forced to work in the fields each year. Children are being used as cheap labour force by a government which imposes Soviet-style cotton quotas, and which is unwilling to pay a decent living wage to cotton farmers and labourers, thereby ensuring that children are used instead of adults. The practice violates the UN convention on the rights of a child.

Children usually receive some payment for their labour in the fields, although there are no standard rates that employers or state officials are required to meet. However, it is clear that farm administrators sometimes invent reasons to dock or to refuse to pay out promised funds, in full or in part. Sometimes farmers on the brink of

¹¹² One dollar is equivalent to 1665 Uzbek currency of som (cym) officially but the exchange rate of dollar and som in the market is higher which is around 2260-2460 som per dollar (Oct.-Dec. 2010, when I was doing field study in Uzbekistan).

¹¹³ Child workers in cotton cultivation are required to pick between 100 to 176 pounds (80 kgs) a day. For each kilogram of cotton the workers pick they are paid 15 to 20 Uzbek som, or 1 to 2 cents.

bankruptcy pay the children in part, and the kids have no chance of seeing the rest of the money. School administrators often arrange for farmers to make payments directly to schools in cash with further payments to students in the future. However, sometimes the farmer pay the children directly in cash so that they may be assured their due payment in complete. At times arrangements specifically exclude payment, when the children are brought out for a *khashar* for one day, or a few days, and are not paid anything by having a deal with the teacher or administrator.

Whatever little the child labourers earn they have to manage out of that for their food and lodging in run-down barracks. The response of the child labourers also reveal that they were spending their earnings on items of personal requirements and also on items of domestic needs if at all could save some money from food and lodging for themselves in the cotton cultivation. No need is fulfilled, responded a good percentage of sampled child workers through this little earning. Even in the preceding situation there was significant number of children whose contribution has improved overall economic conditions to some extent of their area and at the larger extent of the country as they treat it their duty towards country for picking cotton. But there were also a considerable number of children who were not in a position to improve the family life by their contribution as they were earning little. According to them they hardly meet their personal requirements by their earnings.

1.11. Health Conditions: Children begin work in family undertaking from an early age alongside their parents/relatives and sometimes with master craftsmen. They learn the skill by observing and participating in such activities. It was only after the industrial revolution in the early 19th century that children started being employed both on farms and factories as wage labourer because they provided a cheap and uncomplaining labour force as against adults who could be more demanding and hence difficult to handle. Most of the work, the children do is monotonous, repetitive and dull and is often not suited to their physical and mental capabilities. Some children are ill-treated, humiliated and even beaten, while others are looked after with parental care, which acts as an incentive and motivates these young children to undertake arduous and hard work beyond their capacity for a long duration. This adversely affects their health and well being. It is against this backdrop that children in the cotton industry of Uzbekistan were asked about the working conditions in the handicraft centres.

The nature and the quantum of work have their effects on physical as well as mental growth of the workers, especially the young ones. Cotton picking particularly requires using of fingers intensively for picking the cotton from the plants continuously by standing up for hours together. In such situation aching and irritation of eyes, fingers and joints pain, back pain, stomach and chest pains caused by inhaling of cotton and dust can be said to be natural. So far as protection against work hazards is concerned the child labourers responded otherwise. Table 5.4 and chart 5.5 shows the working conditions and health problems of working children.

Table 5.4
Response to health issues

S. No.	Health problems	Number	Percentage
1.	Back pain	21	52.5
2.	Joint pain	28	70.00
3.	Respiratory problem	19	47.5
4.	Leg pain	9	22.5
5.	Stress/strain	16	40.00

Source: Field Study 2010.

Chart 5.1: Response to working conditions



Source: Field Study 2010

Graph 5.1: Relationship of the variables in the graphic form

Problems due to long working hours, hard and hazardous jobs, poor diet, etc. puts stress due to which the children complained of backache, headache, eye irritation and pain in joints, although space for work is open but is too hot to be out in the open sun and that for such a heavy work. The chronic and lifelong diseases emerge in a situation in which government officials as well as the parents do not take it seriously. So, without taking serious note of the diseases child labourers cannot be saved from its disastrous implications. Our observation also reveals that the employer is not concerned about the health problems and safety measures.

Under the Soviet Union, forced labour was accompanied by some care for the health of children, the quality of their nutrition, and development of the rural social infrastructure, the Paris-based group Human Rights in Central Asia reported. Children work at least eight hours daily on the cotton fields, sometimes without rest for days. They inhale dust, laden with residues of chemicals, pesticides and defoliants used in the fields before the cotton harvest. Work on the harvest and exposure to pesticides and defoliants is also demonstrably detrimental to children's health, (Human Rights Watch in Central Asia 2001). The students are beaten up by school staff for refusing to work for the cotton harvest. Child labour provides more than half of the cotton

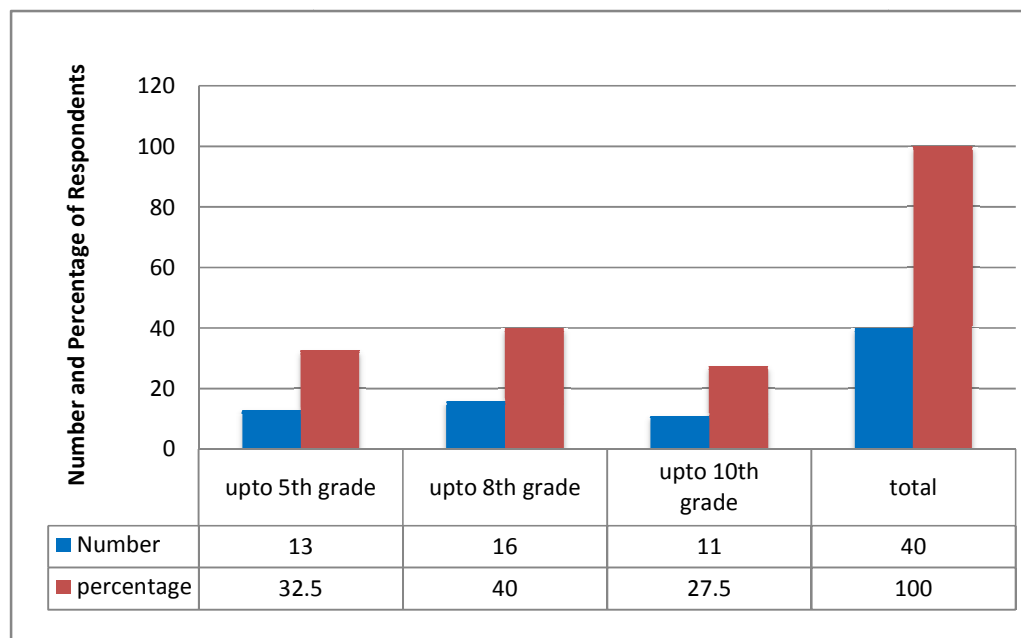
produced in Uzbekistan. The Convention on the Rights of the Child provides that children have a right “to be protected from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous, or to interfere with the child’s education, or to be harmful to the child’s health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.” Human Rights Organisations confirmed eight deaths of children working in the Samarkand region over a two year period. Many more suffer with chronic diseases including intestinal infections, respiratory infections, meningitis and hepatitis. Heatstroke is also common.

In the opinion of local doctors, independently dangerous conditions collectively contribute to the children’s weaker immunities and leave them more vulnerable to infectious diseases to which they are exposed to due to lack of elementary sanitation. Research divulges that frequent cases of viral hepatitis contracted during spring fieldwork. Fatal outcomes are not uncommon. Amoebic dysentery and gastroenteritis are also prevalent. The cost of medical treatment is almost prohibitive, or force families into debt. Farmers are not obligated to provide such treatment for those injured or sickened while working in their fields, nor are they required to provide any compensation to families for injuries or fatalities. Children are sickened by fertilizer or pesticide residues spread through direct contact with plants, or via dust or water. Local medical opinion ties rates of viral hepatitis infections to pesticide and nitrogen fertilizer use.

1.12. Causes for Employing Children: The compulsory mobilization of school children for the cotton harvest represents a distinctive pattern which breaks with worldwide trends. Whereas families and employers tend to be both the major initiators and beneficiaries of children’s work elsewhere, Uzbekistan represents a rare instance of state-sanctioned mass recruitment of child labourers. The various studies conducted by different agencies and organizations in Uzbekistan shows that the recruitment of child labourers relies on a well orchestrated nation-wide campaign that involves foresight, planning and co-ordination among public agencies on many different levels. Instructions are transmitted from local administrations, oblast and district *hokimiyats*, to local schools and farmers who are allocated a certain contingent of children. The latter have to accept the stated numbers of school children, to provide transportation, to create adequate conditions for work and to make timely payments. Local *hokimiyats* call daily meetings (the so-called *shtab*) where all administrators

and farmers concerned report on the progress of the harvest. Central and local administrations engage in forward planning and take necessary measures for the allocation of resources; transport, fuel, medical assistance and cash, to ensure the efficient employment of labour during the harvest period. Clearly, these preparations involve the allocation of scarce resources and the license to suspend schooling for a lengthy period of time. Given the extensive presidential powers over the appointment and vetting of local administrators (spelt out fully in Article 93 of the Constitution) it is not conceivable that local *hokims* could take such initiatives without the tacit support or endorsement of the central government. Nor is there any evidence that the central government is using its extensive powers to take local administrations to task over their use of child labour. This suggests that the practice of compulsory child labour in the cotton sector of Uzbekistan is the result of public policy despite the fact that the government is a signatory to ILO Conventions that prohibit this practice.

1.13. Educational Losses: Education is of paramount importance for the proper growth and development of the individual. It plays an important role in one's life in the sense that it helps in shaping the right kind of life style in the human beings. Education, formal or informal aims at developing the positive quality of the child and helps the individual realize his potentialities. All the children working in the cotton sector interviewed are studying in the schools and Lyceums (colleges) in different grades. Accordingly, the child workers were asked to state their educational qualification/background.

Chart 5.2: Educational qualification of the working children

Source: Field Study 2010

Almost one third of the interviewed children 13 (32.5 percent) were having educational qualification of 5th standard only, 16 (40.00 percent) were having their educational qualification of 8th grade only and the remaining interviewed children 11 (27.5 percent) working in the cotton cultivation of Uzbekistan were the students of 10th grade. The primary reasons being school directors and heads at the orders of State administration are sending their students into the fields for picking cotton with predetermined quotas to each student who are accompanied by their class teachers for supervision and monitoring and at times have to pick cotton also. Children are also forced into cotton picking by their parents who are infact pressurised by the authorities to meet their assigned quotas of cotton with given time. Parents have also limited options when it comes to the enforcement of state orders for cotton season and children are available option for them for reasons of additional manpower and right over them as their own children. But in both ways whether, putting children into cotton picking from schools and lyceums with teachers or through their parents; they are at the most disadvantageous and loosing side of it.

Children mobilized for the cotton harvest experience significant educational losses. Two months of school closure during the harvest period are *de facto* deducted from their schooling. This represents a net loss of about 25% of their exposure to education. The cumulative effects of these losses over the years, between grades 5 to grade 9, amount to one entire year of net school time. Other field reports suggest that schoolchildren in rural areas may also be subject to recruitment for spring farm labour (hoeing, weeding and transplanting) occasioning further suspension of classes for weeks at a time. Thus, the total educational losses of rural school children are even higher than those identified by various studies. Many school children are acutely aware of the significance of this loss for their future prospects. They are at a clear disadvantage in comparison to their urban counterparts and are resentful of these obstacles to their educational and social mobility. Some extracts from interviews with children, their parents and teachers express concern and discontent with the current state of affairs.

1.14. Legal Aspect: Child agricultural labour violates local and international laws and norms. The Government of Uzbekistan is a signatory of numerous international human rights and labour treaties. It has the necessary legal framework to eradicate child labour. Nonetheless, in terms of international law, child labour in the cotton sector of Uzbekistan contravenes several articles of the 1989 *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Article 28, paragraph (e) affirms that State Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and shall, in particular ‘take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates’. It is evident that schooling is being disrupted for two months a year for the cotton harvest and that additional disruption sometimes occur for spring farm work (such as hoeing, weeding and transplanting). Article 31 declares ‘the right of the child to rest and leisure’. Working children in Uzbekistan are deprived of this right during the harvest period. They have a full working day without weekend breaks. Transportation to and from the cotton fields adds to the length of the working day and some children may not return home until late in the evening without the benefit of rest and recreation. Finally, Article 32 of the Convention affirms the ‘right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child’s education’. The realities of child labour in the cotton sector of Uzbekistan, suggest that this norm of international law is also being

contravened. The use of child labour to harvest cotton also violates the ILO conventions to which the government is a signatory.

Uzbekistan has signed and ratified ILO conventions: No 29, (the 1930 Forced Labour Convention) and No. 105 (The 1957 Abolition of Forced Labour Convention). These documents were ratified in 1992 and 1997 respectively. However, neither aforementioned national laws, nor Uzbekistan's ILO commitments, have curbed widespread use of forced child labour. Until 2008, two other important ILO conventions, No. 138 (Minimum Age Convention, 1973), and No.182 (Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999) were unrecognized by the Uzbek government. Finally, in March 2008, the Parliament (Oliy Majlis) ratified these two conventions. In September 2008 the Cabinet of Ministers adopted a resolution and the National Action Plan aimed for the implementation of C182 and C138. But these documents didn't stipulate cooperation with ILO and any mechanism of independent monitoring of how the conventions are being implemented. A few weeks after the resolution schoolchildren were, as usually, taken for cotton harvest. That fact demonstrated that the rule of law is nonexistent in Uzbekistan, and none of ILO conventions ratified by Uzbekistan are considered seriously by its government. None of them have affected the real situation. Nor the ratification obviated the need for further pressure on the Uzbek government to end the use of forced child labour.

1.14.1. National Legislation: In terms of domestic law, child labour in Uzbekistan contravenes several items of national legislation. Article 37 of the Constitution prohibits the use of any form of forced labour. The 1991 *Law on the Foundations of State Youth Policy* stipulates that 'it is not permitted to attract school and university students to work during the learning process, except in cases when such work corresponds to their chosen specialty and is a form of apprenticeship, or cases of voluntary collective or individual work in time free from schooling. Such labour is accepted on the condition of properly concluded contracts in accordance to labour and civic laws'. The Law on *Guarantees of the Right of Child to Labour* adopted in 2007 states that a person younger than 18 years of age is considered to be a child. The right to employment may be exercised from 16 years onwards, and in some cases (with the consent of parents and during periods free from study) from 14 years on. At the same time the state guarantees the labour rights for persons younger than 18 years by providing the necessary conditions for combining work with compulsory education

(Article 20). Article 20 makes clear stipulations concerning the conditions under which children may be permitted to work including (!) Every child has the right to work, free choice of the type of activity and profession, fair labour conditions in accordance to his age, state of health and professional training in accordance with the procedure prescribed by the law. (2) Application for a job is permitted from the age of 16. (3) Persons who reach the age of 15 can be accepted for a job by written consent of either parents or guardians. (4) To prepare the children for work it is permitted to recruit the pupils of secondary schools, academic lyceums, and professional colleges to carry out an easy job, that does not harm their health and growth, does not infringe upon the educational process, free from school hours – upon reaching the age of 14 by written consent of either of parents or guardians. Article 7 of the Labour Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan on ‘Prohibition of forced labour’ clearly states that forced labour, namely a compulsion to work under the threat of any punishment (including as a means to ensure labour discipline) is prohibited except when it is executed on the basis of legal acts on military or alternative services, in a state of emergency, as a result of a court verdict coming into force or other cases envisaged by the legislation. Article 241 of the Labour Code, also prohibits the use of children for any work that may damage their health, security and morality. The Government of Uzbekistan points out that these provisions are in full compliance with the international legal acts on protection of children’s rights and, in particular, the 1989 *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. However, there is widespread international concern in relation to the actual implementation of these laws.

The research delineates that the application part of Uzbek legislations and provisions related to the safeguard and rights of children from forced labour and other forms of exploitation are unimplemented as state is the major agency breaking the laws they formed otherwise for their children. These children aged between six to eighteen years are put to arduous labour for narrow and short gains of the known autocratic state of the newly independent region and that way the state is putting its own future in stake as the children are the future of any state. Far from implementing the legislations and legal provisions related to the forced labour; the state of Uzbekistan is in itself its violator. Islam Karimov’s government is also not allowing the human rights and other non-governmental organizations to work in Uzbekistan for the welfare of the children under conditions damaging to their health and education

although they are not allowed to highlight the pathetic condition of children in different sectors of the economy especially the cotton industry as state is having the major role in it.

The national as well as International provisions, legislations, conventions, articles, constitutional safeguards, etc. are hardly visible in the field of working children. The poor implementation of the constitutional measures for the safeguarding of the children's rights including education and health rights specially is an outcome of the State's dependence on the monoculture of cotton. Because the demand of the local as well as global market pushed the political structure running the state to utilize all available resources including women and children for cotton cultivation.

1.15. Societal Attitude towards Child Labour: A less tangible but no less corrosive effect of existing labour practices in the cotton sector of Uzbekistan is the erosion of trust in the government's ability to deliver equitable development. There is, undoubtedly, a Soviet legacy of mobilization for cotton harvests which used to be accompanied with propaganda and 'socialist competition' among harvest brigades in order to push up production norms. However, cotton cultivators were also the beneficiaries of health, education and welfare entitlements that increased their social wage. The currently low levels of 'trickle down' of cotton revenues to direct producers is not lost on the population. Xenophobic exhortations to participate in the production of national wealth under current conditions breed cynicism and discontent which is further exacerbated by the exploitation of children.

The societal attitude towards children put to work in cotton fields is not one of positive and is treated by everyone as very inhuman and unjustified on the part of the state and administration. The modern civilized world has developed many tools and social indicators for measuring the civilizations as developed, under developed and developing in socio-economic terms. Perhaps, there cannot be a social indicator of civilization, that can measure the insensibility of its people, when the civilization becomes insensible than animals, by treating their children as commodities. The political structure of the country which is having its roots of Soviet Russian style is being considered the most uncivilized to exploit their children for satisfying their greed.

Majority of the children, social workers, human rights activists, parents and teachers interviewed were fully aware about the violation of local and international

laws by the participation of children in the cotton cultivation in Uzbekistan. Though we could have interaction with limited number of local low level officials but only few who were interviewed denied that children were forced to pick cotton in the fields and said that ‘if there is any child in the field, you must understand that they are there voluntarily’. However he also conveyed they have set up special agricultural offices within the prosecutor’s office to pursue cases against those who will not fulfilling quotas or other obligations, including school children.

Inspite of the awareness, some of those interviewed put number of causes for necessity of children’s participation, the important being farmer’s lack of means to engage farm machinery or pay adult labourers. It is always too expensive to pay adults. They demand defined working hours, respect for their rights. If you don’t satisfy their demands, they won’t work. Therefore local governments and farmers find it convenient to send children out to the fields. They are easy to handle and more working hours and low wages comparatively than adults. Absurdly low purchase prices for cotton and wheat often have farmers unable to cover basic costs.

One of the farm directors in Samarkand delineated that beyond the insurmountable financial cost, the sheer lack of able bodied adults in the villages is often put as a reason for the forcible recruitment of children (though if prevailing wages on Uzbek farms were higher, as they are in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan to which increasing number of rural Uzbeks go to work, migration from the countryside could decline or reverse itself).

1.16. Role of Non-Governmental Organizations: The role of NGOs in the contemporary times in different sectors of the social and economic structure of the society is critical and noteworthy. The organizations especially working in the field of human rights in many developing countries are having a very hard task in their hands as these countries are under the very unstable political and economic structure. Uzbekistan with its autocratic political structure is giving stiff challenge to the non-governmental organizations to perform their functions smoothly in various sectors including the civil and human rights. The working of young children in the cotton fields has been a practice in place though from Soviet times but its intensity and magnitude in the Post-Soviet period intensified to the extent that all schools in all oblasts are closed down for three months from September to put the school children into cotton picking. The forced violation of children’s rights has advocated many

national and international organizations to raise hue and cry against the state of Uzbekistan.

The systematic and institutionalized forms of forced child labour in Uzbekistan persist without any doubt. The practice is difficult to eradicate because the reforms intended to transition Uzbekistan to private agriculture have largely been superficial, as the government still maintains a monopoly on export licenses and sets cotton quotas and prices, and farmers become dependent on local administrators for supplies. With adults migrating outside of Uzbekistan for better-paid labour, the incentive for cash-strapped farmers is to use child labour, and local administrators tasked with meeting government quotas exploit children in the harvest.

UNICEF, the largest world organization dealing with the rights of the child world over delineated through its officials that there is very limited success of curbing child labour in Uzbekistan. It was recently that a panel discussion at the Open Society Institute highlighted the ongoing problem of forced child labour in Uzbekistan and the efforts of non-governmental groups to enlist governments and international institutions in the cause of persuading Uzbekistan to end the practice.¹¹⁴

Umida Niyazova, an Uzbek emigrant and leader of the Uzbek-German Forum for Human Rights, described worrisome new trends this year involving increased police presence and harassment of human rights monitors who tried to track child labour. Niyazova's group verified that despite the Uzbek leadership's claims to the contrary, the practice of sending children into the fields continued. At first mainly older children were dispatched early in September, but then the recruitment of children as young as 10 increased over the period of the harvest due to a shorter season with impending cold weather, and the high price of cotton on the world market this year after floods in Pakistan and China. Children earn only 3 cents a kilo and at most \$2-3 a day, and have to pay for food and work clothes out of their wages.

The Europe and Central Asia Division of Human Rights Watch have been generating and raising awareness about human rights concerns in Uzbekistan related with the use of young children in forced cotton picking and also about the restriction on the human rights activists and media with the European Union.¹¹⁵ UNICEF has been under fire from NGOs due to its failure to take up explicitly the issue of forced

¹¹⁴ EurasiaNet is funded by the Open Society Foundations under the auspices of its Central Eurasia Project.

¹¹⁵ Chohona/EurasiaNet/2/07/11

child labour in Uzbekistan and its use of an outdated survey that minimized the extent of the problem. The premiere of "Not My Life," a movie on child trafficking sponsored by UNICEF depicting that there was no aspect of childhood that wasn't damaged in some way in every country in the world and requires a global approach for improving children's rights.

Focused Cases

Apart from serving the written schedules, we also followed the method of observation and maintained a field diary during the field work. During the course of field work, we observed some striking facts about child labour in the cotton industry of Uzbekistan. Our empirical findings brought out some revealing facts about the institution of child labour in Uzbekistan. We witnessed some special cases of child labourers which highlighted the nature, causes and consequences of the problem. The study of these cases will certainly lead to a deeper and wider sociological understanding of the phenomenon of child labour.

Case-1

Uzbekistan's largest economic sector is agriculture, and cotton is its main crop.¹¹⁶ Around 75% of the cotton is exported, making Uzbekistan the second largest exporter of cotton in the world. The cotton is grown on government owned plantations where workers are urged by government news papers to 'Reap Prosperity'. Farmers are allowed to lease parts of the government plantations, but they can only plant cotton, and they are told how much they are expected to produce. Failure to meet their goals can cost them their farms.

As an export crop, cotton generates most of Uzbekistan's income from outside the country and, thus also makes up most of its annual revenues. Since independence, Uzbekistan's Government has raised the quotas for cotton production each year, though they are not often met. The quotas have resulted in systematic corruption. Farmers seeking to avoid penalties for not yielding a prescribed amount of cotton, pay huge bribes to local officials who falsify the production numbers. As a cash crop, cotton has also become less profitable each year. The world price for cotton and the demand for the fibre have both dropped, as has Uzbekistan's ability to meet its production goals.

Since their days as Soviet citizens, most Uzbeks have been obliged to devote the autumn months to picking cotton. September is harvest time during which thousands of workers head to the fields. Schools close until December and other industries shut down as well. The Prof. recited that children; as young as 7 work in the fields, supervised by teachers who are held accountable for their students production. For upto three months each year, the children are housed in shabby barracks, farm

¹¹⁶ Interview with a Professor from Tashkent.

sheds or school rooms. They live in diets of macaroni, bread and sweat tea made with untreated water. The amount of food they receive depends on how much cotton they pick. Medical treatment is either unavailable or denied, children return to school sick or malnourished, unable to make up the work they have missed.

Uzbekistan refuses to sign the international convention agreements that prohibit child labour, saying the country does not force anyone to pick cotton. Leaders claim that everyone volunteers out of love for their homeland, which is absolutely wrong. Still, wealthy families will sometimes bribe harvest officials to obtain a certificate of poor health for their children, thus exempting them from the harvest. But it is an option that is open to few. The cotton crop has exacted a toll on Uzbekistan's older students as well university students in Bukhara who spend two months in the cotton fields at harvest time, where they are required to pick 176 pounds (80 kg) a day and reimburse the government for their food and lodging. Officially, the 4,000 students are volunteers so they are not paid. In the Kashkadarya province, near Kashka River, hundreds of thousands of workers are forced to harvest cotton under a system that dates back to Soviet days. In Kashkadarya, the heart of the nation's cotton industry, the harvest is sometimes as large as 420,000 tons (380, 940 metric tons). Workers are paid 15 to 20 Uzbek som, or 1 to 2 cents, for each kilogram of cotton they pick. From this they pay for their food and lodging in run-down barracks. The government does not reveal its selling price for the cotton because economic figures are often classified as state secrets.

Future plans for the cotton industry include improvements in the textile manufacturing sector, where machinery is seriously outdated, badly damaged, or simply worn out. The government hopes, by improving the textile industry, to employ more workers and to use more of the cotton within the country.

Case-2

Since independence, Uzbekistan's children have been less likely to go to school than they had been under Soviet rule, when education was a priority.¹¹⁷ Today budgets and political priority have left the schools with outdated and irrelevant textbooks, untrained teachers, and crumbling school buildings. The government's policy of requiring students to pick cotton for three months a year has contributed to a lack of respect for education. Since independence, the literacy rate (the percentage of

¹¹⁷ Interview with a School Teacher from Tashkent.

people older than 15 who can read and write) has declined from more than 99 percent to less than 97 percent. As schools continue to close, especially in the rural areas, the literacy rate is expected to fall even lower.

Schools often close for the months of September, October and November so that children can pick cotton and educational facilities can be used to house cotton pickers brought in from other areas. Even the youngest children, 7 or 8 years old, go to the fields. Those who do not meet their quotas or who pick poor quality cotton must serve detention and receive reduced grades, which lower their prospects for employment or further education. Other punishments include scrubbing floors or fetching drinking water from great distances. Those who meet their quotas receive 2 to 3 cents for each kilogram of cotton they pick.

Case-3

Dilnora, around 50 years old in presence of her teenage daughter talked to us about the cotton cultivation in Uzbekistan.¹¹⁸ She narrated her experience and observation very nicely that Economic and Agriculture University students are sent to fields to pick cotton in order to meet state cotton quotas. She also said that this time only boys were sent to pick cotton and it looked a bit justified to her only that her daughter and other girls don't go to pick cotton. Lessons were closed from September onwards, so that cotton will be picked from the field. Each student was having a quota of 30 kg to be picked in one day and receive 20 soms for picking one kg of cotton and in this way they earn 600 soms for picking 30 kgs in a day. If any students don't want to pick cotton, he has to pay very huge amount for not picking (\$1020) narrated the lady with a desperate voice that the amount is unbearable, so it is better for them to be in the field than to be in class. They are sent to fields with the justification that it is the practical part of their study to be in the cotton field as they are students of agricultural and economic university which is from the scientific research point of view very unjustified.

Case-4

Bekmuratov¹¹⁹, a farmer from Bukhara, says that Uzbek farmers would not benefit from the rise in costs of cotton price in the world market, because in Uzbekistan the government buys the cotton from farmers for a price they like. In

¹¹⁸ Interview with a Housewife from Tashkent.

¹¹⁹ Interview with a Farmer in Bukhara.

Uzbekistan, the difference between the cotton production expenses and the price which government buys is very little, in other words, a farmer benefits only about 10 to 15 percent from the entire crop, he says. If the harvest is good and if we meet our contracted target, the profit will be 10 per cent. If let's say we spent 100 million som on our expenses, then our profit will be 10 million. Expenditure is up to 85-90 per cent, says Bekmourtov.

Karimov, another farmer, says that the main profit from cotton goes to the account of the government. Government buys the 1st sort cotton for 640 thousand soms from us and the 2nd sort for 600 thousand soms. The farmers get only 50 per cent of the real price of cotton. The rest goes to the authorities, says Karimov. In these days farmers do not benefit from growing cotton, when they harvest the crop in autumn, selling price and expenditure incurred is almost equal. The price of mineral fertilizers is in average 300 thousand soms per ton. 1 liter of diesel is 1200 som. A tractor costs 27 million soms. You can calculate the cost of amortization. The state taxes are so heavy. Farmers pay 16 different taxes. We pay 450 per 1000 som that we take for wages. According to Bekmurtov from Bukhara, as long as the Uzbek farmer is not independent from the state, no matter how much the cotton price rise in the world market, the farmer can never gain. Every farmer is controlled; internal affairs, prosecutor and all other structures of the state control the farmers. As if there is no other problem in the society except farmers. There is only one thing- live or die but you have to meet the planned target, says Bekmurtov.

Case-5

The Human Rights Activist¹²⁰ claimed that Uzbekistan has a cartel above cotton production and export. Uzbekistan pledges more or less 60% of the state's hard exchange export earnings. On the other hand, the farmers remunerated very shoddily for their work; they are mostly dependent on quotas and are forced to grow a certain amount of cotton and to sell it for unrealistic, low prices to the government. 90% of the Uzbek cotton is still handpicked. To guarantee the export incomes through low investment, the Uzbek government organizes a cotton campaign mobilizing school children, students and people working in the public sector to work on the fields every year. All profits from the cotton sector are concentrated in the hands of the president,

¹²⁰ Interview with a Local Human Rights Activist from Tashkent.

his family, and those few close to him. The Activist divulged that the mobilization for the cotton harvest is state sanctioned and is implemented through a strict hierarchic system of pressure and intimidation on all levels. Depending on the quotas imposed on the region, the local authorities (hokimiyat) decide how much cotton the schools and the farmers of the region should pick. The farmers and school administration agree on the scope of the work, passing the information onto to teachers and school children.

Soon after the beginning of the academic year in September, schools are closed and children are mobilized to the fields by school administration and teachers. Farmers in most cases are in charge of the transportation of the pupils to the fields as well as their meals. School children who reject to participate in the cotton harvest will be enforced to do so by the school administration and teachers. The mechanisms applied to ensure work on the fields are usually threat of bad marks, as well as direct humiliation through publicly insulting and rebuking. Sometimes when the parents do not allow their kids to work on the fields, the local authorities threaten them with dismissal or even a criminal charge narrated the Human Rights Defender.

The Human Rights Activist also disclosed that the school children have to work on the fields for about eight hours a day, every day for two months (from midst of September to midst of November). Children scarcely receive food from the farmers and thus bring their food themselves. The cotton fields are often sprayed with defoliants, which additionally affects the health of children and young people working there. The daily quota, which school children are obliged to fulfill, lies between 30 and 50 kg which is paid by 100 UZ Som (0.07 USD) per kilo. In addition, the school children are supposed to spend a part of this small remuneration for transportation, food and sometimes even a contribution to the school.

Case-6

Since the cotton yielding find a hold well under means in mid-September; the establishment are pressurizing mounting numbers of school broods as well as students and community division employees to labour in the cotton ground, through numerous strategies in an endeavor to maintain up the pretence that the superfluous labour is utterly charitable.¹²¹ Yet, in the facade of worldwide boycott of its fiber, the Uzbek

¹²¹ Interview with a Social Worker in Samarkand.

regime shatter proofed legal proscriptions on the exercise of child labour, the practice prolongs. According to the social notable Shaharзад all the schools and colleges are closed and year-one children stay at home while teachers and other school children work in the fields”. He also mentioned that the security presence in the fields increased.

Shaharзад also narrated that owing to good weather conditions, this year’s harvest was a good one and the authorities have set a target of over 3.5 million tons of raw cotton. To achieve this they will need to recruit more “volunteers” more than ever. The social activist also delineated that in the central region of Jizak, markets in number of districts remained closed for the peak season of cotton cultivation. “Everyone is picking cotton,” he explained. Coercion is overlaid with propaganda, as the government appeals to the nation’s sense of patriotism. On September 15, *Khorezmskaya Pravda*, a state newspaper in northern Uzbekistan, published an appeal headlined “Cotton is Our Pride, Our National Wealth”. “Every one of us should be working in the fields today,” the statement said. It is believed that these advertized programmes in newspapers and local television channels of motivating and sensitizing people towards cotton picking are completely state backed and planned with the intentions of meeting the set quotas of cotton well in time. Muslim clerics in the eastern Andijan region have been drafted into support the campaign. An article in a local newspaper said “picking every gram of cotton is a sacred duty for every Muslim”.

The social activist observed that in various regions the authorities are using rhetoric’s of various kinds to obscure their interest in contemptible labour from forced workforce. Several people are consequently worn to the yearly cotton operation that they see nonentity erroneous with it. Some education division employees in various parts of the country including Tashkent reveal that there was no issue of compulsion said Shaharзад. They are justifying it with the argument that we have been picking cotton for 20 years and our children will gather it also.

Case-7

Cotton is the most important crop cultivated in Uzbekistan.¹²² Around 50 percent of population in Uzbekistan is directly and indirectly dependent on cotton as

¹²² Interview with a Professor in Tashkent.

farmers, labourers, middlemen etc. It was during the Soviet period that the monoculture of cotton was started in Uzbekistan by Russians especially to have their interests at home and in the colony fulfilled. Historically cotton has played a very important role in the development of Uzbekistan but it has also affected many other areas including environment and water especially. Cotton in Uzbekistan is mostly grown in provinces of Fergana with the mother of cotton as Kashkadarya, Andijan, Namangan, Bokhara, Samarkand etc.

The socio-economic dimensions of cotton mostly include its social implications on the common man growing and cultivating cotton at family and local level, on the economic aspect of life; be it putting labour into the cultivation process or getting the money in return to cultivation. But on the economic front it has resulted into greatest disadvantage to the farmer who cultivates the crop as he has no control over the production which is totally state owned. So far as the cultivable land is concerned it doesn't belong to the farmer as it is a state or public property. Farmers can get upto a maximum of 50 years or one generation and after that it is to be transferred back to the state but the children of the farmer can get it after a new agreement with the state. Again due to non-ownership of the land by the farmer it has a certain disadvantage for the farmer due to feelings of insecurity and loss of future.

Case-8

Abdul Sattar, a teacher from one of the schools in Kashkadarya said that the first bell rang in schools in the first week of September in Uzbekistan this year.¹²³ “The first bell in Kashkadarya schools not only means that children for the new academic session are back in schools, but it also means that the cotton harvest season has begun for school children and teachers”. Sattar divulged that two and a half months are surmised as the entire academic term and the first term of the school year is spent picking cotton. The Kashkadarya teacher also narrated that teachers register pupils who are picking cotton as being present in class and even mark them with better grades if they pick cotton really well.

This year the cotton harvest in Uzbekistan was and is mostly done by students from schools and colleges. According to the teacher from Kashkadarya province, the director of the school instructed teachers to prepare school children for cotton picking.

¹²³ Interview with a School Teacher in Kashkadarya (the heart of Uzbek cotton).

The school teacher Sattar delineates that even in the first day of the new academic session in school we had to prepare children to pick cotton. We had also to take them to the cotton fields. Poor kids wear nice, new cloths and within only couple of days they are made to pick cotton with the same cloths- said the teacher from Kashkadarya.

The Kashkadarya teacher Abdul Sattar says that children pick cotton in the fields which are close to the school and teachers are sent in groups to districts which are further away. Up to now, the only news is that the list of teachers is made and starting from September 3, an average of 15 teachers from each school will pick cotton for 15 days. We are lodged in a hut in the farm field, a useless place. We were there last year during the harvest. The food and water is no good. We put a blanket on concrete and sleep there. There is no drinking water. The water is salty. It is uncomfortable to bathe there. The conditions are very bad. There is no choice, we go for 15 days and tolerate it. Cotton picking is state policy, as you know, - says the teacher from Kashkadarya.

The teacher from Kashkadarya also says that during the cotton season classes at school are canceled and the teachers have to change their profession to become cotton pickers for couple of months. You see, half of the teachers do not work in school. We were told to spend 10 to 15 days in the desert. We go and live there waiting for those 10 days to pass. The second group of teachers does the same. Sattar also revealed that for a teacher both the classes and the cotton is the same.

Case-9

The Uzbek cotton industry is a ruinous eccentricity created by Soviet central planning.¹²⁴ Over 80% of the loss of water from the Aral Sea is due to irrigation for the Uzbek cotton industry, so it is conscientious for one of the World's greatest environmental disasters. On most agricultural land in Uzbekistan, cotton has been grown as a monoculture for fifty five years, with no rotation. This of course exhausts the soil and encourages pests. As a result the cotton industry employs massive quantities of pesticide and fertilizer. As a result it is not just that the Aral Sea is disappearing, but that and fertilizers, with no rotation. The whole area once well known sea suffers appalling pollution, reflected in abysmal levels of disease.

¹²⁴ Interview with a Professor from Tashkent.

The Professor disclosed that Uzbek farm workers are tied to the farm. They need a propusk (visa) to move away– which they won't get. The state farm worker normally gets two dollars a month. Their living and nutritional standards would improve greatly if, rather than grow cotton, they had a little area to grow subsistence crops. Mr. Professor marked out that there are no independent research institutes allowed in Uzbekistan. In fact the proportion of the population enslaved on state cotton farms is closer to 60 percent.

The cotton industry in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan contributes to political repression, economic stagnation, widespread poverty and environmental degradation, said the Prof. The economics of Central Asian cotton is simple and exploitative. Millions of the rural poor either work for little or no reward in support of growing and harvesting the crop. The considerable profits go either to the state or small elites with powerful political ties. Forced child labour and other abuses are common.

This system is only sustainable under conditions of political repression, which can be used to mobilize workers at less than market cost. Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan are among the world's most repressive states, with no free elections. Opposition activists and human rights defenders are subject to persecution. The lack of a free media allows many abuses to go unreported. Unelected local governments are usually complicit in abuses, since they have little or no accountability to the population. Cotton producers have an interest in continuing these corrupt and non-democratic regimes.

The industry relies on cheap labour. Schoolchildren are still regularly required to spend up to two months in the cotton fields in Uzbekistan. Despite official denials, child labour is still in use in Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. Students in all three countries have to miss their classes to pick cotton. Little attention is paid to the conditions in which children and students work which results into bad health and even some casualties.

Case-10

Professor Sator¹²⁵ (name changed) narrates that harvesting season of cotton is showing the condition of state-forced child labour in the Uzbek cotton fields is not sensationalist; they are very much the everyday conditions in which hundreds of thousands of Uzbek children are forced to live for months. Women do much of the hard manual labour in cotton fields, and reap almost none of the benefits. Cash wages are minimal and often paid late or not at all. In most cotton-producing areas, growers are among the poorest elements in society. The environmental costs of the monoculture have been devastating. The depletion of the Aral Sea is the result of intensive irrigation to fuel cotton production. The region around the sea has appalling public health and ecological problems. Even further upstream, increased salinisation and desertification of land have a major impact on the environment. Disputes over water usage cause tension among Central Asian states.

Reforming the cotton sector is not easy. Central Asian cotton is traded internationally by major European and U.S. corporations; its production is financed by Western banks, and the final product ends up in well-known outlets in Western countries. But neither the international cotton trading companies nor the clothing manufacturers pay much attention to the conditions in which the cotton is produced. Nor have international organizations or IFIs done much to address the abuses. US and EU subsidy regimes for their own farmers make long-term change more difficult by depressing world prices.

To effect immediate change, you should demand that your apparel manufacturer state on their garment labels where their cotton comes from, and that it does not come from Uzbekistan. With the vast volume of T-shirts bought and sold, the message will quickly spread, and High Street retail will follow. Why am I doing this? As a large user of cotton, and with our influential position in the T-shirt industry, Continental Clothing has an opportunity, if not even a responsibility, to raise awareness and promote consumer action on issues where we feel strongly - such as the state orchestrated child slavery in Uzbekistan. The wonderful thing is that it costs us nothing, and may switch cause consumers to question the garments they buy and so switch them on to cotton garments which guarantee that certain positive social and

¹²⁵ Interview with a Professor in Fergana.

environmental conditions are met - such as Continental garments. This is often the way with ethical and environmental choices, initially they appear expensive and difficult, until you realise they can be sustainable choices for a longer term and more profitable future. So yes, we are doing this because we can, and also for personal gain. If you follow the same formula, you may benefit in exactly the same way.

Case-11

I am really afraid of being expelled from school.¹²⁶ Every year the first week of school after summer breaks, the Director of the school warns us that if we don't go out to pick cotton I might as well not come to school. The school administration does everything to create the impression that the school children themselves are the ones who have decided to go into the fields for cotton cultivation during the peak season. We are all forced to follow this unwritten law. And moreover, the only way to get cash is to go out into the fields and pick cotton. It is really painful to see how the small kids knock themselves out in the cotton fields to earn this rotten money. Just think about it: in order to earn 50 *sum* (four US cents), a kid who is barely 14 has to bend down to the cotton bush over 50 times. And his earning from a day of this work won't even buy him a pair of ugly socks simply.

Case-12

Our school closes every year on the eve of the 10th of September, or 10 days after the start of the school year.¹²⁷ The exact date depends on how hot the summer was and how mature the cotton crop is. However the end of the cotton season is dependent on how quickly the cotton plan target is fulfilled, not only in the district but in the province and the republic as a whole. For instance, if our district and province fulfils the plan a little early, let's say, in October, and then we don't have to go out into the fields any more. In other words, after the plan is fulfilled anyone out picking cotton is doing it to earn some money. But if the plan isn't fulfilled it could be December, there could be cold weather already, but the children still are out in the fields. No one can protest this state of affairs. Therefore, you can't really predict how long the cotton season will last and when it will end. This year the harvest lasted from September 10 to November 20.

¹²⁶ Interview with a Student in Kashkadarya oblast.

¹²⁷ Interview with a School Teacher from Namangan.

Case-13

From last four years I have been coming out for cotton picking.¹²⁸ We have to buy the school uniforms with the money I bring home from the cotton harvest. So it is a way I can help my parents. Last year right after the cotton campaign, I got sick with hepatitis. The doctor said I got infected from dirty water. The tractor that was supposed to bring us drinking water broke down, and we had to drink from the irrigation canal. Along the borders of the canal they had spread saltpeter and so many kids got poisoned. Some of them got sick like I did. However no one gave us any medical assistance, or medicine. When the chairman of the farm, the district *khokim* and the auxiliary policeman came out into the cotton fields, they threw stones at the kids who weren't picking because they were sick. And if any of them got hold of you, they would beat you. A few students, being afraid of them, would run from field to field and hide.

Case-14

I am the mother of six children.¹²⁹ Already around one and a half year ago my husband and eldest son went off to work in Russia. I married off two of my daughters. Two of my sons study in the district centre, one in the seventh grade, the other in the ninth. This year was the first year they enforced my seventh grader to go out to pick cotton. He is a scrawny boy and two years ago he got ill with hepatitis. Next to our residence we have a garden plot, where we produce fruits and vegetables to vend and somehow make a living. This year the chairman of the collective farm insisted that I go out to pick cotton and my daughter in law and remaining children, otherwise he would take our plot away. How can I go out to pick cotton and one could really witness a desperation current on her face as tears started to flow down from her eyes. My daughter-in-law is pregnant. The chairman said that if we don't go out, I'll have to pay one hundred thousand som (approximately 60 dollars, or more than two average monthly wages). When I said there was no means I could pay that kind of money, he started to intimidate that in that case we wouldn't obtain the benefits from the *mahalla*.

¹²⁸ Interview with a School Child from Namangan

¹²⁹ Interview with a Lady from Namangan.

Case-15

Matters can turn out to be even further staid when parents who keep their children absent from the harvest may be charged with an offense.¹³⁰ A tenant of Namangan of Village Giganth reported his fairy-tale like this “don’t even inquire about that, I am not going to respond the query. I have breathed in this village for thirty five years. All my life, and that of my wife, has been splurged out in the fields. We have three children. They go to the school across the street. The oldest boy is in the eighth grade. On 5th September their teacher told them that they are going out to pick cotton. My son and some five other boys objected, and held they would not go. The teacher let the other students go, but kept back my son and the other boys in the classroom and banged them up, shoddily. My son came home in the evening in tears, with a bloated face and two black eyes. The next day I went to the school and met with the course director. He rebuffed to take note and dubbed me an enemy of the people. I said to him straightly that I have crooked my back in these cotton fields my entire life and enough is enough. My son is going to breathe in a different way. I crave him to study, to become knowledgeable, and to absorb in some conscientious place. The course director started to bash his fists on the desk and say that he would call the police, that I must end haranguing him, and heaved me out. He spoke to me in a very indecent language, and truly snubbed me. So even though we didn’t have any additional food in the house, I packed whatever was available for my children’s meal to be out in the fields. What else could I have made? After all, the solitary thing they provide to the cotton pickers for lunch is several potatoes, cabbage or macaroni. Previous year five or six school children, from my son’s school busted into houses simply to pilfer some food. Their parents had reasonably a good time purely to get them out of the police station. So, those were my feelings as I left the school.

Case-16

The farmers who make use of the children’s labour often admit that they have no time or resources to devote to the children’s health.¹³¹ The director recounted that each year when the schoolchildren come to pick cotton in my fields, I myself supply them with drinking water. Using special barrels for that purpose from the garage of

¹³⁰ Interview with a Farmer in Namangan.

¹³¹ Interview with a Farm Director in Namangan Oblast.

the farming association, I bring drinking water from the taps near the district centre. In a few cases when there was no water in the pipes, I bring water from the irrigation canal that flows through the district. It's hard to say anything about the quality of that water. After all, I grew up on that water myself. And I am healthy. However, the doctors from the Central Hospital are always saying that you at least need to chlorinate this water. But not everyone follows this recommendation, because we are sure that this water wouldn't poison anyone. A few doctors have said that from pollution or because the water itself is of low quality one can get kidney stones, or enlarged spleen or liver. As a farmer, it is my responsibility to fulfil the production quota and productivity of the harvest. Let their parents worry about the health of children.

Case-17

This is clear and open fact here that often children are not paid the full amount due to them.¹³² Their payment depends in part on the grade of cotton they pick, which is itself tied to the various stages that the harvest entails. At the start of the cotton harvest season the government sets the price for one harvested kilogram of 50 *sum* (3 US cents). However by the middle of the season the local administration lowered this to 40 *sum*, and by the end of the season, to 30. If on average a pupil receives 40 *sum* per kilogram, then on average he or she earns 1600 *sum* (less than one US dollar). Over two months of harvesting that amount may grow to about 96,000 *sum* (60 US dollars). If one takes into account that students spend about 1300 *sum* per day just on food, it follows that they are working in the fields practically for free. For instance, all of the textbooks required for seventh grade cost approximately 25,000 *sum*. A student will not even be able to buy their schoolbooks with his hard earned money for months of labour in the fields. In this sense the students are truly slaves.

Case-18

My daughter is in the ninth grade and my son in the seventh.¹³³ Every year, both of them are sent by their schools out to pick cotton. Naturally, we don't object, because at least they can bring in a little money to help with the cost of their clothing, schoolbooks and supplies. However, I do object to sending girls who are close to

¹³² Interview with a School Teacher from Namangan.

¹³³ Interview with a Mother from Fergana.

being of sensitive age. After all, girls are not so suited to hard physical labour and to those terrible living conditions. Even if I allow my daughter to go out and pick cotton, she earns 100 thousand *sum*, but when I marry her off I will have to pay 500 thousand just to treat her various ailments. But my husband has left to work in Russia, and that's why I agreed to let my daughter go. Otherwise, I would have gotten a medical certificate from the district hospital. She also narrated that due to some approach in the hospital one can get the medical certificate which otherwise is very difficult to obtain as officials are also keeping a very strict vigil even on hospitals and other institutions of the state. How can a mother allow her young daughter to be out in the open and work; it is only the pressure of the state agencies which are putting the young girls in the fields for cotton picking. Girls are not as sound as boys from the physiological and biological point of view and are susceptible to more bodily damage like bruises and stresses on the sensitive parts than boys. So it is a matter of shame on our state which put the innocent young girls into cotton picking who are the mothers of tomorrow and also being Uzbek and Muslims they should not be doing it.

Case-19

By the commencement of the cotton season they proclaim that school is closed, and that's that.¹³⁴ Each and every right-thinking parent comprehends what that means. As a result, no parents who yearn for their children to continue to go to school would ever object, even though no one ever solicits for their acquiescence. If you inquire any of the parents on the subject of this they will just express amusement at you, 'what do you mean, authorization, what accord or contract?' Cotton—that's all that needs to be whispered. The school is closed, one and all is out in the fields picking cotton. Even on the government structures you will witness full-size posters, "everyone out to the cotton collection!" every single one of the learner or school children who are at least half healthy have to be out in the countryside. It get hold of to the position where the traffic police force even stop busses and cars roving in the direction of the district or provincial center and force each and every passenger who are not invalids or under the weather, out to pick cotton.

¹³⁴ Interview with a Fergana Parent.

Case-20

After all children are children.¹³⁵ By no means, you can give them total shield from jeopardy. They need constant care and are to be monitored consistently. Throughout the cotton collection season I was able to learn by heart cases where children were asphyxiated by the cotton they gathered, or were scuttled over by tractors when they were sleeping in the fields. Sorry to say it that due to the national disposition, whether it is out of heedlessness, disproportionate good-heartedness, or trepidation, persons answerable for these catastrophes are time and again exonerated. Both national as well international press as well independent ones doesn't put pen to paper on the subject of these occurrences nor are they revealed on small screens. For instance, I am acquainted with a case when six adolescent girls who walk off to wash in a river or some canal were flounced away by the current. The prosecutor's office even lodged a scandalous case on the substance, however afterward they plant the brake pedal on it and it never went anywhere. I believe that whichever personality conscientious for a child's calamity must bear liability, and that these unpleasant incidents should not be allowed to calm down up without any legal procedure followed and action taken.

¹³⁵ Interview with a School Teacher in Fergana.

Group Discussions

Besides selective interviews we also followed the method of group discussions and which proved for us the best method of getting good amount of information related to the theme under investigation. The group interviews which we conducted in different provinces of Uzbekistan were then jointly put under the heading focused group interviews and under the systematic order of questions so that a sequence in investigating the problem could be followed. The group discussion highlights and bring into the picture all the elements and components which are part of this inhuman institution existing in Uzbekistan at the behest of state. People belonging to different echelons of society participated in the discussions. In the following paragraphs each variable is discussed in-depth under group discussion theme.

Level of ‘Forced Child Labour in Uzbekistan’

Every year in the autumn all schools are closed to put children aged 8 to 15 in Uzbekistan to harvest cotton but the children enrolled in schools in the capital and other major cities are not involved as urban areas are under the scanner of social activists, human rights groups besides local and non-local media. Children studying in lower grades in lyceums and college and university students, as well as local public servants are also necessary to labour in cotton turfs for the period of the harvest. Children in rural regions are also by and large required to weed the cotton fields in the spring spell. In entirety, unavoidable labour in farming the cotton need school children to neglect three to four months of lessons each year.

According to appraisal and coarse reckonings, child labour accounts for more or less half of the entire cotton singled out for the period of harvest in Uzbekistan. Cotton pickers, together with children, are strained to labour seven days a week. Children and adults are toiling upto 10 hours a day with a solitary undersized break for lunch. Children who do not reside close to the harvest camp in the cotton fields have to stay in awfully pitiable living environment devoid of hygiene and other basic amenities of life. A good number of them undergo malnutrition and are short of admittance to indispensable medical conduct. Every day children are given a quota necessitate them to pick between 30 and 50 kgs of cotton. If their quota is not met, children are deprecated by school administration, and sometimes bodily maltreated.

Instituting Child Labour in Uzbekistan

The use of strained child labour in Uzbekistan is a calculated state policy. Enforced instructions transferring children to the cotton meadows are issued by school commissioners who entertain oral instructions from home administration (hokimiyats). Given Uzbekistan's austere centralized system of power and control and cotton business management, it can be construed that the guidelines instigate in the central government. With no directions from Tashkent, it is ludicrous that schools transversely the kingdom would be put down the lid for even a solitary day.

The Apparatus of Hounding

Apprehension of directorial castigation coerces children, including lyceum, college and university students, to labour in the fields. The children and students are exposed in the midst of eviction if they will not discharge their responsibility to pick cotton. Parents who do not mail children to the cotton collection risk losing State public and welfare reimbursements. School supervisors and even instructors can lose their posts if they will not act in accordance with the instructions of local authorities to accomplish conscription and other supplementary proportion enclosed in the twelve-monthly yield arrangement. Throughout the cotton harvesting flavor, Uzbekistan is distorted hooked on a virtual labour encampment, in the midst of children and tutors prearranged into labour contingents, breathing in ill-congested quarters, and operational in cotton grounds with perambulation by police force.

Existing Legal Protection

There is sufficient legal protection but these legal provisions are not imposed, and the use of forced child labour is humdrum all over Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan has adopted a number of laws, on Youth Policy, on Labour, and on Children's Rights. These decrees put limits and restrictions on the use of child labour. Lawfully, children are only permitted to work after age of 15. Prior this age they can be engaged only in the framework of school-related activity, and for no more than 15 days. In every case, children are not permissible to work more than four hours per day.

Profits from the Establishment of Enforced Child Labour

This dominant agricultural industry of Uzbekistan is stringently administered by the central government in Tashkent and all procurement prices of cotton are

decided and managed from Tashkent. Cotton and grain planting is commanded on two-thirds of the best arable lands in Uzbekistan. Cultivators have neither the right to decide which crops to sow, nor to whom they vend their yield. As in Soviet times, the Uzbek government inflicts cotton production quotas on all farmers and local administration. The local *hokims* (governors) are in person answerable for accomplishing these proportions. Farmers cannot do business of cotton in the open bazaar at market value and in its place are necessary to bring production to local government cotton gins. Farmers endeavored to sell abroad their produce to neighbouring countries are incriminated with smuggling and face punishment with fines.

Cotton is the principal export article of trade and key resource of revenue for the kingdom. Whilst three trading corporations formed at the Ministry of Foreign Economic Affairs trade cotton on global marketplaces, all export returns linger under straight and stringent control of executives employed by President Islam Karimov. As the Government of Uzbekistan thwarts any lucidity in cotton sent abroad, they stay utterly baffling to the Uzbek community and intercontinental onlookers. No information is made accessible on the subject of export revenues or the value Uzbek cotton is vended for in worldwide bazaars. Yet less is known regarding how cotton revenues are distributed within Uzbekistan, although it is implicit that substantial sums are funneled unswervingly to the bank accounts of the President and other tall bureaucrats.

Primary Cause of this Observable Fact

The most important reason augmenting the establishment of enforced child labour vestiges the nonexistence of reform in cotton production and domineering State secretarial control. The Uzbek management enforces unjustly squat procurement prices on cotton, hitherto vends the cotton at market ones. In such surroundings, cotton farmers and other rural residents engaged in the cotton sector are increasingly poverty wounded and resort to financial voyage, even to the cotton meadows in neighbouring Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan where they can make respectable earnings. Given these economic circumstances, the Uzbek management desires utilizing strained labour to implementing reforms. It relies on executive and other intimidation, together with the exercise of police and legal examinations against farmers who do

not sternly tag on management proclamations and accomplish their anticipated cotton and grain proportions.

Need of Interventions

The management of Uzbekistan should put an end, on paper and in practice, to the use of child and all forms of enforced labour in the cotton industry. It have to prevent ordering and authorizing the shutting down of schools for the reasons of sending students to the cotton fields and explicitly bar home governments from regulating high schools (lyceums), colleges and universities to employ students for illicit labour practices. To put into practice such proscription, the government of Uzbekistan must set up comprehensive reforms in the cotton industry. It is not enough to convert communal farms into classified farms if the latter stay dispossessed of land and production privileges. The administration should gratis farmers from callous governmental rules and tolerates bazaar enticements to substitute the existing arrangement of governmental compulsion. Rather than controlling each feature of the cotton sector, the government of Uzbekistan should actively participate as a facilitator defending the interests of all stakeholders, together with private farmers and entrepreneurs as well as ordinary farmers and citizens.

Difference of Child Labour in Uzbekistan with other Developing Countries

Child labour in the cotton industry of Uzbekistan varies significantly from other developing countries. Child labour in Uzbekistan is not embarked on at the inventiveness of parents, except arranged and consented by the state, which employ an assortment of means of duress to vigor children to work in cotton grounds. In addition, the practice twigs from an autocratic structure of governance and monetary exploitation which portrays the Uzbek government.

Child Labour and Soviet Legacy

During Soviet epoch Uzbekistan accomplished a relatively far above the ground echelon of social and economic development, even though these attainments concurred in the midst of a number of severe social and environmental issues. About half of the cotton used to be collected by machines. Nowadays, as a consequence of unprofessional demeanor, lack of restructuring, botched incentive systems and unbalanced allocation of cotton revenues, the exercise of machinery has been condensed to naught. Currently, in spite of various trivial developments (for example,

the prologue of quality control, wrapping and stocking systems), the cotton industry as a whole is relapsing. The degree of strained labour has correspondingly amplified as mechanization has decline. Dilapidating social and economic conditions associated to the deterioration of the cotton sector have been in particular destructive in rural areas.

Western Response

The reaction from the West has been so far derisory. The United States and European Union cover up Uzbek cotton and textiles under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP), which endows with import tax exemptions to underprivileged developing countries. In Europe, Uzbek cotton was approved GSP rank in June 2005, immediately following the Andijan mass execution in which Uzbek security forces fired upon unarmed protestors killing hundreds. The GSP was proposed to deal with discrepancies in business dealings sandwiched between North and South, however in the case of Uzbekistan; it to a certain extent reinforces social injustices. GSP constructs the autocratic Uzbek regime still more affluent whereas the systemic abuse of child labour is perpetuated.

Countries and Companies Currently Importing Uzbek Cotton

Uzbekistan has sidetracked cotton exports from European to Asian countries from last one and a half decade, principally China and Bangladesh. Conversely, after being processed in Asia into textile and clothes, Uzbek cotton continues to stumble on its way into Western bazaars. Several Western countries continue to straightly buy Uzbek cotton fibre. Various European countries, primarily the Czech Republic, Austria, Poland, Greece and Italy buy Uzbek cotton indirectly. Coincidentally or not, these very same countries of late opposed extension of EU sanctions against Uzbekistan adopted in reaction to the Andijan mass murder in May 2005. Companies mainly active in importing the Uzbek cotton purportedly include: Cargill Cotton, Weil Brothers and Stern, Plexus Cotton (UK), Daewoo Textile Company (Korea), and Indutech (Italy) and others. There are also certain banks which financed and helped many companies to have their operations on and others provide financial support to importers of Uzbek cotton.

International Institutions and Governments Awareness with Child Labour in Uzbekistan

Forced child labour is prevalent in Uzbekistan since the Soviet times but became known to the global community just ever since the Uzbek human rights activists and journalists decided to break the conspiracy of silence some 2-3 years earlier. The lack of international knowledge of the state of affairs in Uzbekistan provides the opportunity for exploiting young school children. The International Cotton Advisory Committee was forced to change its position on the issue, from ignoring it to its acknowledgement, when its leaders met some years before with Uzbek activists and experts. The European Union is still disdaining this subject and restraining from making any critical declaration, thus cheering the Uzbek regime to remain exploiting school children.

West's Responsibility

Companies and governments should urge the government of Uzbekistan to instantaneously put an end to the use of compulsory child labour in the cotton industry. Until it is verified that this practice has ceased, western companies, cotton importers and retailers should refrain from purchasing Uzbek cotton and textile products it is used in. Moreover, Western governments must hold back GSP standing from Uzbek cotton imports and textile products. This trade benefit may well be re-established when it is verified that mandatory child labour practices have ceased. To shun auxiliary labour abuse of children in developing countries, the EU and other Western countries must establish a certification and cataloging system that would tolerate retailers and consumers scrutinize the source of cotton products imported and put up for sale. The International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNICEF ought to, albeit belatedly, investigate and publicize the issue of forced child labour in Uzbekistan in order to bring much needed international attention to this injustice.

Boycott of Uzbek Cotton Harm Uzbek Farmers and Other Ordinary Citizens

The true producers and pickers of cotton in Uzbekistan get a trifling share of overall cotton export returns. The adult rural population of Uzbekistan is in consequence by now boycotting Uzbek cotton by ditching the countryside in the hunt of fair prices and sustainable earnings. Though child labourers get some returns for

picking cotton, it comes at an objectionable price, the ebbed worth of their education. A boycott of Uzbek cotton would compel the Uzbek government to take genuine measures for restructuring its cotton industry, as a consequence of which Uzbek farmers would benefit a lot. They will receive returns analogous to cotton farmers in neighbouring Kazakhstan where the government doesn't much meddle in the sector so the cotton growing develop into lucrative business.

Ratification of ILO Conventions 138 and 182

Though the government of Uzbekistan ratified both the conventions (138 and 182) of ILO but the guidelines of the conventions are never put into practice as the Government of Uzbekistan is the only violator of it in Uzbekistan. Despite the fact that the ratifying of the conventions on the rights of the child warrants encouragement, the government of Uzbekistan has hitherto to demonstrate a real and sustained determination to eradicate forced child labour which looks a mere reality in near future unless the political structure of the country finds reformation. Until it does so, these conventions will share the providence of other unfulfilled ILO conventions long-since ratified by the Uzbek government. The legal framework needed to instantly stop the practices of forced child labour are not missing, rather such laws and conventions residues concave avowals and are used to obscure the callous veracity of the Uzbek cotton sector. A valid sign of the government's unadulterated intention to eradicate forced child labour would be preliminary stepladder to put into operation reforms in the cotton industry. The government's fortitude to wipe out this disgraceful abuse can be further weighed in the forthcoming cotton crop phase.

Change in the Uzbek People's Attitudes about Child Labour

When parents were asked their views on this question under conditions of relative anonymity, they universally state that they would rather keep children in school than have them work in the fields. Pupils unequivocally state they would prefer to be continuing their studies. Some of the parents revealed that compared to other forms of child exploitation in the world, such as sex trafficking, etc., this is if truth be told not all that appalling. After all, I worked on the farm (in a shop, in my family's business) when I was a child. First, we rebuff proportional wretchedness race that dole out to underestimate the pain of any individual child or assemblage of children relative to others. Secondly, enforced child labour in Uzbekistan's cotton fields

convene the ILO's classification of the worst forms of child labour, which Uzbekistan itself has consigned to eradicate. Labour in the cotton fields causes encumbering damages and even death. Children are undefended against these recurrent catastrophes, and when they occur, they and their families walk off uncompensated (and even stumble upon additional hounding if they strive to chase any recompense). Thirdly, the work turns up at stern educational costs. Children of the countryside miss at least 3-4 months out of a lyceum/school year in which they already practiced a huge disadvantage vis-a-vis their urban peers. If they or their families repudiate involvement, they risk ejection from lyceum/school and will experience at the very least stalking from teachers and school administration. Lastly, Uzbekistan's children do not work for their individual good or that of their families and society, but are strained to benefit state and quasi-state structure. Under Uzbekistan's tyrannical totalitarian organism, it is utterly un-translucent how earnings earned from the billion-dollar cotton export industry are consumed; several have construed that those profits do not in reality reach the state budget. They surely fail to do good to the impecunious communities of the countryside.

Harvest Season Means Forced Labour for Uzbek Children

From first week of September every year, thousands of Uzbek children instigate two months of compulsory labour in the country's cotton meadows. Being paid almost nothing in remuneration and performing in accordance with state command, schools are clogged and children turn out to be virtual slaves as the reaping spell spins in. Even seven year old children are strained to meet up excessive quotas with petite prospect for relax. Conditions are depicted as fetid and food derisory. They make only some pennies for every kilo of cotton and remuneration deductions are made for haulage and victuals expenses. By the end of the harvest season they are left pooped and often in broken health conditions. Teachers are rookie into apt overseers and furthermore to work in the fields in order to meet up production quotas. Children compose more than half of the harvest season labour force. One of the Uzbek farmers describes, "being a cotton farmer here is like lynching between life and death. The government controls our lives very snugly. If we don't comply with, we'll end up in problem. All we yearn for is free will. And the state is grueling us for wanting independence."

Uzbekistan's state-administered cotton industry has also taken its levy on the environment and atmosphere. In the midst of the profound irrigation demands for the hard cash crop; the Aral Sea, once upon a time a climate modifying element in the region has been reduced to 15% of its original size. As a consequence, salinity has swelled; killing dozens of species of indigenous fish and swabbing out Uzbekistan's profitable fishing industry. The cotton fields themselves have been over irrigated and now ill with soaring intensity of soil salinity and corrosion. Cotton monoculture has left Uzbekistan's previously flourishing lands ever more sterile, at times to the point of desertion. The grave use of insect killer has compounded the ecological crisis, leading to augmented rates of birth blemishes and genetic transmutations.

Being the second largest exporter of cotton in the world; the autocratic state of Uzbekistan maintains a monopoly on the export of cotton. With a scarcely compensated, seasonally caged labour force, a great deal of the income from the cotton is not used in future development projects or as part of public wellbeing programs but instead strutting up a petite parasitic elite which formulate up the Third World dictatorial regime. The cotton which is not exported is flanged to Uzbekistan's diminutive home textile industry, made up of combined business enterprises sandwiched between the Uzbek state and overseas shareholder. At the same time we have witnessed how little, crooked, ruling cream of the crop refute these particulars and maintains to be the foremost beneficiary of the hard cash the child labour bring in Uzbekistan. The government of Uzbekistan in reality sells the cotton at 85% of the international market price and 43% of it is propelled to Asian textile mills. Fashioned under analogous surroundings of comprador capitalism, the ultimate manufactured goods are then exported to imperialist countries where it enters the consumer bazaars (markets). Whilst different Third World marionette regimes may garner several benefits of the cosmic pools of virtually incarcerated people, the largest part of it is passed along.

Subsequent to the harvesting of cotton and its spinning into textiles under wicked conditions of comprador capitalism, the finished goods at last pierce First World punter bazaars. The lofty remuneration of the First World workers enable them to procure cosmic magnitude of commodities, something that would not be achievable without the super exploitation of workforce from the underprivileged countries like Uzbekistan.

Chapter 6

Conclusions and Suggestions

The use of children ensures maximum profits to the ruling elite, which benefits from the supply of cotton to western consumers. The use of child labour violates international laws and conventions to which the government of Uzbekistan is a signatory. Children's normal education is interrupted to serve the interest of the small elite who benefit grossly from the high profits from trading cotton on the world market. As a result of forced child labour, children cannot learn in schools and colleges during the academic period, and lag behind in the school curriculum, while some children fall sick from hard work and exhaustion. The conclusions and suggestions made are discussed below.

The case of child labour in Uzbekistan presents distinctive features that set it apart from global patterns. If, in the rest of the world and especially in the South Asia and Africa, the main cause of child labour is poverty compelling households to send their children out to work, in Uzbekistan the prime movers of this practice are state agents and the particular mode of organization of cotton farming.

Although the Government of Uzbekistan has adopted the necessary legal framework for the eradication of forced child labour, both as signatory to international treaties and through domestic legislation, it appears to be in breach of both. The involvement of state parties in the mobilization of child labour for cotton harvests cannot be glossed over. The extended suspension of schooling and the organized large scale deployment of children on cotton fields can hardly take place without the tacit endorsement and support of the central government and the active involvement of local administrations. Without verifiable benchmarks and systematic monitoring, the NAP may remain a dead letter given the lack of concrete steps to reform the agrarian sector and to lift the current constraints on the operations of the cotton sector.

The root causes of reliance on coerced labour should be recognized and remedied through a package of reforms that address the vicious cycle of a partially modified command economy, the plight of labour, declining productivity and low incomes in the cotton farming sector. These are factors that fuel rural poverty; erode trust in governance and administration. In order to assess the real magnitude of the employment of minors, an in-depth study is necessary, particularly in regions with

high unemployment rates. The major factors contributing to the supply and demand of unemployment of minors need to be better researched as well.

Although large-scale mobilization of labour for cotton harvests, including school-age children, was prevalent during the Soviet period, it would be mistaken to interpret current practices as a mere continuation of the patterns set by collective agriculture. The partial nature of agrarian reforms since independence in 1991, expanding private access to land, on the one hand, without releasing private producers from obligations to meet crop quotas at administratively set prices, on the other, has contributed to the surge of labour outmigration to Russia and Kazakhstan, aggravated problems of labour recruitment and supply, and increased reliance on coercive methods of labour control. Recourse to child labour is symptomatic of the systemic failure of current agricultural policies and the necessity for thorough reform.

Thorough reform of the agricultural economy is necessary in order to replace the cheap and easily coerced farm labour that Uzbekistan's schoolchildren now provide. Artificial suppression of purchase prices for agricultural commodities such as cotton will have to be removed so that farmers are able to cover the real market cost of the labour required to grow and harvest such crops. Opening the market in agriculture, and abolishing obligatory state quotas for cotton and wheat may be required to do so.

Uzbekistan, with its massive unemployment, was and is entirely able to eliminate forced child labour. The country already has several laws on the books that would, if respected, ban children's forced labour on the cotton harvest. The practice clearly violates Uzbekistan's own longstanding statutes on the rights of children, and the labour code including its provisions on the minimum age and conditions of children's work. Yet despite these laws, over the past decade, the government has only intensified its reliance on forced child labour to bring in the cotton harvest, due to a number of economic and political factors. Among these are the persistence of elements of a command economy in the sector, and constraints on a free labour market.

Meaningful steps toward ending the problem are well within the reach of the Government of Uzbekistan; the principal obstacle to taking such steps is political will. Under its commitments to the recently signed ILO Convention No. 182, the Uzbek

government is obligated to provide the ILO a list of sectors where worst forms of child labour are found. Public acknowledgement of the problem through public identification of cotton as a target sector is one important precursor to further action.

The government of Uzbekistan needs to put in place a comprehensive national action plan to end forced labour in the cotton industry and commit all resources necessary to the implementation of this action plan. Independent journalists and human rights defenders should be having unrestricted access to document the situation during the cotton harvest and addressing and evaluating the situation of forced child labour through annual reports on human rights, human trafficking and labour issues. There should be encouragement to the World Bank and Asian Development bank to resume their efforts to promote reform in Uzbekistan's agricultural and cotton sectors as forced child labour is symptomatic of incomplete reform of these sectors of the economy and the lack of farmers' rights to manage their own assets and products. Multilateral organizations including the International Labour Organization should be encouraged to make public statements through annual and thematic reports about violations of labour and human rights in Uzbekistan's cotton industry.

Agriculture has gone through considerable changes in Uzbekistan, and with the completion of the conversion of the *shirkhat* into private farms; there is a need to deem the impact on child labour. Though the exercise of structured child labour via schools in conjecture might begin to grow fainter, it may well budge the problem to the family echelon, where children will continue to be deployed on family farms—the least synchronized and potentially most exploitative appearance of child labour. The stumpy height of system in the agricultural sector and the limited window of opportunity for bringing in the harvest mean that the mobilisation of the whole community to bring in the harvest is likely to continue. During 1990's labour productivity was low, and employment creation in rural areas was hampered by the effectively high taxation of the agricultural sector through the quota system, whereby the prices for cotton and grain were fixed below world price levels. This discouraged investment into technology and more capital intensive agriculture, which while maybe reducing the number of jobs available would have increased the proportion requiring the kind of skills and experience that children would not have.

There is a pressing need for adequate data and methodologically sound instruments to monitor patterns of child labour in the cotton sector of Uzbekistan. Specialist UN agencies such as UNICEF and ILO must, in dialogue with the government of Uzbekistan, break with the precedent set by flawed surveys by various agencies and redouble their efforts to achieve a reliable data base as a guide to future policy.

There is no lack of regulation concerning child labour, and as the Uzbekistan government's 2005 report to the CRC Committee points out, the 'labour legislation norms are more favourable than the minimum norms envisaged by the international legal acts on labour and by the ILO Conventions. The problem with regulation is the lack of mechanisms for implementing the labour legislation, with labour inspectors need to be better focused on the violations taking place. The main issue for regulation, however, is to better focus on the issue of use of child labour in bringing in the cotton harvest. Currently there is no regulation addressing this in education or labour laws. This leaves local authorities to be the arbiter of the duration of children's cotton harvesting works, conditions and payment. The importance to the economy of this practice must be more openly debated, and a reasoned discussion is called for seeing how children might become involved in ways that are not detrimental to their health and education. The incentive structure built into the quota system must be examined so that local authorities are penalised rather than being rewarded for exploitative forms of child labour.

Those who benefit from Uzbek forced child labour, the Uzbek comprador elite and the First World, are a global minority. In contrast, the Uzbek masses are part of a larger majority, the vast Third World masses. According to the Environmental Justice Foundation, 250 million children around the world are compelled to work, presumably in commodity exchange industries. Adding to this are the world's exploited adults, those languishing in vast urban slums and subsistence communities under constant threat of being kicked off the land. Together, the vast Third World masses pose a serious threat to the system: they carry great potential and a historical responsibility.

The need for an open debate is essential for reasonable regulation to be developed, and the way to start is greater transparency and data around the issue. The question put by the CRC Committee concerning 'the number of children involved in

labour who are under 16' unfortunately went unanswered in the government's reply. The government's plan to carry out research into this issue during the harvest season is to be commended and a positive step in the right direction.

Transforming the cotton industry in Uzbekistan will not be simple. Structural reforms could have stimulated the growth of the cotton productivity, being beneficial for the cotton industry, farmers and ordinary people alike. Cotton monoculture is more disastrous for the future of Uzbekistan than the tons of heroine which are regularly transported throughout the Central-Asian region. Even though the international community has invested millions of dollars in anti-narcotics programs it has done far too little to fight against the negative effects of the Uzbek cotton industry. Achieving real changes in the cotton sector will take time, but true reform of this sector could provide more stability in this strategic country than the international community would believe.

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Glossary of Terms

adyr arazi	non-irrigated land
agarot	plot adjoining house (Russian)
arenda	lease (Russian)
chek	land plot for house
dekhan	smallholder
dekret	maternity benefit
devzire	variety of rice
doppa	traditional men's hats
gap	Women's rotating get-together, which also acts as a savings club
hokim	governor of province
hokimiyat	governorate
ish hakki	remuneration for work
kolkhoz, pl. kolkhozy	collective farm (Russian)
mahalla	neighbourhood
mardigor	casual labourer (yallama in Khorezm)
mihnat shartnamesi	labour contract
nikoh	Muslim marriage
oblast	province (Russian, viloyat in Uzbek)
oila pudrati	family leasehold (arenda in Russian)
oila pudratchisi	family leaseholder
orakchi	labourer harvesting with scythe
pudrat	lease
selsovyet	rural administrative unit
shalpaye	paddy field
shirkat	Agricultural cooperative closely corresponding Soviet collective farms (sovkhoz or kolkhoz), but usually with less land than before and with a new name
shirkat uyushmasi	association of shirkats
sotik, pl. sotka	one hundredth of a hectare
sovkhoz, pl. sovkhozy	state farm (Russian)
som	Uzbekistan's national currency
tamorka	private subsidiary plot
yagona	weeding of cotton

Khashar	popular tradition of aiding one's neighbours, relatives or the local community. In Soviet times authorities began to use khashar to describe forced labour on days free from one's main work. Most often this consisted of street sweeping and other cleaning of public places.
Mahalla	neighbourhood community in Uzbekistan
Raiono	regional education department
Shartnoma	Contract
Shtab	daily meetings
Sotka	a parcel of land equal to 100 square meters

List of Publications

- *Gender Earnings and Poverty Reduction: Post-Communist Uzbekistan* (Journal of Asian and African Studies, Sage Publications, United Kingdom, 2011)
- *Globalization and Labour Mobility in Uzbekistan: A Study in Changes and Challenges* (Journal of Eurasia and the East, Moscow, Russia, Oct. 2011)
- *A Sociological Analysis of the Role of Education in Employment Opportunities for Women in Kashmir* (Journal of Society in Kashmir, Department of Sociology, University of Kashmir, July 2011)
- *Socio-economic Dimensions of Child Labour in Central Asia: A Case Study of the Cotton Industry in Uzbekistan* (Journal of Problems of Economic Transition, ME Sharpe Publications, New York, USA, May 2011)
- *Socio-Economic Dimensions of Globalization: A Case Study of Labour Mobility in Uzbekistan* (Journal of Eurasian Studies, Elsevier, Netherlands, Jan.-March 2011)
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