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Amit , Kundu and Anwasha, Das

Department of Economics, Jadavpur University, Kolkata,  
India

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# **SOME UNEXPLORED ECONOMICS OF ROAMING CHILD WORKERS**

**AMIT KUNDU**

**READER, DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS, JADAVPUR UNIVERSITY,**

**&**

**ANWESHA DAS (PAUL)**

**PROJECT FELLOW, DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS, JADAVPUR  
UNIVERSITY, KOLKATA, PIN-700032, WEST BENGAL, INDIA.**

## **Abstract:**

Within the net of child labour, there is a section of children who live their lives on the streets, without any kind of attachment with their family and maintain their livelihood through working as informal child workers. This study is based on these children who are termed here as 'Roaming child workers'. It came out that apart from poverty of the parents there are other socio-economic reasons which force a child to come out from the family and work as child worker in the urban areas. It also came out from field survey that after leaving home a good number of children are economically better off and even able to keep themselves above the poverty line. But still they are very vulnerable. Through this study, effort has been made to prove that average monthly expenditure on substances of these 'Roaming working children' increases at a decreasing rate with their average monthly income, whereas, average monthly expenditure on entertainment shares a linear relationship with average monthly income.

Key words: Child Labour, Poverty and Consumption Pattern

JEL Classifications: J40, I32

**Address for correspondence:** Dr. Amit Kundu, Reader, Department of Economics, Jadavpur University, Kolkata, West Bengal, India, Pin-700032. Phone : (0)9830505312  
E-mail: akundu1970@rediffmail.com or akundu29@rediffmail.com

## SOME UNEXPLORED ECONOMICS OF ROAMING CHILD WORKERS

### Introduction:

In India, despite acceptance of international labour standards and commitments on restricting the use of child labour, millions of children are engaged in several kinds of works. It not only deprives them from their childhood and their dignity, but it is also detrimental to their health, education and utilizing opportunities as normal individuals in the society. In India, The Census report defines persons below the age of fourteen as children. As per the 1991 Census of India, 37 percent of the population is in the childhood ages (0-14 years) and according to the 2001 Census of India, the children in the age group of 0-14 years stand at 35.3 percent of the population where out of the total children population, 52 percent are male and 48 percent are female. In India, the number of working children in the age group of 5-14 years were 1.13 crores in 1991 (*Source: National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development, Government of India*) and as per 2001 Census, that has gone up to 1.26 crores (*Source: Rajya Shabha Unstarred Question No. 2295, dated on 23.12.2004*). The above data clearly portrays that, in India, the incidence of child labour is extremely alarming. If we look into the problems of child labour in India, we will observe a situation, which is even more critical. Surveys and estimates on child labour by government and non government organizations give different figures, highlighted in **Table 1**, vary from 10.23 million to 44 million. The discrepancy in the data of child labour creates huge hindrance in revealing the true magnitude of the problem. Hence, it also adds difficulty in developing suitable strategies of their development.

Working children in India can be broadly divided into three categories, namely full time child workers employed in hazardous economic activities; children employed for wages but in activities that are not prohibited under the Child Labour Act and children who are engaged as unpaid family workers in family enterprises such as farms, households etc. According to the constitution, no child below the age of fourteen years shall be employed to work in any factory or mine or engaged in any other hazardous employment (Article 23). The legal conception of a child has tended to vary depending upon the purpose. Different definitions reflect a lack of uniformity in the definition of the 'Child' in related acts, which creates enormous difficulties in formulating and implementing strategies to ensure the development of the deprived children.

Among these working children, there is a huge section of children who live in and around the railway platforms of the metropolitan cities of without any support from their families, i.e.

they live on their own. These children roam from one place to another according to their need and wish. Having no contacts with their families, these children have a huge influence of their peers. They do not have any particular occupation and earning and therefore no structured pattern of expenditure. With no saving habits, they mostly use their earnings for consumption and entertainment purposes. They are exposed to different kinds of physical, emotional and sexual abuses. But there is no authentic data regarding these children. This study is based on these children. For the convenience of the study these children are named here as 'Roaming working children'. In this study, focus is given to understand the present condition of this 'Roaming working children' in Kolkata and with this we shall try to understand the key reasons responsible for their present condition.

### **Overview of Literature:**

To eradicate the incidence of child labour, World Development Report (1995) called for a multifaceted approach with programmes that increases income security, reduce education costs, and improve the quality schooling. Burra (1997) revealed that the causal relationship sought to be established between poverty and child labour. It has been argued in her book that the prevalence and persistence of child labour itself reinforce, if not creates poverty. It has been suggested that a statutory Commission on Child Labour needed to be established to do a thorough examination of the issue of child labour in its entire ramification. Dixit (1997) observed that the causes of girls child labour are unemployment among the parents, poverty, inadequate distribution of land and assets, inadequate income of adults, migration of labour, social and cultural factors, educational backwardness, ignorance of parents, bonded labour system and large families etc. Basu and Van (1998) have shown that if child labour and adult labour are substitutes (*Substitution Axiom*) and if child leisure is a luxury commodity to the poor households (*Luxury Axiom*), then unfavourable adult labour markets, responsible for low adult wage rate is the driving force behind the incidence of child labour. According to the Luxury Axiom, there exists a critical level of adult wage rate, and any adult worker earning below this wage rate considers himself to be poor and not to have the luxury of sending his children to school. He is forced to send them to the job market to supplement his family income. Chandra (1998) observed the problem of child labour primarily from educational perspective. She pointed out the failure of Government in fulfilling the directives of the Constitution. Kaushik Basu (1999) used some of the models of child labour to investigate the impact of international standards. It was found that one beneficial effect of such standards could be provided as a help for developing nations to make a coordinated improvement in their working conditions, without causing a flight of capital. Kannan (2001) highlighted that

apart from the concern that child labour is a fundamental developmental problem, it also reflects the new dimension it has acquired in the context of attempt to bring the issue under the World Trade Organisation with a view to link child labour to international trade. A study by Nagaraj (2002) on the *beedi* industry in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, India, shows that the number children in the age group 5 to 14 years attending schools, rises strictly monotonically as the household monthly per capita expenditure rises. Basu and Tzannatos (2003), held poverty as the primary reason behind the incidence of child labour in the developing countries.

### **Objectives of Our Study:**

1. Whether income as a proxy of poverty is the sole criteria behind incidence of 'Roaming working children'?
2. Whether reasons responsible for creating 'Roaming working children' need to be scanned to prevent the increased rate of 'Roaming working children'

### **Methodology:**

To get an in depth understanding on the issue, primary focus has been given to the streets and platform areas in and around Sealdah Station, Howrah Station and Park Circus Station, in Kolkata, West Bengal, India. In this study, the children, mainly in the age group of 5-14, living in and around the Sealdah Station, Howrah Station and Park Circus Station, without any family support, have been considered as the target group. Total 286 'Roaming Working Children' were interviewed who are chosen randomly. However, 43 survey sheets could not be considered due to the following reasons:

- (a) 5 children refused to answer most of the questions
- (b) Answers of 3 children were highly inconsistent
- (c) As the survey sheet was quite intensive, for 35 children it was not possible to complete in one go. Due to their high mobility, these children could be traced after wards and thus 35 survey sheets remained incomplete.

Therefore, total sample size is **243**.

As the target group is highly mobile, no conventional survey method could be followed while surveying. Information was mainly based on personal interview. Building rapport with each child and gaining their trust was given most priority while surveying. Few children, who could be contacted more than once, were interviewed more than once to verify the information about, specially related to their background. 6 Focused Group Discussions<sup>1</sup> (FGDs) were conducted with the children and their stakeholders<sup>2</sup> on different issues to understand the socio-economic conditions of these children.

### **Socio Economic status of the Roaming Working Children:**

Our field survey revealed that out of total 243 'Roaming child workers', the original places of living of 158 (65% of total sample size) is West Bengal, 61(25% ) is Bihar and 24 (10%) is Bangladesh. In West Bengal most of the sample respondents migrated from Diamond Harbour, Raidighi, Kakdwip, North 24 Parganas, Ghutiari Sharif, Kanning, Lakshmikantapur, Machnandapur, Darvanga, Basirhat, Taldi, Dankun. Survey depicts that roaming child workers are much more prevalent in both girls and boys within the age group of 10 and 14 years than that of in the age group below 10 years. It came out from field survey that, 206 (85%) roaming working children are found to be within the age group of 10 to 14 years and the rest 37(15%) children are below 10 years. Within the total sample, 134 (55%) children are male and 109 (45%) are females. The parents of the sample respondents, during the time of leaving their home were mostly daily labourers. They earned from begging, farming, van pulling, taxi driving, serving liquor, selling vegetables, working in brick manufacturing, stationary shops, working as maid servant, sweeper, carpenter, security guard, rag pickers etc. The income and contribution pattern show that during the time of leaving home huge number of fathers' average monthly income was more than that of the mothers but the proportionate monthly financial contribution of the fathers to their respective families was much less than that of the mothers. Study shows that the average monthly income of 170 (70%) fathers and 219 (90%) mothers was less than or equal to Rs.2000. However, 54 (22%) fathers and only 17(7%) mothers earn more than Rs.4000. But income pattern of 19(8%) fathers and 7(3%) mothers is not known to the children as these children had single parent. The distribution of the average monthly income of the families of the sample respondents, during the time of their leaving home, is shown in Table-2. Financial contribution pattern, on the other hand, depicts an interesting fact that while 230 (95%) mothers provide financial contributions towards the family, only 56 (23%) fathers do the same. Thus it is clear that family's total income do not get reflected in the welfare of the family. Major financial contribution comes only from the mothers. However, it is not sufficient to run the entire family which forces their children to work to support the family. Hence, forcing the children to work and earn for the family is a crucial reason for these children to leave home. Different reasons related to the family which play the highest driving forces for the roaming working children behind leaving their home, is stated in Table-3 and Table 4. Major section of the parents did not receive benefits from Public Distribution System (PDS). Finding from survey clearly showed PDS

has been failed to cover 182 (75%) families within the sample. It is also seen that the information related to PDS is totally unknown to 36 (15%) children within the sample size. The survey also reveals that though 209 fathers (86%) are literate, the numbers of literate mothers, which are much lower, was just 29 (12%). This is one of the key explanations behind influence of the father's opinion over that of the mothers in the decision making process within the family. So lack of intra-household decision making power of the mothers forces their children to work as child worker. The pivotal reason for the male children are the parent's pressure on the child to earn for the family, whereas the dominating reasons for the female children are pressure of the parents to do the household works and pressure of parents to get married at an early age. The other reasons for male and female children are explained in the Table 3 and Table 4 respectively. This leads to the fact that poverty is not the sole criteria of the sample respondents during the time of leaving their home for uncertain future and ultimately opting to work as child worker after migrating to urban areas. There are others vital reasons too which play a very important role behind their leaving home and choosing to stay alone on streets.

It has been stated from the survey that 194 (80%) roaming working children is literate and the remaining 49 are illiterate. Out of these 194 roaming working children, 74 children have never been enrolled in any formal schools. They only know how to write their names. The rest 120 roaming working children were enrolled in formal schools. However, out of 194, 190 roaming working children are not continuing their studies at present. As they are detached from the studies, they have forgotten most of the lessons. They just can recognize letters, some words and can write their names. Thus their educational status is not far better than those who have never been to school. Only 4 out of these literate roaming working children are still in touch with education. However, they are not studying in any formal school. They are having non formal education and that too not at a regular basis. As these children roam to different places, they get access to different NGOs where they receive educational support at an irregular basis. Table 5 shows the different reasons of the 190 sample respondents behind not continuing education. While the children were telling several reasons, focus has been given to priorities them. However, many children had more than one reason which is equally important. In Table 5, it clearly shows that 'scope to earn lot of money without having much education' plays the most vital factor and 'no time to study as they need to earn for their livings on their own' acts as a second dominating factor behind not continuing education. However, reasons behind continuing education, stated below, are quite interesting:

- (i) Desire to earn respect within their peer group, (ii) like to study occasionally and (iii) desire to influence in decision making among their peer group as he (she) has better education

Thus it is quite clear that they do not have any desire to pursue their studies formally. They mainly take it as 'time pass' activity which will support them in making their position better in their peer group.

Though 239 roaming working children are not in touch with studies at present, 182 children of the total target group are still interested in study and 61 children are not interested in study.

The reasons behind their interest in studies are:

- (i) Earning respect from others, (ii) Dressing up like school uniform and
- (iii) Enhancing their knowledge level, provided there is no examination system and no confinement in school

The crucial fact is that no children see education as their tool to get job and earn money in future.

It is interesting to observe that 97 (40%) female children and 85 (35%) male children are married once or more than once. They marry for a short time period, depending upon their wish. As they do not have any family pressure for getting married, they marry due to the following reasons:

- (i) Want to have fun, (ii) they feel it is a matter of pride and will give status within the peers, (iii) want to secure protection for a short time from other peers and stakeholders, (iv) want to dress like newly married couple and (v) get influenced by film stars and try to copy the love stories

These children are least bothered about their health. Therefore, their diseases mostly remain undetected. However, the Table 6 shows the distribution of symptoms which are prevalent within these children. Most of the children have multiple symptoms and thus the sum of percentages exceeded 100. Mostly, it is the environment and way of leading their lives that play a key role in showing these symptoms in their body. Physical, emotional and sexual abuses are very common among these children. All these children get physically abused by the police, vendors, peers, employers and coolies.

All these children earn in a daily basis and work in unorganized sector. Table 7 shows the distribution. These children earn through multiple occupations. These children had more than one occupation. Within these children most common activity to earn money is through 'searching trains to collect items or money that are left by the passengers'.



Average income of these sample respondents is calculated on the basis of the average monthly income level of the respondents after considering last three consecutive months as reference period. Here we have considered income both in cash and in kind as these roaming working children also get food, cloths, and medicines from the NGOs. The approximate average valuations of the kind payment are as follows (source: FGD with field workers of NGOs):

- (1). Snacks: Rs. 8 per child per day, (2). Lunch: Rs. 18 per child per day, (3). Dinner: Rs.15 per child per day, (4).Cloths: Rs. 30 per child per month and (5). Medicine: Rs. 35 per child per month

These roaming working children do not save their earned money. Very few amount of their monthly income sometimes might be unspent. So we can consider that their average monthly income is almost identical to their average monthly consumption expenditure. Table 8 shows the distribution of average monthly income of these children during the time of leaving home. It shows totally their own income and it also came out from field survey that the sample respondents had to contribute their entire income for their own family.

Poverty line is the minimum level of income deemed necessary to achieve an adequate standard of living in a given country. According to the opinion of the Expert Group formed by Planning Commission of Government of India under the Leadership of Suresh Tendulkar it was estimated that urban poverty line of West Bengal in 2004-05 was Rs.572.50 (November 2009). It is further updated in the basis of Consumer Price Index for Industrial Workers (CPIIW) of Kolkata of May 2008 considering 2001 as the base year and that has become Rs.727.07 MPCE. However, as the sample respondents are children, their consumption pattern is lower than that of adults. Here we assume that the average monthly consumption expenditure of a roaming working child is half of any adults. Thus in this study we have considered poverty line for these 'Roaming working children' as half of the urban poverty line in West Bengal at Kolkata which ultimately becomes Rs.363 in 2008.

Table-9 shows the present average monthly income as well as consumption status of the roaming working children. It came out from our primary data that 129 sample roaming child workers are below poverty line in 2008 and the remaining children are above poverty line. Within the sample roaming working children, average monthly income of 48 male and 24 female, within the age group between 10 to 14 years, is above poverty line but below Rs.1000. Average monthly income of 9 male and 16 female respondents, within the age 10 and 14 years, is above Rs.1000 but below Rs. 1750. Average monthly income of 2 male and 7 female, within the age 10 and 14 years, is above Rs.1750 but below or equal to Rs. 2500. It

also came out that female children get more lucrative options for earning than male. It is the nature of work that changes over time and with sex, which reflects on their earnings. So it is proved that acuteness of poverty is not so prominent among this type of child workers. It is estimated that near about 50% of the sample respondents do not reside below poverty line but the degree of vulnerability attached to them is severely high. By comparing Table 8 and Table 9, an interesting fact can be drawn that average monthly income of 131 male children and 109 female children has increased in monetary terms from the time of leaving their home and average monthly income of only 3 male children have remained unchanged (here all the calculations are done at constant price considering 2001-02 as base year price). However, the contribution pattern shows that none of these children contribute towards their families. Therefore, 3 male children whose average monthly income has almost remained unchanged actually consume their all earnings by themselves which made them better off in present situations in terms of their average monthly income.

All these children do not have any savings. It has been clearly found that as these children do not save money due to high level of uncertainties in their lives, these children prefer to think of today than tomorrow. The reasons for not having any savings are as follows:

- (i) Nobody knows what will happen tomorrow. So, they enjoy the present, (ii.) No safe place to keep the savings, (iii) High possibilities that police will snatch the money (iv) Peers steal the money and (v) 'Mashi'<sup>3</sup> snatch their earned money.

Next we will move to the distribution of expenditure among the sample respondents. Initially we consider expenditure pattern on food item among the children which has been shown in Table 10. During the time of taking information of expenditure of the sample respondents under different heads we have to depend on mixed reference period mostly followed by NSSO. Here at the time of taking information of expenditure on health, entertainment and consuming substances the reference period is previous one month. From Table 10 it is clear that both male and female roaming working children spend very less in food items. One main reason is that these children gets food distributed through NGOs. They exactly know the timing of distribution of food by the NGOs. These children also find places where they get food in a very cheap rate compromising with the quality. They, mostly, negotiate for food against working in road side shops. Moreover, they steal foods from hotels.

In the Table 11 consumption of non food items by the children has been shown. The children spend a major portion of their earnings in consuming substances. All the children are addicted to substances. Most of them take more than one substances and thus the sum of percentages exceeded 100. They mostly take substances like Ganja, Gul, Dendrite, Tej,

Khaini, Bidi, Country liquor, in groups and share the substances with each other. Table 12 shows the distribution. The children also spend a large amount of their earning in entertainment such as watching films, buying goods that is not necessary for their livings but enhances their status. None of these children have to pay anything for the shelter. They stay in dysfunctional boogies, on stairs of platforms, around the station. They buy or collect plastics and use them while sleeping. Again they sell them when they leave the place to some one. During winter they buy, collect or steal blankets and use that while sleeping. They prefer to sleep in groups. Some of them utilize the night shelters of NGOs. They do not spend any amount for health care as they are not bothered about their health. They prefer not to cure their wounds as they can gain sympathy from others as and can earn money. They mostly go to Government hospitals or NGOs providing health care only during emergencies. Similarly, they spend no amount in education. Some of them access educational facilities from some NGOs occasionally, depending on their moods. However, these roaming working children spend very nominal portion of their earnings on buying cloths. They also sometimes exchange their cloths between peers against money.

Now, we have to investigate whether age, sex and income of the child workers play any significant role in their expenses on substance and entertainment. Initially we consider the expenditure on substances and consider the following linear regression model.

$$Y_i = \alpha_1 + \alpha_2 D_1 + \alpha_3 D_2 + \alpha_4 \text{Income} + \alpha_5 \text{Income}^2 + u_i \dots \dots \dots (i).$$

$Y_i$  = Monthly expenditure on substances of  $i^{\text{th}}$  respondent.

$D_1 = 1$ , if the roaming working child is more than 10 years old  
 = 0, if the roaming working child is less than 10 years old

$D_2 = 1$ , if the roaming working child is male  
 = 0, if roaming working child is female

Income = Average monthly income of the roaming working child.

$u_i$  = disturbance term

Now running simple OLS, we get the following result:

$$Y_i = -336.210* + 63.860*D_1 + 315.024*D_2 + 0877*Income - .0002224*Income^2 + e_i$$

Se = (.000)      (.018)      (.000)      (.000)      (.000)

$R^2 = .741$        $\bar{R}^2 = .737$  ..... (ii)

Where \* indicates the parameter estimate is significant at 1% level.

Expense on substances is observed more among the male working children who are more than 10 years old than their female counterparts. As other coefficients of income and income<sup>2</sup> both are significant, we can say that the consumption expenditure on substances of the male

working children more than 10 years old increases at a decreasing rate with the rise of their average monthly income.

Next we consider the expenditure on entertainment and to test the role of sex, age and income of the roaming working children we again consider the following linear model.

$$E_i = \alpha_1 + \alpha_2 D_1 + \alpha_3 D_2 + \alpha_4 \text{Income} + \alpha_5 \text{Income}^2 + u_i \dots\dots\dots(ii).$$

Here  $E_i \Rightarrow$  average monthly expenditure on entertainment of the  $i^{\text{th}}$  respondent.

The other explanatory variables are as before.

Now after running simple OLS, we get the following results:

$$E_i = 138.703^* + 11.428 D_1 - 279.538^* D_2 + .236^* \text{Income} + .0000462 \text{Income}^2 + e_i$$

S.E. = (.000)      (.543)      (.000)      (.001)      (.205)

$R^2 = .798$       Adjusted  $R^2 = .794$  ----- (iv)

Where \* indicates that estimated parameter are significant at 1% level.

Here age of the sample respondents has no influence on their average monthly expenditure on entertainment.

However, gender of the sample respondent does play a significant role on monthly average expenditure on entertainment. Moreover, we can establish the fact that female roaming working children's average monthly expenditure on entertainment is comparatively more than their male counterpart.

Now, we can see that average monthly income shares a positive relationship with average monthly expenditure on entertainment. However, coefficient of  $\text{Income}^2$  has no significant relationship with average monthly expenditure on entertainment. Thus we can conclude that average monthly expenditure on entertainment and average monthly income of the roaming female child labourers keeps a linear relationship.

**Benefits received from NGOs:**

There are several NGOs working in and around the survey places. These NGOs have several services for the deprived children such as education, health, nutrition, environment and vocational training. However, only 37 (15%) children are under the reach of the existing NGOs. The irony is that not a single child under the sample was found accessing services at a regular basis. All of them are utilizing the services of the NGOs to fulfill their temporary needs. Thus no long term benefit is received by them through the services of the NGOs. The NGOs mainly focus on the children living in and around platform with their parents. They hardly frame strategies to bring these roaming children under their net for their long term

rehabilitation. Thus these roaming children are no way benefited from the NGOs in long term basis.

### **Government initiatives:**

Despite several polices and legislations, shown in *Annexure A*, the degree of the deprivation of the child workers of India is towering. Recently, the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Amendment Act, 2006 has been developed to amend the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2000. Moreover Ministry of Labour & Employment, Government of India issued a Notification dated 10<sup>th</sup> July, 2006, including two new 'Occupations'. According to this, employment of children as domestic workers or servants, in dhabas (road-side eaters), restaurants, hotels, motels, tea shops, resorts and other recreational centers has become 'hazardous' and hence 'prohibited' in terms of the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act. This Notification has come into effect from 10<sup>th</sup> October, 2006. Having no feasible and structured implementation plans, these initiatives have mostly failed to curb the intensity of the problem, till date. The employers of the child workers are most of times can escape themselves from punishment. So we still see the presence of roaming working children in the metropolitan cities of Kolkata. Though India's commitment to children is clearly manifested in its constitution, where many articles are dedicated to children, efforts are needed to make it truly beneficial for the children in the implementation level.

### **Few Recommendations for the Roaming Child Workers.**

There are several interesting literatures which have highlighted on solutions to the problem of child labour. According to Gaonkar (1997), poverty eradication is the main solution to stop the incidence of child labour. He suggested that the main focus of the child labour policy should be to create better employment opportunities for the parents so that they do not need to send their children to work , to provide sufficient quantity of essential commodities through fair price shops and to provide better primary schools with sufficient meals during noon. Tripathy (1997) suggested that mass awareness generation programme, implementation of legal provisions, developmental schemes and selfless efforts of NGOs and Government officials are essentially important for solving the problem of child labour. Dessy (2000) has advocated the imposition of compulsory education as a means to combat the incidence of child labour. Jafarey and Lahiri (2002) and Gupta (2002) have examined the efficacy of imposition of trade sanctions on export items of the developing countries produced by child labour as a policy in curbing the incidence of child labour. Bhargava (2004) has compiled her field notes had narrated how the Government, community and NGOs should work together

for the elimination of child labour. Lieten (2005) warns against using one comprehensive figure for a complex phenomenon like child labour. Bose (2006) mentioned that a comprehensive planning, budgetary allocations and delivery system are required to reach out services to children and their mothers. John (2006) focused on the questions related to elimination of child labour in India. Using NSSO/ NFHS data, he described how different states were facing child labour problems. Poverty is an important but not the sole cause of being roaming child workers. Besides that as these child workers are totally detached from their parents they maintain fully an unhealthy and unsafe life.

In the context of this study some recommendations for these child workers are as follows:

- (i) Authentic data needs to be figured out related to these 'Roaming working children' to actually capture the true dimension of the problem.
- (ii) Effective coordination between the NGOs and the government needs to be there to reach out to these most vulnerable children which can improve their quality of lives. The NGOs should also be operated in the backward rural areas to stop the incidence of escape of the children from their respective home.
- (iii) Awareness regarding the available services, both from NGOs and Government is highly required so that the children can access the facilities as early as possible
- (iv) Proper monitoring on those roaming working children mainly by the NGOs is required in order to check their consumption on substances. Apart from that Government should impose heavy penalty on the employers of child workers who are most of the times small and medium entrepreneurs.

### **Conclusion:**

From the study it is clearly found that degree of vulnerability is very acute among the roaming working children, whose number is gradually increasing. It is also quite clear that the poverty is not the sole reason for becoming roaming working children. Other reasons (most of the times related indirectly to poverty) related to the family play a pivotal role behind the incidence of the Roaming working children. It came out from our field survey that these child workers are economically in a much better position and a good number of them are living above the adjusted urban poverty line of Kolkata. We can also conclude that average monthly expenditure on substance of the male roaming workers above 10 years old is increasing at a decreasing rate with their average monthly income and average monthly expenditure on entertainment of the female child workers keeps a positive linear relationship with their average monthly income.

## **End Notes:**

1. A Focus Group Discussion (FGD) is a group discussion of approximately 6 - 12 persons guided by a facilitator, during which group members talk freely and spontaneously about a certain topic. A FGD is a qualitative method. Its purpose is to obtain in-depth information on concepts, perceptions and ideas of a group. A FGD aims to be more than a question-answer interaction. The idea is that group members discuss the topic among themselves, with guidance from the facilitator.

2. Stakeholders of these children are: community leaders/influencers, coolies, STD booth owner, trolley puller, and vender in and around the Sealdah Station, RPF/GRPF, and police officials of the surrounding police station in the Sealdah area, NGOs working in and around Sealdah Station.

3. 'Mashi' represents a section a ladies who sometimes provide food to the children but have a strong dominance over these children. These ladies take advantages of these children and use these children in different works that are beneficial to these ladies.

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**Table 1: Different Estimates On The Magnitude Of Child Labour In India**

Data sources	Year	Magnitude of child labour in India (in millions)
The National Census	1971	10.74
	1981	13.60
	1991	11.29
	2001	Not published( 13.99 <sup>@</sup> )
International Labour Organisation #	1975	15.10
	1996	23.17
National Sample Survey Organisation #	1987-8	17.60
	1993-4	13.13
	1999-2000	10.23

(Source: @ Projected child labour population for 2001, estimated on the basis of Census figures by Mondira Dutta(2003), *Magnitude of child labour with special reference to girl child-an Indian scenario*, in Zutshi, Bupinder and Dutta(eds), *Child labour rehabilitation in India*.

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**Table 2: Distribution Of Average Monthly Income Of The Families Of The Sample Respondents During The Time Of Leaving Their Home:**

Average monthly income (Rs.)	Male	Female	Total
0-2000	2	7	9
2001-4000	23	82	105
4001-6000	88	15	103
Unknown	21	5	26
Total	134	109	<b>243</b>

Source: Data collected from field survey

Particular	Key Reasons	Number	Total
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No. of male child	<b><i>Reasons related to family</i></b>		<b>85</b>	
	Parent's pressure to earn for the family	2		
	poverty	13		
	Physical abuse on the child by stepmother	3		
	Physical abuse on the child by stepfather	2		
	Father's sexual abusive behavior towards the child	1		
	Mother's sexual abusive behavior towards the child	0		
	Parents did not allow the child to go to school	2		
	More affectionate behavior towards other siblings than the concerned child by the parents	3		
	Pressure to do the household works	0		
	Parent's pressure to give all money earned by the child in the family	38		
	Addiction of father	9		
	Torture on mother by father	2		
	Regular conflicts between the parents	4		
	Parent's pressure to look after other siblings	1		
	Torture on the concerned child by other sibling/siblings	2		
	The child was trafficked by a relative	3		
	<b><i>Reasons related to Education</i></b>			<b>17</b>
	Father/step father did not allow the child to go to school	2		
	Mother/step mother did not allow the child to go to school	1		
Did not want to go to school as the distance was very far from house	1			
No regular class were taken in school	1			
Lack of understanding in some specific subjects and there was nobody to guide the child	2			
Abusive behavior towards the child by the teacher	4			
Unwillingness in studying	3			
No environment to study at home which caused repeated poor results	2			
Parent's increasing expectation from the child about better result	1			
<b><i>Reasons related to friends</i></b>		<b>11</b>		
Influence of the peers to leave home in search of higher standard of living	8			
Influence of peers to do adventure in life	3			
<b><i>Reason related to one's own choice</i></b>		<b>21</b>		
Wanted to have freedom in life	15			
Wanted to earn huge money so that the child can get power to rule others	6			

**Table 3: Reasons Behind Leaving Home Of Roaming Male Children**

Source: Data collected from field survey

**Table 4: Reasons For Leaving Home Of The Female Roaming Child Workers**

<b>Particular</b>	<b>Key Reasons</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Total</b>	
No. of female child	<b><i>Reasons related to family</i></b>		<b>74</b>	
	Parent's pressure to earn for the family	3		
	poverty	9		
	Physical abuse on the child by stepmother	3		
	Physical abuse on the child by stepfather	2		
	Father's sexual abusive behavior towards the child	6		
	Mother's sexual abusive behavior towards the child	0		
	Parents did not allow the child to go to school	1		
	More affectionate behavior towards other siblings than the concerned child by the parents	1		
	Pressure to do the household works	17		
	Parent's pressure to give all money earned by the child in the family	1		
	Addiction of father	4		
	Torture on mother by father	2		
	Regular conflicts between the parents	1		
	Parent's pressure to look after other siblings	2		
	Torture on the concerned child by other sibling/siblings	3		
	Parent's pressure on the child for getting married	12		
	The child was trafficked by a relative	7		
	<b><i>Reasons related to Education</i></b>			<b>5</b>
	Father/step father did not allow the child to go to school	3		
Mother/step mother did not allow the child to go to school	1			
Did not want to go school as the distance was very far from house	0			
No regular class were taken in school	0			
Lack of understanding in some specific subjects and there was nobody to guide the child	0			
Abusive behavior towards the child by the teacher	1			
Unwillingness in studying	0			
No environment to study at home which caused repeated poor results	0			
Parent's increasing expectation from the child about better result	0			
<b><i>Reasons related to friends</i></b>			<b>13</b>	
Influence of the peers to leave home in search of higher standard of living	3			
Influence of peers to run away to avoid marriage fixed by parents	8			
Influence of peers to leave home to marry the person who the child loved	2			
<b><i>Reason related to one's own choice</i></b>			<b>20</b>	
Wanted to have freedom in life	18			
Wanted to earn huge money so that the child can get power to rule others	2			

**Table 5: Key Reasons Of The Sample Roaming Child Workers Behind Not Continuing education**

<b>Vital reasons behind not continuing the education</b>	<b>Number of children</b>
No time to study as they need to earn for their livings on their own	15
No scope to get enrolled to school as they do not have guardians	2
Fear of examinations	3
Similar rough behaviour of the teachers in NGOs as they were in the schools	2
There is no stability in their lives as they roam from one place to another	9
No space to study	2
Fear in Mathematics and English	2
Do not want to be imprisoned in schools	7
Do not get interest in the subjects	1
Do not have patience	7
Spending in buying books will decrease their investment in buying substances for addiction	8
Can not remember lessons	3
Age has become more and can not adjust to younger group	11
They have huge scope to earn lot of money without having much education	28

*Source: Data collected from field survey*

**Table 6: Symptoms Prominent Among The Sample Roaming Working Children**

<b>Symptoms</b>	<b>Number</b>
Infection in skin	223
Fever	98
Cough and cold	59
Acidity	92
Vomiting regularly	65
Shedding blood while vomiting	17
Pain in stomach	151
Infection from injury in several parts of the body	110
Problem in eyes	33
Pain in urinal part	89
Headache	78
Constipation	132
Weakness	88
Problem in breathing	59

*Source: Data collected from field survey*

**Table 7: Different Occupations Of The Roaming Working Children**

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Number</b>
Begging	88
Stealing money and other valuable items	78
Stealing vegetable, fruit and selling them	95
Picking up pieces of iron and selling them	102
Sexual activities with friends	150
As flying sex workers	68
Acting as middle person in transacting ganja, drug, liquor	32
Tying rubber band in the liquor packet	45
Cleaning bogies of the train	78
Polishing shoes	12
Washing utensils, serving food in road side hotels, tea shops	110
Van pulling	92
Rag picking	77
Searching trains to collect items or money that are left by the passengers	218
Collecting 'dhala' (foil pack) from Rajdhani Express and selling them	82

*Source: Data collected from field survey*

**Table 8: Average Monthly Income Distribution Of The Roaming Working Children During The Time Of Leaving Home:**

Average monthly income	No income	Rs.100- Rs150	>Rs.150- <Rs.200	>Rs.200 < Rs.250	TOTAL
No. of male child	0	12	119	3	134
No. of female child	4	93	12	0	109
	4	105	131	3	<b>243</b>

Source: Data collected from field survey

**Table 9: Distribution Of The Present Average Monthly Consumption Expenditure Of The Roaming Working Children**

Average monthly income level of last 3 consecutive months		Rs.200- Rs.363	Rs.363- Rs.1000	>Rs.1000 < Rs.1750	Rs.1750- Rs.2500	Total
No. of male child	Age below or equal to 10 yrs.	13	2	1	0	16
	Age above 10 to 14 yrs.	59	48	9	2	118
No. of female child	Age below or equal to 10 yrs.	16	2	2	1	21
	Age above 10 to 14 yrs	41	24	16	7	88
Total		129	76	28	10	<b>243</b>

Source: Data collected from field survey

**Table 10: Average Monthly Allocation On Food Item Of The Roaming Working Children**

Particular	Expenditure Pattern on Food Item(%)					Total
	Below Rs. 100	Rs.100-Rs.400	Above Rs.400-Rs.800	Above Rs.800 – Rs.1200	Above Rs.1200	
No. of male child	38	88	8	0	0	134
No. of female child	16	89	3	1	0	109
	54	177	11	1	0	<b>243</b>

**Table 11: Average Monthly Allocation On Non Food Item Of The Roaming Child Workers**

Particular	Expenditure Pattern on Non Food Item(%)												TOTAL
	Shelter		Clothing		Education		Health		Substances of addiction		Entertainment		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Below Rs. 100	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	13	13	8	9	46
Rs.100-Rs.400	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	24	24	0	35	86
Above Rs.400-Rs.800	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	74	9	1	14	98
Above Rs.1200	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	0	0	2	13
	0	0	3	3	0	0	0	0	122	46	9	60	<b>243</b>

*Source: Data collected from field survey*

**Table 12: Different Substances Taken By The Child Workers**

Substances taken by the children	Percentage
Ganja	92
Country liquor	88
Dendrite	90
Tej	89
Khaini	72
Bidi	88
Gul	93

*Source: Data collected from field survey*



*Annexure A:*

**Major legislations related to the children in India:**

National Nutrition Policy 1993

Pre-Natal Diagnostic Technique( Regulation And Prevention Of Misuse) Act 1994

Persons With Disabilities ( Equal Protection Of Rights And Full Participation) Act 2000

Juvenile Justice (Care And Protection Of Children) Act 2000, National Health Policy 2002

National Charter For Children 2004 And National Plan Of Action For Children In 2005.