



The Beginners Guide to Child Labour in Cottonseed Farms



GLOBAL MARCH

Against Child Labour
Contra el Trabajo Infantil
Contre le Travail des Enfants



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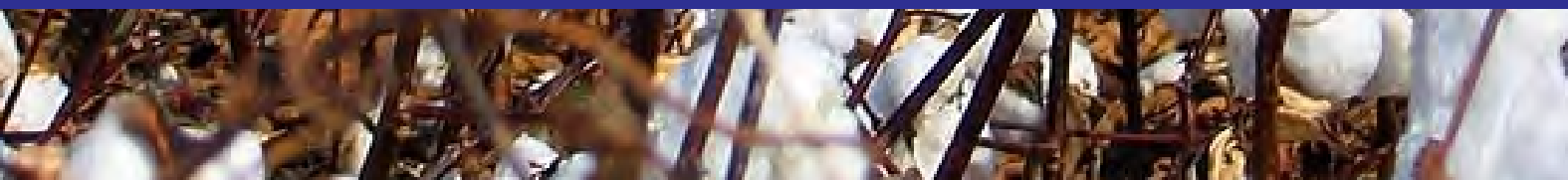
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1.Introduction



History: Cotton is the oldest growing fiber in the history of mankind, present since the Indus valley civilization in 3000 year B.C., traces of cotton balls was also found by the scientists in Mexico which were 7000 years old.¹

It is a vastly used, spun and woven fabric ever since its history of cultivation. When Columbus discovered America he had found cotton growing at Bahamas.

Due to its vast characteristics, cotton has always been the most popular fabric. It has been spun, woven, knitted and worn for as long as it has been cultivated. It is recorded to be highest produced and used natural fabric.

All parts of the cotton plant are useful. The most important is the fiber or lint, which is used in making cotton cloth. Linters – the short fuzz on the seed – provide cellulose for making plastics, explosives and other products. Linters also are incorporated into high quality paper products and processed into batting for padding mattresses, furniture and automobile cushions.²

Growing cotton: Grown in subtropical climate³, cotton is mainly produced in U.S., Uzbekistan, China and India². It requires an average a minimum temperature of 60 degrees Fahrenheit for germination, 70-80 degrees Fahrenheit for vegetative growth, 80-90 degrees Fahrenheit with cool nights during fruiting period and an average rainfall of at least of 50 cm.

It largely requires black or alluvial soil which has the highest water holding capacity. Sowing happens pre-monsoon. Water plays an important role and it can only grow where water is available in abundance.

World's annual production of cotton takes place in over 30 million hectares. With annual total production in May 2009 amounts over 110 million bales. India is second largest producer of cotton with over 25% of total production.

Conventional method of growing cotton involves plowing and listing of the firm seed beds for planting. Depending on the arrival of monsoon seeding is done just before it arrives. Seeding is followed by weed control which involves uprooting weed and grass which share soil nutrients, sunlight and water present for the cotton plant. Two months from planting, flower buds called square appear on cotton plant. Three weeks later, the blossoms open. Their petals change from creamy white to yellow, then pink and finally, dark red. After three days, they wither and fall, leaving green pods which are called cotton bolls.

Inside the Cotton bolls, moist fibers grow and push out from newly form seeds. Eventually, the boll turns brown as it ripens and fibers continue expanding under warm sun. Finally, the boll splits and cotton fibers come out. The cotton bolls are then picked and sent for ginning.



The process of cotton cultivation howsoever varies according to type of cottonseeds.

Types of Cotton: Cottonseeds can be broadly categorized into three kinds:

1. **Regular or conventional cotton**
2. **Organic cotton**
3. **Genetically modified or BT cotton**

Regular or conventional cotton: As the name suggest, regular or conventional cotton is the cotton grown from cottonseeds and the process that has been used for years now. It involves the ideal process of growing cotton, with modernization in terms of machinery now involved in turn of manpower. Plowing and seeding is done through mechanical planters. Cultivators help in weed control. Pesticides help in keeping the moth away from the growing cotton, also fertilizers help in providing nutrition to the plant. Picking is done by a stripper or a picker.

With years of experiments and modernization, the regular cotton now available in market is exposed to various harmful pesticides and fertilizers⁴. Also, the yield of cotton production reduced year after year.

Organic Cotton: Organic cotton is cotton that is grown without chemical fertilizers or pesticides from plants which are not genetically modified.^[8]

Though organic cotton has less environmental impact than conventional cotton, it costs more to produce. Side-effects of conventional production that are avoided in organic growing methods include:

- High levels of agrochemicals are used in the production of non-organic, conventional cotton. Cotton production uses more chemicals per unit area than any other crop and accounts in total for 16% of the world's pesticides.
- The chemicals used in the processing of cotton pollute the air and surface waters.
- Residual chemicals may irritate consumers' skin.

Genetically modified or BT cotton: Cotton and other monoculture crops require an intensive use of pesticides as various types of pests attack these crops causing extensive damage. Over the past 40 years, many pests have developed resistance to pesticides⁵. *Bacillus Thuringiensis* or BT has been used to control insect pests since the 1920s. Because of their specificity, these pesticides are regarded as environmentally friendly, with little or no effect on humans, wildlife, pollinators, and most other beneficial insects⁶.

Transgenic cotton was developed through a strategic alliance between Monsanto and the dominant U.S. seed cotton firm, Delta and Pine Land Co. (D&PL). In 1996, the first year of commercial availability, BT cotton was planted on 1.8 million acres, or 14% of the acreage in the United States⁷.

BT cotton not only ensured protection from pest, but also promised higher yield, which meant more money. Today, it is the most widely grown cotton crop.

Howsoever, BT cotton involves a process of cross pollination which has to be done in the morning hours after the pods are grown. The process of cross pollination, because of pollen grains being heavy and cannot transfer on its own, has to be done manually, which require taking pollen grain from the male boll and putting it to female boll.

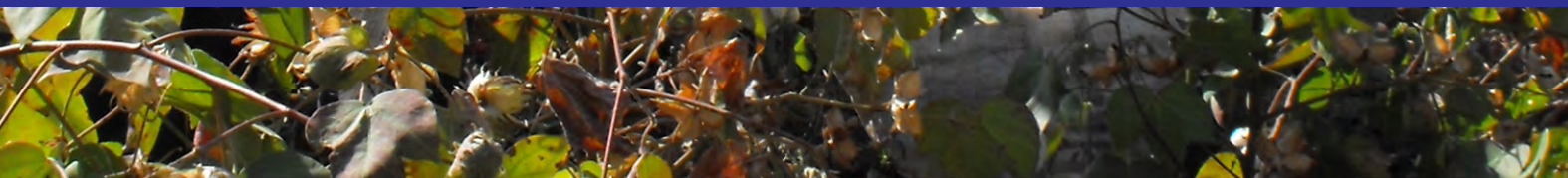
In March 2002, BT cottonseeds were bought in India under MAHYCO-MONSANTO partnership, the seed making company and its Indian subsidiary. Due to its easy maintenance and high yield, BT cotton has gained a lot of popularity in the recent times, 45% of cotton producing land worldwide is engaged in producing BT cotton. In India, about 9 million hectare, of land is engaged in BT cotton production, which makes India largest producer of BT cotton, beating China, producing about 20 million bales of BT cotton. The largest BT cotton producing states are Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh. As of today, apart from MAHYCO-MONSANTO is still the biggest seed providing company in India. Apart from which there is BAYER sciences India Ltd. which also supplies BT cottonseeds.







2. Child Labor in Cotton industry





Requirement of child labor in Farms: Due to low height of the plant and development of bolls happens at two to three feet from ground, it requires a lot of bending down to cross pollinate. Also, the process of cross pollination is very delicate and requires delicate hands to complete the process.

According to Sivaramakrishna, a seed farmer in Mahaboobnagar district, Andhra Pradesh, 'Cross-pollination work is very labor intensive and a large number of laborers is required to do this work. It is also delicate work and needs to be handled carefully. We prefer young girl children for this task because with their delicate fingers (nimble fingers) they can handle this work better than adults. They also work more intensively than adults. We can control them easily. They listen to us and do what ever we ask them to do. The most important thing is labor costs. Nearly half of our investment goes towards payment of labor charges. The wage rates for children are far lower than adult wages. We can reduce our labor costs considerably if we hire girl children. If we want to hire adult labor we have to pay higher wages. With current the procurement price we get from the seed companies we can not afford to pay higher wages to the laborers'.^[9]

Process of Recruitment: The children working in the cotton seed farms are often migrated from the neighboring states or districts. In Gujarat, the workers migrate from Southern Rajasthan, where as in Andhra Pradesh children are from neighboring districts of Andhra Pradesh.

The recruitment in BT cotton fields happens mainly between July and September, which is the cotton growing season in India. "Mates" or agents play a very important role in recruitment of the children. Mates are the residents of migrating districts. They are provided a commission of Rs. 4-6 per day per labor in the

cotton seed farm by the seed company. Mates provide an advance amount to the parents of the worker child. Mates usually take their relative's children to work. These children range between 8-16 years of age. Each village has approximately 200 such mates who take children from their extended families to work.^[10]

As per Indian law, payment of advances violates bonded labor act, and is prohibited. Still, in these areas, advances and bonded labor are common practices. The above stated method of recruitment, is named under migration at these fields where as, they violate law of migration of labor and come under trafficking of labor for work.

In mostly cases mates convince families to send the child away for two months to the fields. In few others, where family deny sending kids to the field mates convince the child, and tell him where to meet from where they go to the field without the parental knowledge.

Condition of Labor: Due to the nature of the work, where cross pollination happens early in the morning, children at BT cottonseed farms began their work at dawn. Work starts at 4 a.m. when children are woken up to see whether the flowers have opened and then work continues up to noon. Laborers start again at 2 p.m. and work till 7 or 8 p.m. Children, adolescents and adults live in makeshift accommodation on the farms, which are far away from the villages. They are completely isolated.^[10]

Most of the children who have worked in the cotton seed farms hesitate to talk about the condition of living in the fields. However, cases of deaths or sexual harassment catch media attention time to time. One such news on August 18, 2009 covered the news of death of a child who was reported missing from the village. The family of the girl child claimed the cause of the death to be sexual abuse on which there was a due inquiry set up.^[11] Every year there is one to two deaths the reason for which is sexual harassment, illness due to pesticides or poisonous snake bites.

Apart from serious issues like deaths or prolonged illness, overall condition of labor is also poor. Long work hours in sun, improper meal and living conditions makes it difficult for labors. Also, these factors contribute to falling health of child labors. Children, who have worked in fields year after year, have failed to experience normal growth due to malnourishment and work pressure.

Incidences of Trafficking, Fact and figures:

One of the raids by the DRMU (Dakshini Rajasthan Majdoor Union) reported that 46 vehicles were stopped by the DRMU with the assistance of the Police and the Road Transport Authority between July and August 2007. Apart from private vehicles, both from Gujarat and



Rajasthan, children were also going in state transport buses. The total number of workers was 1325, of whom 161 were boys and 127 were girls. All of these children were being taken away at the dead of night. Many of them had walked from home at night and met up with the mates and other workers at designated places from where they were taken away in vehicles. Several of them had not even told their parents that they were leaving home. They were huddled together in the vehicles and had no idea where they were being taken. Some of them who had left with their parents' consent were scared to go back home without having earned any wages for fear of reprisals at home. Repeated raids and awareness programs have resulted in higher incidences of trafficking as now many parents are not willing to send the children, but the Mates take them if the child is willing to work. ^[12]

There are total of approximately 2.26 lakh child labors involved in the cotton seed farms. Howsoever, the government and the seed companies deny the involvement of the child labor in the cotton fields.

Many of the movement of labor which takes place is shown as migration of labor, which in fact in many cases is trafficking of child labor, as in most of these incidences the mate provides a false image to the parent or the child involved. Also, providing advances for work is against law and violates bonded labor act.

Present Laws, NGOs: As there are a lot of migrated labor in Gujarat cotton fields, DMRU is one of the most active organization working against migration of child labor from Rajasthan. They conduct trainings and awareness program on the side affects of the child labor involvement in the cottonseed farms, they also control and raid to rescue children from cottonseed farms. Another such organization that works actively in Andhra Pradesh is MV foundation, which also works in stopping child labor in the cottonseed farms.

But these organizations face resistance from government, which denies involvement of the child labor in the cottonseed farms and refuses to help conduct frequent raids, the irresponsible parents, who do not believe in the side affects of child labor and refuse to stop their child from working in the fields, children who do not understand the concern of their parents or organizations and leave for fields without their parents consent and the seed companies and agents who play the major part in employment of children in the farms.

DMRU studied the key regulatory acts by Supreme Court and their limitations in BT cottonseed farms. ^[12]
Some of the acts are:

1. Child Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 (CLA): prohibits child below 14 year to work in any establishment. If at all he works no child is allowed to work between 7 p.m. to 8 a.m. and not more than three hours without a break. CLA howsoever does not discuss minimum wage for the child labor. As stated above all these laws by CLA are violated by the cottonseed farmers.
2. Minimum Wage Act, 1948: (MWA): The MWA has provision not only to ensure payment of minimum wage and overtime but it also has the provision for revision of wage every five years. It is ironic that in one of the most developed state with highest growth rates the current (October 2007) rate of





Minimum Wage at Rs 50/- is one of the lowest. This wage rate was fixed in April 2002 and since then it continues to be the same as it is not linked with the price index. Moreover, as per the MWA, wage rates should be revised every five years. But the revision is still pending.

3. Interstate Migrant Workmen (CS & RE) Act, 1979 (ISMWA): This Act was enacted to safe-guard the interests of the inter-state migrant workmen. The following facts of the case do not leave any scope for any ambiguity on the issue: (a) workers are recruited by the agents on the instructions of the employers. Many employers have signed form VI. (b) The number of workers employed in each establishment is more than five. (c) The employers are already paying one-way (onward) journey cost to workers. (d) Accommodation is provided free of cost to all the workers. (e) The workers are from the state of Rajasthan and the employers and the establishments are located in the state of Gujarat. The employers, however, are escaping the provisions on the basis of certain documentary requirement from the employers as stipulated in the Act/Rules. The employers do not get themselves registered.
4. Bonded Labor (Abolition) Act, 1976 (BLA): The provisions the BLA suggest that there are four important stipulations that need to be satisfied to be bonded labor as per the Act. First, there should be an advance. Second, the worker should be doing work in lieu of that advance. Third, the wages paid are less than the minimum wage prescribed by the competent authority. Fourth, worker loses the right to move freely through out the country. All these stipulations, as we noted above, are satisfied in case of the BT cotton workers irrespective of age, caste region and religion of the workers. In fact, the only one fact that workers are paid less than the minimum wage make them bonded labor as per the ruling of the Supreme Court of India.

Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2008: The act asks for free and compulsory education for every child above 6 years and less than 14 years, under which the child can not be expelled or withdrawn during this phase. However, the children working at the BT cottonseed farms do not get any education while working at the farms.







3. International world of Fair trade cotton



Studies undertaken: Due to heavy involvement of Child labor in cotton farms in Uzbekistan and other cotton growing regions as well, there are several studies that have been undertaken internationally which study the involvement of child labor in cottonseed farms. The study by Environmental Justice Foundation on “The children behind our cotton”^[33] is one of the most referred studies.

As per this study six of the world's top seven cotton producers have been reported to use children in the field. Children are recruited, at the expense of their schooling, for numerous exacting, dangerous and tedious tasks, from hybrid cottonseed production to pesticide application and pest control. Children are also involved in the harvest; since the crop can be hand-picked by underpaid or free labor, there is little incentive for mechanization of the industry. They may be subjected to beatings, threats of violence and overwork. Shocking cases of sexual harassment and abuse of girls have been reported in some major cotton-producing countries. Children are often trapped in debt-bondage due to loans extended to their impoverished parents, while others are only guaranteed payment – usually pitiful sums – at the end of several months' work.

While the growth of ethical consumerism has prompted a rising interest in organic and Fair trade cotton, and conditions in textile factories have come under harsher scrutiny, little attention has so far been paid to conditions in conventional and BT cotton fields. Retailers need to be aware of who is handling the cotton at every stage of the process. The failure of producers, traders and, in particular, retailers, to track their supply chain means that products made using child labor can easily enter western consumer markets. Practical measures can swiftly be taken to address transparency of sourcing; with a labeling scheme established that identifies the country of origin of the cotton as well as the country of manufacture. The onus falls on actors at various stages of the supply chain – on consumers to demand clear labeling from retailers; retailers to require transparency from textile companies; and cotton traders to clarify the sources of their supply. Meanwhile, international pressure must be brought to bear on all countries that have yet to ratify and implement ILO Conventions on child labor. Consumers and retailers at each end of the financial scale can use their purchasing power to ensure that children are not paying a terrible price for our clothes and goods. In particular, European and North-American consumers, accounting for around 75% of world clothing imports, have enormous potential to influence the way in which this industry operates.

One of the other studies that cover the other aspect of fair trade retailing is by Alexander James Nicholls, “Strategic options in Fair Trade retailing” which notes that there has been a significance increase in the market of fair trade products in UK in last five years. It also provides a definition of fair trade and goes onto set a context for expansion of this market by examining the key drivers behind it.^[34]

A study by ILO focuses on Azerbaijan and states that the problem of child labor is one of the negative phenomena of transition to market economy. The factors contributing to child labor have been identified to be poverty, unemployment, high level of migration, number of children in the family and problems in provision of family needs; low level of education; existing intentions of getting profit due to child labor; insufficient social protection; indifference of society to a problem, family disharmony and diminishing family support; trafficking of children within the country and inadequate enforcement of labor and criminal laws. It explain the present laws and defines how the laws and regulations are not enforced and many

children continue to be engaged in the different spheres of economy having been deprived from the schooling that brings to illiteracy of population and loss of skilled labor force in the future. It also describes UNICEF's inefficiency to address the issue in the region.^[15]

Journalist Dan McDougall^[16] reports the extent of child labor behind Egyptian cotton, and explains lifestyle of an Egyptian family and states that for the children here, education is a luxury their parents cannot afford. Instead their days are regulated by the harvests: radishes in winter, onions in spring and Egyptian cotton in summer and autumn. In the next month the fields that cling to the banks of the Nile will be full of children working the cotton for up to 10 hours a day. Perhaps most alarming is the nature of their work – removing the bollworm, the cotton farmers' nemesis, and handling plants drenched in pesticides. Accurate health studies are thin on the ground here, but many of the children complain of breathing difficulties at the height of summer.

An estimated 2.7m children work across the country, the majority in agriculture, with more than 1m hired each year for the cotton harvest, during which they work long hours in 40°C heat. Increasingly, though, there is no school time in between. In a recent UNICEF survey, nearly all children asked reported beatings by foremen in the fields.

According to most NGOs, eradicating child labor in agriculture in Egypt would be impossible, as it is traditionally an issue between families. But investigation in the Nile Valley has found that the children are more likely to be victims of modern-day gang masters, who recruit them from impoverished families to work the fields from dawn until dusk.

Egypt's cotton exports are worth £150m, a business that should be securing the livelihoods of the farmers. Instead, Egypt is a nation of thousands of families, trying to survive amid inflation, corruption, dwindling water resources, high fuel prices and a government that has yet to ease their burden. Now, the farmers feel besieged on all sides. Their decrepit irrigation systems, which pump waters from the increasingly depleted Nile, are rusting. The cost of seeds and fertilizer has soared. Many pay rich landowners ever higher rents for the right to work their modest lands. Those who own their own simple farms end up with smaller and smaller plots as each generation's inheritance subdivides farms among several sons.^[16]

Business Models: Fair trade model is a vast discussed term not only by companies but also by NGOs and government of various nations. Fair trade is term vastly used in food and cosmetics which are major consumer consumptions apart from garments. We can study different models in food and cosmetics, not that they are perfect but are remarkable changes of the industry. The “fair fish tuna” model that ensured that there were no FADs and other damaging fishing methods that happened in order to pack tuna for the UK market by one of the largest retailer.^[17] The model covers over 70 percent of the UK market now.

Howsoever, in garment there are no such business models that can be studied or generalized to the industry. The companies, if any have worked to promote fair trade cotton and eradicate child labor from cotton fields it has been at such small scale that it is a very tokenistic measure and is not applicable for masses studies.

Role of NGOs, Government and Companies: International Labor Organization is the biggest organization worldwide that works in labor interest in protection of their rights. Various regional NGOs with varied area of interests are working in cotton fields. There are NGOs who look at protection of migrated labor, child labor, labor association, environmental concerns, labor rights and interests, etc. and each of them has their bit of interest in BT cottonseed farms. But most of times these NGOs working within confidentiality of their organization fail to make concrete efforts because of the economic and legal limitations.

Governments of cotton producing nations in their own measures are working towards child labor issues in cotton fields of their countries. However, due to different socio-economic structure of different nations, government policies vary from one to another. For e.g. minimum age of child labor, hours and areas of work, etc. are different in each nation. Countries where agriculture is only source of income, it is considered fine for child to work in fields assisting his parents. As stated above at various regions family structures and values allow child to work with their family and in such circumstances government has a very limited role. Social values and cultural background of different nations limits the scope for generalization of applicability of international laws. However, various governments in their own reach have different laws and regulation towards child labor in the industry. Each of them has different policy on child development and education and has its own way of monitoring child labor.

Most of textile and garment companies are either not aware or not concerned of the issue of child labor in the cottonseed farms. Cotton goes through a long process before it reaches the retailer, and the retailer is only concerned of the supplier and not of the supply chain behind it. However, there are a few retailers who are concerned of the issue or have been targeted by the global media to look at the issue of child labor in their supply chain. Such companies within their limitations try to resolve the issue within their domain. But as stated earlier, each of the companies no matter how big is not more than 5% of the cotton market. Also, at times the companies face resistance from the local NGOs or the government. The companies concerned, also face internal tussles as on profit versus ethical trade. As a result, there have been companies who have worked on issue in or without collaboration of NGOs and government, but have been very limited in their reach to be really counted upon. Lack of consumer awareness and media also play an important role to why the issue has not been subjected so far.





4. Research in India

Abstracts of Studies undertaken: There have been several studies undertaken by NCPCR and other free standing organizations working in this field. Some of the local NGOs and labor unions have also raised the issue and have conducted research in the fields. Some of the relevant studies are being stated below.

Child Labor in Cottonseed Production by Ashok Khandelwal^[12]

The report is the result of a survey conducted at cotton fields of six different companies and gives details of labor conditions in these fields. Some of the details that study discusses are:

The fact of use of extensive child labor in cottonseed industry

Southern Rajasthan being the main source of labor

Suppression by company representatives

Exploitative policies of seed companies

Advances ensure supply of labor

Poor living condition of labor

Verbal and physical abuse of labor along with extensive exploitation

The study also gives a detail list of various laws present and compares failure of regulation and presence of illegal activities. It also talks about impact of the practice that results into bondage, inter- generation transfer of misery and impact on health of workers.

Children migrating for work from Dungarpur district, Rajasthan, to Gujarat: A Report^[10]

The report is the compilation of the study that has been conducted at the host districts which provide maximum labor to cottonseed fields.

The report talks about the story of families, cycle of work, role of mates, stories from labors on method of recruitment and living conditions, role of children on farms and mental and sexual harassment on the field. It also provides estimates of child labor on fields and also discusses presence of child labor in other industries. It explains the violation of human rights on cottonseeds farms and other fields.

It briefly discusses the role of DMRU in reducing migration of child labor and the limitations and problems that have been there which doesn't ensure the desired result. The study ends with strong recommendation in terms of action to be taken by the government and scope of improvement of condition.

Enquiry Visit to Gadwal (Mahabubnagar) and Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh^[18]

The report is the result of a visit to one of the districts in Andhra Pradesh where child labor in cottonseed farms had been reported.

Apart from the discussion on board and visitors the report highlights on key issues involved in child labor in Andhra Pradesh. It informs the presence of extensive child labor, especially girls in cottonseed farms and explains the lack of awareness of relevant legislation.

It provides details on company's responsibilities on involvement on child labor and use of pesticides and harmful chemicals on farms. It also explains the missing concept of laws related to work hours, wages, living condition and hazardous conditions on the field.

It explains the lack of interaction between communities, NGOs, child activists and government officials and how in turn it results in poor condition and lack of improvement.

It talks of failure of different departments set to work on child education, social welfare, women and child development and police which due to their lack of interaction and coordination fail to address the real issue.

It gives detailed study on lack of infrastructure and manpower in terms of teachers, etc. to help rescued child during the process of rescue and providing education along with the explanation on the missing concept of counseling and rehabilitation.

Child Bondage Continues in Indian Cotton Supply Chain^[9]

The recent trends in employment of child labor in hybrid cottonseed production in different states in India clearly indicate that the overall number of children employed in this sector is on the rise. According to report, in the 2006-07 cultivation season, nearly 416,460 children under the age of 18, the majority of them (54%) younger than 14, were employed in cottonseed farms in Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka states which account for nearly 92% of the total production area in the country. Gujarat, accounts for nearly 175,260 (42%) of the total children employed in this sector. The Indian companies Nuziveedu, Raasi, Ankur and Mahyco (a joint venture partner of Monsanto), make use of around 200,000 children who are employed by the farmers to which they have sub-contracted the cultivation of BT cotton seeds.

The study states that the response of state and central governments and the seed industry to address the problem of child labor in this sector has not been very encouraging. Though the efforts made by a few NGOs like MV Foundation, special projects implemented by ILO-IPEC, UNICEF and initiatives by few individual seed companies in the state of Andhra Pradesh had some positive impact, due to their limited coverage these efforts have had a very minimal impact on the overall magnitude of child labor in the cottonseed industry.

Limitation, Repetitions and Shortcomings: There are several studies apart from the above stated ones which have raised the issue of child labor in BT cottonseed farms in India. It is nearly impossible to reach out to and read each big and small study conducted. But the most prominent and relevant studies undertaken also have their limitations. One of the major limitations is the timeline of the survey. As the cotton season is short lived the study has to be designed and conducted within the period. Also the conditions are so restrictive and misguiding at the farms it is very tough to collect the accurate data from the fields. Neither the owners, nor the agent or workers give out any information to the surveyor. In such circumstances most of the studies lack accurate statistics of the extent and condition of the child labor in the fields.

Also, most of the studies that have been conducted focus on the numbers of child labor involvement, condition of labor in the fields, role of agents, payment terms and how bad the condition is. Studies repetitively talk about the same issue in a particular region. But there are very few studies that talk about the role of government, failure of implementation of the law and role of NGOs. There are almost no relevant suggestions as to what are the measures that can be taken to improve the condition.

5. Gap/ Opportunity identification

So far it has been discussed how each stake holder, the government, NGO, the retail brands have been doing the bit to change the condition of the child labor involvement in cottonseed farms. But at the same time it is also known that there is hardly any change in the condition and involvement of children in cottonseed farms.

The structure of the industry is such that the supplier companies often blame buyers for unethical practices, claiming low prices and competitive atmosphere. Buyer companies in turn blame suppliers for not ensuring the ethical practices in their business. At the same time there are several NGOs who blame garment retailers for the current condition while others blame seed companies for the same. Seed companies in turn have an issue of high labor turnover and blame government for their difficult to meet policies and norms, and have an issue of dealing with labor shortage. Thus, around the industry, there have been no substantial measures but has several stakeholders who want to improve the condition of the industry.

The analysis of the studies shows that often the limitation of one stake holder in the industry is the strength of another. Like where the NGO or the company has to follow the laws, government has the power to change the law. At the same time where NGOs have financial limitation to provide the difference cost of replacement of child labor, the retail companies have the liberty to pay the difference and retrieve the same from consumer.

Thus, the present structure of the industry gives out an opportunity for stakeholders to work in collaboration with each other towards the issue of child labor involvement in cottonseed farms. In an ideal condition, the company needs to know its cotton supplier and supports government raids and inspection to clear the field of child labor. Also, it works with the supplier to jointly manage the cost of replacements. NGOs in this scenario collaborate with government to monitor counseling and rehabilitations. Also they can help government in implementation and regulation of laws. Each of the stakeholders shares information through a transparent channel and helps in keeping the cotton fields free of child labor and exploitation.

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