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Child Labour and Schooling in India

A reappraisal

UNICEF INNOCENTI – GLOBAL OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND FORESIGHT JULY 2024

Executive summary

The pursuit of universal schooling is one of the key strategies adopted worldwide to end child labour. This is because child labour and schooling are intricately connected. A 2021 report by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reveals, for instance, that across the world, more than one third of children in child labour are out of school. Especially worrying is the large share of younger children in child labour who are excluded from school despite falling within the age range for compulsory education.

The 2020 global estimates of child labour show that 160 million children – 63 million girls and 97 million boys – were in child labour globally at the beginning of 2020, with child labour defined as work that is hazardous to child health and development and interferes with the right to education. Several regions have made steady progress in reducing child labour; for example, the number of children in child labour in the Asia and the Pacific region declined from 62.1 million in 2016 to 48.7 million at the start of 2020. Even so, the region is likely to miss the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 8.7, to end child labour by 2025, unless the region achieves an average rate of reduction of 35 per cent per annum. It is estimated that, without accelerated efforts, the region is likely to have 33.4 million children in child labour in 2025 and 22.7 million children in child labour in 2030.

India has made rapid progress towards the universalization of school education, hand in hand with a decline in child labour. The Government of India and its development partners have put in place several initiatives to combat child labour over the past two decades. Several legislative measures to prevent child labour and to promote schooling have been enacted – for example, the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act 2016 to regulate child labour practices and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act 2012. On the education front, in addition to the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009 and the integration of the Mid-Day Meal Scheme into the National Food Security Act 2013, other more recent initiatives include the launch of the Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing (DIKSHA), a national digital platform for school education in 2017, and the National Initiative for School Heads' and Teachers' Holistic Advancement (NISHTHA), a teacher capacity building programme. In alignment with the National Education Policy 2020, the Government of India launched the National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy (NIPUN Bharat 2021) and the PM Schools for Rising India (PM SHRI 2022) for the upgradation of schools. Also released were the National Curriculum Framework for Foundational Stage (NCF FS) in 2022 and the National Curriculum Framework for School Education in 2023.

While overall trends in child labour have declined as education enrolment has increased – suggesting a strong association between universal education and eradication of child labour – many forms of child work and child labour continue to persist, just as school attendance and completion rates reveal gaps in educational attainment. Building a better understanding of the linkages between school participation, child work and child labour in India generates new insights into how best to support and strengthen the role of education in the elimination of child labour.

This report describes recent patterns in child work and child labour in India and their linkages with children's school participation. The study uses secondary quantitative survey data and primary qualitative interviews with the objectives of:

- describing patterns of child work and child labour (including work below the minimum age, hazardous work and the worst forms of child labour other than hazardous work, such as child trafficking) in India, updating existing estimates which primarily relied on Census 2011 data;
- assessing the interlinkages between children's participation in school, work and labour; and
- exploring children's perspectives of the experience of work and labour and the intersections with schooling, including during the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting school closures.

Key findings

Measuring child work and child labour in India is challenging, mostly because available national surveys have not been designed to specifically measure child labour but instead capture children's economic activities as part of wider labour surveys. There are also information gaps, especially regarding the amount of time spent by children in economic activities, as well as child participation and time spent in household chores. Hence, while to the authors' knowledge the surveys used in this report represent the most comprehensive available information for the purpose of capturing child labour in India, results must be interpreted considering the above limitations. National and international child labour definitions also partially differ, resulting in varied estimates of child labour.

Child work and child labour: Estimates of child work and child labour in India are available for the periods 2011/12 and 2018/19. Below, a summary of previous estimates is reported, complemented by estimates obtained from data analysis conducted as part of this report.

Considering child work, according to the Census of India 2011, 11.8 million children aged 5–17 were main workers (those working more than six months).[1]

Analysis conducted as part of this report using the Employment and Unemployment Survey (EUS) 2011/12 reveals that 12.9 million children aged 5–17 were engaged in economic activities in the year preceding the survey. Analysis of the 2018–19 Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS 2018/19) reveals that 2 per cent of all children – close to 5 million children aged 5–17 – were engaged in economic activity in India.

Regarding child labour, estimates derived by combining the EUS 2011/12 and the India Human Development Survey 2011/12, which included children working in hazardous industries and those that worked for long hours in economic activities or household chores, indicate that close to 13.2 million children were in child labour, corresponding to 4 per cent of all children in the 5–17 age group.[2] Using EUS 2011/12, the ILO estimated that 5.8 million children aged 5–17 years – corresponding to 1.9 per cent of children in this age group – were involved in designated hazardous industries and occupations.[3] Drawing on the 2019 India Time Use Survey, which allows

a granular description of activities done by children including household chores, another study found that about 7 per cent of children aged 6–17 years were in child labour in 2019.[4]

Analyses of data from PLFS 2018/19 conducted as part of this report reveal that the estimated number of children in child labour in India ranged from 1.8 million (0.7 per cent of all children aged 5–17 years) using the national definition to 3.3 million (1.3 per cent of children) using the most comprehensive international definition.

Analyses of EUS 2011/12 and PLFS 2018/19 conducted as part of this report reveal similar socioeconomic patterns of child work and child labour. Almost 50 per cent of working children work within the family. The agricultural sector engages nearly half of them and the industrial sector (including manufacturing and construction) one third of them. Approximately 14–17 per cent of working children were engaged in the service sector. The gender dimensions of child labour need further attention, as the work children do within the household is typically underreported, especially for girls, who are more heavily involved in household chores.

Work participation among children aged 5–17 years tends to be:

- higher among older children;
- higher among boys than girls;
- higher among children residing in rural rather than urban areas;
- higher among Scheduled Tribe children than those belonging to other castes;
- higher among Muslim children than those belonging to other religions; and
- higher among children belonging to the poorest households.

Child labour patterns were also similar, with the main difference being that in 2018/19 industry was the largest sector for children in child labour. Agriculture represented the second largest sector, followed by services and other sectors.

Worst forms of child labour: The worst kinds of child labour include work in hazardous industries or occupations, and long hours of work (as opposed to 'other child labour', mostly covering work below the minimum age). Results show that most child labour occurs in these worst forms, by engaging children in hazardous industries or occupations, and/or for long hours (as opposed to engaging children below the minimum age). Children from socially disadvantaged religious and caste groups and economically poor households and children who were out of school were more likely to be engaged in hazardous work. Commonly reported are also abuse and mistreatment of children by their employers, particularly in factories, including physical and verbal abuse, low salary and denial of health services, even when children experience accidents and injuries.

Sectors that require specific attention to address the worst forms of child labour include domestic work outside the household, the production of bangles, glass products and leather products, and work in brick kilns or construction, among others. Other than hazardous work, the worst forms of child labour – such as child trafficking, the use of children in illicit activities and the exploitation of street-connected children – are rarely captured in large-scale surveys. One exception is the 2011 Census, which reported that 9 per cent of beggars in India were children.

Schooling and work: Most children aged 6–17 years – 9 out of 10 children – were classified as attending school only (i.e., not working) in India in the last decade, as reported in national data (PLFS 2018/19). Hardly any children were reported as combining school and work (less than 1 per cent) and small proportions of children were reported as concentrating on work or not pursuing either school or work. However, data on children's activity status are not consistent across surveys. It is also difficult to isolate causal relationships between work and schooling using quantitative methods, because both outcomes are simultaneously affected by similar factors. Perspectives from children and caregivers are therefore especially valuable to assess the interrelationship between work and schooling.

For example, although not directly comparable, life event calendar data from the Population Council's UDAYA survey on 15–19-year-olds in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh show 17–25 per cent of boys and 12–15 per cent of girls combine school and work at 10 years of age. Children and caregivers interviewed in 2021 as part of the qualitative study conducted for this report also reported that a relatively high proportion of children combine school and work. Further, they consistently reported that working has a negative impact on school participation and learning. These findings on the inverse association between schooling and child work are underscored by evidence from multiple sources. Overall, hours of school attendance may leave significant time for work and attendance records may not reflect the extent and quality of school participation.

PLFS 2018/19 data also suggest that children's activity status varies by demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. For example, boys are more likely to be only working, while girls are more likely to be neither in school nor working. Children belonging to the richest households are more likely to be only in school compared with children from the poorest households.

The qualitative interviews conducted in 2021 as part of this project also further show that school closures and remote learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately affected school attendance and learning among children who already experienced barriers to accessing education. Child marriage also continues to disrupt children's schooling, particularly girls' schooling.

Schooling and migration: The Census 2011 data – the only available national figures on migration – estimate that 450 million individuals (37 per cent of the population) were internal migrants, with every fifth migrant in India a child, giving an estimated total of 93 million migrant children. Against this broader backdrop, participants in the qualitative survey reported on children sent to cities to engage in factory work, including Delhi, Hyderabad, Jaipur (for the bangle sector), Meerut and Mumbai, as well as several neighbouring states, such as Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and West Bengal.

Half of the primary caregivers in our qualitative sample reported that children are able to study in their migration destination, while others commented that schooling and work requirements conflict. School participation is especially difficult if children follow parents working in the brick kilns sector, which is often temporary work, with locations changing from one year to the next. Children from better-off families are more likely to attend school at the migration destination, while access to school at the destination remains poor among children from more disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds. Hence, providing better access to and quality of education to migrant children at their destination remains a priority. Children left behind in migrant households tend to continue with their schooling, although some experience challenges related to economic vulnerability and limited adult supervision.

Recommendations

Emerging from the findings of this study are two sets of recommendations for strengthening the role of education in keeping children out of work and labour and for generating better evidence to track the elimination of child labour.

For improved policy and programming: Ending child labour requires a substantial increase in investments for children's schooling, particularly quality education, and equitable reach for the most disadvantaged groups must be ensured. Education and child labour elimination policies need to align more closely, in terms of identifying synergies and ensuring greater intersectoral coordination. Better targeting of child labour prevention efforts to vulnerable groups and geographies should become a priority and this is possible using available data and evidence. Vulnerable groups include children from the poorest households, or those from the most disadvantaged groups in terms of wealth, caste, religion or migration background. Programmes are also needed that promote positive attitudes towards education and school completion and that demonstrate to parents the relevance of the curriculum for fulfilling children's aspirations. Such programmes should be combined with social protection interventions for reducing economic pressures that tend to dissuade parents from enrolling their children in school and from keeping them in school once enrolled.

For better research and evidence generation: Measuring children's work and child labour accurately should become a priority, to better inform policy actions to eliminate child labour in India. This calls for the inclusion of a standard set of questions in national-level surveys that can accurately measure children's work and child labour, including exposure to work-related hazards. Information collected should include both participation and hours worked, including in household chores and economic activities within the household, which remain otherwise invisible. Mixed-method studies that can complement national data with perspectives directly gathered from children, using age-appropriate and ethical methods, can provide more accurate insight into child work and its interlinkages with other dimensions of children's well-being. Gender gaps are particularly notable and detailed time use data are key to providing more realistic insights into the work undertaken by children within the home and outside.

While our analysis highlights some sectors where hazardous child labour exists (including bangle, glass and leather production), evidence gaps remain on the scale, geographies, causes and potential solutions for this. Evidence is especially limited on the worst forms of child labour other than hazardous work, such as child trafficking and the use of children for illicit activities.

More analysis is needed to better assess the prevalence of children combining school and work and the specific challenges this poses in terms of school completion and learning. The same holds for children that are neither working nor attending school. Finally, mixed-method research is needed on children affected by migration and the challenges they face to continue their schooling.

Contents

1. Introduction and objectives

India has made rapid progress towards the universalization of school education, hand in hand with a decline in child labour. The Government of India has demonstrated its commitment to end child labour by ratifying ILO Conventions 138 and 182, introducing the 1986 Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, and the 2016 Amendment Act completely prohibits children under 14 from employment and bans adolescents (14–18 years) from hazardous occupations. India has also implemented various initiatives to promote universal access to education nationwide. These include the launch of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in 2001, the passing of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009, which ensures the right to education for all children up to the age of 14, and the integration of the Mid-Day Meal Scheme into the National Food Security Act 2013. Other more recent initiatives to improve school education include the launch of Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing (DIKSHA), a national digital platform for school education, in 2017, and the National Initiative for School Heads' and Teachers' Holistic Advancement (NISHTHA) in 2019/20, which is the world's largest Integrated Teacher Training Programme for different stages of school education. Besides these, in alignment with the National Education Policy 2020, the Government of India launched the National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy (NIPUN Bharat 2021), and the PM Schools for Rising India (PM SHRI 2022) for the upgradation of schools. Also released were the National Curriculum Framework for Foundational Stage (NCF FS) in 2022 and the National Curriculum Framework for School Education in 2023.

While overall trends in child labour have declined as education enrolment has increased – suggesting a strong association between universal education and the eradication of child labour – many forms of child work and child labour continue to persist, either hidden or undercounted, just as school attendance and completion rates reveal gaps in educational attainment. According to the Census of India 2011, 11.8 million children aged 5–17 years were 'main workers' (who worked for six months or more in the reference year). Estimates derived from combining the Employment Unemployment Survey (EUS) 2011/12 and the India Human Development Survey 2011/12 found that an estimated 13.2 million children were in child labour, corresponding to 4 per cent of all children in the 5–17 age group.[5] Drawing on the 2019 India Time Use Survey, which allows a granular description of activities done by children including household chores, another study found that about 7 per cent of children aged 6–17 years were in child labour in 2019. Risk factors commonly associated with child labour include poor access to quality schooling, household income poverty or insecure livelihoods. The recent COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the impacts of household economic shocks and prolonged school closures on child labour. This suggests that more work remains to be done to continue to understand the dynamics and patterns of child work and child labour in a changing economic and educational landscape.

Although there is a growing body of evidence on the prevalence of child labour and the factors associated with it, several aspects of child labour in India have not yet been sufficiently captured. These include, for example, aspects related to the worst forms of child labour, hazards/abuses to which children are exposed, children's experiences of and perspectives on combining work and school, and pathways through which educational and other interventions affect child labour. This is partially because of the difficulty in capturing some of these aspects in standard quantitative surveys.

Further, the available evidence is not adequate to generate a sufficiently complete picture of the linkages between education and child labour.

Against this background, the Population Council, in partnership with UNICEF Innocenti – Global Office of Research and Foresight, undertook a multi-component study to better understand the linkages between child labour and education in India. Specifically, the study sought to:

- describe patterns of child work and child labour (including hazardous work and the worst forms of child labour) in India, using the latest available data to update existing estimates;[6]
- assess the interlinkages between children's participation in school, work and labour; and
- explore children's perspectives of the experience of work and labour and the intersections with schooling, including during the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting school closures.

This report describes findings from this study. We review existing sources of national data in India and update estimates using new methods and draw on insights from qualitative research with children, families and key stakeholders, as well as other secondary data, to develop a comprehensive perspective on children's work and labour in India today. The purpose is to lay the ground for understanding how children's work and labour can be addressed through appropriate strategies, accelerating reductions in child labour in India.

In section 2, we describe the key concepts used in the analysis of data, including study design and limitations. In section 3, we then examine the extent and pattern of children's engagement in work and child labour, including hazardous work and the worst forms of child labour. This is followed in section 4 by a description of the linkages between schooling and child labour, drawing on both the available cross-sectional and longitudinal data and secondary literature. In section 5, we present data gathered from children and their families to address gaps in the data. We highlight the drivers and decisions that shape children's engagement in work and labour, including how COVID-19 influenced schooling and labour outcomes. The final section concludes with recommendations for programmes and research.

2. Definitions and methods used in this report

The report attempts to update the state of knowledge about child labour prevalence and its nature in India, drawing on a variety of data sources and methods. These include a review of literature, further analyses of available secondary data and a primary qualitative study to examine the linkages between child labour and education.

2.1 Review of literature

We conducted a review of published studies between 2000 and 2022 in English on the linkages between children's education and child labour in India (see Annex 1 for the inclusion and exclusion criteria used). We also conducted a review of both published and grey literature on COVID-19 and its implications for child labour and education outcomes. We conducted an online search of databases, including JSTOR, Google Scholar, DeepDyve, ERIC and the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER). We retained 9 studies related to linkages between child labour and education in India and 11 studies on COVID-19 and its implications for child labour and education outcomes (see Annexes 2 and 3 for a description of studies retained).

2.2 Analysis of secondary data on child work and child labour

The international legal framework on child labour defines child labour as work that is harmful to a child's physical or mental health and can deprive the child from schooling. In other words, the international child labour framework, guided by ILO Convention 138 on minimum age and Convention 182 on the worst forms of child labour, distinguishes between general participation of children in work and participation in those forms of work that are more likely to constitute a harm for the child (see Annex 4 for details on the child labour definition). The analysis that follows also applies this distinction.

The prevalence of child work and child labour is typically estimated using national child labour surveys. These are specifically designed with the objective to capture both the type of activity performed by children (e.g., economic activities within the household, paid work outside the household, or household chores), as well as the number of hours worked in the reference period, generally the week before the day of the interview.

However, national child labour surveys are not available in India. Hence, to measure child labour outcomes, researchers have relied on various other national surveys, which can only partially capture the outcomes of interest. Moreover, previous studies estimating child work and child labour in India used diverse definitions of child labour, also using various age groups. Therefore, the available estimates of child work and child labour in India are not directly comparable. Nevertheless, these can still be informative to broadly assess the scale of the phenomenon, as well as how this varies over time and by demographic or socioeconomic characteristics. Below, we report a summary of the

main estimates available for child work and child labour. We further describe the definitions, data and methods used to estimate child labour in this report.

Considering child work, according to the Census of India 2011, 11.8 million children aged 5–17 were main workers (those working more than six months).[7]

Regarding child labour, the same study combined the EUS 2011/12 and the India Human Development Survey 2011/12.[8] Aligning with international child labour frameworks, the authors constructed a measure of child labour that considered both whether children worked in hazardous industries as well as whether they worked for long hours in economic activities or household chores. The study found that an estimated 13.2 million children were in child labour, corresponding to 4 per cent of all children in the 5–17 age group.[9] Using EUS 2011–12, the ILO estimated that 5.8 million children aged 5–17 years – corresponding to 1.9 per cent of children in this age group – were involved in designated hazardous industries and occupations.[10] Drawing on the 2019 India Time Use Survey, which allows a granular description of activities done by children including household chores, another study found that about 7 per cent of children aged 6–17 years were in child labour in 2019.[11]

In this report, we draw on two national surveys, EUS 2011/12 and PLFS 2018/19, which enable estimates of the prevalence and nature of child work and child labour, including hazardous work (see Annex 5 for details of these surveys). Findings are reported in section 3, while the definitions used are described below.

Child work: In accordance with the international framework (see Annex 4), child work includes involvement in any economic activity by children aged 5–17 years during the reference period. EUS 2011/12 and PLFS 2018/19 considered any activity resulting in the production of goods and services that add value to national product as an economic activity. Such activities included production of all goods and services for market (i.e., for pay or profit), including those of government services, production of primary commodities for own consumption and own account production of fixed assets.[12]

Child labour: Both national and international definition frameworks were considered to define child labour in India. Based on the specific information gathered as part of EUS 2011/12 and PLFS 2018/19, multiple child labour measures were constructed. We provide child labour estimates using three different definitions combining age groupings with activity types and hourly thresholds.

The national definition focuses on activity types and age groups, in accordance with national policies (Annex 6). Moreover, based on the national definition, children's economic activities within the household (e.g., help in the household business) are not considered child labour, unless the sector is classified as hazardous based on the national classification of hazardous industries and occupations. This definition can be operationalized using both EUS 2011/12 and PLFS 2018/19. So, two data points are available for the national definition of child labour used in this report.

As for the international framework, the most comprehensive measure considers both the type of activity (whether hazardous or not) and the hours worked. However, hours worked are only available in PLFS 2018/19 (hours were not collected as part of EUS 2011/12). Therefore, we use two different international definitions: a simpler definition which focuses only on activity type (international

definition A, measurable using both surveys) and a more comprehensive definition which also considers hours worked (international definition B, measurable using PLFS 2018/19 only).

The main differences between the national and international definitions pertain to the scope of activities considered. First, as mentioned above, based on the national definition, a child working within the household is not considered to be engaged in child labour, unless the activity type is classified as hazardous. However, based on the international framework, a child aged 5–11 years engaged in economic activities is considered to be in child labour, independent of the activity type (whether hazardous or not; whether within or outside the household).

The national and international definitions also differ because they utilize two different classifications of hazardous industries and activities. The international classification considers children's engagement as crop farm labourers, livestock farm labourers, mixed crop and livestock farm labourers, garden and horticultural labourers, forestry labourers, and fishery and aquaculture labourers as hazardous.[13] The Indian classification considers children's engagement in agricultural processes where tractors, threshing and harvesting machines are used, and chaff cutting, to be hazardous.[14]

The three child labour definitions used in this report are described in detail in Table 1.

Table 1: Measurement framework used to estimate child labour in this report

	National definition	International definition (A)	International definition (B)
Age 5–11 years	Economic activity outside the household Designated hazardous industries and designated hazardous occupations in industries not designated as hazardous, as per the Government of India classification	Any economic activity (including within the household)	Any economic activity (including within the household)
Age 12–14 years	Age 12–13 years: Economic activity outside the household plus designated hazardous industries and designated hazardous occupations in industries not designated as hazardous, as per the Government of India classification Age 14 years: Designated hazardous industries and designated hazardous occupations in industries not designated as hazardous, as per the Government of India classification	Designated hazardous industries and designated hazardous occupations in industries not designated as hazardous, as per the classification used in the ILO global estimation of child labour	Designated hazardous industries and designated hazardous occupations in industries not designated as hazardous, as per the classification used in the ILO global estimation of child labour In long hours (≥ 14 hours a week) in occupations other than designated hazardous occupations
Age 15–17 years	Designated hazardous industries and designated hazardous occupations in industries not designated as hazardous, as per the Government of India classification	Designated hazardous industries and designated hazardous occupations in industries not designated as hazardous, as per the classification used in the ILO global estimation of child labour	Designated hazardous industries and designated hazardous occupations in industries not designated as hazardous, as per the classification used in the ILO global estimation of child labour In long hours (≥ 43 hours a week) in occupations other than designated hazardous occupations
Data availability and sources	EUS 2011/12 PLFS 2018/19	EUS 2011/12 PLFS 2018/19	PLFS 2018/19

Estimates based on the above definitions are constrained by data availability and so provide a partial picture of child labour. They need to be interpreted with caution. For instance, we observe the following:

- Neither EUS nor PLFS provide information on children's engagement in household chores. So, none of the above three child labour definitions considered children's engagement in household chores. This leads to the underestimation of child labour by the international definitions, especially for girls, who are generally more intensively engaged in household chores.

- The national definition also tends to underestimate the prevalence of child labour among children aged 5–14 years (by focusing on economic activities outside the household without accounting for children's participation in economic activities within the household or household chores).

- Both the national definition and the international definition A tend to underestimate child labour among children aged 15–17 years (by excluding those who worked long hours in industries or occupations not designated as hazardous).[15]

- International definition B is the most comprehensive, as it considers both activity types and hourly thresholds, thus replicating the International Labour Organization (ILO) measurement framework. While this definition follows the ILO framework, it can be operationalized only for the period 2018/19, because data required for this definition (hours of work) are not available in the 2011/12 survey.

- Finally, children's engagement in the worst forms of child labour other than hazardous work is not captured by the above surveys and definitions, which again leads to an underestimation of child labour.

2.3 Analysis of secondary data on child work and schooling

The report also assesses the relationship between children's work and schooling. First, it looks at EUS and PLFS reported information on school enrolment and engagement in economic activities in terms of principal or subsidiary status.[16] This information is used to assign children's activity status to one of four mutually exclusive categories: in school only; in school and working; only working; and neither in school nor working. We again note that work in this context did not include engagement in household chores (see Annex 7 for details on the categorization of the activity status). Second, regression analysis is used drawing on the Population Council's UDAYA survey conducted between 2015 and 2020 to understand the lives of adolescents and young adults, which provides crucial insights into the quality of adolescents' transitions to adulthood in India. The UDAYA survey included a telephone survey of 642 households in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh in May 2020. The regression analysis using UDAYA data focuses on two areas: (i) analysis of individual-, peer-, household- and school-level factors associated with children's engagement in economic activity; and (ii) the interrelationship between children's schooling and work. Findings from the regression analysis are presented in section 4 (Annex 8 reports methodological details).

2.4 Primary qualitative study

The statistical evidence from available cross-sectional data and secondary literature to describe children's engagement in work and child labour tells only part of the story. As noted, gaps in data, particularly nationally representative, disaggregated data on child labour and children's hazardous work, mean that critical aspects of children's experiences remain hidden to official statistics. To better understand the complex drivers and decision-making processes behind children's choices regarding work, labour and education, and to further explore the experiences of different groups of children, it is important to also hear directly from children and their families, in their own voices. This includes the perspectives of specific groups of children often marginalized in both data and analysis, including children who belong to households engaged in migration, and girls, who must navigate the compounding impacts of labour and child marriage. At the time of this study, the experiences of children living through the seismic disruptions to schooling, work and daily home life seen as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic are still evolving. Children's own voices help paint an emerging picture of this reality currently not reflected in available quantitative data.

To address this gap, we conducted a complementary qualitative study in one district each in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. A total of 32 in-depth interviews (IDIs) were conducted, including with adolescents aged 12–17 years (n=17, nine boys and eight girls) and parents or caregivers of children aged 5–17 years (n=15, seven mothers and eight fathers). The qualitative study also included eight focus group discussions (FGDs) with four groups of boys and four groups of girls aged 12–17 years in the same villages in which IDIs were conducted. A total of 13 key informant interviews (KIIs) were also conducted with influential adults in the community, such as elected representatives, teachers, business representatives and government officials. The qualitative study was provided ethical clearance by Population Council's Institutional Review Board (see Annex 9 for more details). Insights from the qualitative study are used throughout the report to complement findings from the quantitative secondary data analysis. A particularly rich set of findings related to the experiences and perspectives of children and their families regarding the impacts of migration, child marriage and COVID-19 on their education, work and labour decisions. These findings are discussed in detail in section 5.

2.5 Data and study limitations

Findings presented in this report should be interpreted with some limitations in mind. These mostly relate to the inadequacy of data sources available to measure child labour in India.

The national surveys used in this report (EUS and PLFS) were not specifically designed to estimate child labour (including children's hazardous work). Therefore, while they represent the most comprehensive available information for the purpose of capturing child labour in India, these data have several gaps.

For instance, in these surveys the samples of children aged 5–17 and their age distribution may not be representative of the national population in this age group. Caution needs to be applied when disaggregating estimates by demographic or socioeconomic subgroups due to the relatively smaller sample size (see Annex 10).

Further, EUS 2011/12 and PLFS 2018/19 did not include questions on children's engagement in household chores and only captured economic activities. This is a major limitation of the datasets used, which leads to an underestimation of child labour by the international definitions. EUS 2011/12 also lacked data on the number of hours spent by children in economic activities. These differences in the specific labour indicators available in EUS and PLFS imply that it is not possible to construct the same child labour measures for the two periods.

Moreover, differences in the sampling design used in EUS and PLFS call for caution in drawing inferences about changes over time in the proportion of working children or children in child labour (see Annex 11). Survey comparability is especially limited as it pertains to estimates by socioeconomic group.[17]

Both EUS and PLFS data on children's engagement or time spent working were reported by a knowledgeable adult in the household. As caregivers tend to underreport children's engagement in work, child work and child labour rates provided in this report may be underestimated.[18]

The discrepancy between self- and proxy-reported child labour may be higher for girls, in settings where social norms on time use are prevalent, whereby boys are generally expected to be more heavily engaged in economic activities compared with girls.[19]

Further, this report acknowledges differences in the classification of hazardous industries and occupations used globally[20] and nationally.[21]

The UDAYA survey was only representative of the adolescent population aged 10–19 years in the states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, so did not cover children aged 5–9 years. Moreover, the primary qualitative study was geographically limited to a few villages in one district each in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

Finally, the regression analysis using UDAYA data does not identify the causal relationship between children's schooling and work but is limited to showing the association between the two.

Despite these limitations, our findings shed new light on children's engagement in work, child labour and hazardous work, and the interlinkages between children's education and child labour, and could guide future policies and interventions.

3. Estimates of child work and child labour in India

This section first presents the estimates of children's work and socioeconomic and spatial differences in children's work. It also describes the sectoral distribution of children's work. The section then presents the estimates of child labour and hazardous child labour (hazardous work) as defined in section 2.

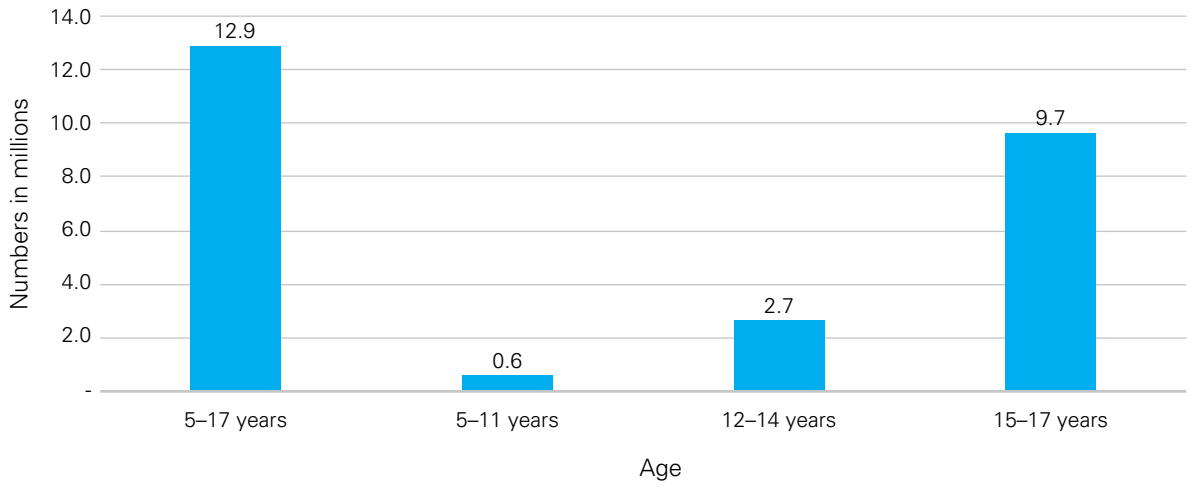
The prevalence and characteristics of child work are presented for two separate time periods, based on EUS 2011/12 and PLFS 2018/19. Both surveys capture only economic activities – defined as any activity resulting in the production of goods and services that add value to national product as an economic activity. Such activities include production of all goods and services for market (i.e., for pay or profit), including those of government services, production of primary commodities for own consumption and own account production of fixed assets.[22]

Three important points should be noted. First, the findings of the two surveys offer only rough estimates of child work and child labour because, as noted earlier, they were not specifically designed to produce such estimates. Second, the estimates drawn from the two surveys are not comparable given the differences in the sample designs, as well as in the specific information collected. For example, EUS 2011/12 did not collect data on the number of hours spent by children in economic activities, whereas PLFS 2018/19 did. Third, the surveys do not capture the nuances of child work and child labour discussed in section 2. Both EUS 2011/12 and PLFS 2018/19 did not capture children's engagement in household chores, which leads to an underestimation of child labour by the international definitions, especially for girls, who are generally more intensively engaged in chores. Neither EUS nor PLFS provided information on children's engagement in the worst forms of child labour other than hazardous work. This again leads to an underestimation of child labour.

3.1 Child work participation

According to EUS 2011/12, 12.9 million children (4.3 per cent of all children) were engaged in economic activities in the year preceding the survey in 2011/12 (Figure 1).

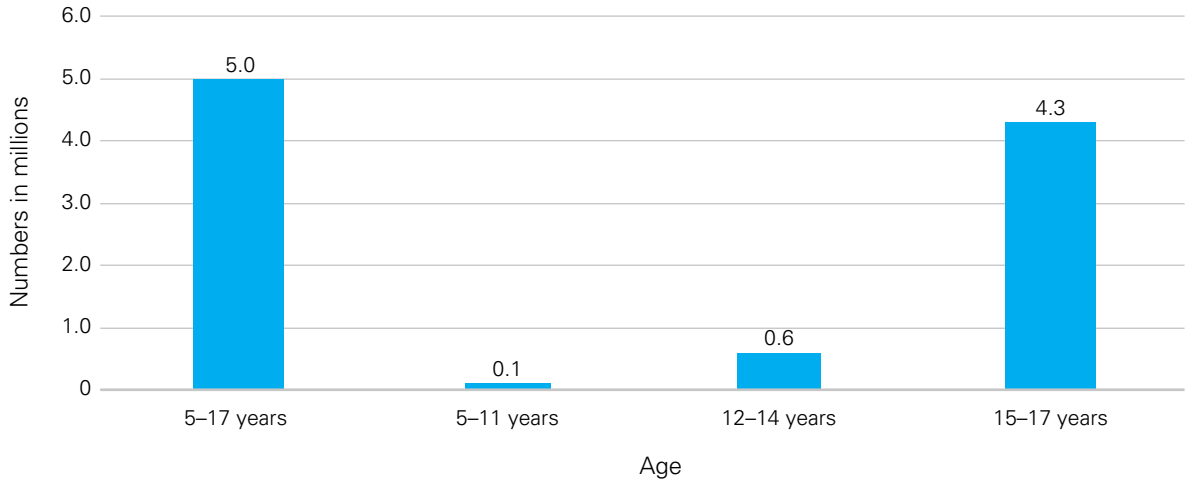
Figure 1: Number of child workers aged 5–17 years (in millions), 2011/12, India



Note: Numbers have been rounded off and calculated using sample weight given in the survey dataset.
Source: Calculated from EUS 2011/12.

According to PLFS 2018/19, 5 million children, that is, 2 per cent of all children aged 5–17 years, were working (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Number of child workers aged 5–17 years (in millions), 2018/19, India



Note: Numbers have been rounded off and calculated using sample weight given in the survey dataset.
Source: Calculated from PLFS 2018/19.

As Figures 1 and 2 reveal, work participation among children varies considerably by age, with older children (aged 15–17 years) representing 75–86 per cent of all working children, depending on the survey considered.

Both EUS 2011/12 and PLFS 2018/19 also allow for disaggregation by sex, location, caste and household wealth. Fairly similar patterns of socioeconomic differentials in the work participation rates among children aged 5–17 years are revealed by EUS 2011/12 and PLFS 2018/19. The work participation rates among children aged 5–17 years tend to be higher among boys than girls, higher among children residing in rural rather than urban areas, higher among Scheduled Tribe children than those belonging to other castes, higher among Muslim children than those belonging to other religions, and higher among children belonging to the poorest households (see Table 2).

Table 2: Socioeconomic differentials in work participation rate among children aged 5–17 years, India

	2011/12	2018/19
Sex		
Male	5.3	2.7
Female	3.1	1.2
Place of residence		
Rural	4.6	2.1
Urban	3.5	1.6
Religion		
Hindu	3.9	1.8
Muslim	6.3	2.9
Christian	2.7	1.0
Others	5.9	2.2
Caste/Tribe		
Scheduled Tribe	6.0	3.0
Scheduled Caste	4.9	2.0
Other Backward Class	4.1	2.0
Others	3.6	1.6
Sex of the household head		
Male	4.1	1.9
Female	6.6	2.5
Household economic status (monthly per capita consumption expenditure) quintile		
Poorest	5.6	2.2
Poorer	4.4	1.9
Middle	4.4	2.5
Richer	3.6	1.9
Richest	2.8	1.2
Total	4.3	2.0

Note: Figures from EUS 2011/12 and PLFS 2018/19 are not directly comparable due to differences in sampling design between EUS and PLFS (see Annex 11).

Source: EUS 2011/12 and PLFS 2018/19.

Both the surveys also point out that half (50–54 per cent) of child workers aged 5–17 years worked within the family (see Table 3). Of the child workers who worked within the family, more than half (51–57 per cent) were engaged in growing non-perennial crops, such as cereals, leguminous crops, oil seeds, vegetables, roots and tubers, and fibre crops. Child workers who worked outside the family were mostly employed in constructing buildings and manufacturing apparel.

Table 3: Where children work in India

	2011/12	2018/19
	% of working children	
Sectoral employment		
Agriculture	53	49
Industrial sector	33	34
Services and other sectors	14	17
Place of work		
Employed within the household	50	54
Employed outside the household	50	46

Source: EUS 2011/12 and PLFS 2018/19.

Both surveys also reveal that the agricultural sector engages nearly half of child workers (49–53 per cent). Child workers employed in the agricultural sector were mostly engaged in growing non-perennial crops and animal husbandry. The industrial sector engaged one third of the child workers. Child workers employed in the industrial sector were mainly engaged in manufacturing (mostly in apparel, textiles and tobacco), followed by the construction sector. Around 14–17 per cent of children were engaged in the service sector, which includes, among other occupations, retail trade, and food and beverage services.

These occupational patterns were corroborated by participants in the qualitative study in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, who also reported that child workers, both male and female, were largely engaged in agricultural and animal husbandry activities. While boys, in addition, were engaged in retail trade and casual labour, girls were additionally engaged in tailoring and embroidery work and beauty parlour jobs. A few also mentioned that children, particularly boys, worked in factories, brick kilns and construction.

> "Boys do electrician's jobs; they work in shoe stores, garment stores; girls do sewing, working in beauty parlours."
>
> – Girl, 17 years, PSU 103, Uttar Pradesh[23]

"The boys engage in labour, in companies, in shopping malls or on their own farms. The girls engage in sewing, cooking, etc."

– Boy, 14 years, PSU 21, Uttar Pradesh

"Some [boys] are doing welding work; some are working in battery and inverter shops and some are even driving cars."

– Mother, 40 years, PSU 103, Uttar Pradesh

3.2 Child labour

We report child labour estimates using EUS 2011/12 and PLFS 2018/19, as per the definitions shown in section 2 (Table 1). These include both the national and the international definitions.

In 2011/12, the estimated number of children in child labour ranged from 4.6 million to 6.3 million, depending on the definition used.[24] This translated into 1.5–2.1 per cent of all children aged 5–17 years in India (Table 4). As a subset of working children, children in child labour represented 35–49 per cent, depending on the definition used (Annex 12).

Table 4: Prevalence (%) and number (million) of children in child labour by age group, according to child labour definitions, 2011/12

	National definition		International definition (A)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	%	N	%	N
5–11 years	0.23	0.37	0.38	0.60
12–14 years	1.34	1.01	1.25	0.95
15–17 years	4.84	3.18	7.28	4.78
5–17 years	**1.52**	**4.56**	**2.11**	**6.33**

Note: Estimates in columns (1) and (2) apply the national definition of child labour (economic activities outside the household or engagement in hazardous industries/occupations among children aged 5–13 years; engagement in hazardous industries/occupations among children aged 14–17 years). The national definition applies the classification of hazardous occupations and processes as per India's Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986. Estimates in columns (3) and (4) apply international definition A of child labour (any economic activities among children aged 5–11 years; engagement in hazardous industries/occupations among children aged 12–17 years). The international definitions apply the classification of hazardous industries/occupations used in the ILO global estimates of child labour. For details on definitions, see Table 1.

Source: EUS 2011/12.

In 2018/19, the estimated number of children in child labour varied from 1.8 million to 3.3 million, depending on the definition used. This translated into 0.7–1.3 per cent of all children aged 5–17 years in India (Table 5). As a subset of working children, children in child labour represented 35–64 per cent, depending on the definition used (Annex 12).

Table 5: Prevalence (%) and number (million) of children in child labour by age group, according to child labour definitions, 2018/19

	National definition		International definition (A)		International definition (B)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	%	N	%	N	%	N
5–11 years	0.03	0.04	0.12	0.14	0.12	0.15
12–14 years	0.41	0.27	0.19	0.12	0.65	0.43
15–17 years	2.27	1.48	2.50	1.63	4.10	2.67
5–17 years	**0.70**	**1.78**	**0.74**	**1.89**	**1.28**	**3.25**

Note: Estimates in columns (1) and (2) apply the national definition of child labour (participation in economic activities outside the household or engagement in hazardous industries/occupations among children aged 5–13 years; participation in hazardous industries/occupations among children aged 14–17 years). The national definition applies the classification of hazardous occupations and processes as per India's Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986. Estimates in columns (3) and (4) apply international definition A of child labour (participation in any economic activities among children aged 5–11 years; participation in hazardous industries/occupations among children aged 12–17 years). Estimates in columns (5) and (6) apply international definition B of child labour (participation in any economic activity among children aged 5–11 years, participation in hazardous industries/occupations or long hours of work among children aged 12–17 years). The international definitions apply the classification of hazardous industries/occupations used in the ILO global estimates of child labour. For details on definitions, see Table 1.

Source: PLFS 2018/19.

As described in the measurement framework outlined above (section 2), the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986 has used two broad age groups: children under 14 years of age; and those aged 14–18 years. In 2011/12, an estimated 1.1 million children aged 5–13 years (0.51 per cent of all children in that age range) and 3.5 million children aged 14–18 years (3.9 per cent) were engaged in child labour (Annex 13). In 2018/19, 0.2 million children aged 5–13 years (0.11 per cent of all children in that age range) and 1.6 million children aged 14–18 years (1.8 per cent) were engaged in child labour.

Both EUS 2011/12 and PLFS 2018/19 show that child labour increases with age. Children aged 15–17 years are more likely to be engaged in child labour, irrespective of the definition used. Based on the above definitions, child labour tends to be more prevalent among boys than girls (Annex 14).

In 2011/12, the sectoral distribution of child labour varied depending on the definition and correspondent classification of hazardous industries and occupations used. Using the national definition and the classification of the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986, industry was the largest sector; using the international definition and ILO classification, agriculture was the largest sector. In 2018/19, industry was the largest sector, regardless of the definition or classification used. Within the industrial sector, most child labour was found in manufacturing and construction in both periods and across definitions (Annex 15).

3.3 Worst forms of child labour

This section provides an overview of the worst forms of child labour, drawing on the EUS and PLFS data, as well as describing insights from previous literature and the primary qualitative study conducted in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

3.3.1 Hazardous work

First, we assess what part of child labour constitutes hazardous work using national survey data. Based on the definition and measurement framework outlined in section 2, hazardous work includes work in designated hazardous industries or occupations and long hours of work (43 or more weekly hours in economic activities). Other child labour includes any work by children below the minimum age (e.g., aged 5–11 years) or work for 14 weekly hours or more by children aged 12–14 years.

Table 6 presents the number of children working in hazardous industries or occupations based on different definitions.

Table 6: Number of children aged 5–17 years in child labour, hazardous and non-hazardous work (in millions), India, 2011/12 and 2018/19

	National definition	International definition (A)	International definition (B)
	(1)	(2)	(3)
2011/12			
Hazardous work	4.2	5.8	–
Other child labour	0.4	0.5	–
Total	4.6	6.3	–
2018/19			
Hazardous work	1.7	1.8	3.2
Other child labour	0.2	0.1	0.1
Total	1.8	1.9	3.3

Note: Estimates in column (1) apply the national definition of child labour (economic activities outside the household or engagement in hazardous industries/occupations among children aged 5–13 years; engagement in hazardous industries/occupations among children aged 14–17 years). The national definition applies the classification of hazardous occupations and processes as per India's Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986. Estimates in column (2) apply international definition A of child labour (any economic activities among children aged 5–11 years; engagement in hazardous industries/occupations among children aged 12–17 years). Estimates in column (3) apply international definition B of child labour (any economic activity among children aged 5–11 years, work in hazardous industries/occupations or long hours among children aged 12–17 years). The international definitions apply the classification of hazardous occupations and processes used in the ILO global estimates of child labour. For details on definitions, see Table 1 above.

Source: EUS 2011/12 and PLFS 2018/19.

EUS and PLFS data indicate that most child labour in the context of India is constituted by hazardous work, which is likely to cause serious harm to children's health and overall human development.

According to both EUS 2011/12 and PLFS 2018/19, hazardous work represents the biggest portion of child labour, irrespective of the definition used. For instance, using international definition A and the ILO classification of hazardous activities, 5.8 million children were engaged in hazardous work in 2011/12. Overall, in 2011/12, hazardous work represented 92 per cent of child labour, regardless of the definition used. A similar picture emerges from PLFS 2018/19. In 2018/19, hazardous work represented between 93 and 97 per cent of child labour.

3.3.2 Worst forms of child labour other than hazardous work – addressing data gaps

Children's engagement in the worst forms of child labour other than hazardous work is rarely captured in large-scale surveys.[25] For example, while the 2011 Census had information about children engaged in begging, no information was available on children in bonded and forced labour or in commercial sexual exploitation. The EUS and PLFS surveys had combined data related to children engaged in begging and commercial sexual exploitation with other unspecified categories. Therefore, what is available were estimates from other studies, as described below.

Some analyses focus on domestic work performed by children outside their own household. This activity is inherently different from household chores that children generally perform for their own household. While household chores can be hazardous (for instance, when children carry heavy loads while fetching water, or are exposed to fumes while cooking), domestic work outside the household is likely to be associated with worse conditions, often including trafficking and illegal child labour.[26] According to a 2007 report by the National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector, in India, the estimated number of child domestic workers amounted to 800,000 children under 14 years of age.[27] However, there remains a high level of uncertainty on the real dimensions of the phenomenon, which is an important area for further research. A small-scale study of 500 child domestic workers from six states (Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Kerala, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh) reported that 88 per cent of these child domestic workers entered domestic work before they were 15 years of age and some 36 per cent as early as 9–11 years of age. Of these child domestic workers, 89 per cent were girls, just 35 per cent were currently attending school, 91 per cent were not given a single day off work, 46 per cent worked 10–12 hours a day and 35 per cent were punished if they made a mistake.[28]

Likewise, available estimates of the number of women and girls who have been commercially sexually exploited showed wide variations, from 70,000 to 3 million women and girls.[29] Available studies have, however, estimated that about 30–40 per cent of trafficked females were minors (girls under 18 years of age) or had entered commercial sexual exploitation when they were minors.[30]

Although bonded labour was outlawed in India in 1976, the National Human Rights Commission noted that it is widely prevalent in many regions in India and that bonded labour contracts are not purely economic but are reinforced by custom or coercion in many sectors.[31] Although no estimates of bonded child labour are available, studies have identified bonded child labour in a number of occupations, including agriculture, brick kilns, stone quarries, carpet weaving, bidi rolling, rearing of silk cocoons, production of silk sarees, silver jewellery, synthetic gemstones, precious gem cutting, diamond cutting and leather products, among others.[32] Similarly, the 2021 report on the worst forms of child labour by the US Department of Labor observed that children are trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation and for forced labour in domestic service within India, and that children are

employed in industries such as spinning mills, cottonseed production, brick kilns, stone quarries, home-based embroidery businesses, roadside restaurants, among others, to pay off debts.[33] Findings also showed that 9 per cent of beggars in India were children aged 5–14 years, according to the 2011 Census.[34]

3.3.3 Child and family perspectives on the worst forms of child labour

While informative, the above review is far from providing a comprehensive assessment of the worst forms of child labour in the Indian context. Therefore, we complemented the above information with perspectives from respondents who participated in the qualitative study carried out as part of this report.

Approximately half the 17 adolescent boys and girls interviewed as part of the IDIs (see section 2) claimed direct awareness of children's engagement in hazardous work. Similarly, half the key informants acknowledged children's participation in hazardous work, although only a few parents did.

Low salary in participants' villages and better salary expectations outside, as well as experience of violence at home, were cited as key factors in driving children's engagement in hazardous work.

> "We have around 10 per cent of children doing hazardous work. These children who are engaged in machinery work get good salary. Some do both night shifts as well as day shifts. Some work in flour mills, spices mills. Some children aged 16–17 years old work as construction labour. Here due to low salary, they go to Hyderabad, Mumbai. Some go in anger as their home environment is not good."
>
> – Ward member and businessman, PSU 103, Uttar Pradesh

Respondents also pointed to a preponderance of harmful work occurring in factories producing medicines, bangles, glass products, hard woods and leather products within their own state or outside the state, at brick kilns or in construction.

Several participants narrated abuse and mistreatment of children by their employers, particularly in factories, including physical and verbal abuse, low salaries despite long hours, working under extreme temperature without any protective gear, and denial of health services even when met with accidents and injuries.

> "They go outside and do it in Delhi, etc. In a glass factory. They are abused if they don't work properly, I've heard from everyone. There are boxes of glass which are difficult to carry. They break if they fall and then they are beaten and abused. It is very hot there. They work 12 hours a day, but they don't earn much. A small child of 10 years had gone to work in Delhi, and he didn't work well so the employer beat him and broke his hand. He was working in a glass factory. He came back home and was treated here at home. The employer did not give any help."
>
> – Boy, 17 years, PSU 66, Bihar

> "At brick kiln … the temperature there is high because the bricks are made there. It is also hot, and it is made with hot coal, and it has to be taken out while it is hot, so it is dangerous. There is no security for them. They work the whole day; they get paid according to the number of bricks they make. Here are some children who have gone to Rajasthan where white lime used to be melted, one child died there also. No remuneration was also given. The body came here after the post-mortem. We got to know that it was the white lime kiln and there he fell down in the boiling kiln."
>
> – Ward member and cultivator, PSU 53, Bihar

Children from socially disadvantaged religious and caste groups, economically poor households and children who were out of school or who were disinterested in their studies were particularly engaged in hazardous work. As one mother in Bihar noted:

> "Children from M Tola, R Tola [socially disadvantaged neighbourhoods], they go to work in bangle factories where bangles are made; parents leave the children [there] and take the money. Due to poverty, the parents leave them. 10–12-year-olds go and they leave their studies."
>
> – Mother, PSU 66, Bihar

> "If the father is not able to earn, the burden is on the child to support the family. The Scheduled Castes are more often employed for such work."
>
> – Businessman, Bihar

Respondents also reported children's engagement in the worst forms of child labour, such as domestic work and bonded labour. Half the study participants claimed general awareness of children's engagement in domestic work and most noted that such work was more common in urban than rural areas. Half the participants reported that they had heard of children being sent to work to pay off family debt, although none reported knowing of this happening directly in their social circle.

> "It does happen. Yes, a little bit like due to some kind of illness or at the time or marriage if some money was taken so when they are unable to pay, they are forced to work."
>
> – Ward member and farmer, Bihar

None of the children interviewed admitted their own experience of engaging in domestic work or working to pay off family debt. Nor did any participant caregiver admit their children's experience of engaging in such work.

Some adult respondents noted the prevalence of disadvantaged caste groups in domestic labour:

> "Those who are from low caste who are very poor. They do not have any support or earning member within the family and those who do not have the support of their father, there are not many in our village. I know three to four children; they go to other's home to work within the locality. They find out work themselves, reach out to different homes. They earn Rs 4,000–5,000 per month."
>
> – Ward member and businessman, PSU 103, Uttar Pradesh

> "I have been looking for a Harijan [a member of a disadvantaged caste] to work but there is no one. Like, you were saying if I wanted a Harijan to come and do my domestic work like cleaning, etc., there is no one here who does that."
>
> – Mother, PSU 148, Bihar

Others also commented on the involvement of agents in procuring children for domestic work:

> "Agents contact nearby villages and find suitable family. They give advance to their families for their work. They earn around Rs 2,500–4,000 per month."
>
> – Businessman, Bihar

> "Many [children and adults] go, when they don't have money for even food; some go to Jodhpur, some go to some other place. The contractor takes them. They get money on monthly basis and sometimes the contractor even takes away the money. I think 3,000 rupees per month. Their helplessness is making them work for just 2–3,000 rupees."
>
> – Mother, PSU 103, Uttar Pradesh

3.4 Summary of key findings

- Measuring child work and child labour in India is fraught with several constraints, resulting in varied estimates. This is mostly due to information gaps, including on hours spent by children in economic activities and on children's participation in and hours spent on household chores. Moreover, national survey data collection methods changed over time, thus limiting comparability. There are also differences between national and international child labour definitions, including those relating to the classification of hazardous industries/occupations used globally and nationally.

- Based on the most recent survey data analysed in this report (PLFS 2018/19), an estimated 5 million children (that is, 2 per cent of all children aged 5–17 years) were working.

- Similar socioeconomic differentials and sectoral patterns in the prevalence of working children are seen in both EUS 2011/12 and PLFS 2018/19, although they are not strictly comparable.
  - The prevalence of child work was higher among boys, older children, children living in rural areas, children belonging to Scheduled Tribes and children from poorer households.
  - The agricultural sector engaged the largest share of child workers in 2011/12 and 2018/19. In each of 2011/12 and 2018/19, about 50 per cent of child workers aged 5–17 years worked within the family and outside the family.
- The estimated number and prevalence of children in child labour varies depending on whether the national or international definition of child labour is used. Based on PLFS 2018/19, the estimated number of children in child labour ranged between 1.8 and 3.3 million children (0.7–1.3 per cent of children; see Table 5).
  - Application of the international definition presents a higher estimation of prevalence than application of the Indian national definition. This is mostly because the international definition also considers economic activities within the household and hours spent in economic activities in the measurement of child labour (independently of whether the activity is in hazardous or non-hazardous sectors).
- Socioeconomic differentials are also consistent across surveys with regard to the children in child labour.
  - There were more children aged 15–17 years than 5–14 years, more children from rural areas than urban areas and more boys than girls engaged in child labour. These patterns hold over time.
  - With regard to gender differences in the prevalence of child labour, it is important to recall that the measures used to capture child labour do not consider children's engagement in household chores. Therefore, the prevalence of child labour among girls is clearly underestimated.
  - In 2011/12, the sectoral distribution of children in child labour varied, depending on the classification used to identify hazardous industries and occupations. Agriculture was the largest sector when using the ILO classification and industry was the largest sector when using the Indian classification. In 2018/19, industry was the largest sector regardless of the classification used. Agriculture represented the second largest sector, followed by services and other sectors.
- Analysis of EUS 2011/12 and PLFS 2018/19 showed that in India, most child labour is hazardous in nature (that is, occurring in hazardous industries or occupations, or engaging children for long hours). Hence, most child labour can be classified as the 'worst forms of child labour', which require immediate action for elimination. This result holds, irrespective of the definition of child labour used in this report.

- Several studies reviewed as part of this report described children's engagement in the worst forms of child labour in India, including in domestic work outside the household and other hazardous industries, such as the production of bangles, glass products or leather products, brick kilns or construction. Such sectors, therefore, represent priority areas for addressing the worst forms of child labour in India.

- Other than hazardous work, the worst forms of child labour are rarely captured in national surveys. One exception is the 2011 Census, which included information on children engaged in begging, reporting that 9 per cent of beggars in India were children aged 5–14 years. However, the Census did not collect any information on children in bonded or forced labour or in commercial sexual exploitation.

- Responses from children and caregivers in the qualitative survey conducted as part of this study in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh showed that children from poor households, socially disadvantaged religious or caste groups, or those experiencing violence at home were more likely to engage in the worst forms of child labour. Data to capture these forms of child labour need to have a dedicated and strategic approach to measurement, drawing on representative surveys in locations that have hotspots of child labour and where migration routes involve children.

4. Interlinkages between children's schooling and work

In this section, we further analyse national datasets to assess the interlinkages between children's schooling and work. The section begins with a description of the activity status of children aged 6–17 years and the socioeconomic and demographic differentials in children's activity status for India, drawing on further analysis of EUS 2011/12 and PLFS 2018/19 data. We note that data from these sources did not measure children's engagement in household chores.

Additional insights on children's activity status, drawing on 2015/16 UDAYA survey data from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, are presented to complement these findings.

Results from the qualitative study are used to provide a more comprehensive picture of the interlinkages between children's schooling and work.

4.1 Activity status of children

As described in section 2.3 on methods, we used EUS 2011/12 and PLFS 2018/19 data on economic activities and current attendance in school, in terms of principal or subsidiary status, to assign children's activity status to one of four mutually exclusive categories: in school only; in school and working; only working; and neither in school nor working (see Annex 7 for the categorization of the activity status).

4.1.1 Overview of children's activity status

EUS data on the activity status of children showed that most children aged 6–17 years were recorded as in school only in 2011/12, as reported by an adult in the home (89 per cent). Hardly any children were reported to combine school and work (0.6 per cent), 4 per cent of children were reported as in work only and 6.7 per cent were reported as neither in school nor working. Similar patterns were observed from PLFS 2018/19 data, which showed 93 per cent of children in school only, 0.4 per cent in school and working, 1.8 per cent only working and 4.8 per cent neither in school nor working.

However, the picture of children's activity status is not consistent across surveys and remains an area for further research. Although not comparable due to differences in sampling and geographical coverage, other studies have portrayed a different picture. Life event calendar data collected from 15–19-year-olds in the UDAYA survey in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, for example, reported that at 10 years old, 17–25 per cent of boys and 12–15 per cent of girls combined studying with work.[35]

In-depth analysis of children's time use survey data would be a necessary complement to address shortcomings in national data beyond employment and labour indicators.[36]

4.1.2 Children's activity status by socioeconomic background

EUS and PLFS data also allow the assessment of children's activity status by background characteristics (Table 7).

Children's activity status varies by children's sex and age group. EUS data showed that the prevalence of only working was higher among boys than girls, while the prevalence of being neither in school nor working was higher among girls than boys. The data showed similar proportions of boys and girls being in school only or being in school and working. EUS data also showed that, as children get older, they are less likely to be in school full time and more likely to combine school and work, to only work or to neither attend school nor work. Similar differentials in children's activity status by sex and age group are observed in 2018/19.

Household socioeconomic status is also associated with children's activities. For example, the proportion of children in school only increased steadily with household economic status. EUS 2011/12 showed a difference of 12 percentage points in the proportion of children aged 6–17 years being in school only between the poorest households and the richest households (82 versus 95 per cent; Table 7). Similarly, children from the poorest households were more than twice as likely to be engaged in work only compared with children from the richest households in 2011/12. Children from the poorest households were also four times more likely to be neither in school nor working, compared with children from the richest households. Children in households from socioeconomically disadvantaged groups remained less likely to be in school only in 2018/19. However, data for 2018/19 showed a narrower gap in the proportion of children being in school only between the poorest and richest households – a gap of 7 percentage points (90 versus 97 per cent) in 2018/19.

Table 7: Activity status of children aged 6–17 years, by background characteristics, India

	2011/12				2018/19			
Background characteristics (%)	In school only	In school and working	Only working	Neither in school nor working	In school only	In school and working	Only working	Neither in school nor working
Age (years)								
6–10	94.6	0.1	0.2	5.2	97.6	0.1	0.0	2.3
7–14	91.6	0.6	2.6	5.3	96.4	0.2	0.5	2.9
15–17	73.7	1.7	13.0	11.6	82.4	0.9	5.7	10.9
Sex								
Male	89.7	0.7	5.0	4.5	93.7	0.4	2.4	3.5
Female	87.3	0.5	2.9	9.3	92.4	0.3	1.0	6.3
Place of residence								
Rural	87.7	0.7	4.3	7.3	92.7	0.4	1.8	5.0
Urban	91.3	0.4	3.4	5.0	94.1	0.2	1.6	4.2
Household economic status (monthly per capita consumption expenditure) quintile								
Poorest	82.2	0.6	5.6	11.7	90.1	0.3	2.0	7.6
Poorer	87.9	0.6	4.2	7.4	93.4	0.4	1.7	4.6
Middle	90.0	0.8	3.9	5.3	93.3	0.5	2.1	4.1
Richer	92.1	0.6	3.3	4.0	94.8	0.4	1.6	3.2
Richest	94.5	0.6	2.3	2.5	97.1	0.3	0.9	1.7
Caste/tribe								
Scheduled Caste	86.0	0.8	5.7	7.5	91.1	0.4	2.8	5.7
Scheduled Tribe	86.3	0.5	4.8	8.3	91.6	0.2	2.0	6.2
Other Backward Class	88.6	0.7	3.7	7.0	93.1	0.5	1.7	4.8
Others	91.3	0.5	3.4	4.8	95.2	0.3	1.4	3.1
Religion								
Hindu	90.0	0.6	3.6	5.8	93.7	0.4	1.6	4.4
Muslim	81.2	0.6	6.3	11.9	89.2	0.4	2.7	7.7
Christian	91.6	0.5	2.3	5.5	95.8	0.1	1.0	3.1
Other	89.9	1.7	4.6	3.9	94.4	0.4	1.9	3.3

Source: EUS 2011/12 and PLFS 2018/19.

Children's activity status was also analysed using UDAYA data on children aged 11–17 years from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. These data reported similar patterns in children's activity status by age, sex, household wealth and social affiliation. For example, the proportion of children who combined school and work was higher among older children aged 15–17 years, boys, children belonging to socially disadvantaged castes and children from the poorest households, as well as children whose mother was illiterate or children who witnessed parental violence (Annex 16).

UDAYA data showed that children's activity status varied according to parental characteristics, as well as broader family environment. The proportion of children aged 11–17 years who were in school only was 24 percentage points higher for those whose mother was literate than for those whose mother was non-literate. It was similarly higher for children who did not report witnessing parental violence than for those who did report such violence. It was higher for children who reported

parental discussion on day-to-day matters, including schooling, than for those who did not report this. Conversely, the proportion of children who were only working was higher among children whose mother was non-literate and for those children who witnessed parental violence.

Children's activity status varied by levels of children's foundational skills as well. The proportion of children who were in school only was the lowest among those who lacked both numeracy and literacy skills (39 per cent) and the highest among those with both numeracy and literacy skills (87 per cent). Conversely, the proportion of children who were only working was the highest among those who lacked both numeracy and literacy skills (22 per cent) and the lowest among those with both numeracy and literacy skills (0.9 per cent).

4.1.3 Perspectives on children's activity status from qualitative interviews

In the qualitative study in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh conducted for this project, many boys and girls who were interviewed in-depth described combining school and work. They also mentioned that several boys in their village/neighbourhood combined school and work, while girls combined school and economic activities along with household chores.

Parents cited the poor economic condition of the household as an important reason for children combining work with school. Other parents explained that children were asked to combine school and work so that they, especially boys, would avoid getting into bad company, acquire apprenticeship skills for application in the family business or trade, and become self-reliant in future, and also so that parents could save the cost of hiring labour.

> "Due to poverty, that is why [children combine school and work]. Children of families which have everything study only. They don't need to work. Those who don't have money, where will their child get food from or books to study? Parents tell them that if you don't work, what will you eat?"
>
> – Mother, PSU 66, Bihar

> "If they have an established business like a plant, shop or something, they go there because parents think that my child shouldn't fall into bad company, so parents tell them, 'After school, you come with us, come to our shop or our mill,' so that they don't roam around with bad kids. They also keep them so that they will stay with them and also gain some knowledge."
>
> – Father, PSU 103, Uttar Pradesh

> "[The] main reason is poor economic background. [The] other reason is that parents take initiative to make their children work to make them learn something new."
>
> – Technical resource staff, Uttar Pradesh

Overall, children reported combining school and work largely because they were required to support their family financially, due to poverty, health issues among earning members, parental pressure to earn and pressure to meet their own or their siblings' needs, including school-related expenses.

Some boys and girls reported combining school and work because they lacked the aptitude to study well.

Half of the boys who participated in the IDIs combined school and work, while the remaining reported that they were in school only. The reported age at which boys start combining school and work varied between 10 and 15 years of age.

Boys who combined school and work reported that they wanted to help their parents and they needed to earn money to support their studies or their family. Often boys reported combining school and work because parents explicitly asked them to do so.

> "Most of [the boys] combine schooling and work at 15 years. Some do it at 12–13 years. Some lack the talent to study but have the requisite skills to be employed in some work. They engage in labour, in companies, in shopping malls or on their own farms. They do so due to financial constraints or because they lack the talent to study."
>
> – Boy, 14 years, PSU 21, Uttar Pradesh

> "[The boys] go to school and work also. They start doing so around 10 years. The family tells them to work. Sometimes when there is more work, they don't go to school in the morning as the family tells them to work."
>
> – Boy, 14 years, PSU 20, Uttar Pradesh

> "My father told me. It is due to helplessness. Why would I want only my father to work when I can also work? Would I feel good if my father works alone? I am free after coming from school."
>
> – Boy, 14 years, PSU 20, Uttar Pradesh

> "I do so to help my parents."
>
> – Boy, 14 years, PSU 20, Uttar Pradesh

> "We don't have enough farmland and we are poor so we don't employ labourers in our farm for sowing and harvesting because if they will take half of what we earn, what will we be left with? That is why we go to work ourselves."
>
> – Boy, 14 years, PSU 67, Bihar

> "I ride battery rickshaw due to shortage of money in my family. I started this work so that I can continue my studies by earning some money."
>
> – Boy, 17 years, PSU 147, Bihar

"At 16 years [children] do farming or work as shop assistants. They have to combine schooling and work to help their family somewhat; if work is more, they start working to help the family after returning from school. If they are not interested in studying or can't understand what is being taught at school … There are also financial problems in the family, so they start working."

– Boy, 14 years, PSU 66, Bihar

One boy also noted that he combined school and work to learn vocational skills.

"I want to become doctor. So, I work in a clinic."

– Boy, 17 years, PSU 103, Uttar Pradesh

Similar to boys, the girls interviewed here also noted that they were asked by their parents to do so.

"Because of poverty. I work to help my parents."

– Girl, 15 years, PSU 20, Uttar Pradesh

"So that I could fund my studies, buy books, cover my expenses related to going and coming from school, and other odd expenses."

– Girl, 15 years, PSU 104, Uttar Pradesh

"I left studying due to issues at home. My father is weak. There is no one else. I have a younger brother, so I had to leave. I was sitting idle at home, so I learnt sewing. Father cannot help so I decided to earn to take care of my expenses."

Girl, 17 years, PSU 103, Uttar Pradesh

"I had wanted to study, but my parents did not send me. They told me to work in the field."

– Girl, 13 years, PSU 147, Bihar

"Because my mother told me that I have to work because there is no one else to do it."

– Girl, 14 years, PSU 148, Bihar

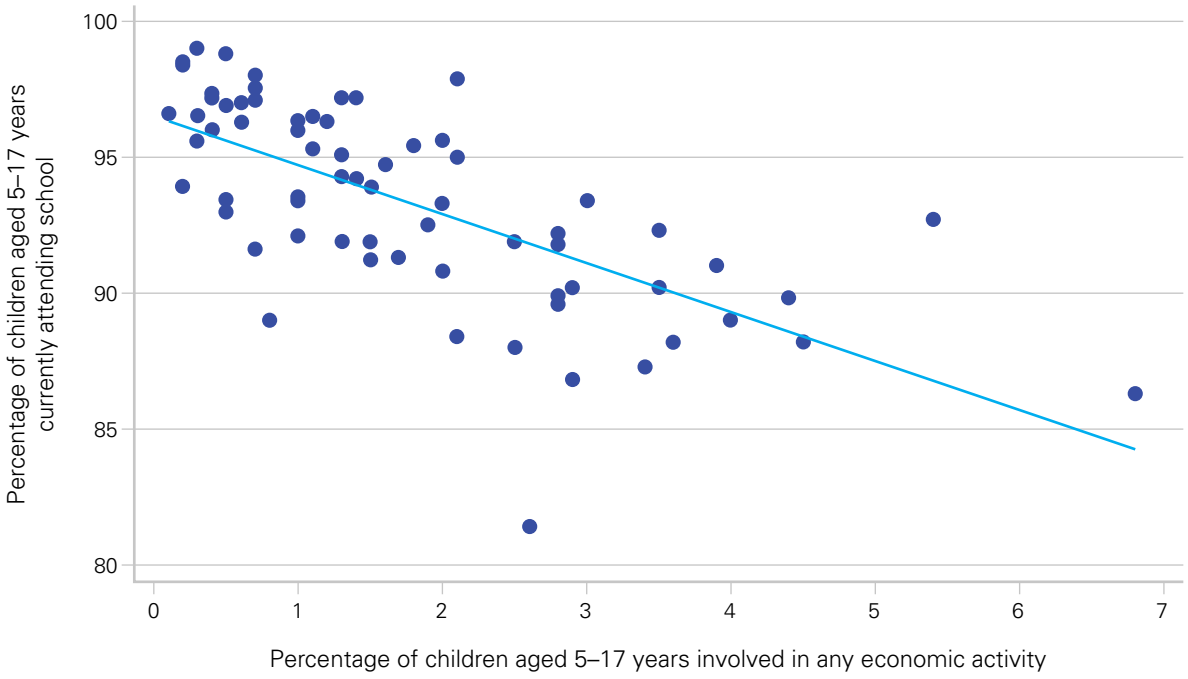
4.2 Interrelationship between schooling and work

4.2.1 Overview on the association between schooling and work

Several studies included in the literature review highlighted that most working children were non-literate or with limited education and that child work participation was highest for those who had never enrolled in school, followed by those who had dropped out from school.[37]

Findings from multiple data sources and analysis methods show a robust inverse association between children's schooling and engagement in work. Data from EUS 2011/12 and PLFS 2018/19 indicate an inverse correlation between children's school attendance and work participation. Regions characterized by high levels of school attendance typically had low levels of child work participation (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Scatter plot showing the correlation between children's school attendance and work participation, 2018/19



Note: Each dot indicates the regional-level prevalence of children attending school (vertical axis) and involved in economic activities (horizontal axis). The correlation coefficient between school attendance and work participation was –0.50; regions with fewer than 500 children in the study sample were excluded from this analysis.

Source: PLFS 2018/19.

Findings from the regression analysis on factors associated with children's work using UDAYA panel data also showed an inverse relationship between school enrolment and children's work. Boys and girls who were enrolled in school had, respectively, 95 and 79 per cent lower probability of engaging in paid work and 45–47 per cent lower probability of engaging in unpaid work, compared with those who were out of school (see Annex 17, Model 1).

This relationship was weakened, however, when we included additional variables related to children's schooling experiences, such as learning levels, supplementary coaching and type of school in which they were enrolled. Boys with foundational skills (both reading and mathematical skills) had 33 per cent lower probability of engaging in paid work than those without foundational skills, although no such association was observed with unpaid work among boys or paid or unpaid work among girls (see Annex 17, Model 2).

Additionally, boys who received supplementary coaching had 43 per cent lower probability of engaging in paid work and 27 per cent lower probability of doing unpaid work than those who did not receive such coaching; however, no such association was observed for girls. For boys, those enrolled in government schools had a 1.3 times higher probability of doing unpaid work than those enrolled in private schools; however, no such association was observed with paid work for boys, or with paid work or unpaid work for girls.

Regression findings using UDAYA data also showed that engagement in economic activities was inversely associated with school retention and vice versa. Among boys, participation in economic activities was associated with a 16 percentage point decline in current school enrolment, while school enrolment was associated with a 23 percentage point decline in engagement in economic activities, keeping all other predictor variables constant at their means (see Annex 18). Among girls, engagement in economic activities was associated with a 5 percentage point decline in current enrolment in school, while school enrolment was associated with a 13 percentage point reduction in engagement in economic activities, keeping all other predictor variables constant at their means (see Annex 19). The estimated partial correlation was higher among boys than among girls, suggesting a higher degree of inverse association between engagement in economic activities and school continuation among boys than girls.

Studies that examined the causal relationship between child labour and education in India were, however, few and far between and they reported an inconsistent relationship between children's education and work. One study, which examined the determinants of participation in work and schooling in north India, found that schooling mostly conflicted with household work for girls and market work for boys.[38] The direct costs of primary schooling increased participation in market work for both boys and girls, making school attendance less likely. Similarly, the opportunity costs of schooling (captured by village wages) increased market work for both boys and girls.

However, a second study that examined the trade-offs between time spent at school and learning activities, on the one hand, and domestic and paid work, on the other hand, observed that there was no trade-off between time allocated to school and time allocated to work, whereas time allocated to other activities, such as leisure, home-based learning activities and time unaccounted, was compromised for work.[39]

Overall, it is difficult to isolate causal relationships between work and schooling outcomes using quantitative methods, because work and schooling outcomes are simultaneously affected by similar factors. Perspectives from children and caregivers are therefore especially valuable to assess the interrelationship between work and schooling.

4.2.2 Perspectives from children and caregivers

The narratives of the participants in the qualitative study in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh carried out for this project show the negative consequences of combining schooling and work. They show that combining schooling and work affected school attendance for boys and girls alike, although some children managed to combine both more successfully by working before or after school hours.

Most of the children interviewed reported that combining schooling and work had a negative impact on their school attendance.

> "I can't study properly. I try to finish my work before I go to school so that I don't face any difficulties. Sometimes I'd be late for school if I didn't get an auto on time for 15–20 minutes and so it affected my attendance. I don't get money from there if I need and I face trouble in my eyes and my hands start paining sometimes. If I want to make something, I can't. I can't go to my friend's house."
>
> – Girl, 15 years, PSU 104, Uttar Pradesh

> "As the classes get over in the noon, [children] go to work. The family tells them to work. They do farming and cattle rearing. Sometimes when there is more work, they don't go to school in the morning as the family tells them to work."
>
> – Boy, 14 years, PSU 20, Uttar Pradesh

> "If children can't go to school perhaps because of some work at home or if parents asked them to, then the teacher would enquire about them and there would be no attendance for them."
>
> – Boy, 14 years, PSU 21, Uttar Pradesh

> "Some [children] start [working] since childhood because of lack of money. They go to school only twice or thrice a week. They work late till night and therefore, they are unable to get up in the morning."
>
> – Boy, 17 years, PSU 104, Uttar Pradesh

> "The teachers get angry. [The children's] attendance is affected. They have to go to work due to household issues. Those who work don't participate much in school since they focus more on their work."
>
> – Girl, 15 years, PSU 104, Uttar Pradesh

> "[Children] work after they come back from school, or they do work and go before the attendance starts and get their attendance."
>
> – Boy, 14 years, PSU 66, Bihar

Children also felt that combining schooling and work had a negative impact on school performance – their learning levels – because of irregular attendance in school, inability to concentrate on studies and not getting time to do school assignments at home.

"[Children] can't keep up and they often forget what has been taught."

– Boy, 14 years, PSU 21, Uttar Pradesh

"When [children] concentrated on studies they scored well, but when they concentrate on work also, they don't score well. One can only focus on one thing and not on both."

– Boy, 15 years, Uttar Pradesh

"[Children] go to school less often. They aren't able to study properly."

– Boy, 14 years, PSU 67, Bihar

"Because [a child] has started working, he will not attend school regularly. This affects his performance in the class. He gets less marks in the exam."

– Boy, 17 years, PSU 147, Bihar

Boys expressed slightly more mixed views about the effects of combining schooling and work on performance than girls. Some held the opinion that combining schooling and work did not affect boys' performance at all, perhaps because their perceptions about performance were low or the perceived quality of teaching was poor in the study villages, while others reported that it affected their performance.

"Attendance gets affected, but not performance; it depends on children. It would be affecting some children but not everyone."

– Boy, 17 years, PSU 103, Uttar Pradesh

"Some [boys] study from home and some study after work. There are two kinds of children – some even study while they work and their result is also good."

– Boy, 17 years, PSU 104, Uttar Pradesh

"It affects [a boy's] attendance in school. But if the boy is hardworking, he can get good marks by doing more hard work at home."

– Boy, 17 years, PSU 148, Bihar

Girls' perceptions about the impact of work on school performance, on the other hand, were more consistently negative than those of the boys interviewed.

> "At ages 10–15 years, [boys] work on fields and kiln. If they have more work, they go for work or else they go to school. If they go to work, they cannot study, and if they study, they don't get work."
>
> – Girl, 12 years, PSU 21, Uttar Pradesh

> "[Children who combine work with schooling] will not be present every day. They know less than those children who go to school daily."
>
> – Girl, 15 years, PSU 20, Uttar Pradesh

> "[Children work] at around 17 and some at ages 12–15 years too. Mostly because there is no elder person to help, so they begin working; their parents ask them to and perhaps there is no one else to work. They are sometimes unable to go to school because of work. Their names are struck off, they don't have proper knowledge and they study less. They get less marks and have weak comprehension."
>
> – Girl, 14 years, PSU 148, Bihar

Boys and girls who participated in the IDIs felt that not many girls in their village combined schooling and economic work; rather, it was more common for them to combine schooling and household work. They felt, however, that combining schooling and work affected girls' attendance and performance, as with the case of boys who did so.

> "Most [girls] go to school and do their household work. They do not go to farms. Only those whose parents don't have enough money to teach them combine studying and working so that they will have a little bit of money in their hands so they can manage the expenses of their schools and tuitions."
>
> – Boy, 14 years, PSU 67, Bihar

> "If someone has a younger brother and the father is the only breadwinner in the family, [girls] start working. Some do stitching and embroidery and there are many other work that they do. It affects their attendance and performance in the same way as it affects boys."
>
> – Boy, 17 years, PSU 104, Uttar Pradesh

> "Parents don't have money and there are various other reasons. Mummy, papa can't afford it and sometimes even the girls are not interested in studying so that is why some starts working. If there is a lot of work, they don't do their homework, they don't learn and get scolded by the teachers."
>
> – Boy, 14 years, PSU 66, Bihar

Adult key informants were unequivocal in their opinion that combining schooling and work affected children's school attendance, particularly during harvest seasons, and children may miss school for an extended period during such times. They also noted that it affected children's learning levels because of irregular attendance, inability to handle the pressures of both studying and working at a young age, work-related distractions and physical exhaustion, among other challenges, and that they gradually dropped out of school.

> "[Children's learning levels are] affected during the harvest season when many children are involved in agricultural work. It does affect their performance."
>
> – Teacher, Uttar Pradesh

> "[Combining schooling and work] does affect their performance also because the children in their growing age are not able to juggle between study and work."
>
> – Technical resource staff, Uttar Pradesh

> "If these children work till late night, then there is some negligence in going to school the next day as they get tired after eight hours' work. They don't remain serious towards studies, they go to school irregularly and parents also do not pay much attention. If both types of children are compared, then working children do not perform well as compared to the children who only study. Such children gradually fall into the category of dropouts."
>
> – Assistant Labour Commissioner, Uttar Pradesh

> "Boys still go to school because there's no work in the field every day, but girls who start doing the work of embroidery, etc. often miss school."
>
> – Deputy Labour Commissioner, Uttar Pradesh

> "[Children] don't come to school as they are engrossed in work. But it is our weakness also that schools' academic arrangement is not getting improved. If we conduct the classes regularly, they will be interested."
>
> – Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan programme officer, Bihar

4.3 Summary of key findings

- The picture of children's activity status is not consistent across surveys and remains an area for further research.
  - In EUS 2011/12 data, most children in India were reported as being in school only, while hardly any children were reported as combining school and work. Four per cent of children concentrated on only working and about 7 per cent were reported as being neither in school nor working. PLFS 2018/19 showed a similar distribution of children by activity status.

  - Life-event calendar data on 15–19-year-olds in the UDAYA survey showed instead that, at 10 years of age, 17–25 per cent of boys and 12–15 per cent of girls combined studying with work.

- Statistics based on EUS 2011/12 and PLFS 2018/19 showed similar socioeconomic differentials in children's activity status.

  - The proportion of children only working was higher among boys than girls, while the proportion of children neither in school nor working was higher among girls. Boys and girls had similar prevalence rates for being in school full time and for combining school and work. EUS and PLFS data also show that, as children get older, they are less likely to be in school full time and more likely to combine school and work, only work or neither attend school nor work.

  - Children's activity status is associated with their socioeconomic background. In 2011/12, children belonging to the richest households were more likely to be in school only compared with children from the poorest households. This pattern persisted in 2018/19, although the gap had narrowed.

  - Children from rural households, as well as children from Scheduled Castes or Tribes, are also at a disadvantage in terms of activity status.

- Children's activity status also varied by parental characteristics and broader family environment. The proportion of children in school only was higher for those whose mother was literate rather than non-literate, those who did not report witnessing parental violence rather than those who did, and those who reported parental discussion on day-to-day matters, such as schooling. Children's activity status also varied according to their foundational skills, with a higher proportion of children who lacked numeracy and literacy skills exclusively working than those with such skills.

  - The qualitative study from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh showed a consistent picture, in that both parents and children cited poor household economic conditions as an important reason for children combining school and work. Other reasons reported by parents included allowing children to acquire apprenticeship skills to support the family business and become self-reliant in the future. Children also reported combining school and work as a result of health issues among family members or difficulties in learning in school.

- Triangulation of evidence from multiple sources underscores an inverse association between children's schooling and work.

  - As part of the qualitative study, children reported that combining schooling and work had a negative impact on attendance and performance in school. Such a perception of the negative impact of work on schooling outcomes was stronger among girls than boys. Adults unequivocally reported that working negatively affected school participation, especially during harvest seasons, with further consequences on learning levels.

5. Children and family perspectives on migration, child marriage and COVID-19

Qualitative data yielded rich illustrative insights regarding several key themes, compensating for the significant gaps in national datasets. In particular, respondents provided insights into the experiences of children whose choices around schooling have been affected by migration and child marriage – two dimensions of child labour that are often excluded in available quantitative data. Likewise, while the impact of COVID-19 experiences and mitigation measures on schooling, work and labour decisions is still evolving, qualitative interviews prominently capture the significant daily disruptions to education and labour choices the pandemic continues to impose at the time of writing. Below, we briefly share and discuss these findings.

5.1 Perspectives on schooling for children affected by migration

Some 450 million people were recorded as internal migrants in India in the 2011 Census, which means that internal migrants as a percentage of the total population increased from 30 per cent in 2001 to 37 per cent in 2011.[40] The bulk of the internal migration was within the same district (62 per cent), followed by between districts within the same state (26 per cent) and just 12 per cent was interstate in 2011. With 93 million migrant children, every fifth migrant in India was a child in 2011.[41] A larger proportion of migrant children lived in rural areas than urban areas (56 per cent versus 44 per cent) and rural–rural migration was the most common direction of flow for child migrants, while urban–urban migration was the second most common.

Interviews in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh revealed particularly valuable observations on the experiences of children engaged in, or living in, households where work and education are affected by labour migration. These perspectives offer useful additional insights to available quantitative data.

While male caregivers of children and key informants mostly reported that children migrate along with other family members, fewer female caregivers of children and children who participated in the FGDs reported the same.

Caregivers and key informants also noted that the decision to leave children behind may depend on household income, the availability of extended kin to take care of the children, the nature of the work at the destination and the nature of migration (permanent or temporary). Specifically, those who migrate with the prospects of a well-paid job at the destination take their family along with them; others leave their families behind. People who have extended kin at origin may leave their family and children at origin. Permanent migrants typically take their family along with them.

"[Migrating children] go along with the family. All of them go together. The mothers either leave them here or take them along. So, children go. The older ones start working. In Punjab, 10-year-olds do all kinds of work."

– Father, PSU 21, Uttar Pradesh

"The thing is that if both parents go out, they take their kids along and if the parents have to go out to earn, either the father or the eldest brother goes to work, the mother doesn't. The mother stays back at home."

– Father, PSU 103, Uttar Pradesh

"[Children] go along [when parents migrate]. Who will leave children here? If there is an older person or the head of the family here, then they stay back, else the children are taken along. They are forced to do so. What else can they do? If there is some work that involves all of them, that involves the children, the ladies, then the whole family goes along."

– Father, PSU 104, Uttar Pradesh

"The father earns and sends money, and the mother takes care of them. They cannot take the whole family along."

– Mother, PSU 103, Uttar Pradesh

"[Parents] leave [children] behind. Only gents go."

– Mother, PSU 66, Bihar

"Most of the times, the family take [the child]. Permanent migrants take them, temporary migrants do not."

– Education state resource person, Uttar Pradesh

Urban migration proved a common theme for the destination, with children sent to cities to engage in factory work – including Delhi, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Meerut and Mumbai – as well as several neighbouring states, including Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and West Bengal.

"Some [children] go to Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh to work in factories. They are aged 10–12. They come from poor families. They work in companies, packaging medicines, running machines, etc. They might get hurt but they are from poor families. They earn 5,000 to 6,000 rupees."

– Boy, 14 years, PSU 21, Uttar Pradesh

"[Children go] to Jodhpur, Haryana and Delhi; they go as they are poor as they think that we will earn something for our parents. They work in making window frames, furniture, iron work."

– Mother, PSU 103, Uttar Pradesh

"When they leave school, [children] worked to make bangles. They go to Jaipur. Many children from our village have gone there, even children who are just 7–8 years old."

– Girl, 17 years, PSU 66, Bihar

One key theme expressed by respondents throughout was the significant differences between children belonging to households of different socioeconomic levels in terms of accessing education and avoiding work before, during and after migrating, as well as whether they had family members leaving home to migrate in the first place. Adult respondents, for instance, felt that parents or caregivers migrating for work largely preferred to take their children with them, in particular when migrating for long periods, but emphasized that the ability to do so was typically constrained by household income.

"Those who earn more can afford to take [their children] along. Those who earn less, leave their family and kids here, and they will send money from there. If they do the job of a contractor, they have more money, so they take their family along and live there."

– Father, PSU 66, Bihar

"Those who have a handsome salary like to keep their family with them. Those who have good income take their family with them."

– Businessman, Bihar

5.1.1 Migrant children's schooling at destination

The schooling and work experiences of children who migrate with their family depend on age, family income, access to school and the environment at the destination. Half of the primary caregivers who talked about migrant children's schooling experiences at destination reported that children are able to study there, while others commented that schooling and work requirements conflict. Migrant families who are better off typically enrol their children in school, often in private schools.

Only a few key informants felt that children are able to study at destination, an option that again depends on the socioeconomic condition of the family. Some commented that young children may study, while older children may combine schooling and work.

"Some children start domestic work as well as study. It depends on their family background and financial condition. Educated families will enrol their children in private schools. But chances of going to school are limited for most children."

– Education state resource person, Uttar Pradesh

"Whether children study or work depends on the financial condition of the family. Though the younger children study, they mostly study in government schools or those schools which have less fees. The older children, those who are aged 16–17 years, do some work along with studies. It's possible that the children who don't study don't find pleasure in studies or the income of the family isn't enough to cover the expenses, they work in such a condition."

– Deputy Labour Commissioner, Uttar Pradesh

Some respondents pointed to differences in the educational vulnerability of children from families that work in specific sectors, particularly brick kiln work. In comparison, children from migrant families who work in factories and companies in metro cities seem to have better opportunities to pursue some schooling, as described by the following contrasting vignettes.

"Those who work in the brick kiln go to Jammu or Jaipur on a large scale because they get good money there. They go with their family and children. Nothing happens for the schooling of their children. Their schooling is neither done in Bareilly nor at the place where parents go to work. Brick kiln work is very temporary in nature and this work usually lasts for four to five months, it starts in October and ends in May–June. During this time, schooling of these children is completely affected, and children cannot study. This is a huge drawback for the children working at brick kilns. It is the compulsion of the parents that they have to keep the children with them.

The second thing is that the brick kiln work is not permanent, and they do not know whether they will go to the same kiln next year. If one has to go to work only at a certain place, there can be arrangement for schooling of children. But, every time these people change their place of work, so their children are not getting education."

– Assistant Labour Commissioner, Uttar Pradesh

"Many people who go to Delhi and work in factories get their children enrolled in schools there. They study, will the small children work? Children whose parents migrate to work at the brick kiln don't study because there are no schools near the kiln. Those who permanently go to work in Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, etc., live there on rent so they admit their children in the nearby or a private school, but they do educate the children."

– Teacher, Bihar

Several key informants also expressed the opinion that government efforts to provide educational access for migrant children have not been successful as a result of the seasonal and temporary migration of families.

"The government wants, tries [to improve educational access for migrant children], but as far as I know, it has not got any success in this. We need to work on this thing. A lot of effort has been done for the schooling of these children, like thinking of making temporary schools. But as their parents' work is temporary and after some time these people leave from one place and come at some other place next time. Due to all these

reasons, despite many efforts, something in a systematic way could not be done for the education of their children. Despite many efforts, no success has been achieved in this and it needs to be worked on."

– Assistant Labour Commissioner, Uttar Pradesh

"About five to six years ago where I was working, we had tried to have inter-district discussion that there should be facility for studying for children who migrate with their parents. Later on, it was not taken care of. I think they should be working only as their migration is temporary only."

– Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan programme officer, Bihar

When probed about the educational experiences of children in households where one or more primary caregiver has migrated away from the community, or of children in migrant households that have arrived in new host communities, adult respondents felt that children from non-migrant households often performed better in their schooling. This was cited as a combined result of greater attention and supervision from parents, who may be present more regularly in non-migrant households, economically better off and, as a related point, more likely to send their children to private schools.

"How can we compare children from migrant and non-migrant households? We [non-migrant households] will educate our children in good school and they will send their children to Madrasa."

– Mother, PSU 20, Uttar Pradesh

"[Children] study, but the difference is how much they study. I stay here so I pay attention to their education. Like, I tell them 'study son'. Now if someone is not at home, though they send money for their education, there isn't as much effect on them. Both of them study but the difference is that they [children from migrant households] aren't focused, there isn't anyone to put pressure on them to study."

– Father, PSU 148, Bihar

"[Children] already have income assurance from the person who has migrated, so they study. But it is natural that there will be difference. If only mother is there, she has to put more efforts as the child fear of guardian gets reduced but when both parents are there it remains intact."

– Teacher, Uttar Pradesh

"If the main member of the family, their guardian, goes to work, then although children go to school, their study gets affected. As far as I know, they are unable to get proper schooling. Their family members are not able to monitor them properly. Sometimes situation arises that due to some reason the head of the home is unable to send money, so yes education of the children is affected. If their families have need then they work. It is obvious thing that those

whose parents are living with their children have better physical, mental health and education than those whose parents are not living with them."

– Assistant Labour Commissioner, Uttar Pradesh

An implicit message heard throughout the interviews is the opinion that family migration decisions, and the implications for children's education, are driven predominantly by adult decision-makers. Children are expected to accompany their parents, partake in their decisions and obey them. Respondents also held mixed opinions as to what happens to the children of labour migrants and whether their situation improves or not. Common themes among the respondents were those of continuity versus disruption to children's education as a result of adult actions.

"How will [the children] study there? They only go for work. What will they do, will they study or earn?"

– Mother, PSU 103, Uttar Pradesh

"The children study there. They educate them. If they are working, why will they make the children work? If they have gone there, they will teach their children in private schools only."

– Father, PSU 66, Bihar

"If there are adequate facilities there, they arrange tuitions. If there is a school nearby, they get them enrolled there."

– Mother, PSU 67, Bihar

5.1.2 Educational and work experiences of children left behind in migrant households

When probed about the educational and work experiences of children left behind in migrant households, the primary caregivers and key informants reported that children left behind do continue with their schooling. Some noted that children from non-migrant households studied better than those in migrant households because of greater attention and supervision from parents. It was also noted that non-migrant households may be economically better off and may send their children to private schools.

"Both [children in migrant and non-migrant households] are studying. The only difference is a [child from a migrant household] will be studying in a government school and the other one [a child from a non-migrant household] in a private school. If the father has gone out, the mother is still there, right? So, the mother has to put pressure on the child."

– Father, PUS 66, Bihar

"[Children from migrant households] study and they work. Because if they don't study, how will they work further? Knowledge is required, right? But, the guardian isn't there, so fear is less. That is what I am saying, those who want to study, they will. Those who don't, won't study as they think now my guardian isn't there so there's no one to tell them."

– Father, PSU 67, Bihar

"Some [children from migrant households] go to school and some start working. If the father goes to work, the mother gets the responsibility of her child. She becomes more aware of their studies. Thus, their children become more sincere."

– Education state resource person, Uttar Pradesh

"[Children from migrant households] will get admission in school. The non-migrant household children will get more care as both the parents will be there, compared to migrant household children."

– Additional Basic Shiksha Adhikari, Uttar Pradesh

5.2 Child marriage and children's schooling and work experiences

Most adult caregivers of children interviewed felt that child marriage is not common in their village and neighbourhood. However, most felt that child marriage disrupted children's schooling, particularly girls' schooling. They also noted that boys may start working from marriage, while girls' burden of household chores will increase with marriage.

"Schooling is discontinued after marriage. If the in-laws are educated, they teach [the girl]. Boys may study if they want to study, and those who don't want to, start earning. Once a girl is married, she has to work more. Like my daughter-in-law has been working since she came here. She has to cook two meals for the day. Even at home, she worked."

– Father, PSU 20, Uttar Pradesh

"[Girls] are young so they aren't matured, what work will they do? They are small children, their studies will be disrupted. Yes, it will affect their work. What will they earn? What is his age? He doesn't have the capacity to lift 10 kgs and has been married. What will he do? They are weak. Whose parents will want their girls to work? Even if they are married, who would want them to work? Won't it affect them? They are young, if they have children they will become weak."

– Father, PSU 66, Bihar

"[Girl's] age is not right, and studies are stopped as well. And she starts working [household chores] too now that she is married. For men, the problem is that now that he has a wife, he has to give her money for expenses. He should. So he will work. If there is work at home or else he will go outside to work. They leave their studies and they begin working."

– Mother, PSU 67, Bihar

Similar views were expressed by key informants as well.

"It is obvious that if a child gets married at an early age his or her schooling stops. If a girl gets married at the age of 15, then she can't continue her study. It will not be possible for her to continue study, in such situation she will either do domestic or some other work. If her husband is working, or even not working, but after marriage he also works, and the girl also starts doing domestic work or if in-laws' family has a business, then she starts cooperating in it. Obviously, the responsibility increases after getting married. Before marriage, they used to live with their parents and get some financial support from them. Now he has to be completely dependent on himself and earn money for both. Financial pressure comes after marriage. So, after marriage, whether it's boy or girl, schooling almost gets over for both and they start working."

– Assistant Labour Commissioner, Uttar Pradesh

"The studies stop. It will for sure as the boys will migrate after marriage, it is a tradition in village. The ladies tell them to go and earn after getting married. As the girls grow a little, they learn everything from their home itself. And when she goes to in-laws' house she must be doing all the work."

– Labour Enforcement Officer, Bihar

5.3 Perspectives on children's educational access during the COVID-19 pandemic

India was one of the first countries in the world to close its schools as an emergency measure with the outbreak of COVID-19 and virtual platforms were used to continue with children's schooling. A growing body of analysis primarily based on secondary data is clarifying the still emerging implications of children's schooling and work experiences following school closures with the outbreak of COVID-19. Most of the studies were conducted during or immediately after the first lockdown.

The existing literature suggests that significant minorities of children experienced delayed enrolment or school discontinuation. It implies that inequities in educational access impeded the efficacy of remote education for already marginalized groups of children and also that such equity gaps are likely to widen in the wake of the pandemic.[42] Children attending public schools prior to the pandemic were particularly vulnerable to missing out on education, as the schools and teachers were not equipped to provide online learning,[43] so children in public schools were more likely to experience learning losses.[44] The 2021 National Achievement Survey (NAS) demonstrates evidence of significant gaps in learning

among children across the country, including an average decrease in performance of students from Class 3 to 5 and from Class 8 to 10, with literature identifying COVID-19 and related school closures as the primary reason for the regression.[45] This analysis benefits, however, from further grounding with qualitative perspectives from children and their families consulted during this study (presented below).

Interviews with children revealed that online education could only go so far. They spoke of difficulties in learning without supervision, without the motivating force of teachers or peers; they spoke of disruptions to schedules and curricula resulting in fragmented learning. In many ways, children spoke of what we know: human connection is necessary to the well-being of children, including in their education.

> "I don't have a mobile. I am unable to learn. I have not even touched a book. I have passed 6th, I haven't got the books for 7th and now it is 8th. The teachers did not give the books for 7th. I don't have books. No online studies are going on in our school. If the schools open, I will start going and become the same as before in a year or two."
>
> – Boy, 14 years, PSU 20, Uttar Pradesh

> "I can't study online since I don't have a phone. My family can't afford a phone. I sometimes read books. I sometimes sit down to study but since schools are closed, I don't feel like studying. So may be spending two hours in a day. Whatever the teacher taught, I kept revising so I don't forget. I am ready to go back."
>
> – Boy, 14 years, PSU 21, Uttar Pradesh

> "No, there were no online classes in government schools. I just used to go to tuition."
>
> – Girl, 17 years, PSU 67, Bihar

Children who took online classes, however, also narrated a number of challenges, including a lack of live interactions with their teachers so they were not able to answer their queries, issues with internet connectivity and accessing a family member's phone and the lack of a suitable environment for studying at home.

> "[Teachers] used to explain in school. Now, they send a video or an image. The children have to understand on their own."
>
> – Boy, 17 years, PSU 103, Uttar Pradesh

> "Face-to-face is different, but here many times there is a problem of internet. If one has not understood something, one can stand and ask that in the school, but here it cannot be done in the same way."
>
> – Boy, 17 years, PSU 104, Uttar Pradesh

"Online classes are not regular; sometimes, there is a problem from the teacher's side that he has to go somewhere, or sometimes his health has not been fine, sometimes my health got bad, sometimes there is a network problem. After lockdown everyone is using excessive phone data, so, due to all these reasons classes are not regular."

– Boy, 17 years, PSU 148, Bihar

"There's no recharge done on phones and sometimes my brother is unable to give me phone if he has gone out. Even when he is at home, it is difficult since he can't make calls during that time."

– Girl, 15 years, PSU 104, Uttar Pradesh

Several children, particularly boys, reported that they missed going to school, which was closed as a result of the outbreak of COVID-19, and they hoped that schools would reopen as soon as possible.

"Studies aren't going on well and syllabus has not been completed and it has become difficult to go out of the house. I miss school. Before this, I used to go to school, so it felt good. Now, it doesn't feel good. The situation of my siblings is also the same as mine. They don't feel good. They keep saying that when will our schools open?"

– Boy, 14 years, PSU 148, Bihar

Children also unanimously reported that they learned less with schools closed. They attributed it to factors such as a lack of interaction with teachers to allow for any clarification, less time spent on learning various subjects, differences in the way teachers and those who gave tuition conducted the classes, limited coverage of the syllabus in online classes, the lack of a fixed schedule for studying, a lack of tests and examinations and limited peer support in the learning process.

"I have forgotten everything; now I don't even know how to add or subtract."

– Boy, 14 years, PSU 20, Uttar Pradesh

"When schools were open, we could go and learn. When the teachers explained something, we would understand. In online mode, how can we understand in a small phone? The teacher won't come here to explain. So, I can't learn as much as before."

– Boy, 14 years, PSU 21, Uttar Pradesh

"No, it was better earlier as we used to go to school and study and then come back and study again for an hour."

– Boy, 15 years, Uttar Pradesh

"When I went to school, there was more studying for five to six hours, so I could learn more. In coaching, we are taught for one hour. How much will I study in one hour? While in school we could ask the teacher if we did not know something, but there is no one to tell us. In school, we would study for five to six hours, but now I keep roaming around. Only study if I want to. In school it was that we had to study. It was compulsory."

– Boy, 14 years, PSU 67, Bihar

"There is difference in understanding sitting in front of teacher physically and understanding online. I couldn't learn. Sometimes things used to get late in online classes, and we could not complete the chapter well, the syllabus is still far behind. We were able to learn better in offline class. Because doubts of all the students are cleared better in offline classes, and offline classes continue for half an hour extra, but in online classes, it is not so. Apart from this, the health of the teacher had also deteriorated due to Corona."

– Boy, 17 years, PSU 148, Bihar

"We were taught according to the periods for every half an hour in school; it was not the same at home. I used to study according to the timetable in school but here there was no fixed timetable. There was no test also."

– Girl, 15 years, PSU 104, Uttar Pradesh

"When I used to go to school, it was good. We used to study more in school and now we only study in the tuition. The teacher used to tell and even the friends used to help, who will help at home? All subjects are difficult, although it is taught in the tuitions but not in the same manner as it was taught in the school. Yes, when we used to go to school we were taught in a group, in the school we were taught for three to four hours but in tuition it is just one hour. Thus, there is not much learning in tuition."

– Girl, 17 years, PSU 67, Bihar

Although studies that assessed changes in children's engagement in work with the outbreak of COVID-19 are sparse in India, the available evidence suggests that the risk of child labour increased following the outbreak of COVID-19.[46] Perspectives from respondents who participated in the primary qualitative study in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh tended to focus less on the implications of COVID-19 on their education–work balance and more specifically on the myriad challenges that children, in particular girls, experienced in accessing education. Most participant children had started working prior to the outbreak of COVID-19 and just one participant reported starting to work with the outbreak of COVID-19. Still, some participants, particularly boys, reported that they tended to spend more time in household chores or unpaid economic activities because of the pandemic.

"I have to go to work now since there is nothing to do at home. I used to go earlier too but now I go more often since there is more time now. I used to do it one to two days in a week, when needed, before COVID, but daily now. Now I spend more time. I work more."

– Boy, 14 years, PSU 21, Uttar Pradesh

"Now I hardly study for half an hour. Now I work more."

– Girl, 14 years, PSU 148, Bihar

5.4 Summary of key findings

- With 93 million migrant children recorded in India in 2011, there are specific challenges to providing quality schooling and eliminating child labour for children at destination or for those left at origin.

- While most migration occurs across rural areas, children being sent to urban areas to work also require attention. Participants in the qualitative survey conducted as part of this study reported that children were sent to cities to engage in factory work, including Delhi, Hyderabad, Jaipur (for the bangle production sector), Meerut and Mumbai, as well as several neighbouring states, including Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and West Bengal.

- Children's schooling at destination depends on their households' financial conditions and broader socioeconomic status, with children belonging to better-off families being more likely to attend school at destination. Schooling outcomes at destination also vary depending on migrant parents' sector of work. For example, school participation is especially difficult if children follow parents working in the brick kilns sector, which is often temporary, with locations changing from one year to the next.

- Key informants interviewed as part of this study reported that schooling access remains poor for migrant children at destination, which thus represents a priority policy area to improve overall education outcomes in India.

- Children left behind were reported as experiencing a relatively higher risk of starting to work, due to more limited supervision and economic vulnerability.

- While child marriage was not commonly reported by participants in the qualitative studies, caregivers and key informants clearly articulated how child marriage negatively impacts schooling and labour outcomes.

- Participants also described the challenges related to school closure and economic vulnerabilities from COVID-19, which tended to widen inequalities in school attendance and learning. Children, especially those from the most disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, experienced multiple challenges in continuing education, including lack of live interaction with their teachers and peers, issues with connectivity and the lack of a suitable environment for studying at home.

- While these circumstances increased the risk of child labour, respondents did not commonly report that they started working during the pandemic. However, they reported that they tended to spend more time in domestic work and other unpaid activities.

6. Summary and recommendations

This section summarizes the key findings of the study and presents selected programmatic and research recommendations arising from the study.

6.1 Summary

Measuring child labour in India is constrained by several issues: lack of key information (such as on hours worked); changes in sampling methods over time; and differences in the classification of industries/occupations as hazardous and non-hazardous globally and nationally. Such challenges have resulted in varied estimates with limited comparability over time. Children's engagement in the worst forms of child labour is rarely captured in large-scale surveys and what data are available are estimates/guesstimates.

This report used two main national-level surveys, EUS 2011/12 and PLFS 2018/19, to measure the prevalence of child work and child labour in India. The surveys also provided information on children's schooling, allowing us to measure children's activity status by using four categories: in school only; in school and working; only working; and neither in school nor working. Data from EUS and PLFS were combined with information from other secondary sources, such as UDAYA data or previous studies, to obtain a comprehensive picture of child labour and its interlinkages with schooling in India. This quantitative analysis was complemented with the results from a small-scale primary qualitative study, including IDIs and FGDs with children and caregivers in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

Descriptive statistical analysis of PLFS data indicated that an estimated 5 million children (2 per cent of all children aged 5–17 years) were working in 2018/19.

Based on PLFS 2018/19, the estimated number of children in child labour ranged from 1.8 million to 3.3 million children (0.7–1.3 per cent of all children aged 5–17 years), depending on the specific definition and classification of hazardous activities used. Applying the international definitions generated higher estimates of child labour prevalence than applying the national definition (mostly because the international definition also considers economic activities within the household and number of hours spent in economic activities in its measurement of child labour, irrespective of whether the work is in hazardous or non-hazardous sectors).

Socioeconomic differentials and sectoral patterns in the prevalence of child work were relatively stable across EUS 2011/12 and PLFS 2018/19 surveys. The proportion of working children was higher among boys, older children aged 15–17 years, children living in rural areas and those belonging to disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds in terms of caste or household wealth. Most working children were found in agriculture and about 50 per cent of working children worked within the family and 50 per cent outside the family.

Socioeconomic and sectoral patterns in child labour prevalence were similar and, again, relatively stable across EUS 2011/12 and PLFS 2018/19 surveys. However, it is important to emphasize

that none of the indicators of children's work or child labour used in the report captures children's engagement in household chores. Given that girls are disproportionately engaged in household chores, the work and labour measures are clearly underestimated (by the international definitions) for girls. Therefore, the differential in child labour prevalence by sex remains an open question that needs further scrutiny.

The EUS and PLFS data also showed that most child labour in India is hazardous in nature, that is, entailing children's engagement in hazardous industries/occupations and/or for long hours.

Information on the worst forms of child labour other than hazardous work (such as child trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, use of children for other illicit activities) remains largely hidden as it cannot be captured by standard surveys.

Findings from previous studies and from the small-scale primary qualitative study conducted as part of this report in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh indicated several sectors that require specific attention to address the worst forms of child labour, including domestic work outside the household, production of bangles, glass products and leather products, and work in brick kilns or construction, among others.

As reported above for working children and children in child labour, the prevalence of the worst forms of child labour is highest for children from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, including children from poorer households or socially marginalized religious and caste groups.

This report also analysed children's activity status, categorized into four broad groups of: in school only; in school and working; only working; and neither in school nor working. While the available data consistently show that most children attend school only, figures on children combining school and work are not consistent across data sources. EUS 2011/12 and PLFS 2018/19 indicate that hardly any children combined school and work (less than 1 per cent). Other studies, though not comparable, reported that a much higher proportion of children combined school and work. Therefore, the extent to which children combine schooling and work remains an area for future research.

Triangulation of evidence from multiple sources underscores an inverse association between children's schooling and work. Multi-variate analysis using panel data from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh showed an inverse association between children's school attendance and economic participation. Participants in the qualitative study in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh voiced unequivocally that combining schooling and work affected children's school attendance and their performance – that is, their learning levels – because of irregular attendance in school, inability to handle the pressures of both studying and working at a young age, work-related distractions and physical exhaustion, among other challenges, and that they gradually dropped out of school.

Available evidence, from surveys conducted mostly during or immediately after the first lockdown, suggests that minorities of children had experienced delayed enrolment or school discontinuation with the outbreak of COVID-19. They also showed that school closures and remote learning disproportionately affected children who already experienced barriers to accessing education or who were at higher risk of exclusion. School closures and remote learning affected children's learning levels. Limited available evidence suggests that notable proportions of children had started working or tended to spend more time in unpaid economic activities.

6.2 Research recommendations

Although the body of evidence on children's engagement in economic activities and child labour has increased substantially, several evidence gaps remain.

As mentioned above, measuring children's work and child labour accurately remains a major challenge because of a lack of specific information on children's participation and hours spent in economic activities or household chores. This calls for the inclusion of a standard set of questions in national-level surveys that can measure child work and child labour, including household chores, accurately and comprehensively. Complementing national datasets with data from time use surveys is also important for a more gender-balanced perspective on boys' and girls' work.

Our results also call for an in-depth assessment of the differences between international and national definitions and classifications of hazardous industries/occupations and how such differences affect child labour estimates.

Our estimate of children engaged in hazardous work was complemented with information from previous studies and the primary qualitative small-scale study, which indicated some relevant sectors for addressing hazardous work in India, such as bangles, glass and leather production. We acknowledge, however, that evidence on children's hazardous work remains limited. Mixed-method studies on the magnitude and nature of hazardous work are required to generate further evidence, including on: children's engagement in hazardous unpaid household work, the factors that place children at risk of hazardous work and the consequences of children's engagement in hazardous work on their health – both physical and mental – and development.

Evidence is especially limited about children engaged in the worst forms of child labour other than hazardous work, such as child trafficking and the use of children for illicit activities. Again, this area of research requires mixed methods to inform on the specific features of this type of child labour in the Indian context.

Our analysis shows that national-level surveys tend to underestimate the numbers of children who combine school and work, while children- and adolescent-focused surveys using tools such as life-event calendars help capture children's activity status at specific ages more accurately. Our qualitative study has shed some light on why children combine schooling and work and how this affects children's school attendance and performance. Additional mixed-method studies are needed that generate evidence on: the number of children who combine schooling and work; the age when boys and girls and children belonging to different socioeconomic groups start combining school and work; the factors and circumstances that compel children to do so; and the consequences of doing so, not only on their educational outcomes but also on their health, both physical and mental, and nutrition.

Moreover, the findings from this report show that children who combine schooling and work were at high risk of irregular attendance and discontinuation of schooling. Hence, it is important to investigate the specific needs and vulnerabilities of children combining school and work, to ensure that they have access to appropriate support interventions.

Some 5 per cent of all children aged 6–17 years were neither in school nor in work, based on the PLFS 2018/19. Our analysis showed that girls, children from rural areas and children belonging to socioeconomically disadvantaged groups were more likely to fall into this group. Additional studies to better understand the factors that lead some children to be neither in school nor work, and the mechanisms through which these children can be mainstreamed into formal or non-formal education systems, are called for.

Finally, while emerging evidence suggests that school closures may have compelled many children to discontinue schooling and be pushed into work, more rigorous studies are required to understand the long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children's education and work outcomes, the impact of migration on children's access to schooling and pressure to work and the impact of early marriage on girls' schooling and their work within the home.

6.3 Programme recommendations

Findings related to interlinkages between children's education and work underscore the need for increasing investment in children's schooling to strengthen the role of education in the elimination of child labour in India. Although the Government of India has articulated its commitment to improving schooling outcomes in the country, as can be seen in the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009, the National Education Policy 2020 and several programmes such as the Samagra Shiksha, what is needed is a strong commitment to ensure that these programmes are effectively implemented and that they do indeed ensure quality education, including for the most disadvantaged groups.

Below, we provide examples of the main policies and programmes that are relevant to address the specific challenges highlighted in this report. Further details on effective and promising educational strategies that can address child labour in India can be found in a complementary discussion paper.[47]

This report consistently showed that children from specific socioeconomic groups are more likely to work and less likely to attend school. These include children from the poorest households, or from disadvantaged groups in terms of caste or religion. Economic pressures that dissuade parents from enrolling their children in school and keeping them in school once enrolled need to be addressed. Expanding social protection coverage can contribute to reducing child work participation in these contexts.[48]

In relation to education, multilevel interventions targeted at students, their families and schools to improve school attendance are needed.

- At the child level, schooling that facilitates positive peer support and establishes norms that encourage school completion may motivate children to pursue an education. A school climate that is conducive to learning and that helps children feel connected to their school, particularly among those from the most marginalized groups, needs to be created.

- Our findings also highlight the role of parents and family environment in pushing children into work and child labour. Our findings also suggest that a substantial amount of child work takes place within the household, especially for very young children, girls and children from rural areas, who may not be easily reachable, unless through parents and caregivers. At the parent and family level, programmes are needed that promote positive attitudes towards education and school completion and demonstrate to parents the relevance of the curriculum for future opportunities for both their sons and their daughters, raising parents' aspirations for their children and encouraging greater parental involvement in children's education.

- Our study observed that children with foundational skills (basic literacy and numeracy) had a lower probability of engaging in paid work. Concerted efforts to improve learning outcomes are needed. The Government of India has articulated its commitment to improving learning outcomes in several policies and programmes. Several intervention models have been piloted in India to improve learning outcomes and these have identified a number of strategies that hold promise. These include: adapting the curriculum to children's learning levels and providing level-appropriate learning materials instead of grade-level curriculum;[49] providing remedial education by informal teachers hired from the community[50] or by community volunteers;[51] providing additional teachers;[52] providing incentive payments to teachers based on improvement in their students' test scores;[53] and information and communication technology (ICT) based instruction.[54] Investments are required to adapt and upscale these promising models.

- Finally, the study findings showed that children's work participation has become particularly pronounced from the age of 15 years onwards. While the agricultural sector continues to be a major employer of children in rural areas, the industrial and service sectors remain important employers in urban areas. These findings call for better targeting of child labour prevention efforts to vulnerable groups and risk sectors.

Endnotes

1 See Kim, Jihye, Wendy Olsen and Arkadiusz Wiśniowski, 'A Bayesian Estimation of Child Labour in India', *Child Indicators Research*, 13, 2020, pp. 1975–2001.

2 See Kim, Jihye, Wendy Olsen and Arkadiusz Wiśniowski, 'A Bayesian Estimation of Child Labour in India'.

3 Khan, Sherin R. and Scott Lyon, *Measuring Children's Work in South Asia: Perspectives from national household surveys*, New Delhi: ILO, 2015, <www.ilo.org/publications/measuring-childrens-work-south-asia-perspectives-national-household-surveys> .

4 Kim, Jihye, and Wendy Olsen, 'Harmful Forms of Child Labour in India from a Time-use Perspective', *Development in Practice*, vol. 33 no. 2, 2023, pp. 190–204.

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8 See Kim, Jihye, Wendy Olsen and Arkadiusz Wiśniowski, 'A Bayesian Estimation of Child Labour in India'.

9 See Kim, Jihye, Wendy Olsen and Arkadiusz Wiśniowski, 'A Bayesian Estimation of Child Labour in India'.

10 The estimate does not account for children's engagement in long hours of work, because information on hours worked is not gathered by EUS 2011/12. See Khan, Sherin R. and Scott Lyon, *Measuring Children's Work in South Asia: Perspectives from national household surveys*.

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12 *National Sample Survey Office, Employment and Unemployment Situation in India, 2011–12,* Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India, New Delhi, 2014; National Statistical Office, *Annual Report: Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), 2018–2019,* Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India, New Delhi, 2020.

13 See Overview of Methodology (Annex) in International Labour Office and United Nations Children's Fund, *Child Labour: Global estimates 2020, trends and the road forward,* ILO and UNICEF, New York, 2021, <www.ilo.org/publications/child-labour-global-estimates-2020-trends-and-road-forward>.

14 In addition, while the ILO classification does not consider children's age when classifying industries and occupations into hazardous and non-hazardous, the Government of India classification is differentiated based on children's age. There are a set of occupations and processes in which adolescents (15–17-year-olds) are prohibited to work and children (5–14-year-olds) are prohibited to help, and a set of occupations and processes where children (but not adolescents) are prohibited to help in family or family enterprises. See: Ministry of Labour and Employment, Amendment in the Schedule to the Child and Adolescent Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act, 1986, Ministry of Labour and Employment, Government of India, New Delhi, 2017.

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23 PSU refers to the primary sampling units of the UDAYA study, from which qualitative respondents were sampled. See Annex 5 for details on the UDAYA study, and Annex 9 for details on the qualitative study.

24 We note that our estimate of the number of children in child labour for 2011/12 was higher than that reported by Khan and Lyon, *Measuring Children's Work in South Asia*. This might be because code 920, instead of 921, is used for Agricultural, Forestry and Fishery Labourers in national classification of occupation (NCO 2004). Therefore, Khan and Lyon might have missed children engaged in these roles. Our estimate of the number of children in child labour was the same as the estimate given by Khan and Lyon when we excluded children who worked in these roles (5.8 million).

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57 Socioeconomically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs) listed in the NEP 2020 include: female and transgender individuals; those belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, other backward castes and minorities; students from villages, small towns and aspirational districts; children with disabilities, including learning disabilities; children from migrant communities; low-income households; children in vulnerable situations, victims of or children of victims of trafficking; orphans, including child beggars in urban areas; and the urban poor.

Tables and figures

Annex 1: Exclusion and inclusion criteria for the literature review

Include/Exclude	Reason
1. Interlinkages between education and child labour	
Include	✓ Reported education influence on child labour and vice-versa
	✓ Peer reviewed research papers/ reports using secondary data analyses and primary quantitative research
	✓ With Geographic focus on India
	✓ Studies with clear description of research questions, methods, sample size and sampling approach, and description of data collection and analysis
	✓ Published between 2000-2020
Exclude	✘ Only qualitative research study, review papers, commentaries
	✘ Studies from geographies other than India
	✘ Grey literature
	✘ Published in other than English language
2. Impact of COVID-19 on child labour and education outcomes	
Include	✓ Reported education outcome or work participation: Enrolment, attendance, remote learning, time spent in learning, learning loss and intention to return, domestic chores
	✓ Quantitative or mixed method studies with primary/secondary data analysis
	✓ Modelling studies in which India is included
	✓ Studies including perspective of parents/teacher/stakeholders reporting about children experience of education and work
	✓ Initiatives to mitigate the risk of COVID 19 on education and child labour outcomes
	✓ Included grey literature
	✓ With Geographic focus on India
	✓ Published from 2020 onwards
Exclude	✘ Commentaries
	✘ Collage level studies
	✘ Insufficient sample

Annex 2: Studies retained in the synthesis of evidence on prevalence of child labour, its drivers and linkages with education

Citation	Type of study, sample size, and geography	Outcome and effect size		
		Prevalence of child labour	Drivers of child labour	Linkages with education
Aggarwal, 2004	Analysis of secondary data 55th round (1999-2000) of the NSSO survey Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh	India was home to 9.33 million child labourers (5-14) in 1999-2000 (4.12 %). Around 90% were in rural areas (8.15 million) and male child labour constituted 53.3% (4.98 million) Between 1991 census and 1999-2000 (NSS 55th round), the number and proportion of child labour declined in rural MP, Maharashtra, and TN, while it increased among female children aged 10-14 years in rural and urban areas and among male children aged 10-14 in the urban areas Child labourers were mostly employed in agriculture in rural areas. In urban areas, industries that employed child labourers were bidi making in the four states, followed by silk industry in UP and matchstick industry in TN.	Child labour was higher in larger households (size above 8) and in small households (size 0-4); among socially disadvantaged castes; Hindus than Muslims; female than male headed households; households with no or small landholdings in rural areas Child labour more prevalent among socially backward classes, Muslim households, female-headed households, and poor households in urban areas	Most child labour were illiterate in rural areas, while they were primary educated in urban areas
Barman, 2011	Analysis of secondary data Data on 114216 children of 5-14 years from 2005-06 NFHS Across India		Head of the household preferred to send other relatives to participate in the workforce (0.55 times higher for boy child and 0.77 times higher for girl child) as compared to son/daughter, son-in-law/ daughter-in-law, and grand children Children's work declined with level of adult literacy. Children's work higher among socially disadvantaged castes and tribes, and households with lower wealth status. Risk of child labour higher for males than females when father was not alive (higher for females than males when mother was not alive). Risk of child labour was very high when both of the parents were not alive compared to those who had both parents alive.	States where difference between male and female literacy was less 10%, both male and female child labour in rural areas was the lowest. Children (both sexes) who completed primary level of education were less likely to work as a labour (about 0.45 times less likely) than children who were illiterate or could not complete primary education

Citation	Type of study, sample size, and geography	Outcome and effect size		
		Prevalence of child labour	Drivers of child labour	Linkages with education
Dash, et al., 2018	Analysis of secondary data Census 1991, 2001 and 2011 data and the NSSO 68th round data on employment and unemployment India	The number of economically active children in the age group of 5–14 was 11.3 million during 1991 census, 12.7 million during 2001 census, 10.1 million in 2011. Uttar Pradesh accounts for the largest share of the child work force in India followed by Bihar, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh. Census 2011 shows a child labour sex ratio of 799 female child labourers per 1,000 male child labourers with the highest sex ratio observed in Rajasthan (1,141). Around 32.9% of children work as agricultural labourers, 26% as cultivators, and 35.8% in other services in the non-agricultural sector. Highest percentage of children engaged as cultivators lives in Himachal Pradesh (87%), as agricultural labourers in Odisha (49.7%) and engaged in household industries in West Bengal (11.9%).	Females were 42% less likely to be in child labour than male In urban areas, children are 22 % less likely to become child labour than in rural areas Compared to the Hindu family, children from other religion are 1.01 times more likely to become child labour. Muslims are 1.41 times more likely to become child labour. Scheduled Caste people are 1.28 times more likely to become child labourers followed by Other Backward Castes (1.19 times) compared to that of Scheduled Tribes	Compared to those who never attended the school, drop-outs are 54% less likely to be a child labourers. Further it reduces 99 % risk of being child labour among those who are currently attending the school
Gaur, 2010	Analysis of secondary data NFHS 2005-06 data on 124,826 children aged 5–14 years. India	Every tenth child in the age group of 5–11 years and every sixth child in the age group of 12–14 years were engaged in work Percentage of total working children varied from 5% or less in states like Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Kerala and Goa to 20% in Rajasthan and Arunachal Pradesh, and 32% in Gujarat. Percentage of children engaged in other family work was the highest (5 %), followed by household chores and unpaid work (3 % each), and paid work (2 %) for non-household members in India.	Orphan children were more involved in work at an early age in India (18.4 %) than their non-orphaned counterparts (11.4 %) Children with more siblings were more involved in child work: from 7.2% when single (no siblings) to 14.1% in the case of four and more siblings Involvement of the mother and the father in the service sector decreased the overall child work to 11.6 % and 8 % respectively, while involvement of mother and father in agricultural work increased the overall work participation rate to 15% and 14 % respectively.	Work participation rate among children not attending the school was almost double in India

Citation	Type of study, sample size, and geography	Outcome and effect size		
		Prevalence of child labour	Drivers of child labour	Linkages with education
Gómez, et al., 2016	Analysis of secondary data NSS 68th Round Employment and Unemployment Survey India	Out of the 9,687,688 children, over 30% were below15 years of age, and around 20% were below 14 years of age. About 44% were children from households living below the poverty line 70% worked for the primary sector Approximately half (46%) worked as casual wage labourers; and 3% worked as regular employees. Rest 51% worked in own household enterprise	65% of the child labourers are male 90% lived in rural areas 80% of cases corresponded to children from "backward classes", "scheduled castes", and "scheduled tribes" 95% were from households with an average per capita income less than or equal to Rs 1,610 per month at 2012 values Uttar Pradesh is the most affected state, with 4% of its working force being child labour	85% did not attend school
Kis-Katos, 2012	Analysis of secondary data World Bank Living Standards Measurement Study (LSMS) series Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, Rural		Probability that a child works falls with household wealth	Domestic work and school are the two most conflicting alternatives for girls, market work and school for boys Direct costs of primary schooling increase participation in market work of children of both sexes, making school attendance also less likely; in a similar vein, opportunity costs of schooling (captured by village wages) increase market work of both boys and girls.

Citation	Type of study, sample size, and geography	Outcome and effect size		
		Prevalence of child labour	Drivers of child labour	Linkages with education
Menon and Rodgers, 2018	Analysis of secondary data NSSO employment data from 1983 to 2008 merged with data on state-level minimum wage rates, for all children ages 5–14 Pooled sample of children has 851,740 observations India		Rural areas: Probability of employment for rural boys and girls show a strong decline when heads of households have post-primary education Education of adult women in the household reduces the likelihood for boys and girls work within and outside the household Children are slightly less likely to be engaged in employment in states with higher levels of male unemployment Urban area: Belonging to scheduled tribe/ castes has a statistically significant negative effect for boys employed outside the home Child labour in urban areas appears to respond less to state-level variations in unemployment compared to rural areas As the adult minimum wage increases, there is no statistically significant impact on the labour of boys or girls outside the home as salaried or casual workers in rural or urban areas	Urban area: Likelihood that a child is employed decreases with the child's educational attainment, and it is also lower when household heads have a post-primary education

Citation	Type of study, sample size, and geography	Outcome and effect size		
		Prevalence of child labour	Drivers of child labour	Linkages with education
Narayanan and Dhanaraj, 2018.	Primary quantitative study 1,244 children in aged 6–12 years in 274 randomly selected villages Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh		Father studied beyond secondary school was associated with lower hours at work Larger number of livestock possessed increases children's time spent at work Household economic status (Land owned by the household) has no impact on child work Older children are more likely to work Controlling for age and birth order, boys tend to work less (by 0.295) than girls Children belonging to the Scheduled Tribes spend more time at work relative to those belonging to general social groups.	There might not be a direct correspondence between time allocated to school and time allocated to work Dropouts and never enrolled children spend longer at work hours (about 3 times more) and less time on home-based learning activities than children who attend school.
Pal, et al., 2016	Primary quantitative study Data collected from 327 households and 166 girls and 161 boys aged 5-14 Domkal Block of Murshidabad District, West Bengal	Children spent 8 to 10 hours a day in family work Boys spent more time on work than girls	Higher caste children work less. Factors that are associated with higher time spent by children working: Nuclear family Lower number of females in the household Larger household size Higher number of children in the household Lower number of male children over 14 years of age Lower educational level of mother Lower level of household assets Less agricultural lend Boys work more hours than girls	Children attending school are devoting less time to enterprise work

Annex 3: Studies retained in the synthesis of evidence on the impact of COVID-19

Citation	Study design, sample size, and geography	Outcomes and effect size		
		Education	Child labour	Initiatives
Idris, 2020	Mixed review of academic papers, grey literature and media reports and blogs South Asia: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Nepal and Pakistan	Due to school closure risk of child labour increased. Inequality widened as school closure disproportionately affected children who already experienced barriers to education. Anticipated risk of school discontinuation for these children and high risk of getting involved in child labour.	Higher risk of modern slavery and worst form of child labour (e.g., trafficking and forced begging) due to rise in unemployment, loss of parents due to COVID, school closure. Those already in child labour may be hit by wage loss, extended working hours. Due to imperfect labour market in agriculture, the children of farmers and agricultural labourers are at greater risk.	Although, government has recommended online teaching, most schools do not have the capacity to offer this.
Kalra and Jolad, 2021	Review article based on results from ASER, 2020 or MOSPI, NSS published results, UNICEF rapid assessment survey India	**Out-of-school:** The proportion of "out of school children" has increased from 1.8 percent to 5.3 percent in the 6-10 age group between 2018-2020. **Access to and use of online resources:** 18.3 percent of children in enrolled in government schools in rural areas have accessed video recordings, and 8.1 percent have attended live online classes, the proportion slightly rises to 28.7 percent and 17.7 respectively for children enrolled in private schools **Barriers to remote learning:** Great divide in remote learning induced by gaps in access to online education related to the following elements: (i) Physical infrastructure (unreliable electricity supply, study space, and overall home environment); (ii) Electronic devices (access to smartphones, computers, TV, among others)		

Citation	Study design, sample size, and geography	Outcomes and effect size		
		Education	Child labour	Initiatives
ASER, 2021	During 2020 due to COVID pandemic, the survey was conducted via phone calls, reaching 52,227 rural households with 59,521, 5-16 years old school-age children in 26 States and 4 Union Territories. Rural India	**Enrolment:** Among young children aged 5-8 years, the proportion of children not enrolled increased by 4 percentage points from 3.6 in 2018 to 7.5% in 2020. Also about 5% children aged 6-10 years were not enrolled in 2020 in comparison to just 1.8% in 2018. Non-enrolment is visible mostly among the youngest children (age 6 and 7), may be due to delay in admission owing to pandemic. The difference diminishes with increasing age. Among 15-16-year-olds, enrolment levels are actually slightly higher than in 2018. **Online learning:** Further, 17.7% children in private schools accessed live online classes during the reference week as compared to 8.1% of government school children		**Household level initiatives:** Percentage of Households owning a smartphone increased from 37% to 62%, during 2018 to 2020. 11% families reported buying a new phone since the lockdown began, of which more than 80% reported that the new phone was a smartphone. **Learning support by school:** 36% of households reported that support was also provided physically in delivering material by teacher at home or by parents visit to school About 74% households who reported any material support reported medium as WhatsApp, 12% phone calls and 26% reported personal visit.
Azim Premji foundation, 2021	Mixed method field study covering 16,067 children in 1,137 public schools in 44 districts across 5 states in January 2021 (Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand). Domains assessed: language (oral expression, reading fluency, writing skills and listening comprehension) and mathematics (numbers, operations, problem solving and shapes, fractions, data handling and measurement)	Learning loss in language: 92% children on an average have lost at least one specific language ability from the previous year across all classes 82% children on an average have lost at least one specific mathematical ability from the previous year across all classes		

Citation	Study design, sample size, and geography	Outcomes and effect size		
		Education	Child labour	Initiatives
Bhaumik, 2020	Quantitative: Descriptive survey method Sample size:173 students [93 male and 80 female] in the age range of 15-18 years studying in grades 11 and 12 from Kendrya Vidhalaya; government schools and public/private schools Delhi, Bihar .	**Access to digital devices:** About 76.5% private school students had access to personal digital devices as compared to 75.3% of KV students and only 58.3% of the government school students. **Access to fast internet:** 71.9% of the private school students followed by 62.9% of the KV students, and only 44.3% of the government school students. **Availability of personal study space:** 84.4% of private school students had their personal study space vs. 76.7% of KV and 72.1% of government school students. **Digital skills:** 74.9% of the government school students found it difficult to search for relevant information on the internet in contrast to 53.2% of the private school students and 49.3% of the KV students 86% of the government school students admitted to not possessing adequate digital literacy in contrast to 71.2% of the KV students, and 59.4% of the private school students **Digital literacy:** 86% of government school students admitted to not possess adequate digital literacy vs. 71.2% of KV students, and 59.4% of private school students	N/A	**Remote learning initiatives by the Ministry of Education:** • Digital learning initiatives in form of DIKSHA (Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Society) • eVidyadaan, Swayam Prabha 24X7 educational channel • e-Paathshala for free access to digital textbooks • NROER (National Repository of Open Educational Resources), • On-air radio broadcasting of educational lessons

Citation	Study design, sample size, and geography	Outcomes and effect size		
		Education	Child labour	Initiatives
Kailash Satyarthi Children's Foundation, 2020	**Phase I: Online** survey conducted with 53 NGOs from 27th April to 5th May 2020 spread across the country **Phase 2: Household survey** of 245 respondents from 17th May to 24th May 2020 from rural areas of states-, Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh. All India	**School drop-out** About 85% of the NGOs surveyed feel that school dropouts are likely to increase. About 20% of the respondent(N=183) households with school going children are potentially ready to consider withdrawing their children from school due to financial crisis and deny them their right to get educated.	About 93% of NGOs reported that the incidence of child labour will increase and 64% of NGOs reported that child bonded labour will also increase post lockdown. Household survey finds that 21% of households are potentially ready to send their children into child labour due to their economic vulnerability	
Kundu & Bej, 2020	This study includes survey of college and school students with mixed approach combining both methods quantitative and qualitative component Quantitative and qualitative interview 100 students: 50 from college and 50 from secondary school have participated in quantitative self-administered survey. In- depth interviews have been conducted over telephone with 30 students (15 college students and 15 school students) India	Fear among students with transition from F2F to online was quite high with (M=45, SD=1.59) The perception of challenges in the path of accepting online mode of learning is found high (M = 44.04, SD = 1.75) Regarding students' liking for online classes, overall, they show a poor perception (M = 11.58, SD = 1.46) Urban students (M = 13.14, SD = 1.78) are found having stronger perception for online classes than rural students (M = 9.88, SD = 1.97) and this difference is found statistically significant. Challenges of online learning mode: Infrastructural, situational and lack of technical skills among faculty, internet connectivity were noted in IDIs with students.	N/A	N/A

Citation	Study design, sample size, and geography	Outcomes and effect size		
		Education	Child labour	Initiatives
Ghatak, et al., 2020	Door-to-door (73%) and Telephonic interviews (27%) were used. The survey was conducted mostly in the month of July 2020 with a few surveys extending to the first week of August 2020. The sample size conducted included 3176 households (1 adult and 1 child in the age-group of 10-18 years were individually interviewed from each household). About 49% of respondents were in upper primary/early secondary (grades 6-8), 23% secondary (grades 9-10), 15 % of the boys and girls were in primary (grades 1-5) and 12% in senior secondary grades (grades 11-12) Assam (five districts), Bihar (eight districts), Uttar Pradesh-UP (11 districts), Telangana (four districts), and Delhi (one district)	**Syllabus completion:** About 61% of the students said that the syllabus was not complete before school closure (highest 89% from Assam) **Status of examination:** 40 % of the students in senior secondary and 25% students in secondary classes did appear for the exams. **Access to phones:** 71% of the households reporting the phone belonging to a male member as compared to 22% of the female members. Only 26% girls said that they could access the phone present in the household whenever they wanted to; The corresponding data for boys is (37%). **Uncertainties in going back to school:** 56% of girls and boys reported being hopeful of returning to school when it reopens	Household chores: About 71% of girls reported being engaged in chores and care work as against boys (38%)	

Citation	Study design, sample size, and geography	Outcomes and effect size		
		Education	Child labour	Initiatives
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 2021	5 sources of data are used: phone surveys of parents, adolescents and teachers; in-depth telephone interviews with parents, adolescents and teachers; expert interviews; secondary research; and online youth survey. Sample size: Phone survey (N=**5029**)-parents of children aged 5-13 years [**2774**], parents of children aged 14-18 years (**252**), Adolescents (aged 14-18 years; N=**2003**); Public school teacher survey (N=**789**) IDI's-50 parents, adolescents and teachers Telephone interviews-30 experts [14 civil society members, 8 foundations, 8 government officials and 1 EdTech company] Online survey adolescents aged 14-18 years (N=617) Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh	40 per cent of students in the six surveyed states did not use any form of remote learning in the past six months of the survey Digital channels are not as accessible as often perceived- 10% of students did not have access to any of the following devices – smartphone, feature phone, television (TV), radio, or laptop/computer with significant variation between states. More than 10 per cent of students do not have access to mobile phones within or outside of their households. 66 % of students aged 14-18 years and 58 % of students between 5-13 years have used at least one remote learning resource Nearly 30-40 per cent of students are not in touch with their teachers, though this varies significantly by state 15 % more migrant parents and 9 % more ST parents reported that their children were learning less now. Parents of children from migrant families (60 percent) and from ST families (53 per cent) rated their children's mental and socio-emotional well-being as poor or very poor compared to the status reported for the overall sample **Teachers:** WhatsApp is the most commonly used remote teaching tool with 89 per cent of teachers using WhatsApp to provide remote education, followed distantly by textbooks (21 per cent), home visits (21 per cent) and YouTube (19 per cent) **Challenges faced by teachers:** inability to reach students (75 per cent) and lack of class discipline (51 per cent). Lack of e-skills (12 per cent) and additional expenditure (7 per cent) as barriers to effective remote teaching. 33 per cent saw no benefits at all to remote learning.	N/A	The central government has created repositories of learning content (such as DIKSHA (a digital infrastructure for school education), SWAYAM , e-Pathshala, etc.) to drive access. For example, the DIKSHA portal has video lessons, worksheets, assignments, etc., in multiple languages The learning content was provided through TV, WhatsApp groups, radio programming, digitized content on DIKSHA, and other learning applications. Educate Girls leverages youth volunteers to create learning circles of students and pool in digital resources in the community to bridge the technology gap and provide counselling to students. Pratham uses a hyper- local neighbourhood model combining SMS, calls, and in-person interaction with both parents and students.

Citation	Study design, sample size, and geography	Outcomes and effect size		
		Education	Child labour	Initiatives
Vyas, 2020	Phone survey of 1200 parents and 500 teachers across 5 study states (Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha and Uttar Pradesh), May-June 2020. Government school parents were interviewed over phone/personal interviews while private school parents and government teachers filled data via Google Form.	**Government school** **Education during school closure:** Over 80% parents reported that lessons not being delivered during the lockdown. **Mode of remote learning:** Among those reported education is being delivered, the dominant mode is WhatsApp (75%) followed by phone calls between the teacher and the student (38%) **Barriers:** 75% of parents reported a host of challenges in supporting children to access education digitally including 1) Not having an internet connection 2) Being unable to afford data 3) Internet speed/signal is not conducive. More than 40% parents reported that they did not have the right device to access digital education. 84% teachers faced challenges in delivering education digitally **Private School** 60% children in private schools suffered interruption in education. In cases where education was 'delivered', WhatsApp was the dominant mode— reported by 57% parents, followed by other modes were YouTube, Zoom and phone conversations between the teacher and the student Barriers: 50% parents surveyed, spend over 20% of their income on private school education. 82% parents reported a combination of challenges in supporting their children to access education: 53% had Signal/ internet speed issues, 32% reported data is too expensive, 23% they don't have device and 18 % reported no internet connection		Effect on MDM: 35% children did not receive their mid-day meals or received DBT in lieu of MDM. Of the remaining 65%, only 8% received cooked meals while 53% received dry rations and 4% received money (DBT) in lieu of the MDM Over half the teachers surveyed believe low-tech and accessible technology (such as radio, physical learning materials is more effective than digital mediums. 71% of the teachers are of the view that textbooks should reach children before schools reopen. However, the study shows that over 80% children have not received textbooks for the next academic year

Citation	Study design, sample size, and geography	Outcomes and effect size		
		Education	Child labour	Initiatives
Vegas, et al., 2021	A phone survey of a random sample of households with primary school-aged children in the Indian city of Chennai. Drew sample of 201 households and a total of 271 primary-school-aged children in February of 2021, which were part of ongoing study. Survey was conducted with primary caregiver of children aged 4-11 years Chennai, Tamil Nadu February, 2021	**Enrolment:** After schools closure, 2% of households reported that their children's enrolment in school was discontinued. **Access to digital learning modes:** Among the respondents enrolled, 1 in 5 reported that children attended schools that were not offering any type of remote instruction, while four out of five were in schools that had begun some type of remote instruction. Students in private schools and those from high-socioeconomic status households have more access to digital devices and are more engaged in regular educational activities during COVID-19 than their peers in government schools and from low-socioeconomic status **Attendance:** Among the children whose schools had begun remote instruction, only 57% attended all the remote classes and 19% did not attend any remote classes.		

Annex 4: International framework on child labour

Three main international conventions provide the legal framework to define child labour.

The **ILO Convention 138** on minimum age for admission to work calls on member states to set a general minimum age for work not lower than the end of compulsory education, generally 15 years of age (Article 2). A higher minimum age of 18 years and above is set for work that, by the nature of the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to jeopardize the health, safety or morale of young persons, usually referred to as *hazardous work* (Article 3). The convention includes flexibility clauses that are at the discretion of national authorities, which implies that statistical measures of child labour consistent with national laws may differ by country.

Guidance on hazardous work activities which should be prohibited is given by Article 3 of ILO Recommendation No. 190 (R190):

- work which exposes children to physical, psychological or sexual abuse;
- work underground, under water, at dangerous heights or in confined spaces;
- work with dangerous machinery, equipment and tools, or which involves the manual handling or transport of heavy loads;
- work in an unhealthy environment which may, for example, expose children to hazardous substances, agents or processes, or to temperatures, noise levels, or vibrations damaging to their health;
- work under particularly difficult conditions, such as work for long hours or during the night or work where the child is unreasonably confined to the premises of the employer.

The **ILO Convention 182** on the *worst forms of child labour* applies to all children, that is, all individuals below 18 years of age. The worst forms of child labour include hazardous work (as defined in R190) and the worst forms of child labour other than hazardous work. The latter include, among others, all forms of slavery such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom, and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict; the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, pornography or other illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs.

The **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child** recognizes the child's right 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 or social development (Article 32).

Based on the above framework, child labour is distinguished from child work more broadly, as described below.

Child work is defined as any activity falling within the general production boundary as defined in the 2008 System of National Accounts (SNA). This includes children below 18 years of age engaged in any activities to produce goods or to provide services for use by others or for own use (ILO, 2018). Activities include:

- Economic production: all market production and certain types of non-market production. Includes both formal and informal production, as well as activities inside and outside the household.

- Non-economic production: household chores (domestic and personal services by a household member for consumption within the household, such as preparing meals and taking care of other household members).

Child labour is 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/or

- interferes with their schooling by: depriving them of the opportunity to attend school; obliging them to leave school prematurely; or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work.

Whether or not particular forms of 'work' can be called 'child labour' depends on the child's age, the type and hours of work performed, and the conditions under which it is performed. Based on the above-outlined conventions, the international framework includes two main forms of child labour: work below the minimum age and worst forms of child labour.

Work below the minimum age

Based on ILO Convention 138, the general minimum age for work shall be no lower than the end of compulsory education, generally 15 years of age. A higher minimum age of 18 years is set for *hazardous work*. National authorities are allowed to adopt flexibility clauses and/or provisions on *light work*. For example, state signatories whose economy and educational facilities are insufficiently developed may specify a lower general minimum age of 14 years. Moreover, national laws may permit the employment or work of persons aged 13–15 years if it is not likely to be harmful to a child's health or development and does not prejudice a child's education. The lower age limit for *light work* can be 12 years for developing countries (Article 7).

Worst forms of child labour

Because their bodies and minds are still developing, children are more vulnerable than adults to workplace hazards, and the consequences of hazardous work are often more devastating and lasting for them in terms of effects on their physical, cognitive, and behavioural development and emotional growth. Hence, concepts of work hazard and risk[55] as applied to adult workers need to be expanded to include the developmental aspects of childhood.

Therefore, a priority is to eliminate without delay the *worst forms of child labour*. These include children being enslaved, separated from their families, exposed to serious hazards and illnesses, and/or left to fend for themselves on the streets of large cities – often at a very early age.

The worst forms of child labour include:

- *Hazardous child labour* (or hazardous work): this includes work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.

- *Worst forms of child labour other than hazardous work*: this includes, among others, forms of slavery such as sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage, recruitment of children for use in conflict, as well as use of children for illicit activities.

For measurement, the ILO and UNICEF classify *child labour* based on age-specific thresholds, as follows (ILO and UNICEF, 2021):

- *Long hours in economic activities*:
  - age 5–11: all economic activities, performed for any amount of time (the only exceptions may be so-called 'excluded forms of work', based on national legislation);
  - age 12–14: economic activities performed for 14 hours or more per week (in this age range, economic activities performed for less than 14 hours per week are considered *light work*);
  - age 15–17: economic activities performed for 43 hours or more per week.

- *Long hours in household chores*:
  - age 5–11 and age 12–14: 21 hours or more per week.[56]

- *Exposure to hazards*:
  - all age groups: work in industries and occupations designated as *hazardous*, based on national legislation, or the worst forms of child labour other than hazardous work.

Figure A1 summarizes the above concepts and definitions, differentiating between permissible forms of work and child labour. Child labour is further decomposed in its possible forms: work below the minimum age, hazardous work, and the worst forms of child labour other than hazardous work.

Figure A1: International framework for statistical identification of child labour

Age group[b]	Working children (general production boundary)						
	Economic production					Non-economic production (household chores)	
	Light work in economic production[a]	Regular work in economic production	Worst forms of child labour			Hazardous household chores	Other work in non-economic production
			Hazardous work in economic production		Worst forms of child labour other than hazardous work		
Children below the minimum age specified for light work (e.g., 5–11 years)	Work in economic production below the minimum age for light work	Work in economic production below the general minimum working age	Work in industries and occupations designated as hazardous or work under hazardous conditions (e.g., at night) in industries and occupations not designated as hazardous	Work for long hours and/or at night in industries and occupations not designated as hazardous[c]	Children trafficked for work; forced and bonded child labour; commercial sexual exploitation of children; use of children for illicit activities and armed conflict	Long hours in household chores[d]	Own-use production of services or volunteer work in household producing services involving unsafe equipment or heavy loads; in dangerous locations; etc.
Children within the age range specified for light work (e.g., 12–14 years)							
Children at or above the general minimum working age (e.g., 15–17 years)							

Notes: Areas in red denote child labour, while areas in blue denote activities not considered child labour.

a. Economic production includes employment work, own-use production of goods, unpaid trainee work, volunteer work in market and non-market units, and volunteer work in household producing of goods, in line with (ILO, Report of the Conference: 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians, Geneva, 2–11 October 2013, ILO, Department of Statistics, Geneva, 2013).

b. Age-group limits may differ across countries depending upon the national circumstances.

c. The threshold for long hours of work in economic production should take into account the age of the child and the cumulative hours worked.

d. The threshold for long hours of work in household chores should take into account the age of the child and the cumulative hours spent in chores.

Source: Adapted from ILO, Resolution to Amend the 18th ICLS Resolution Concerning Statistics of Child Labour, ILO, 2018, Geneva.

As noted above, beyond the age of 14, countries are left to define what constitutes child labour, what is hazardous work and what they wish to prohibit or regulate. Thus, child labour legislation varies by country, resulting in different definitions and measures that are used to quantify the prevalence in national data. Most commonly, countries consider only economic activities when they measure child labour. However, there is increasing evidence that even household chores might harm children's health and should therefore be considered when measuring child labour. For example, household chores may become hazardous if they absorb an excessive amount of children's time, thus interfering with their rights to education and leisure. Moreover, because girls are much more involved than boys in non-economic production, not considering this area of activity may lead to gender biases in child labour estimates (Dayıoğlu, Meltem, Impact of Unpaid Household Services on the Measurement of Child Labour, MICS Methodological Papers, No. 2, Statistics and Monitoring Section, Division of Policy and Strategy, United Nations Children's Fund, New York, 2013).

Similarly, specialized data are not available on both 'extensive margin' (namely, participation or the decision to work) and 'intensive margin' (namely, the number of hours worked or the allocation of time to different child labour activities) in economic activities when measuring child labour. This means that national data on child labour is typically limited in its coverage and tends to underestimate child work and child labour.

Annex 5: Description of the datasets used

	Objectives	Coverage	Sampling design	Number of households/ institutions	Number and age range of children
Employment and unemployment survey (68th Round, 2011-12)	To provide estimates of various labour force indicators (labour force participation rate, worker population ratio, unemployment rate, extent of underemployment, wages of employees, etc.) at the national and State/UT levels. Structural aspects of the workforce such as status in employment, industrial and occupational distribution of workers are also derived.	The whole of the Indian Union except interior villages of Nagaland situated beyond five km of the bus route and the villages in Andaman and Nicobar Islands which remained inaccessible throughout the year.	Stratified multi-stage design. The first stage units (FSU) were the 2001 census villages (Panchayat wards in the case of Kerala) in the rural sector and Urban Frame Survey (UFS) blocks in the urban sector. The ultimate stage units (USU) were households in both sectors.	The number of households surveyed was 1, 01,724 and the number of persons surveyed was 4, 56,999.	Age range included aged 5-17 years and total number of children included in 121,258
Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2018-19	To provide estimates of various labour force indicators (labour force participation rate, worker population ratio, unemployment rate, extent of underemployment, wages of employees, etc.) at the national and State/UT levels. Structural aspects of the workforce such as status in employment, industrial distribution and occupational distribution of the workers are also derived.	The whole of the Indian Union except the villages in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, which remained extremely difficult to access throughout the year.	Stratified multi-stage design. The first stage units (FSU) were the Urban Frame Survey (UFS) blocks in urban areas and the 2011 Census villages (Panchayat wards for Kerala) in rural areas. The ultimate stage units (USU) were households. Rotational panel sampling design used in urban areas (each selected household is visited four times, in the beginning with the first visit schedule and thrice periodically later with revisit schedule). In urban areas, samples for a panel within each stratum were drawn in the form of two independent sub-samples. No revisit in rural samples.	The number of households surveyed was 101,579 and the number of persons surveyed was 420,757.	Age range included aged 5-17 years and the total number of children included in 95,152 (excluding 12 cases of children who reported other in sex column)

	Objectives	Coverage	Sampling design	Number of households/ institutions	Number and age range of children
Understanding the lives of adolescent and young adults (UDAYA panel survey in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, 2015-16 and 2018-19)	The UDAYA study explored the situation of adolescents and their transition from adolescence to young adulthood. The survey covered about their status of education, health, work roles, marriage along with human, social, financial and physical assets acquired during the transition.	Bihar and Uttar Pradesh	Multi-stage systematic sampling with a longitudinal design, 150 primary sampling units (PSU). Rural and urban areas of the state treated as independent sampling domains. The number of PSU was equally divided between rural and urban areas. Estimates provided separately for unmarried boys and girls aged 10-14 and 15-19 and married girls 15-19 years.	The study interviewed 20,154 adolescents aged 10-19 in 2015-16 and out of them, 16,292 were re-interviewed in 2018-19.	We included 1712 male and 1439 female adolescents aged 10-14 in 2015-16 and re-interviewed in 2018-19.
UDAYA COVID survey (Population Council)	Rapid longitudinal study to inform on the risk of health and economic effects of COVID-19 and lockdown.	Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, May 2020	The study used the sampling frame of UDAYA cohort study. The phone survey covered 1,694 households randomly selected from the UDAYA sample.	1,694 households in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.	642 households (298 in Bihar, 344 in Uttar Pradesh) had school going children.

Annex 6: India's national and legal policy frameworks addressing children's education, work and labour

Several policies and laws have articulated the importance of investing in schooling and preventing child labour. Notable among these are the recent National Education Policy 2020, the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE) 2009, and the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act 2016. We focus here on describing the salient features of these policies and laws.

The National Education Policy 2020

The National Education Policy (NEP 2020) envisions high-quality education for all (Ministry of Human Resource Development, *National Education Policy, 2020*, New Delhi, 2020). The priority goals include universal access to quality early childhood care and education, universal foundational literacy and numeracy in primary schools, universal enrolment and participation in preschool to secondary level, and equitable and inclusive education for all. The NEP 2020 has articulated several strategies that can improve school participation and completion, learning and skills, and potentially reduce children's work and child labour.

The policy has advocated developing a National Curricular and Pedagogical Framework for early childhood care and education for children up to the age of 8, expanding and strengthening early childhood education institutions, and training current early education centre workers (*Anganwadi* teachers) and teachers. The NEP 2020 has called for setting up a National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy, filling teacher vacancies and employing local teachers to ensure a pupil–teacher ratio of less than 30:1, and continuous professional development of teachers. It has advocated for curricular restructuring to make it responsive and relevant to the developmental needs and interests of learners at different stages of their development, technological and other interventions to improve pedagogy, peer tutoring and community volunteer tutoring, and addressing the nutrition and health needs of children to improve foundational skills.

The policy has articulated various measures to bring back children who dropped out of school and prevent children from dropping out. The proposed measures include strengthening school infrastructure and human resources to improve access, establishing the credibility of government schools, providing safe transportation and accommodation, particularly for girls, and establishing alternative and innovative education centres. They also include monitoring attendance and learning levels, remedial education, and facilitating learning through both formal and non-formal education modes.

The NEP 2020 has taken cognizance of low levels of access, participation and learning outcomes among children from socio-economically disadvantaged groups.[57] It has advocated – apart from general measures – for: expanding the reach of such schemes as targeted scholarships, conditional cash transfers, bicycles for transport; declaring regions with large populations from educationally disadvantaged groups as special education zones, where all schemes will be implemented to the maximum; creating gender and other inclusion funds; and expanding residential schools.

It is too early to comment on how well the NEP 2020 prescriptions have been translated into reality. Several commentators have critiqued the policy's emphasis on vocational, non-formal and distance education for potentially placing children from marginalized communities and poor families at risk of premature streaming into lower-quality education, and have said that introducing vocational internships for children under 14 comes close to promoting child labour (Taneja, Anjela, 'NEP Turns Blind Eye to Deep-rooted Inequalities in Every Classroom', The Quint World, 31 July 2020). According to others, the NEP 2020 should have made school education from 3–18 years a legal right, and without doing so, universalization of education for children aged 3–18 would be difficult to achieve (Chamaraj, Kathyayini, 'NEP 2020: Disregarding a fundamental right', Deccan Herald, 2020; Child Rights and You, A Review of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, 2020).

Some others argue that a clear implementation plan is missing for several propositions, including bringing out-of-school children back to school, teacher training, addressing the digital divide, and bridging the gap between the socio-economically disadvantaged groups and others (Rajput, Seema, 'Draft National Education Policy: Vision for Out-of-school Children', Ideas for India, 2019; Ramamoorthy, Saraswathy, 'What Are the Real Issues the NEP Has Missed Out On?', BW Education, 2020; Tiwary, Shiv, 'NEP 2020: In the Pursuit of Knowledge, Wisdom and Truth', BW Education, 2021).

It is also pointed out that while the NEP 2020 has paid attention to improving access to schools, infrastructures, curriculum and intra-classroom pedagogy, it has not sufficiently acknowledged the economic, political and societal contexts that influence education outcomes for children (Nawani, Disha, 'NEP 2020 Fails Those Trapped in Vicious Cycles of Disadvantage', Indian Express, 2020).

Overall, however, the NEP 2020 does not mention 'child labour' or 'children's work'. Neither does it explicitly recognize the linkages of school education with child labour.

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009

The NEP 2020 builds on the commitments enshrined in the 2009 Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE Act) which, for the first time, made primary education compulsory (Ministry of Human Resource Development, *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA): Framework for Implementation, Based on the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009*, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, New Delhi, 2011). The RTE Act placed the responsibility on the states to ensure free and compulsory enrolment, regular attendance and completion of elementary school, particularly among children from disadvantaged groups. It made the states responsible for ensuring the availability of neighbourhood schools, infrastructure, teaching staff and learning equipment; good-quality education; and appropriate training of teachers. The RTE Act also placed responsibility on parents for ensuring that their children are enrolled in an appropriate elementary school and remain in school until they have completed Class 8. Additionally, the RTE Act stipulated conditions that may enhance continuation and regular attendance. For example, according to the Act, schools must ensure that no child will be held back, and no child will be subjected to physical punishment or mental harassment. Schools must hold regular meetings with parents to apprise them of their children's progress.

There has been a significant increase in enrolment of children in school associated with the enactment of the RTE Act. The proportion of children aged 5–17 years who were enrolled in school increased from 77 per cent in 2004–05 to 87 per cent in 2011–12 to 92 per cent in 2018–19 (National Sample Survey Office, Employment and Unemployment Situation in India, 2004–05, Part 1, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India, New Delhi, 2006; National Sample Survey Office, Employment and Unemployment Situation in India, 2011–12, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India, New Delhi, 2014; National Statistical Office 2020). The pupil–teacher ratio has steadily declined from 46 per cent in 2004–05 to 35 per cent in 2011–12 to 26 per cent in 2018–19. However, a review of the implementation of the RTE Act covering the period 2010–20 by the RTE Forum has observed several persistent shortcomings (RTE Forum, Status of Implementation of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009: A Report Card of the Last Decade 2010–2020: Draft Report, RTE Forum, New Delhi, 2020). The review noted that allocated funds were underutilized, 34 per cent of schools were without the requisite number of teachers as per RTE norms, only 13 per cent of schools complied with RTE infrastructure norms, and there were delays in forming school management committees. Moreover, an assessment of the effects of the enactment of the RTE Act found that although there were positive effects on reading and numeracy skills of children in Class 1, consistently negative results were observed for children in all the other classes in public schools, and the enactment was found to be associated with up to an 8 percentage point increase in the likelihood that a student cannot read (see Bhat, Dhruva, '"Harbinger of a New Era?" Evaluating the Effect of India's Right to Education Act on Learning Outcomes', M-RCBG Associate Working Paper Series, No. 76, 2017).

The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act 2016

The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act 2016 completely prohibits the employment of children below 14 years (except in the entertainment industry and non-hazardous family enterprises) and the employment of adolescents aged 14–18 in hazardous occupations and processes, and it regulated their working conditions where they are not prohibited (Ministry of Labour and Employment, The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act 2016, New Delhi, 2016). The Act also specified stricter punishment for employers for violation of the Act and made the offence of employing any child or adolescent in contravention of the Act by an employer cognizable. The Act empowered the appropriate government to confer such powers and impose such duties on a district magistrate as may be necessary.

However, studies have noted that the provision in the Act that allows children to help in 'family' enterprises post-school hours and during holidays aims to allow work and education to go hand in hand (Ganotra, Komal, 'Flawed Child Labour Law Amendment', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 51, no. 35, 2016, pp. 19–21; Goswami, Padmaja, "The Child Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act 2016 and the right to education for girls: Tensions and contradictions," International Journal of Advance Study and Research Work, 1(1), 2018). This provision ignores the fact that children working within the family set-up might be involved in a range of activities with diverse demands on a child's physical and mental health. Moreover, contractors may misuse this provision to engage child labourers under the disguise of assistants to adult family members in outsourced work. In addition, the definition of family and family enterprise under the amendment may open up a range of settings

for work by the child. The Act has also reduced the lists of hazardous occupations and processes significantly (Ganotra 2016).

As far as implementation of the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act is concerned, the National Crime Records Bureau report showed just 476 cases registered under the Act in 2020 and 0.1 crimes per lakh of population (100,000 people) in 2020 (National Crime Records Bureau, Crime in India, 2020, NCRB, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, New Delhi, 2021). A study that assessed the effects of the Act observed that the child labour ban had no overall effect on child schooling status or children's housework, while the likelihood of child employment relative to non-child employment increased by about 2 percentage points, which implied that child labour increased by 12.5 per cent over the pre-ban mean (see Bharadwaj, Prashant, Leah K. Lakdawala and Nicholas Li, 'Perverse Consequences of Well-intentioned Regulation: Evidence from India's child labor ban', Journal of the European Economic Association, vol. 18, no. 3, 2020, pp. 1158–1195).

Overall, the Act makes no reference to school enrolment and completion as a necessary strategy to prevent child labour.

The Government of India recognizes that the problem of child labour continues to pose a challenge, with both the central and state governments taking various proactive measures to tackle this problem. These include enforcement of legislative provisions along with simultaneous rehabilitative measures. Central and state governments are also aware that the enforcement of laws alone cannot solve the remaining challenge. Accordingly, the emphasis has been on both rehabilitation of these children and improving the economic conditions of their families. Given that the child labour problem is inextricably linked to poverty and poor schooling, it requires more concerted and coordinated efforts cutting across government ministries and departments as well as significant social and community engagement to tackle underpinning norms that rationalize the premature appropriation of children's work in often exploitative conditions.

Annex 7: Categorization of children's activity status, based on principal and subsidiary activity status and current school attendance (enrolment) questions, EUS and PLFS

Principal activity (Principal status or Usual principal status)	Subsidiary activity	Current attendance in school (enrollment)	Activity Status
Economic activity	Economic activity	Attending school	Attending school and working
Economic activity	No economic activity	Attending school	Attending school and working
Studying	Economic activity	Attending school	Attending school and working
Studying	Economic activity	Not attending school	Attending school and working
Neither working nor studying	Economic activity	Attending school	Attending school and working
Economic activity	Economic activity	Not attending school	Only working
Economic activity	No economic activity	Not attending school	Only working
Neither working nor studying	Economic activity	Not attending school	Only working
Studying	No economic activity	Attending school	Attending school only
Studying	No economic activity	Not attending school	Attending school only
Neither working nor studying	No economic activity	Attending school	Attending school only
Neither working nor studying	No economic activity	Not attending school	Neither working nor school

Annex 8: Details of regression analysis conducted

Random effect logistic regression analysis of factors correlated with children's engagement in work

We used random effects logistic regressions to examine the individual, peer, household, and school level factors associated with children's work, drawing on the cohort data from Population Council's UDAYA study in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. We examined whether children's agency, peer and social network, family environment, the socio-economic characteristics of the household and schooling environment were associated with shifts in engagement in economic activity over a 3-year period, accounting for correlation in repeated observations among the same individual over time. We used random effects, rather than fixed effects, because we were interested in both time-invariant and time-varying factors that may be associated with engagement in economic activity over time. Our analysis focused on children who participated as 10–14-year-olds in 2015-16 round of UDAYA survey and were re-interviewed three years later in 2018-19 when they were aged 13-17. Our analytical sample comprised 1,712 male children and 1,439 female children. The random effects model is represented in the following equation:

$$Y_{it} = \beta_{yx} X_{it} + \beta_{yx} Z_i + \eta_i + \varepsilon_{it}$$

where Y_{it} is the value of the dependent variable for i^{th} case at t^{th} time period, X_{it} is the vector of time-varying covariates for i^{th} case at t^{th} time period, β_{yx} is the row vector of coefficients that shows the relationship between X_{it} and Y_{it}, Z_i is the vector of observed time-invariant covariates for the i^{th} case with β_{yz} its row vector of coefficients at time t, η_i is a scalar of all other latent time-invariant variables that influence Y_{it}, and ε_{it} is the random disturbance for i^{th} case at t^{th} time period with $E(\varepsilon_{it})=0$ and $E(\varepsilon_{it}^2) = \sigma^2\varepsilon_t$. It is also assumed that ε_{it} is uncorrelated with X_{it}, Z_i, and η_i.

The dependent and independent variables used in the random effects model are described below.

Variables	Male		Female	
	Wave 1	Wave 2 [p-value]*	Wave 1	Wave 2 [p-value]*
Dependent variables				
Engaged in paid work in the last one year	10.3	23.0 [p=0.000]	8.7	19.5 [p=0.000]
Engaged in unpaid work in the last one year	47.6	67.0 [p=0.000]	29.4	48.3 [p=0.000]
Explanatory variables				
Household and family level				
Place of residence				
Urban	15.4	---	17.1	---
Rural	84.6	---	82.9	---
Religion				
Hindu	84.9	---	78.	---
Muslim	14.9	---	20.9	---
Others	0.2	---	0.7	---
Caste				
General	17.0	---	18.1	---
Scheduled castes/tribes	26.2	---	25.5	---
Other backward castes	56.9	---	56.4	---
Household size				
less than 4	16.9	---	13.1	---
5-6	44.1	---	40.4	---
7 or more	39.0	---	46.6	---
Wealth index score[1] [mean]	19.8	23.9[p=0.000]	20.1	23.7 [p=0.000]
At least one family member got employment under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act	8.6	---	9.8	---
At least one household member uses alcohols/drug/tobacco	24.6	---	33.5	---
Mother's education				
Illiterate	72.0	---	70.4	---
Literate	28.0	---	29.6	---
Discussed personal matters with parents[2]	58.4	52.3 [p=0.018]	71.4	64.5 [p=0.007]
Individual level				
Decision-making say in personal matters[3]				
No say in decisions	44.1	45.6 [p=0.550]	59.0	62.0 [p=0.258]
Had some say in decisions related to all three domains	55.9	54.4	41.0	38.0
Gender egalitarian attitude score[4]				
Below 4	52.2	35.0[p=0.000]	28.1	25.4 [p=0.223]
4 and above	47.8	65.0	71.9	74.6
Reading and numerical ability				
No	34.1	29.3 [p=0.001]	44.	39.2 [p=0.001]
Can read a paragraph or solve a numerical problem	24.0	24.4	28.8	31.3
Can read a paragraph and solve a numerical problem	41.9	46.4	26.6	29.5
Private tuition[5]				
No	58.0	58.3 [p=0.885]	65.3	68.4 [p=0.118]
Yes	42.0	41.7	34.7	31.6

Variables	Male		Female	
School type[5] *******				
Private school	47.3	54.2 [p=0.001]	37.9	55.1 [p=0.000]
Government School	52.7	45.8	62.1	44.9
Ever done paid work	12.5	26.6 [p=0.000]	9.7	23.7 [p=0.000]
Peer level				
Number of friends				
Below 5	72.6	52.5 [p=0.000]	69.8	61.7 [p=0.001]
5 and more	27.4	47.5	30.2	38.3
Member of any group *	5.1	3.8 [p=0.320]	2.2	2.7 [p=0.583]
Number of respondents	**1,761**	**1,761**	**1,278**	**1,278**

Notes: *Difference between wave 1 and wave 2 are significant or not significant;

1 Constructed based on ownership of selected durable goods and amenities (possible scores from 0 to 57).

2 Respondents were asked whether they discussed in the last one year about friendship and any experience of teasing with their mother or father; Those who responded affirmatively to any one were considered to have discussed personal matters with their parents.

3 Respondents were asked who took the decisions regarding how much education respondent should have, who the respondent's friends would be, and going to a friend's house for wave 1. In Wave 2, the question on going to a friend's house was replaced with a question on decision about whether respondent should work or stay at home. Those who responded that they took the decision either jointly or independently were coded as 1, otherwise coded as 0. Those who reported some say in all three domains were categorized as having decision-making agency.

4 Gender egalitarian attitude score was calculated based on 6 statements. In wave 1, statements used were: it is more important to educate boys than girls; girls like to be teased by boys; girls should be allowed to decide when they want to marry; boys should do as much domestic work as girls; father/husband alone/mainly should decide about spending household money; and girls are usually as good as boys in studies. In wave 2, the statement "girls are usually as good as boys in studies" was replaced by the statement "Giving the kids a bath and feeding the kids women's responsibility only" Those who agreed with gender egalitarian statements or disagreed with gender inegalitarian statements were assigned a score of 1 and otherwise 0; a binary variable was created, with those who scored 4 or more and less than four.

5 Of those who were in school at wave 1

Source: Computed from UDAYA 2015-16 and 2018-19.

Structural equation modelling of linkages between children's education participation and work

We used cohort data from children who participated as 10–14-year-olds in the 2015-16 round of UDAYA survey and were re-interviewed when they were aged 13-17 in 2018-19 for the structural equation modelling. Our analytical sample was limited to children who were ever enrolled in school (1,682 male children and 1,384 female children).

The dependence of current enrolment in school on engagement in paid work, and vice versa, could be modelled using the following two equations.

$$E(Y_{ij}) = \beta_{10}+\beta_{11}X_i+\beta_{12}W_i+\beta_{13}Z_{ik}+U_i \quad \ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots 1$$
$$E(Z_{ik}) = \beta_{20}+\beta_{21}X_i+\beta_{22}W_i+\beta_{23}Y_{ij}+V_i \quad \ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots 2$$

Yij is current enrolment in school; Zik is engagement in paid work, where j=0 and 1 and k=0 and 1; X_i is a vector of background variables; U_i and V_i are the error terms for the i^{th} individual.

We fitted non-recursive models and evaluation of the models showed high goodness-of-fit and appropriateness of the models, as measured by such indices as Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) and Standardized Root Mean Squared Residual (SRMR). The coefficient of determination (R2) was 28 percent for boys' model and 21 percent for the girls' model. The dependent and independent variables included in the model are described below:

Variables	Male	Female
Dependent variables (wave 2)		
Engaged in paid work in the last one year	22.5	19.1
Currently in school	81.1	72.7
Explanatory variables (wave 1)		
Age-appropriate enrolment in school (%)	48.5	49.3
Age of the respondent (mean)	11.9	12.1
Demonstrated reading and numerical ability (%)	38.8	27.1
Resided in rural areas (%)	84.8	83.1
Wealth index score (mean)	19.8	20.3
Number of friends (mean)	3.8	3.7
Discussed personal matters with parents (%)	53.9	67.1
Took private tuition (%)	40.3	31.7
Studied in a government school (%)	50.5	56.7
Education of mother (mean)	2.3	2.4
Number of respondents	**1,682**	**1,384**

Source: Computed from UDAYA 2015-16 and 2018-19

Annex 9: Details of primary qualitative study

The qualitative study drew on the sampling frame of UDAYA study (see Annex 5). We identified one district each in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh for the qualitative study, in consultation with UNICEF state offices and based on the level of migration, prevalence of child work and school discontinuation. We used a normalized score based on three indicators: incidence of child work (2011 census), rate of intra-state outmigration (2011 census), and percentage of 6–17-year-olds who were out-of-school (2015-16 NFHS) and identified the top ten districts; among these districts, the district with the maximum number of PSU covered in the UDAYA study was selected for locating the primary qualitative study in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, respectively).

Thus, we selected the districts of Bareilly in Uttar Pradesh and Gaya in Bihar. The prevalence of child work was six percent in Bareilly and seven percent in Gaya; 16 percent of children aged 6-17 years in Gaya and 35 percent in Bareilly were out of school. In both the districts, level of intra-state outmigration was three percent or more.

Within each district, we selected two villages and two urban wards which were those where the UDAYA survey had been conducted. We undertook a listing exercise in the households listed for the UDAYA survey in the selected areas to identify children aged 12-17 and parents/primary adult caregivers of children aged 5-17 for participating in the qualitative study. We completed the household listing in 414 households from the two districts – 194 households in Bihar and 200 households in Uttar Pradesh. We selected boys and girls and adult men and women for in-depth interview (IDI) from UDAYA study households in which we interviewed an adolescent aged 10-19 in 2015-16 and who consented, at the time of the UDAYA waves 1 and 2 surveys or during the COVID-19 phone survey (2015-16, 2018-19 and 2020, respectively), to be re-contacted for future studies.

Table A1 gives an overview of the data collection activities. We note that children aged 12-17 for the IDIs may or may not have participated in the earlier rounds of UDAYA survey. We also note that children aged 12-17 and parents/caregivers of children aged 5-17 from the same households were not interviewed. We conducted one focus group discussion (FGD) in each village. The participants for the FGDs were selected in a similar way as the selection of children for IDIs. Within each village, 6-8 participants were conveniently selected, based on their availability for a FGD during the research team's visit to the village and their willingness to participate in the FGD. The key informants included teachers, elected representatives of local government bodies, businessmen and government officials from education and labour departments.

Table A1: Data collection activities

Data collection method	Respondent	Bihar	Uttar Pradesh	Total
Household screening	Adult member of the household	194	220	414
In-depth interviews	Boys (12–14-year-olds)	2	2	4
	Boys (15-17-year-olds)	2	3	5
	Girls (12–14-year-olds)	2	1	3
	Girls (15-17-year-olds)	2	3	5
	Mothers	4	3	7
	Fathers	4	4	8
Focus group discussions	Boys (12–14-year-olds)	1	1	2
	Boys (15-17-year-olds)	1	1	2
	Girls (12–14-year-olds)	1	1	2
	Girls (15-17-year-olds)	1	1	2
Key informant interviews	Teachers, elected representatives of local bodies, businessman, government officials	5	8	13

A team of 12 male and female research assistants, trained by the Population Council staff, completed the fieldwork during July-August 2021. The interviews and focus group discussions were recorded with the consent of the participants, transcribed in the local language and translated into English. We developed a coding scheme and used it to code the transcripts in nVivo. The coded blocks of text related to specific themes were analysed to capture typical patterns and exceptions.

The background characteristics of study participants are summarized tables below. Most children who participated IDIs were aged 15-17 (11 of the 17 who participated in the IDIs); they were equally divided between males and females. All children, except, two were currently enrolled in school. Most of them had ever worked (12 of 17) and were currently working (10 of 17). The profile of children who participated in the FGDs were similar. Primary care givers of children were on average aged 42 years. Most of them had some level of schooling and were currently working.

Background characteristics of adolescents who participated in IDIs and FGDs

Characteristics	Number of participants	
	IDI	FGD
Age (years)		
12-14	6	29
15-17	11	36
Mean age	**15.2**	**14.8**
Sex		
Female	8	30
Male	9	35
Currently enrolled in school		
No	2	4
Yes	15	61

Characteristics	Number of participants	
	IDI	FGD
Highest class completed		
1-4	2	9
5-7	5	14
8-9	7	21
10-11	3	21
Education of mother (completed years of schooling]		
No education	7	27
1-4	0	1
5-7	3	17
8-9	0	10
10-12	2	9
Missing	5	1
Religion		
Hindu	14	57
Muslim	3	8
Work status of the respondent [Ever]		
Ever worked in own farm/ labourer	9	---
Outside the household for earning money	3	---
Never done any work	5	---
Work status of the respondent [Current]		---
Ever worked in own farm/ labourer	3	---
Outside the household for earning money	1	---
Within the household	6	---
No work	7	---
Education of father (completed years of schooling]		
No education	4	9
1-4	1	1
5-7	2	11
8-9	1	21
10 or more	4	20
DK/Missing/Not alive	5	3
Work status of mother		
Agriculture related	6	13
Housewife	8	45
Elected representative of local body	1	0
Others (tailoring, salesperson, small business, etc.)	1	6
Missing	1	0
Work status of father		
Not working	1	0
Agriculture related	4	33
Auto mechanic and automobiles	2	4
Carpenter/mason	1	4
Painting	0	3
Driver	5	3
Contractor	1	0
Services	2	8

Characteristics	Number of participants	
	IDI	FGD
Sales and retail trade	0	7
Missing/ not alive	1	1
Total	**17**	**65**

Background characteristics of parents and other stakeholders who participated in the IDIs and KIIs

Characteristics	Number of participants	
	Parents' IDI	KII
Age		
20-29	0	3
30-39	4	1
40-49	9	7
50 or more	1	2
Missing	1	0
Mean age	*42.3*	*42.0*
Sex		
Female	7	2
Male	8	11
Highest class completed		
No education	2	0
1-4	0	1
5-7	1	0
8-9	3	0
10 or more	9	12
Religion		
Hindu	13	10
Muslim	2	3
Work status of parents		
Not working	4	---
Agriculture related	4	---
Driver	1	---
Working in a factory	2	---
Running a shop	2	---
Painting	2	---
Work experience in years		
<=5 years	---	2
6-10 years	---	2
>10 years	---	9
Number of respondents	**15**	**13**

Annex 10: Details of the number of children in the databases, India

	EUS, 2011-12		PLFS, 2018-19	
	Total children	Total working children	Total children	Total working children
Total	**121,258**	**3,963**	**95,152**	**1,506**
Age (years)				
5-11	63,421	148	43,932	47
12-14	30,310	723	24,504	189
15-17	27,527	3,092	26,716	1,270
Sex				
Male	64,874	2,669	50,562	1,122
Female	56,384	1,294	44,590	384
Place of residence				
Rural	76,925	2,778	57,974	1,053
Urban	44,333	1,185	37,178	453

Annex 11: Differences in the sampling design used in EUS 2011/12 and PLFS 2018/19

	EUS 2011-12	PLFS 2018-19
Sampling frame	• Rural area: 2001 census villages • Urban area: 2007-12 Urban Frame Survey (UFS) blocks	• Rural area: 2011 census village • Urban area: 2007-12 UFS blocks & 2012-17 UFS blocks
Sampling design	• Stratified multi-stage design • First stage units: villages &UFS blocks (with one intermediate stage unit for large FSUs) • Last stage units: households	• Stratified multi-stage design, with rotational panel sampling design for urban areas[1] • First stage units: villages &UFS blocks (with one intermediate stage unit for large FSUs) • Last stage units: households
Stratification of first stage units	• Rural stratum – all rural areas within the district • Urban stratum – all urban areas within the district, but town/s with a population of 1000,000 or more within the district were treated as separate stratum	• Rural stratum – all rural areas within the NSS region[2] • Urban stratum –strata were formed within each NSS region on the basis of size class of towns
Sub-stratification	• Rural area – 'r/4' sub-strata formed within each stratum where 'r' is annual sample size allocated for the stratum; each sub-stratum comprised a group of villages and had more or less equal population • Urban area – 'r/4' sub-strata formed within each stratum where 'r' is annual sample size allocated for the stratum; each sub-stratum had more or less equal number of households	• Rural area – 'r/8' sub-strata formed within each stratum where 'r' is annual sample size allocated for the stratum; each sub-stratum comprised a group of villages and had more or less equal population • Urban area – no sub-stratification done
Sample size	• 12,784 first-stage units	• 12,800 first stage units in 2017-18
Sample selection – first stage units	• Rural area – samples from each stratum/ sub-stratum were selected, using probability proportional to size with replacement scheme and size is the population of the village • Urban area – samples from each stratum/sub-stratum were selected, using simple random sampling without replacement scheme	• Rural area – samples from each stratum/ sub-stratum were selected randomly in the form of two independent sub-samples, using probability proportional to size with replacement scheme and size is the population of the village • Urban area – samples from each stratum were selected in the form of two independent sub-samples, using probability proportional to size with replacement scheme and size is the number of households in the UFS block
Second stage strata formation for selection of households	• Rural area – relatively affluent households; households having principal earning from non-agricultural activity; and other households • Urban area – households having monthly per capita consumption expenditure (MPCE) of top 10% of the urban population; households having MPCE of middle 60% of the urban population; and households having MPCE of bottom 30% of the urban population	• Rural area – households with two or more members with grade 10 or above education; households with one member with grade 10 or above education; and households with zero member with grade 10 or above education • Urban area – households with 3 or more members with grade 10 or above education; households with two members with grade 10 or above education; households with one member with grade 10 or above education; and households with zero member with grade 10 or above education

Note: 1 In the rotational panel scheme, each selected household in urban areas is visited four times -first time with first visit schedule and other three times with revisit schedule. There was no revisit for the rural samples. 2NSS regions are a combination of districts with similar geographical features.

Annex 12: Number and percentage of working children and children in child labour, by definition

	EUS 2011-12		PLFS 2018-19	
	N	%	N	%
Working children	12,917,592		5,049,520	
Child labour				
National definition	4,562,770	35.3	1,782,517	35.3
International definition A	6,334,767	49.0	1,891,235	37.5
International definition B	--	--	3,246,769	64.3

Note: National definition of child labour: participation in economic activities outside the household or engagement in hazardous industries/occupations among children aged 5 to 13; participation in hazardous industries/occupations among children 14 to 17. The national definition applies the classification of hazardous occupations and processes as per India's Child Labour Prohibition and Regulation Act.

International definition A of child labour: participation in any economic activities among children aged 5 to 11; participation in hazardous industries/occupations among children 12 to 17.

International definition B of child labour: participation in any economic activity among children aged 5–11, participation in hazardous industries/occupations or long hours of work among children aged 12–17. The international definitions apply the classification of hazardous industries/occupations used in the ILO global estimates of child labour. For details on definitions, see Table 1.

Source: EUS 2011-12 and PLFS 2018–19.

Annex 13: Prevalence (%) and number (million) of children in child labour by groups given in the Indian Child Labour Prohibition and Regulation Act

	EUS 2011-12		PLFS 2018-19	
	%	N	%	N
5–13 years	0.51	1.06	0.11	0.18
14–17 years	3.85	3.50	1.83	1.60
5–17 years	*1.52*	*4.56*	*0.70*	*1.78*

Note: Estimates apply the national definition of child labour (see notes to the previous table).
Source: EUS 2011-12 and PLFS 2018–19.

Annex 14: Prevalence (%) and number (million) children in child labour by place of residence and sex, according to child labour definitions

	National Definition		International Definition A		International Definition B	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Characteristics	%	N	%	N	%	N
EUS 2011-12						
Rural	1.4	3.0	2.3	5.1	–	–
Urban	2.0	1.6	1.6	1.2	–	–
Male	2.1	3.3	2.8	4.6	–	–
Female	0.9	1.3	1.3	1.7	–	–
Total	*1.5*	*4.6*	*2.1*	*6.3*	–	–
PLFS 2018-19						
Rural	0.7	1.2	0.8	1.5	1.3	2.4
Urban	0.8	0.6	0.6	0.4	1.2	0.8
Male	1.0	1.4	0.8	1.5	1.9	2.5
Female	0.4	0.4	0.6	0.4	0.6	0.7
Total	*0.7*	*1.8*	*0.7*	*1.9*	*1.3*	*3.2*

Note: Estimates in columns (1) and (2) apply the national definition of child labour (participation in economic activities outside the household or engagement in hazardous industries/occupations among children aged 5 to 13; participation in hazardous industries/occupations among children 14 to 17). The national definition applies the classification of hazardous occupations and processes as per India's Child Labour Prohibition and Regulation Act. Estimates in columns (3) and (4) apply international definition A of child labour (participation in any economic activities among children aged 5 to 11; participation in hazardous industries/occupations among children 12 to 17). Estimates in columns (5) and (6) apply international definition B of child labour (participation in any economic activity among children aged 5–11, participation in hazardous industries/occupations or long hours of work among children aged 12–17). The international definitions apply the classification of hazardous industries/occupations used in the ILO global estimates of child labour. For details on definitions, see Table 1.

Source: EUS 2011-12 and PLFS 2018–19.

Annex 15: Sectoral distribution (%) of children in child labour, according to child labour definition

Sector	National Definition (1)	International Definition A (2)	International Definition B (3)
EUS 2011-12			
Agriculture	10.5	51.1	--
Industry	80.1	38.8	--
Mining	2.5	1.8	--
Manufacture	46.7	14.8	--
Construction	30.9	22.3	--
Service and Others	9.5	10.0	--
PLFS 2018-19			
Agriculture	6.8	40.7	37.4
Industry	84.3	47.9	43.0
Mining	0.2	0.2	0.1
Manufacture	48.4	14.1	23.1
Construction	35.8	33.7	19.8
Service and Others	8.9	11.4	19.6

Note: Estimates in column (1) apply the national definition of child labour (participation in economic activities outside the household or engagement in hazardous industries/occupations among children aged 5 to 13; participation in hazardous industries/occupations among children 14 to 17). The national definition applies the classification of hazardous occupations and processes as per India's Child Labour Prohibition and Regulation Act. Estimates column (2) apply international definition A of child labour (participation in any economic activities among children aged 5 to 11; participation in hazardous industries/occupations among children 12 to 17). Estimates column (3) apply international definition B of child labour (participation in any economic activity among children aged 5–11, participation in hazardous industries/occupations or long hours of work among children aged 12–17). The international definitions apply the classification of hazardous industries/occupations used in the ILO global estimates of child labour. For details on definitions, see Table 1 in the main report.

Source: EUS 2011-12 and PLFS 2018-19.

Annex 16: Activity status of children aged 11–17 years by background characteristics, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, 2015–16

Background characteristics (%)	In school only	In school and working	Only working	Neither in school nor working
Age (years)				
11-14	82.3	7.1	3.6	7.0
15-17	59.1	10.8	12.1	18.0
Sex				
Male	70.3	12.2	10.2	7.3
Female	62.3	8.2	9.5	20.0
Place of residence				
Rural	64.0	10.5	10.1	15.4
Urban	73.1	5.7	8.4	12.8
Household wealth quintile				
Poorest	44.2	11.6	22.4	21.8
Poorer	53.7	13.3	13.7	19.3
Middle	60.9	12.3	9.2	17.6
Richer	72.6	8.6	6.3	12.5
Richest	86.6	3.9	2.8	6.8
Caste				
Schedule Caste/Schedule Tribe	53.1	17.2	16.2	13.5
Other Backward Class	66.6	8.4	8.7	16.3
Others	78.3	4.0	4.6	13.1
Religion				
Hindu	68.6	10.8	8.8	11.8
Muslim	51.8	5.2	14.1	28.9
Mother's education				
Illiterate	58.4	10.9	12.5	18.2
Literate	82.7	6.9	3.2	7.2
Parent-child discussion				
None	33.8	5.4	24.8	36.0
Discussed some topics	56.1	10.1	12.9	20.9
Discussed all topics	87.3	11.7	0.3	0.7
Numeracy and literacy skills				
Lacked both numeracy and literacy skills	38.7	8.4	21.8	31.1
Had one of the skills	70.8	12.0	6.7	10.5
Had both numeracy and literacy skills	86.8	9.1	0.9	3.3
Witnessed parental violence				
Yes	49.4	17.1	14.2	19.2
No	66.8	9.1	9.4	14.6

Source: Population Council's UDAYA survey, Bihar, and Uttar Pradesh, 2015-16.

Annex 17: Factors associated with children's engagement in paid and unpaid work, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh: Findings from random effects logistic regression analysis

Characteristics	Model 1				Model 2			
	Coeff.	p-value	CI		Coeff.	p-value	CI	
Panel 1: Engagement in paid work, BOYS								
Household and family level								
Rural (Urban=ref)	1.076	0.637	0.795	1.456	1.062	0.692	0.789	1.429
Muslims (Hindus=ref)	1.614	0.014	1.102	2.364	1.420	0.067	0.976	2.066
Caste (General caste=ref)								
Scheduled castes/tribes	2.851	0.000	1.732	4.695	2.614	0.000	1.600	4.271
Other backward castes	1.590	0.037	1.029	2.456	1.580	0.038	1.027	2.431
Household size (<4=ref)								
5-6	0.724	0.079	0.505	1.038	0.679	0.033	0.476	0.969
7 or more	0.641	0.022	0.438	0.938	0.600	0.008	0.412	0.874
Wealth index score	0.966	0.000	0.948	0.985	0.973	0.005	0.955	0.992
At least one family member got employment under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act	1.549	0.094	0.928	2.586	1.311	0.292	0.792	2.169
At least one household member uses alcohols/drug/tobacco	1.489	0.009	1.105	2.006	1.447	0.013	1.080	1.939
Mother's education: Literate (Illiterate=ref)	0.618	0.006	0.437	0.874	0.687	0.032	0.488	0.968
Discussed personal matters with parents	0.999	0.993	0.774	1.290	0.892	0.421	0.675	1.178
Individual level								
In school	0.052	0.000	0.035	0.077	0.759	0.623	0.253	2.276
Reading and numerical ability								
Can read a paragraph or solve a numerical problem					0.986	0.933	0.706	1.376
Can read a paragraph and solve a numerical problem					0.661	0.019	0.467	0.934
Private tuition					0.567	0.001	0.412	0.781
School type: Government School [private=ref)					1.303	0.106	0.945	1.797
Decision-making say in personal matters (no=ref)	1.433	0.006	1.111	1.847	1.434	0.005	1.114	1.846
Gender egalitarian attitude score: 4 or more [4<=ref)	1.371	0.020	1.051	1.787	1.420	0.009	1.089	1.850
Peer level								
5 or more friends [<5 =ref)	1.351	0.025	1.039	1.758	1.367	0.019	1.053	1.776
Member of any group [no =ref]	0.945	0.852	0.523	1.709	1.058	0.852	0.587	1.907
Number of groups	**1,712**				**1,712**			
Number of observations	**3424**				**3424**			

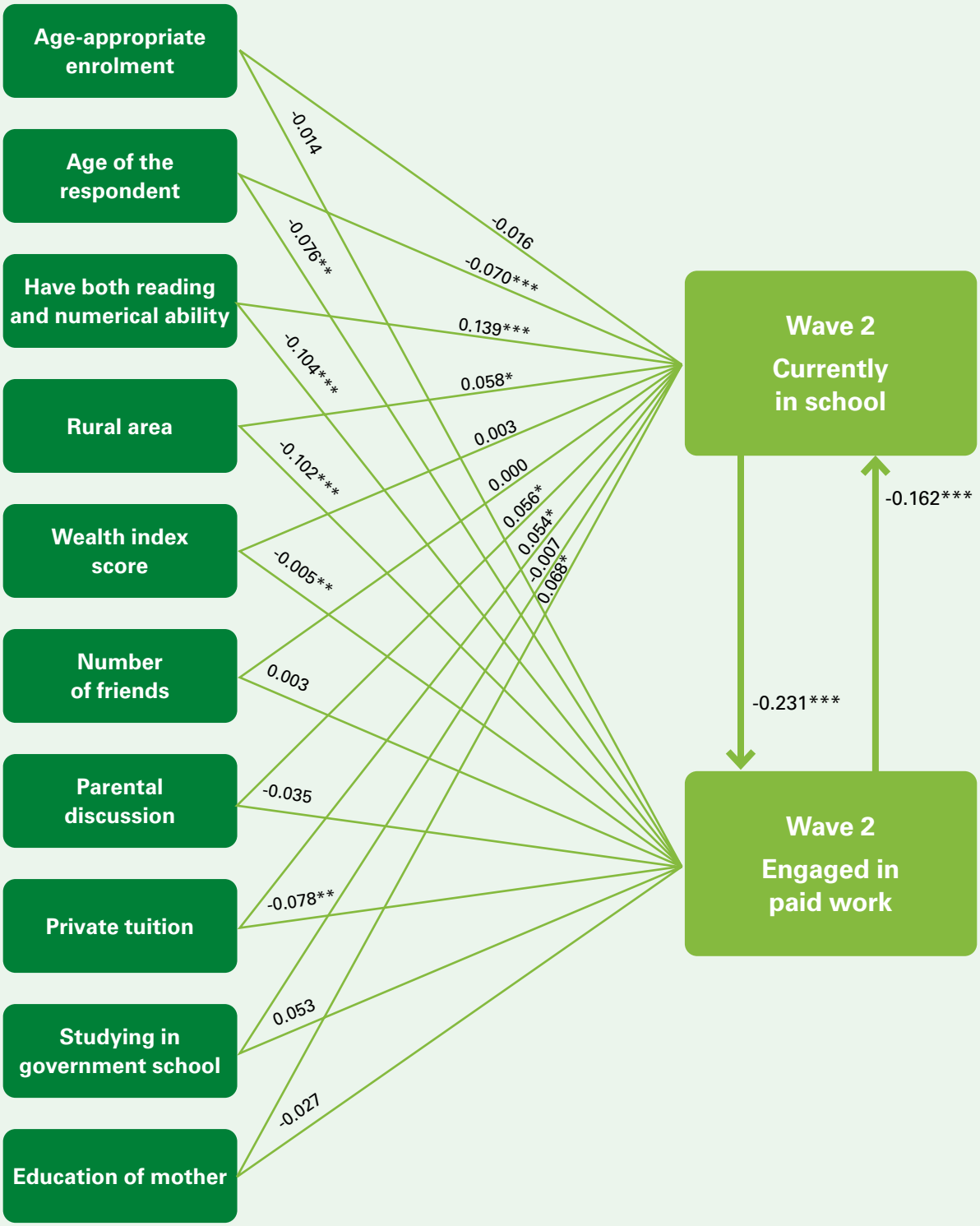
Characteristics	Model 1				Model 2			
	Coeff.	p-value	CI		Coeff.	p-value	CI	
Panel 2: Engagement in paid work, Girls								
Household and family level								
Rural (Urban=ref)	1.186	0.359	0.824	1.706	1.121	0.537	0.780	1.610
Muslims (Hindus=ref)	1.743	0.016	1.109	2.739	1.588	0.045	1.011	2.495
Caste (General caste=ref)								
Scheduled castes/tribes	2.893	0.001	1.566	5.347	2.687	0.001	1.460	4.945
Other backward castes	1.383	0.217	0.826	2.315	1.355	0.247	0.810	2.265
Household size (<4=ref)								
5-6	1.173	0.544	0.700	1.966	1.167	0.555	0.698	1.951
7 or more	1.271	0.371	0.752	2.149	1.216	0.465	0.720	2.054
Wealth index score	0.984	0.141	0.962	1.005	0.992	0.473	0.969	1.015
At least one family member got employment under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act	1.866	0.040	1.029	3.383	1.874	0.037	1.039	3.378
At least one household member uses alcohols/drug/tobacco	1.562	0.015	1.091	2.237	1.500	0.026	1.050	2.143
Mother's education: Literate (Illiterate=ref)	0.470	0.001	0.300	0.736	0.522	0.005	0.332	0.818
Discussed personal matters with parents (no=ref)	0.791	0.147	0.576	1.086	0.813	0.248	0.572	1.155
Individual level								
In school	0.206	0.000	0.142	0.300	0.186	0.074	0.029	1.175
Reading and numerical ability								
Can read a paragraph or solve a numerical problem					1.160	0.452	0.788	1.707
Can read a paragraph and solve a numerical problem					0.624	0.060	0.382	1.020
Private tuition (no =ref)					0.798	0.279	0.530	1.201
School type: Government School [private=ref)					1.382	0.135	0.904	2.113
Decision-making say in personal matters (no=ref)	1.510	0.008	1.112	2.050	1.544	0.005	1.138	2.095
Gender egalitarian attitude score: 4 or more [4<=ref)	1.049	0.781	0.749	1.468	1.069	0.697	0.764	1.495
Peer level								
5 or more friends [<5 =ref)	1.2687	0.139	0.9259	1.7385	1.2622	0.146	0.9225	1.7269
Member of any group [no =ref]	1.8968	0.137	0.8158	4.4101	1.9676	0.116	0.8464	4.574
Number of groups	**1,439**				**1,439**			
Number of observations	**2878**				**2878**			

Characteristics	Model 1				Model 2			
	Coeff.	p-value	CI		Coeff.	p-value	CI	
Panel 3: Engagement in unpaid work, BOYS								
Household and family level								
Rural (Urban=ref)	6.323	0.000	4.926	8.116	6.215	0.000	4.843	7.976
Muslims (Hindus=ref)	0.539	0.000	0.405	0.717	0.515	0.000	0.386	0.688
Caste (General caste=ref)								
Scheduled castes/tribes	0.946	0.743	0.680	1.317	0.901	0.537	0.646	1.256
Other backward castes	1.474	0.006	1.121	1.938	1.434	0.010	1.090	1.887
Household size (<4=ref)								
5-6	1.330	0.036	1.018	1.736	1.315	0.045	1.006	1.717
7 or more	1.721	0.000	1.300	2.279	1.696	0.000	1.280	2.247
Wealth index score	1.016	0.019	1.003	1.029	1.018	0.008	1.005	1.032
At least one family member got employment under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act	1.003	0.987	0.663	1.518	0.981	0.927	0.647	1.486
At least one household member uses alcohols/drug/tobacco	1.029	0.801	0.822	1.290	1.025	0.831	0.818	1.284
Mother's education: Literate (Illiterate=ref)	0.666	0.001	0.528	0.840	0.683	0.001	0.541	0.863
Discussed personal matters with parents (no=ref)	0.930	0.430	0.776	1.114	0.919	0.381	0.762	1.110
Individual level								
In school	0.553	0.000	0.419	0.730	1.815	0.316	0.566	5.821
Reading and numerical ability								
Can read a paragraph or solve a numerical problem					1.248	0.104	0.955	1.630
Can read a paragraph and solve a numerical problem					1.237	0.109	0.953	1.605
Private tuition (no =ref)					0.734	0.003	0.598	0.902
School type: Government School [private=ref)					1.291	0.017	1.046	1.592
Decision-making say in personal matters (no=ref)	1.072	0.439	0.899	1.279	1.069	0.462	0.895	1.275
Gender egalitarian attitude score: 4 or more [4<=ref)	1.325	0.003	1.097	1.599	1.298	0.007	1.074	1.570
Peer level								
5 or more friends [<5 =ref)	1.3563	0.002	1.1216	1.6403	1.361	0.002	1.1246	1.6471
Member of any group [no =ref]	1.7427	0.007	1.1601	2.6181	1.8041	0.004	1.2011	2.7097
Number of groups	**1,712**				**1,712**			
Number of observations	**3424**				**3424**			

Characteristics	Model 1				Model 2			
	Coeff.	p-value	CI		Coeff.	p-value	CI	
Panel 4: Engagement in unpaid work, GIRLS								
Household and family level								
Rural (Urban=ref)	4.675	0.000	3.551	6.155	4.484	0.000	3.413	5.891
Muslims (Hindus=ref)	0.571	0.001	0.414	0.788	0.550	0.000	0.399	0.758
Caste (General caste=ref)								
Scheduled castes/tribes	1.567	0.033	1.037	2.368	1.547	0.037	1.026	2.333
Other backward castes	2.282	0.000	1.619	3.216	2.289	0.000	1.628	3.220
Household size (<4=ref)								
5-6	1.116	0.534	0.790	1.578	1.114	0.540	0.789	1.572
7 or more	1.310	0.134	0.920	1.865	1.291	0.155	0.908	1.837
Wealth index score	1.000	0.968	0.985	1.015	1.003	0.747	0.987	1.018
At least one family member got employment under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act	1.056	0.815	0.670	1.662	1.081	0.736	0.689	1.696
At least one household member uses alcohols/drug/tobacco	1.309	0.033	1.022	1.677	1.268	0.059	0.991	1.622
Mother's education: Literate (Illiterate=ref)	0.633	0.001	0.479	0.837	0.657	0.003	0.496	0.870
Discussed personal matters with parents (no=ref)	1.425	0.003	1.127	1.803	1.272	0.053	0.997	1.623
Individual level								
In school	0.528	0.000	0.399	0.700	0.385	0.127	0.113	1.311
Reading and numerical ability								
Can read a paragraph or solve a numerical problem					0.182	0.915	1.600	1.707
Can read a paragraph and solve a numerical problem					0.933	0.740	1.388	1.020
Private tuition (no =ref)					0.817	0.120	0.633	1.054
School type: Government School [private=ref)					1.198	0.185	0.917	1.566
Decision-making say in personal matters (no=ref)	0.856	0.151	0.692	1.059	0.863	0.171	0.698	1.066
Gender egalitarian attitude score: 4 or more [4<=ref)	1.224	0.107	0.957	1.565	1.236	0.092	0.966	1.581
Peer level								
5 or more friends [<5 =ref)	1.1592	0.181	0.9337	1.4392	1.1771	0.137	0.9493	1.4595
Member of any group [no =ref]	0.8093	0.535	0.4151	1.5781	0.8053	0.525	0.4132	1.5694
Number of groups	**1,439**				**1,439**			
Number of observations	**2878**				**2878**			

Source: UDAYA, 2015-16 and 2018-19.

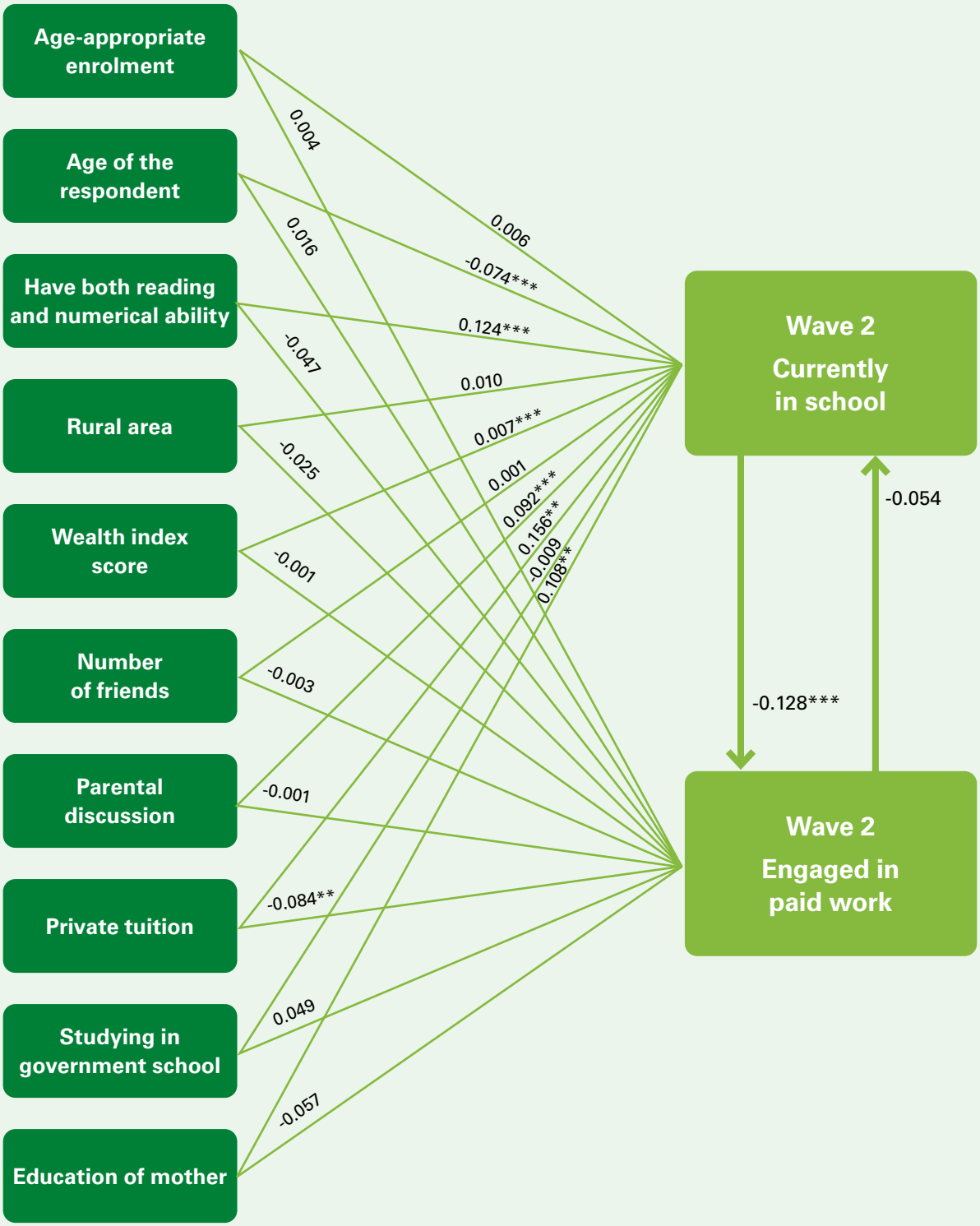
Annex 18: Standardized parameter estimates of the structural equation model examining the interlinkages between children's work and education (male children)



Note: Significance level: * p≤0.05, ** p≤0.01, and *** p≤0.000

Source: UDAYA 2015-16 and 2018-19.

Annex 19: Standardized parameter estimates of the structural equation model examining the interlinkages between children's work and education (female children)



Note: Significance level: * p≤0.05, ** p≤0.01, and *** p≤0.000.
Source: UDAYA 2015-16 and 2018-19.

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