

Report of Dr. Ashok Sahu, Thematic Special Rapporteur (Child/Bonded/Migrant Labour), NHRC on visit to Manipur (Imphal, Churachandpur and Imphal West) during 18-22 June, 2018.

I. General

1.1 Manipur is a State in Northeast India sharing its borders, inter alia, with Myanmar. It is primarily an agrarian economy with substantial horticultural and hydroelectric generation potential. Manipur became part of the Indian Republic in 1949, Union Territory in 1956 and a full-fledged State in 1972. Presently, it has 16 (9 old and 7 new) Districts. The State had a population of 0.29 crore according to 2011 census. The percentage of people below poverty line was 36.89 in Manipur as against all India average of 21.92 in 2011-12.

II. At State Level

(a) Child Labour

Position

2.1 Traditionally local population does not encourage child labour system. It is mostly prevalent among migrant families and among poor families in a sublime form. The 61st Round of National Sample Survey, 2004-05 also does not record any significant presence of child workforce in Manipur.

Important Steps Taken

2.2 Following important steps have been taken by the State Government:

- Between 2012 and 2017, 439 inspections have been carried out.
- State/District Coordination/Advisory/Monitoring Committees have been constituted. Awareness generation activities are being carried out.
- It is proposed to have Nodal officers in all Districts.

(b) Bonded Labour

Position

2.3 Bonded labour system is also not prevalent in Manipur. According to the Socio-Economic Caste Census, 2011, conducted by the Ministry of Rural Development, the number of rehabilitated bonded labour households in Manipur was only 1 (in Churachandpur).

Important Steps Taken

2.4 Following important steps have been taken by the State Government:

- District Vigilance Committees have been constituted.
 - Awareness generation programmes are undertaken from time to time.
- Civil society is active.

(c) Migrant Labour

Position

2.5 Manipur is both a Home and Host State. People migrate for higher studies as well as to avail better employment opportunities. In-migration, mostly from Cachar area of Assam takes place to work both in road and rail construction sector.

Important Steps Taken

2.6 Following important steps have been taken by the State Government:

- Efforts are being made to register the migrant workers and contractors.
- Efforts are also being made to register eligible workers as building and construction workers so that the benefits flowing from the Building and Other Construction Workers Cess Fund would accrue to them.

Highlights of Discussion

2.7 The State level meeting was attended by Labour Commissioner and officials of Labour Department, Joint Secretary, Public Health, Deputy Commissioner, Imphal West, ADM, Imphal East, and representatives of Police and Social Welfare Departments. During interaction it was pointed out that while the bonded labour system is non-existent, the child labour system prevails, as during a recent Survey about 40,000 out-of-school children in the State and 9 cases of child labour (in Thoubal District) were noticed. Both in and out migration is taking place though no precise data is available. The Juvenile Justice Act is being properly implemented, 29 Shelter Homes are functioning and steps are being taken under mission mode to establish residential centres. It was stressed that fresh Surveys on bonded and child labour to capture new forms of bondage or 'neo-bondage' emerging in the economy and whether a child's education is being seriously affected while working for the family or not, respectively, by availing funding being provided by Government of India would be necessary. Steps may be taken to register both in and out migrants and their contractors and ensure provision of

minimum wages, creature comforts, social security and benefits of the Building and Other Construction Workers Cess Fund as admissible.

2.8 Discussion was held with Deputy Chief Engineer, Railways in charge of the construction of Jiribam-Tupul-Imphal railway lines engaging about 15 to 20 thousand employees. Most of them come from outside the State but belong to skilled/highly skilled/ specialist categories. Only 5 to 10 % workers belong to unskilled categories but their payment of wages, accommodation, health etc. are all looked after.

III. At District 1 (Churachandpur) Level

3.1 Churachandpur District shares border with Myanmar. Being an educated District, it has the unique distinction of many inhabitants being posted in Indian Civil and other similar services.

Highlights of the Discussion

3.2 The meeting with District level officials was attended by Deputy Commissioner and officials of District Administration, Superintendent of Police, and representatives of Industry, Cooperation, Public Health, Sericulture, Labour, Medical and Public Works Departments, Childline and NGOs. During interaction it was pointed out that the social structure is such that customary bondage does not prevail and the possibility of the prevalence of neo-bondage is very less. Similarly, child labour is not a major problem as schooling facility is good. While in-migration to the District is relatively less, there is considerable out-migration of both boys and girls to study and work as educational facility in general, technical and vocational streams beyond 10th class is poor and there is lack of employment opportunities. This has resulted in drug abuse and trafficking. Anti Trafficking Unit is functioning in the District. In the past, girls working in Spa etc. even in foreign countries like Singapore have been rescued. Hence the real need of the District is to tackle the problem of narcotic abuse through establishment of Rehabilitation Centres to cater to the requirements of school dropouts, orphans, disabled, drug addicts and HIV/AIDS afflicted children. The State Government is operating various developmental Schemes like 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padho'. The law and order situation is under control and insurgency situation is under check.

Field Visit

3.3 A visit was made to a privately run Shelter Home housing distressed seniors and children including child labour and some affected by HIV/AIDS, namely happiness Home, located at Thingkangphai. The children are being given food, dress, education and medicine and ultimately mainstreamed.

3.4 A visit was made also a brick kiln, namely, ZMB Brickfield in the same area. Utilizing quality soil available, the kiln is located in a shaded area producing quality bricks round the year. About 60 local workers are employed. About 4 skilled workers from West Bengal are employed but they had been working for about last 10 years. There is no system of advance payment. The workers were advised to register as building and construction workers and avail admissible benefits.

IV. At District 2 (Imphal West) Level

Highlights of the Discussion

4.1 The Imphal West District level meeting, held at Lamphelpat, was attended by Deputy Commissioner and officials of District Administration, representatives of Public Health Engineering, Education, Labour, Public Works and Social Welfare Departments and Child Protection Unit and Voluntary Organisations. During interaction, in respect of child labour, it was felt that there is need for survey, strategy, synergy and spread of awareness. School dropout between 9th and 10th class requires to be prevented. Child trafficking of both boys and girls in some form to within and outside the State is occurring and has to be fought with. A holistic approach can resolve the menace and prevent relapse. There is need for forming a Child Labour Task Force. The possibility of bondage or neo-bondage is very less. There is no serious problem of distress in or out migration. There is serious paucity of staff in the Labour Department on which the District Administration was requested to take remedial action.

Field Visit

4.2 A visit was made to Punya Children Home for Girls where two institutions, namely, a Shelter Home and an Adoption Centre, with capacity for 50 and 10 inmates respectively are being run by a Voluntary Organisation, called, Integrated Women and Children Development Centre (IWCDC) under the auspices of the State Social Welfare Department. During the visit, there were 43 inmates in the Shelter Home and 7 in the Adoption Centre. Both the

institutions seemed to be operating efficiently, though there is need for augmenting vocational training facility for elderly girls in the Shelter Home.

4.3 Visits were made to Bhuroden Maxwell Hindi High (upto class X) School, Imphal and CH. Tulasing Junior High (upto class VIII) School, Sekmai where children belonging to migrant workers' families are studying along with others. During interaction students were advised to pursue their studies diligently while teachers were requested to not only take due care but also identify parents, both local and migrants, working in building and construction sectors, asking them to register with the State Labour Department so that they can avail, inter alia, scholarship for educating two children.

V. Any Other Important Observation

5.1 Since Myanmar shares porous border with Myanmar, it is facing problems relating to drug trafficking, HIV/AIDS and Rongiya refugees. It was suggested that in all three cases directives issued by Central and State Government are required to be followed.

VI. Recommendations

(i) District level Surveys both on Child and Bonded Labour are required to be conducted. The former should, inter alia, try to capture whether education of children assisting in family work is getting substantially affected or not.

(ii) Rehabilitation Centres (ref. para 3.2) are required to be established.

(iii) Building and other construction sectors should be registered so that they can avail, inter alia, scholarship for educating two children from the Cess Fund.

(iv) Vocational education system requires to be strengthened.

.....