

Child labour in Assam (India): A Philosophical study

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Children should not work in fields, but on dreams!

– ILO, 2019.

Introduction

There is no proper definition about the age to be covered to determine child labour world over. However it is generally accepted that work done by children below the age of 14 years of age that hinders physical, social and psychological development is to be treated as child labour. According to the census of India a children work for major part of the day, which is below the age of 14 years, is child labour. The 1989 UN Convention on the 'Rights of the Child', sets the upper age at 18. The International Labour Organisation refers to children as those who are under 15 years.

One of the most important issues to be handled around the world is child labour, a labour supplied by the child or adolescents, prominently and largely prevail in developing countries. ILO does not consider all works done by the children as Child labour. All work that is provided by children is not child labour. Generally children after the age of 6 to 7 years work for their family to help their parents. Such type of works is not termed as child labour. The work done by the children or adolescents that does not affect the health condition and their personal development or affect their schooling need not to be consider as bad but something to be considered positive which helps in children health development and welfare of their families and improves skill and experience and make them productive and positive member of their families in later life. A child labour is to be considered when a work done by children deprives the childhood of the children, harmful for his/her health and mental development. Thus, according to ILO- a work that is mentally, physically, socially, or morally dangerous and harmful to children and interfere with their schooling or oblige them to leave the school permanently or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work. The most dangerous form of child labour is that which separates themselves from their families, engaged in most dangerous and hazardous work and left to fend on the street at an early stage. Thus a work is to be defined as child labour is based on age type and hour of work, condition under which the work is done and finally the objectives of the country towards the issue and thus it varies from country to country. Child labour is found in all stages of supply chain including agriculture and manufacturing and

even in retail sector. (www.ilo.org). Now a day’s companies are apprehended about the use of child labour in their supply chain because of the fair of ill reputation of the company.

ILO has launched a membership based forum, Child Labour Platform, in 2010 at global child labour conference to inter exchange the approaches of each other to tackle the child labour use in their supply chain. In 2011 ILO and International Organisation of Employees (IOE) with UN Human Rights Council’s support under the guideline of “Guiding Principle on Business and Human Rights”, also launched a project named “Guidance tool on How to do Business with Respect for Children’s Rights to be free from Child Labour” to guide the companies to prevent child labour by adopting appropriate policies both in their operation and in their supply chain.

One of the most prominent ways of monitoring child labour is to regularly monitor the places where children work. Child Labour Monitoring (CLM) is an active process of ILO to ensure safety from hazardous and exploitation. With a coordinated multi-sector monitoring and referral it aims to cover all sectors that employ children and determine risk.

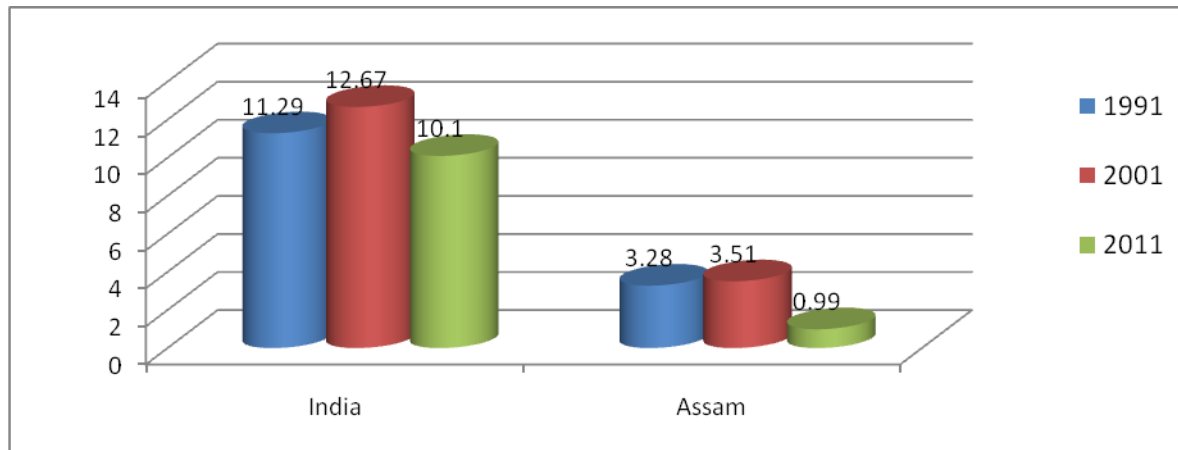
In India, there are 33million children population economically active at the age group of 5-18, of which 62% are boys, and it comprises 9% of the total child population in India (National Plan of Action for children, 2016; Census of India, 2011). 10.1 million out of this child population falls under the age group of 5-14 years. In India a labour that is done by children under the age group below 14 years in hazardous or under any condition is termed as child labour. That means 3.9% of total child population are economically active which are considered in India as child labour. Child labour in India figured increasing day by day till 2001 (census report, 2011). Indian census reported the number of child labour in 1971 as 10.75 million (10753985) and 13.64 million (13640870) in 1981 which is reported in 1991 as 11.29 (or 11285349) million which increased to 12.7 (12666377) million in 2001 and in 2011 it was reported as 10.1 million (.....). Following table shows a trend in child labour in India since 1971.

Table-1 showing Child labour in India as well as in Assam as per Census report

Place	Census 1971	Census 1981	Census 1991	Census 2001	Census 2011
India	10.754	13.6409	11.2853	12.6664	10.1
Assam	2.39349	*****	3.27598	3.51416	0.99512

Source: Census of India reports; <https://labour.gov.in/sites/default/files/Census-2001&2011.pdf>

Figure-1 showing trend of child labour in India (Data in millions)



Census report showed a decline in the number of child labour in India since 2001 due to different effort made by the government of India with the help of local and state governments and NGOs to reduce child labour and was reported as 10.1 million out of the total child population of 259.64 million between 5-14 age groups. This decline is due to the reduction in the number of child labour available in the rural area. In rural areas the decline was reported due to the implementation different rural development schemes by the government which increases the per-day income level of rural families, MGNREGA, Right to education and Mid-Day meal are some prominent schemes which contributed to such reduction. As reported by UNICEF total working labour in India according to 2001 census was 12.6 million out of which 11.3 million were in the rural area and 1.3 million were in the urban area. In census 2011 the rural child labour has come down to 8.1 million but in urban areas it has increased to 2 million. A male and female wise distribution in child labour shows that according to census 2011 4.5 million female child are economically active where as 5.6 million male children are engaged in economic activities in India. Child labours are mainly engaged in mining industry, Bidi factories,, Brick field, Zori and embroidery factories, tea stalls and in the house hold sector as maid. In urban areas there is a growing trend of child labour due to the rise in demand for menial jobs.

Review of literature

“Bestow blessing on those little innocent lives bloomed on earth who have who have brought the message of joy from heavenly garden”

-Rabindra Nath Tagore

B.M. Dinesh (1998) “Economic activities of children, Dimension, causes and consequences” deals with the economic contributions of children, the back ground causes of child labour in Karnataka and suggesting policy measures on the basis of data collected from that place of dakhshin kannada(rural)district of Karnataka.

Chowdhury, D.P. (1996) studied child labour problem Indian states excluding Assam between 1951-1991. Child labour issue of Assam has been excluded mainly because of non availability of reliable statistics.

Khanna, S.K. (1998) studied child labour mainly children right at national and international level and found it as deteriorating in India.

Singh, (1990) after a literature review make the conclusion that child workers are more in 10-14 rather than 5-9 age group.

Goulart & Bedi (2008) studied about working children in Portugal and concluded that children have interest in school rather than working.

Chenokova & Vaithianathan, (2008) in an imperial study found that parents send first child for work rather than the second and send the second child for education. They suggested enforcement of law to curve such tendency and stop child labour.

Cogdon, H. (2010) studied the status of child labour and concluded that poverty is not only the cause of child labour but there are some other cause which drive children to work.

After reviewing existing work done in this problem the researcher has found several study gap in research about the problem and has finally decided to study the problem in Assam by religion base on census of India, 2011 data with the following objectives.

Objectives

1. To study and analyze the intensity of Child Labour in Assam.
2. To study and analyze child labour all religious category in Assam.

Methodology

The study is based on secondary data available in different publication available online i.e www.ilo.org, census of India website and some other publication by other researchers. This study is analytical study based on census data regarding child labour in the state of Assam. Data are analyzed by using statistical analytical tools with the help of Excel data.

Analytical Study

Child labour in Assam has remained alarming since long and governmental effort also has been going on since a long time. Assam has recorded a significant decline in the amount available child worker as per records of census of India. Following table shows the available numbers of child labour in Assam by religious community as per records of census, 2011.

Table-2

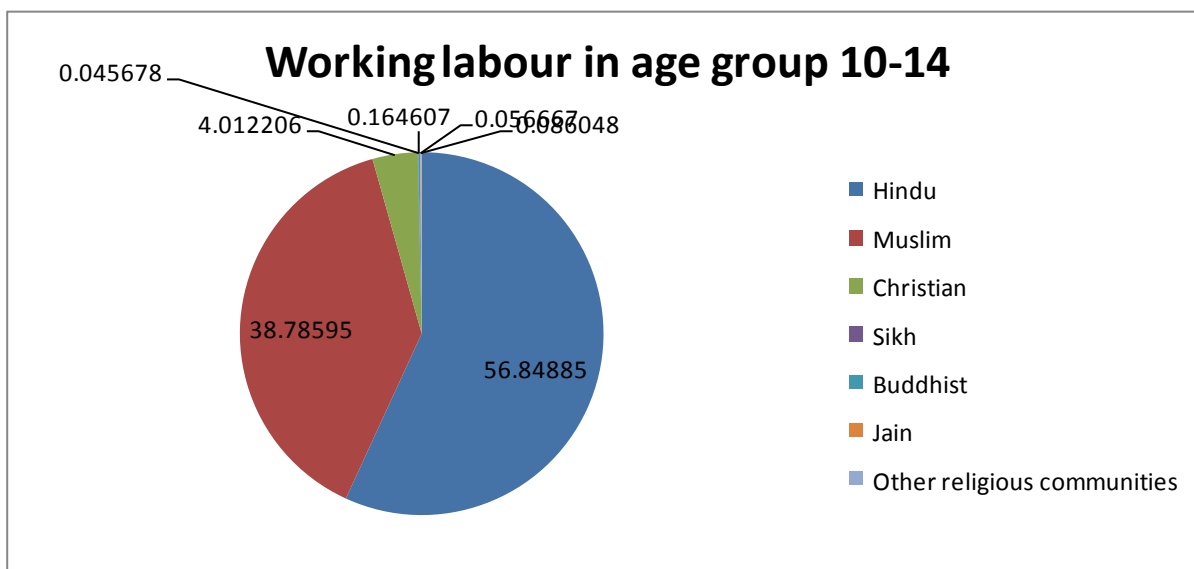
Showing population under different category in Assam

Religious Community	Age-Group	Total				
		Population	Percentage	Males	Females	Percentage
All religious communities						
	10-14	3485265	100	1786020	1699245	100
Hindu		1981333	56.84885	1014009	967324	49.3590462
Muslim		1351793	38.78595	694409	657384	45.5830873
Christian		139836	4.012206	71228	68608	4.73147214
Sikh		1592	0.045678	861	731	0.0498312
Buddhist		5737	0.164607	2925	2812	0.16319717
Jain		1975	0.056667	1034	941	0.02865294
Other religious communities		2999	0.086048	1554	1445	0.08471303
All religious communities						
	05-09	3537367	100	1802663	1734704	100
Hindu		1849073	52.27258	943312	905761	60.5745915
Muslim		1539596	43.52378	783278	756318	31.9978914
Christian		137534	3.888033	70246	67288	6.92672641
Sikh		1379	0.038984	753	626	0.07380074
Buddhist		5040	0.142479	2626	2414	0.20031629
Jain		1928	0.054504	1025	903	0.09488666
Other religious communities		2817	0.079636	1423	1394	0.13178703

Source: Census of India report, 2011

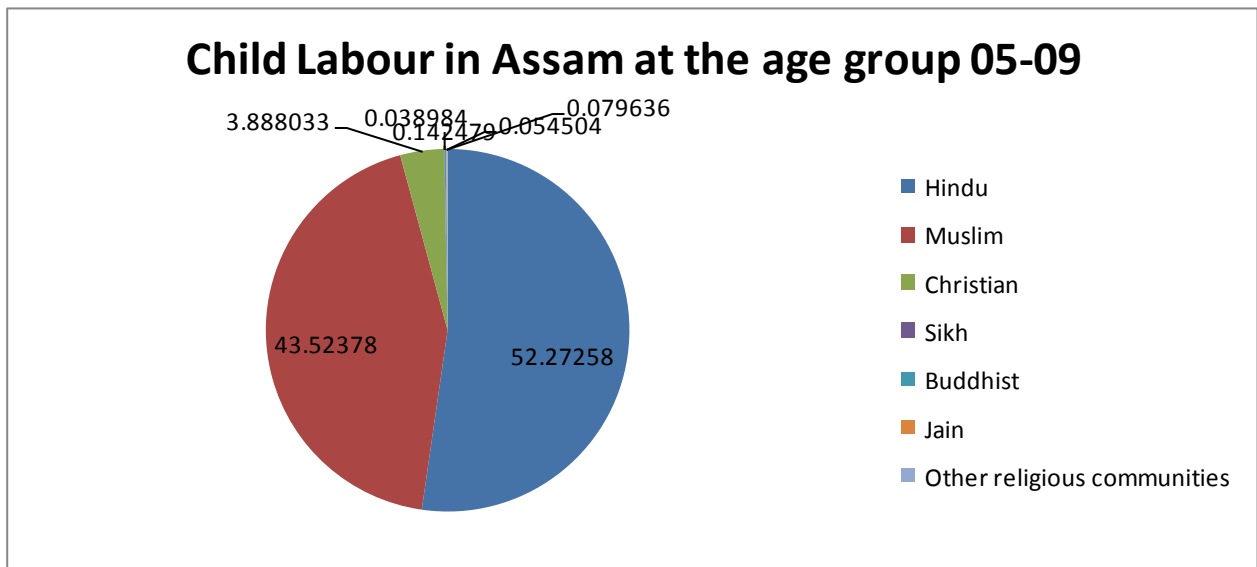
The table reveals that in the age group of 10-14 all community together supplies 3.485 million child labour among which Hindu community shares the maximum 56.84% alone when Muslim community contribute 38.78 % child labour contributing 2nd highest child labour supply in the state. Other minority community supplies a negligible percent each among which Christian community stands high at 4% of the total child labour in this age group. Figure-2 below depicts the same which is a pie chart showing the shares of different community in total child labour. The figure clearly shows that Hindu and Muslim are the highest among all communities in the supply of child labour.

Figure-2



The above table also contains data about child labour in Assam in the age group of 5-9. In this age group also The Hindu and Muslim community is highest community to supply child labour which is contributing as 1.85 million and 1.54 respectively. The figure-3 below also depicts the same which is drawn based on the Table-2 data. The figure veritably showcase that Hindu community contributes 52.27% and Muslims contribute 43.52% in the supply of total child labour in Assam. Other religious community are supplying a very less % as compared to the Hindu and Muslims in Assam.

Figure-3



A Male female wise distribution of child labour in Assam is also shown in the above table for both the age group of 10-14 and 05-09. The data shows that among the total child labour available in Assam in the age group of 10-14 is 3485265 of which 1786020 are male child and 1699245 are female child who are active in economic activities. Male-female comparison shows although male child labours are a little high in number but they are not significantly different. A religion base comparison depicts that 1014009 are Hindu male and 967324 are Hindu female. Muslim community is supplying 694409 as male child labour and 657384 are female. Other religious communities are also supplying both male and female almost equally in total supply of child labour in their respective community categories. The share of child labour in the age group 05-09 also shows the same scenario in terms of male female. This is shown with the help of following figure. Bothe the figures for age group-10-14 and 05-09 shows that Hindu and Muslim communities are generating highest child labour supply out of which Hindu community are in the first position and Muslims are in the second position and all other communities are supplying less in both the age category.

Figure-4

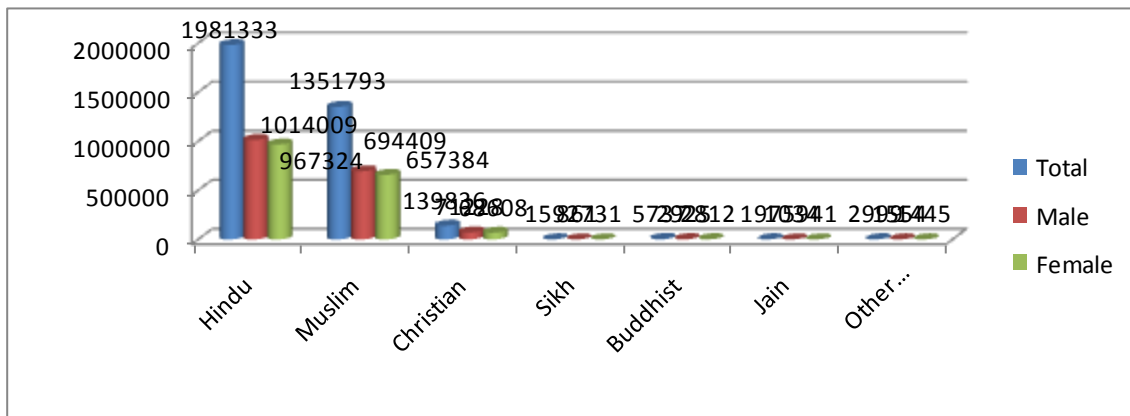


Figure 4 age group-10-14

Figure-5

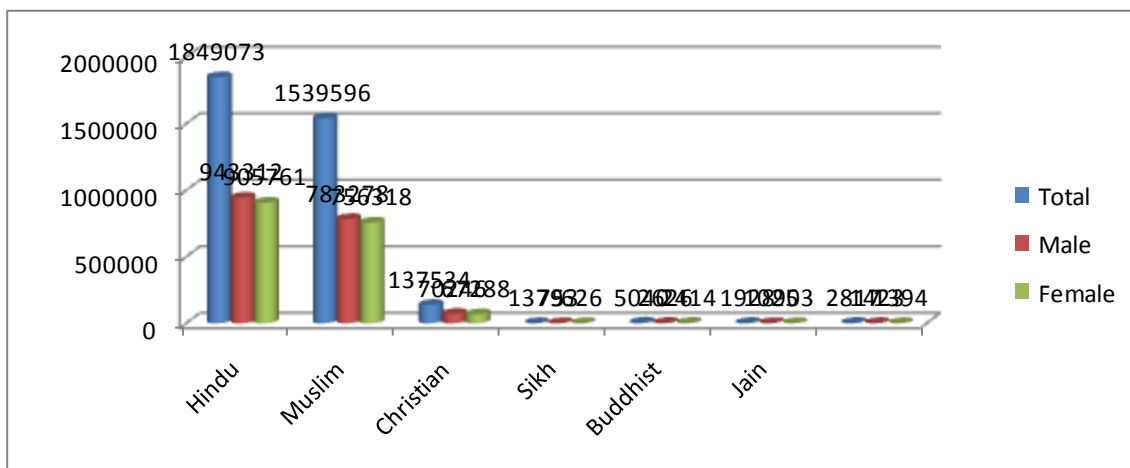


Figure -5 showing age group 05-09

In Table-3 a comparison has been made on the basis of main workers and marginal workers. Main workers are defined as the workers who work for at least 6-8 hours and for not less than 180 days in year. Marginal workers are on the other hand are the workers who work in a part of the day generally 3-4 hours for less than 180 days in a year time. The table the total main workers in first part of the table which shows that all religious community bears 80271 numbers of children as main workers below the age group 10-14 years out of which 58879 are male child and 21392 are female. And the second part of the table which shows marginal workers depicts that there were 144661 numbers of total marginal workers out of which 82352 are male and 62309 are females. The figure -5 drawn based on the data on the table 2 shows a religion base break up of data regarding child labour shows that Hindu and Muslim community are contributing highest to both main as well as marginal workers. In the age category 05-09 it is seen that Hindu child labours are high in case of both main and

marginal category and male and female category. Among all other religious communities the figure is not very significant but still the analysis of the data shows Christians are contributing more in both type of work category in the age group 10-14 compared to the age group 05-09. In the age category 10-14 on the other Christian females are more contributing to the marginal workers compared to the main workers data. In the age group 05 09 on the other shows Christian supplying almost at the same ratio to the main as well as marginal workers as child labour.

Table-3

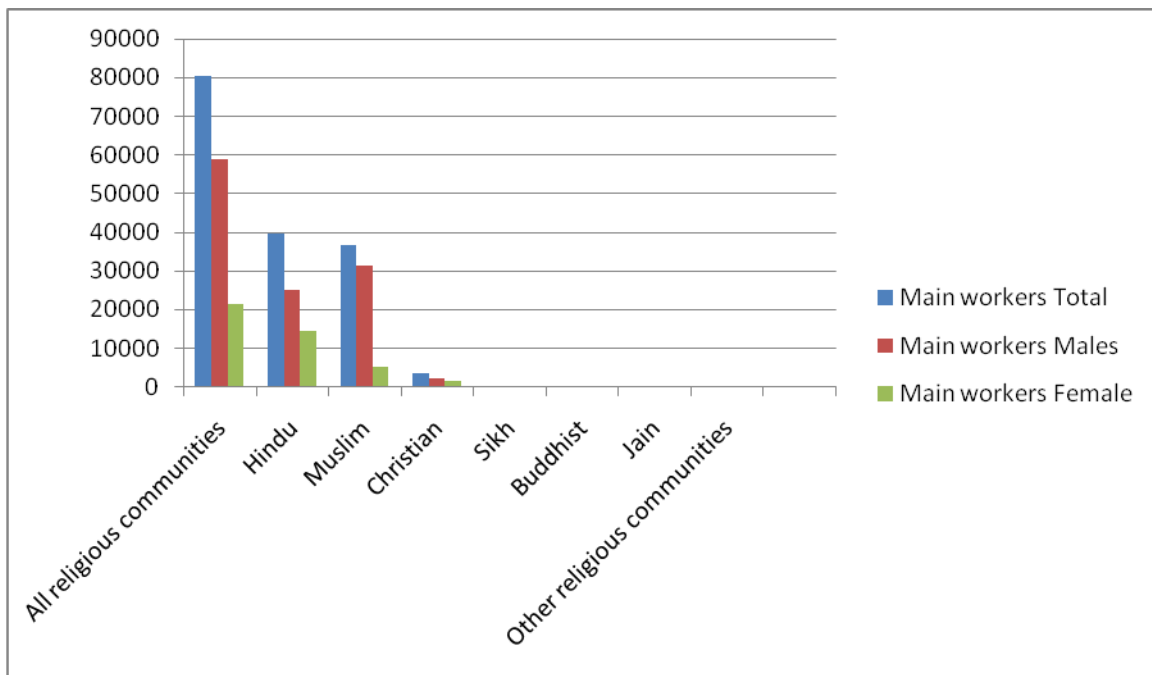
Showing working population under different category in Assam.

Religious Community	Age	Main workers	Main workers	Main workers	Marginal workers	Marginal workers	Marginal workers	Total Workers
		Total	Males	Female	workers Total	workers Males	workers Females	
All religious communities	10-14	80271	58879	21392	144661	82352	62309	224932
Hindu		39621	25107	14514	81293	41424	39869	120914
Muslim		36590	31412	5178	55776	37147	18629	92366
Christian		3798	2196	1602	7081	3531	3550	10879
Sikh		40	27	13	34	16	18	74
Buddhist		131	83	48	269	135	134	400
Jain		23	14	9	39	16	23	62
Other religious communities		68	40	28	169	83	86	237
All religious communities	5-9	18970	10914	8056	40009	20351	19658	58979
Hindu		11491	6381	5110	24139	11996	12143	35630
Muslim		6070	3793	2277	13226	7048	6178	19296
Christian		1314	692	622	2499	1242	1257	3813
Sikh		14	9	5	10	6	4	24
Buddhist		38	20	18	70	29	41	108
Jain		18	7	11	24	11	13	42
Other religious communities		25	12	13	41	19	22	66

Total Working Population 283911

Source: Census report 2011

Figure-6



Conclusion

The study concludes that child labour is available more in rural areas in Assam rather than in urban areas. The Hindu families are supplying more female child labour as compared to the other communities of the societies in Assam. Muslim community is active in supplying male child labour as main worker in the age group of 10-14 more than other community available in the society. Female child labour is less in number in Muslim community both in main and marginal workers. The cause of such variation has been found due to the religious binding that is available in the Muslim society. After discussing the cause of existence of marginal child labour available among the Hindu families it is seen that low caste Hindu families sending more female child to the urban centres as house maid. Government of India with the help of state government are trying to stop child labour by executing different laws and rules with the help of different NGOs and also by starting project National action plan for child Labour, Child Labour (prohibition & Regulation) Act-1986 which has been amended in 2016 and 2017. New provisions have been made under new amendments and now according to new act no child can work in any cause between the age of 10-14 years. And the adolescents at the age group of 15-17 years cannot work under hazardous condition. The success of the afford of the government is seen in the trend from 1991 to 2011 census but still government has to do more to finish child labour from the society and Assam cannot be excluded from such requirements.

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