

CHAPTER 3

CHILD LABOUR: A STATISTICAL PROFILE

3.0 Introduction

The world population of working children has yet to be counted accurately, because as it is often illegal and clandestine, child labour lies beyond the reach of official labour statistics. It is therefore difficult to present an accurate estimate of the overall magnitude of child labour in India. As revealed in the preceding chapter, various agencies have estimated the magnitude of child labour in varying proportions on account of numerous limitations mainly the predominance of the informal nature of labour market, multiplicity of concepts and source of data etc. However, the official estimation of child labour relies on the census statistics. Therefore, to understand the extent and composition of child labour in general and economic participation of girl child in particular, the Census Data have been used and findings of the analysis are presented in this chapter.

3.1 Child Labour in India: Inter-State Situation

With the increasing rate of industrialization and modernization, the incidence of child labour in India has increased considerably. The 2001 Census of India identified 12.66 million children as workers which comprised main workers (involved in full time activities) and marginal workers (i.e., they were not working on a full time basis). They together constituted 5.0 percent of the total child population (5 to 14 years of age) in India, recording an increase of 0.4 percent over the 1991 census.

According to the 2001 census, the total population of India was 1028.61 millions in which child population of 5 to 14 years of age group was 24.6 percent (251 millions). The State-wise distribution of child workers (main) is presented in Table 3.1. Ranks were assigned to the States as per the percentage of child workers to total workers, child population and total population. It can be noted from this table that

Uttar Pradesh was ranked 1st among all the States including the Union Territories of India in the percentage of child workers in terms of all the three variables viz., total workers, total children and total population. The higher the incidence of child labour, more could be the illiteracy, ignorance, poverty and backwardness. Kerala, with its highest literacy rate in India, accounted for the lowest percentage of child labour in India. Kerala's percentages of child labour in total workers, total children and total population were 0.3, 0.5 and 0.9 respectively against 3.8, 5.1 and 1.1 of Assam.

Table 3.1

State- Wise Distribution of Child Workers in India, 2001

Sl. No.	State	Percentage of Child Workers (main) to					
		Total Workers	Rank	Total Children	Rank	Total Population	Rank
1.	Assam	3.8	6	5.1	11	1.1	10
2.	Andhra Pradesh	5.2	2	7.7	5	4.0	3
3.	Arunachal Pradesh	3.0	10	6.1	9	1.0	11
4.	Bihar	3.1	9	4.7	13	3.2	5
5.	Delhi	0.9	19	1.4	22	0.5	13
6.	Gujarath	2.6	13	4.3	16	2.3	8
7.	Goa	1.0	18	1.8	21	0.5	13
8.	Himachal Pradesh	1.7	17	8.1	4	0.6	15
9.	Harayana	1.9	16	4.8	12	1.0	11
10.	Karnataka	4.5	3	6.9	6	2.7	7
11.	Kerala	0.3	20	0.5	23	0.9	12
12.	Meghalaya	3.1	9	4.5	14	3.3	4
13.	Madhya Pradesh	4.0	5	6.7	7	2.9	6
14.	Maharashtra	2.6	13	3.5	17	4.8	2
15.	Mizoram	2.2	15	3.7	16	0.5	13
16.	Manipur	1.9	16	3.0	19	0.5	13
17.	Nagalanda	2.9	11	5.2	10	0.9	12
18.	Orissa	3.1	9	4.4	15	1.6	9
19.	Punjab	2.2	15	3.2	18	1.0	11
20.	Rajasthan	3.4	7	8.3	3	2.7	7
21.	Sikkim	3.2	8	12.0	2	0.8	13
22.	Tripura	1.7	17	2.8	20	0.4	14
23.	Tamilnadu	2.3	14	3.6	17	3.2	5
24.	Uttar Pradesh	5.8	1	12.5	1	6.1	1
25.	West Bengal	4.1	4	6.6	8	1.0	11

Union Territories

1.	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	0.8	4	1.1	5	0.2	3
2.	Chandigarh	0.8	4	1.4	4	0.3	4
3.	Dadrad Nagar Haveli	4.4	1	8.0	1	1.0	1
4.	Daman & Diu	2.3	2	3.1	2	0.8	2
5.	Lakshadweep	0.01	5	0.1	6	0.03	5
6.	Pondichery	0.9	3	1.5	3	0.3	4
India		3.1		5.0		1.2	

Source: Compiled from the Census Data 2001.

Further, Table 3.2 presents the details of States and districts having the maximum and the minimum percentage shares of working children. From the table, it can be noted that among the major States, the share of India's working children varies from 15.2 percent in Uttar Pradesh to a mere 0.30 percent in Kerala. The volume of working children within each State also varies from district to district. The proportion of working children in total workers in Uttar Pradesh across districts varies from 8.5 percent in Bulandshahr district to 0.6 percent in Uttarkashi district. However, the volume of working children in Assam is maximum at Dhubri district (8.7) and minimum at North Cachar Hills (0.4).

3.2 Rural-Urban Differences of Child Labour in India

Majority of the child workers in India, i. e., about 90 percent were in the rural areas. During the census decade from 1991 to 2001, due to the expansion of urbanization there was a rise in the male child workers in the urban sector from 12.4 percent to 14.8 percent and a corresponding decrease in the rural sector from 87.6 percent to 85.2 percent (see Table 3.3). However, the percentage of girl child worker

Table 3.2

Intra-State and Inter State Differences in the Incidence of Child Labour, 2001

Sl. No.	India/Major States	Maximum Value	Minimum Value
1.	India	Uttar Pradesh(15.2)	Kerala(0.30)
2.	Andhra Pradesh	Mahaboobnagar(13.8)	Hyderabad(1.2)
3.	Assam	Dhubri(8.7)	NC Hills(0.4)
4.	Bihar	Saharsa(4.3)	Lohardaga(0.6)
5.	Gujarath	Panch Mahab(11.9)	Gandhinagar(0.4)
6.	Karnataka	Gulbarga(9.9)	Kodagu(0.6)
7.	Kerala	Palakkad(16.9)	Pathanamthitta(2.1)
8.	Madhya Pradesh	Jhaba(9.6)	Datia(0.4)
9.	Maharashtra	Nanded(6.5)	Sindudurg(0.5)
10.	Orissa	Korapu(20.2)	Baleshwar(3.3)
11.	Punjab	Amritsar(15.6)	Rupnagar(1.9)
12.	Rajasthan	Alwar(14.0)	Jaisalmar(0.6)
13.	Tamilnadu	Salem(9.3)	Kanniyakumari(0.8)
14.	Uttar Pradesh	Bulandshahr(8.5)	Uttarkashi(0.6)
15.	West Bengal	Medinipur(9.5)	Darjeeling(1.2)

Source: Compiled from the Census Data 2001.

has not changed in the same proportion. A slight increase (1.5 percent) in the urban sector was recorded from 7.4 to 8.9 percent. Urbanization could not attract the girl workers percent from the countryside. Rather, the opportunities provided by the process of urbanization could not reach the orbit of rural girl workers. Due to the traditional conventions, superstitions, poverty, illiteracy, helping adults in the household chores, providing cheap labour in a variety of menial agricultural operations, the mobility of girl workers was restricted and they accounted for more than 91 percent in rural India.

Table 3.3
Region- Wise Distribution of Child Workers in India, 1991- 2001

Region	1991 (%)			2001 (%)		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Rural	87.6	92.6	89.5	85.2	91.1	87.4
Urban	12.4	7.4	10.5	14.8	8.9	12.6
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Compiled from 2001 & 1991 Census Data.

3.3 Occupational Distribution of Child Workers in India

The census data relating to this aspect are presented in Table 3.4. As per the table, over 83 percent of girls were engaged in agriculture directly, in 2001. Within agricultural sector, 50.9 percent were employed as agricultural labourers and 32.7 percent were cultivators. During the decade of 1991 and 2001, there was not much change in the composition of girl child workers in the main industrial activities in India. Out of around 76 percent of male child workers in agricultural activities, 35 percent were engaged as agricultural labourers and 41 percent were cultivators. Household industry, which comprises mainly the industries of *Beedi*-making, weaving, knitting, carpet making etc. generally engage the labour with a large component of female workers though their percentage in the total child workers was very limited, i. e., 4.6 percent in 1991 and 3.9 percent in 2001. Yet the percentage of girl workers was about two times (3.9) that of male child workers (2.4) in 2001. The activity of "other workers" shown in the table include factory workers, plantation workers, those engaged in trade, commerce, business, mining, transport, construction and a variety of other services. While 1/5th of the total male child workers were engaged in this category of occupations, the corresponding proportion of girl workers was only 1/8th during the period. Even considering all workers including adults, it is found that more female workers are engaged in agricultural sector (about 78.9 percent against 58.2 percent of male workers) which relatively employs more illiterate people. Similarly, it

is also found that more male workers are engaged in the category of 'other workers' (about 39.6 percent against 18.3 percent of female workers) which requires relatively skilled labour in 2001.

Table 3.4

Occupational Distribution of Child Workers in India, 1991- 2001

Occupations	All Workers				Child Workers			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	1991	2001	1991	2001	1991	2001	1991	2001
Cultivator	39.3	36.7	34.6	35.7	37.9	35.2	30.9	32.7
Agricultural Labourers	20.8	21.5	44.2	43.2	39.5	41.5	51.9	50.9
Household Industries	2.1	2.2	3.5	2.8	2.1	2.4	4.6	3.9
Other* Workers	37.2	39.6	17.7	18.3	20.5	20.9	12.6	12.5
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

*Other Workers: Forestry, Plantation, Hunting, Mining, Trade, Transport, Construction and Services.

Source: Compiled from Census of India 2001 & 1991.

3.4 Child Labour and Education

Fifty years after Independence, the slow progress of education particularly primary education in India is a matter of deep concern. In 2001, there were 10 million illiterate children in the age group of 5 to 14 years in the country (5.5 million boys and 4.5 million girls). While it was argued that government must be held responsible for promoting school education to every child, it is essential that all sections of society have also to play a role, if this was to be made a reality.

The fundamental reason for promoting universal primary education was that education is of intrinsic value in itself and valued for what it can do (instrumental value). Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen (1995) provide a useful classification of the benefits of education. Education is desired for itself as it opens up a vast world of opportunities and ideas to the educated person. It is of great instrumental value in the process of economic growth and development. Education plays a critical role in demographic transition; female education in particular is seen to be important in the process of lowering fertility and mortality. There is a strong correlation between literacy and life expectancy.

A report on basic education in India stated that educational achievements in India were highly uneven. Literacy, for instance, was almost universal in urban Kerala while practically unknown among the Scheduled Caste women in Rajasthan. As per the report, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh were the worst performers. It was shocking to find that in as many as 72 districts in these four States, a majority of children in the 10-14 years of age group are illiterate.

Another notable pattern is that literacy rates are much lower for women than for men in most regions. In fact, India has one of the highest female- male gaps in literacy rates in the world. According to Human Development Report of 1998, only five countries have a higher gap than India viz., Bhutan, Syria, Togo, Malawi and Mozambique. Rajasthan alone has as large population as those in all these countries put together and no country in the world has a higher female- male literacy gap than Rajasthan.

3.5 Child Education Across the States in India

State-wise percentages of children of 5-14 years attending school as per the 2001 census are presented in Table 3.5. Figures in the table reveal that about 46.5 percent of rural children and 68.7 percent of urban children in India were attending school. The rural data on school attendance show variations across the States and between rural

and urban areas within each State. With the exception of Kerala, attendance rates among girls were lower than among boys. In Kerala, 85% of rural boys and girls, 87% of urban boys and girls in the age group of 5-14 years were attending school. It was largest percentage ever recorded in any other State in India. Urban children in all the States, it appears, were more accessible to school compares to the rural children. The gender gap also tends to be wider in rural areas. In rural Rajasthan, for example, 48.2 percent of boys and 17.6 percent of girls were attending school. In general, attendance rates of girls were very low in the rural areas of Rajasthan, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. In Rajasthan, the attendance rate of girls touched the lowest bottom in rural areas with 17.6 percent as against the national average of 38.8 percent and it was the second lowest in urban areas (53.2%) after Uttar Pradesh (46.4%) against 65.8 percent of the national average. In Assam, the percentage of children attending school was more or less equal to the national average except in the case of rural girls whose percentage (i.e., 36.2%) was less than the national average (i.e., 38.8%).

3.6 Child Labour in Assam

Assam is the largest State among the States of North Eastern Region (NER). The State is administratively divided into 23 districts which are under two geographical regions: Brahmaputra Valley and Barak Valley (including Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills). The population of Assam, according to 2001 census was 26.66 million. This was nearly 2.59 percent of the total population of the country. There were 16.33 million children in the age group of 0-14 years in the State. About 30 percent of this population was in the age group of 0-14 years. This component of children was kept out of the labour force. Thus, the child population in the age group of 5-14 years considered to be part of the labour force was 12.66 million.

Table 3.5
Percentage of Children (5-14) Attending School in India, 2001

Sl. No.	State	Rural			Urban		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1.	Kerala	85.0	85.0	85.0	87.1	87.1	87.1
2.	Goa	82.5	78.3	80.4	83.4	80.1	81.2
3.	Himachal Pradesh	71.5	62.0	71.4	83.9	82.2	83.1
4.	Tamilnadu	71.5	62.0	66.9	77.1	74.5	75.8
5.	Punjab	63.2	55.5	59.6	69.5	68.0	68.8
6.	Maharashtra	65.4	53.1	59.5	75.1	71.8	73.5
7.	Sikkim	61.0	55.1	58.1	75.3	71.8	73.6
8.	Haryana	63.6	48.0	56.4	73.6	68.8	71.3
9.	Gujarath	60.9	46.8	54.1	67.6	62.6	65.2
10.	Mizoram	54.8	51.5	53.2	76.8	76.1	76.5
11.	Tripura	54.8	48.0	51.5	69.6	67.2	68.4
12.	Karnataka	58.0	44.2	51.2	71.3	67.3	69.3
13.	Manipur	51.5	45.8	48.7	61.4	58.6	60.0
14.	Nagaland	50.0	46.4	48.3	66.8	65.6	66.2
15.	Orissa	55.1	40.4	47.8	69.1	61.8	65.6
16.	Assam	53.0	36.2	44.7	68.4	65.1	66.8
17.	Andhra Pradesh	51.2	34.3	43.0	69.3	63.2	66.3
18.	West Bengal	50.4	36.0	43.2	65.3	60.1	62.7
19.	Madhya Pradesh	51.1	30.6	41.2	70.1	63.0	66.7
20.	Arunachal Pradesh	43.4	33.0	38.4	63.7	57.9	61.0
21.	Uttar Pradesh	42.6	23.4	33.7	53.4	46.4	50.1
22.	Rajasthan	48.2	17.6	33.4	66.4	53.2	60.1
23.	Meghalaya	31.2	32.1	31.6	72.6	70.7	71.6
24.	Bihar	39.8	21.8	31.4	63.4	54.1	59.0
India		54.2	38.8	46.5	71.6	65.8	68.7

Source: Census of India, 2001.

During the decade between 1991 and 2001, the percentage of child workers (5-14 years) in the State of Assam decreased from 2.9 to 2.8. Thus there was a considerable decline in the number of child workers over the decade. This decline was 0.1 percent over the period. Yet, the magnitude of child labour in the State was significantly high. In 2001, about 5.1 percent of all the children in the State were workers.

3.7 District-Wise Child Labour in Assam

The details of the district-wise distribution of child workers are presented in Table 3.6. Ranks have been assigned to the districts in accordance with the percentage of child workers to total workers, child population and total population. As can be noted from Table 3.6, Dhubri and Nagaon were placed at 1st and 2nd ranks in the percentage of child workers in the State. The high incidence of child labour in these two districts was evident from the fact that the difference in the percentage of child workers between the districts of 2nd and 3rd ranks was larger as compared to the difference in the percentage of child workers in any of the two districts of Assam. Thus Dhubri was assigned 1st rank in the percentage of child workers to total workers (8.7 percent) as against NCHs with lowest rank where child workers were only 0.4 percent.

Table 3.6
District-Wise Distribution of Child Workers in Assam, 2001

Sl. No.	District	Percentage of Child Workers to					
		Total Workers	Rank	Total Children	Rank	Total Population	Rank
1.	Dhubri	8.7	1	14.0	1	3.9	1
2.	Nagaon	8.2	2	13.5	2	3.6	2
3.	Barpeta	6.4	3	10.5	6	2.8	3
4.	Bongaigaon	6.1	4	10.2	8	2.6	5
5.	Kamrup	5.9	5	10.4	7	2.7	4
6.	Dibrugarh	5.9	5	11.2	3	2.7	4
7.	Sibsagar	5.8	6	9.1	12	2.4	7
8.	Kokrajhar	5.8	6	11.1	4	2.6	5
9.	Lakhimpur	5.6	7	11.2	3	2.7	4
10.	Tinsukia	5.6	7	10.7	5	2.7	4
11.	Goalpara	5.4	8	9.7	9	2.5	6
12.	Dhemaji	5.3	9	9.4	10	2.4	7
13.	Darrang	5.3	9	9.3	11	2.4	7
14.	Nalbari	5.3	9	9.1	12	2.4	8
15.	Morigaon	5.1	10	9.4	10	2.2	8
16.	Sonitpur	4.9	11	8.7	13	2.1	9
17.	Jorhat	4.9	11	7.4	17	1.9	10
18.	Golaghat	4.7	12	7.8	15	1.9	10
19.	Karbi Anglong	4.4	13	8.1	14	1.7	10
20.	Cachar	4.2	14	6.9	18	1.7	11
21.	Karimganj	4.2	14	6.3	19	1.6	12
22.	Hailakandi	4.0	15	7.5	16	1.7	11
23.	NCHs	0.4	16	2.8	20	1.5	13
	Assam	3.8		5.1		1.1	

Source: Compiled from the Census Data 2001 & Director of Census Operations, Govt. of Assam.

3.8 Rural-Urban Child Labour in the Districts of Assam

Data pertaining to the percentage of child workers total workers distributed in rural and urban areas of all the districts in the State are presented in Table 3.7. As can be noted from the table, in all the districts, it is obvious that the percentages of child workers in the rural areas were higher than those of in the urban areas. And the proportion girl workers in the female workers was always higher than the proportion of boy workers in the total male workers in both the urban and rural areas of all districts in the State. The concentration of child workers was more in the relatively less developed districts.

In urban areas, the percentage of child workers was 2.4 while this was the State average, across the districts, the figure varied from 4.3 percent in Nagaon district to 1.2 percent in Golaghat district. In six districts of Assam, the share of the child workers was far higher than the State average. These districts were Nagaon, Dhubri, Bongaigaon, Dibrugarh, Nalbari and Morigaon. In rural areas, the percentage share of child workers in Assam was 6.1. Across the districts, this ranged from 8.9 percent in Nagaon ditrict to 3.9 percent in NCHs district. In seven districts of Assam, this rural percentage of child workers was far above the State average of 6.1 percent. These districts were Nagaon, Dhubri, Barpeta, Bongaigaon, Dibrugarh, Sibsagar and Jorhat. From the analysis of the concentration of child workers by districts, it was found that majority of the districts (12) above the State average with concentration of urban child workers, while other districts registered the concentration of rural child workers. A similar analysis of both rural and urban shares of child workers showed four districts as areas of concern. They are Nagaon, Dhubri, Bongaigaon and Dibrugarh.

Table 3.7
District-wise Share of Child Workers in the Total Work Force in Assam, 2001

Sl. No.	District	Rural			Urban		
		Male	Female (Rank)	Total	Male	Female (Rank)	Total
1.	Nagaon	7.3	11.2(1)	8.9	3.4	6.8(2)	4.3
2.	Dhubri	7.5	9.5(2)	8.3	2.5	7.4(1)	3.8
3.	Barpeta	5.7	9.3(3)	7.1	1.5	4.9(6)	2.0
4.	Dibrugarh	4.9	9.0(4)	6.6	2.5	5.9(4)	3.3
5.	Sibsagar	5.1	8.8(5)	6.6	1.2	4.5(10)	1.7
6.	Lakhimpur	4.0	8.7(6)	6.1	1.3	6.1(3)	2.5
7.	Bongaigaon	5.5	8.5(7)	6.6	2.8	5.4(5)	3.2
8.	Sonitpur	4.2	8.4(8)	5.7	2.4	4.7(8)	2.8
9.	Golaghat	4.9	8.1(9)	6.1	1.0	2.9(16)	1.2
10.	Goalpara	4.1	8.0(10)	5.7	2.0	4.4(11)	2.6
11.	Kokrajhar	5.2	7.7(11)	6.2	2.5	4.4(11)	2.8
12.	Kamrup	5.4	7.6(12)	6.3	1.5	3.9(12)	1.9
13.	Tinsukia	4.9	7.6(12)	6.1	1.7	4.5(10)	2.5
14.	Dhemaji	4.5	7.6(12)	5.8	1.2	4.5(10)	1.9
15.	Jorhat	6.0	7.6(12)	6.6	1.6	3.2(14)	1.9
16.	Nalbari	4.8	7.5(13)	5.7	3.0	4.8(7)	3.3
17.	Cachar	3.2	7.3(14)	4.6	2.1	4.7(8)	2.6
18.	Darrang	4.5	7.2(15)	5.6	1.5	4.8(7)	2.2
19.	Morigaon	4.1	7.2(15)	5.3	2.3	5.4(5)	3.1
20.	Karbi Anglong	3.9	6.6(16)	4.9	2.1	4.6(9)	2.6
21.	Hailakandi	3.3	6.3(17)	4.4	1.8	3.4(13)	2.0
22.	Karimganj	4.4	5.3(18)	4.7	2.3	3.1(15)	2.4
23.	NCHs	2.1	4.2(19)	3.9	1.5	2.6(17)	1.7
	Assam	4.9	8.1	6.1	2.0	4.5	2.4

Source: Census of India, 2001.

Note: Figures in brackets indicate the ranks of districts in the case of female child workers.

3.9 District-wise Distribution of Girl Child Workers in the State

An analysis of the gender composition of child workers across the district of Assam revealed certain valuable information. The incidence of girl child labour was highest in Assam. Firstly, 9.4 percent of total girl child population in the State were workers, while the comparable all India average was only 3.4 percent. Secondly, in both, urban and rural areas of all the districts in the State, the proportion of child workers to total workers was more in the case of girls than in the case of boys.

In Table 3.7, districts have been ranked as per the percentage share of girl workers in the total female workers for both rural and urban regions and given in the brackets of the respective column. The percentage share of girl workers in rural areas of 8 districts and that of girl workers in urban areas of 12 districts exceeded the State averages of 8.1 percent and 4.5 percent respectively. From table, it is clear that 7 districts, with both rural and urban averages, showing girl child concentration higher than the corresponding State averages were facing a critical situation as regards girl child workers. They were Dhubri, Nagaon, Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh, Bongaigaon, Barpeta and Sonitpur districts.

Data pertaining to the share of child workers in each district in the total child workers of the State are presented in Table 3.8. Ranks have been assigned to the districts as per the share of girl workers they had in the State. Out of the 7 districts mentioned above, 5 districts (i.e., Dhubri, Nagaon, Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh and Bongaigaon) had 34.8 percent share of rural girl workers in the State, while 4 districts (i.e., Dibrugarh, Nagaon, Lakhimpur and Bongaigaon) had 32 percent share of urban girl child workers in the State. Dhubri which had the largest share of both girl and boy workers in rural areas did not show much concentration of child workers in urban areas. Likewise, over 11 percent of urban girl workers in the State were in Dibrugarh district, which ranked 1st with the largest share of urban girl workers in the State.

Table 3.8
District-Wise Distribution of Working Children in Assam, 2001

Sl. No.	District	Rural			Urban		
		% Share of Male Child Workers	% Share of Female Child Workers	Ranks in the Share of Girl Workers	% Share of Male Child Workers	% Share of Female Child Workers	Ranks in the Share of Girl Workers
1.	Dhubri	8.2	8.0	1	2.2	4.5	9
2.	Dibrugarh	6.3	7.4	2	8.9	11.9	1
3.	Nagaon	6.4	7.1	3	7.7	8.5	2
4.	Lakhimpur	4.1	7.0	4	2.2	6.7	4
5.	Goalpara	4.0	5.2	5	2.7	3.7	11
6.	Bongaigaon	5.5	5.1	6	6.1	4.9	7
7.	Dhemaji	4.3	5.0	7	1.7	3.4	12
8.	Darrang	4.6	4.5	8	1.4	2.1	17
9.	Sonitpur	4.4	4.5	8	9.7	7.6	3
10.	Kamrup	4.3	4.2	9	1.3	1.6	19
11.	Nalbari	5.6	4.2	9	6.4	5.2	6
12.	Barpeta	4.3	4.1	10	1.8	2.1	17
13.	Tinsukia	3.2	4.1	10	1.8	4.0	10
14.	Golaghat	4.3	3.8	11	3.8	3.2	13
15.	Hailakandi	3.8	3.7	12	3.3	2.5	16
16.	Sibsagar	3.2	3.7	12	1.6	2.0	18
17.	Morigaon	3.4	3.6	13	1.9	2.7	15
18.	Kokrajhar	4.0	3.5	14	2.5	2.1	17
19.	Jorhat	3.3	2.6	15	5.5	4.7	8
20.	Karbi Anglong	3.0	2.6	15	3.5	3.7	11
21.	Karimganj	6.5	2.5	16	7.4	3.4	12
22.	Cachar	2.3	2.5	16	3.4	3.1	14
23.	NCHs	1.0	1.2	17	13.2	6.2	5
Assam		100	100		100	100	

Source: Census of India, 2001.

3.10 Urban-Rural Child Workers in Assam

A majority of child workers in Assam, i.e., around 90 percent, lived in the rural areas (Table 3.9) during the census decade between 1991 and 2001 and there was no considerable change during this period in the composition of male and female child workers in urban and rural areas of the State. A slight increase in the percentage of urban male child workers was recorded from 11.3 to 13.8 during this period while the share of urban girl workers increased marginally from 5.8 to 5.9 percent. In 2001, in the total urban child workers, the share of male and female children were 63.7% and 36.3% respectively and in the total rural child workers, their share was almost half, i.e., 42% and 58% respectively. The share of girl workers in the total workers of urban and rural areas increased during this period. However, this increase was marginal in urban areas by just 3.0 percent (from 33.3% to 36.3%) and in rural areas it increased by 7.0 percent (from 51.0% to 58.0%).

Table 3.9

Region-Wise Distribution of Main Child Workers in Assam, 1991-2001

Region	1991					2001				
	Male	%	Female	%	Total	Male	%	Female	%	Total
Urban	66.7	11.3	33.3	5.8	100	63.7	13.8	36.3	5.9	100
Rural	49.0	88.7	51.0	94.2	100	42.0	86.2	58.0	94.1	100
Total	50.5	100	49.5	100	100	44.6	100	55.4	100	100

Source: Compiled from the Census Data 2001 & 1991.

The above analysis reveals that not only a very large component of girl workers (above 94%) lived in the rural areas, but also their percentage share in the total rural child workers registered an increasing trend during the census period of 1991 and 2001.

3.11 Marginal Workers in Assam

The concept of marginal workers was introduced in 1981 census. It was thought that under the Indian conditions the enquiry relating to the usual status of workers was more appropriate than the current status. The economic question of the 1981 census was thus formulated in order to first divide the population into those who had worked at any time during the year preceding the census year and those who had not worked at all during the year. The latter were termed as non-workers. Having classified the population into those two broad groups, an attempt was made further to sub-divide those who had worked in some economic activity for the major part of the year, and marginal workers i.e., those who had worked for some time during the last part, but not worked for the major part of the year. Thus a three-fold classification of workers into a mutually exclusive groups of main workers, marginal workers and non-workers was introduced in 1981 census. The same classification was continued for 2001 census also.

In 2001, the total child workers in Assam were 3,51,416 of whom 2,62,615 were main workers and 88,801 were marginal workers. Together they constituted about 10.0 percent of total population (of the age group of 5-14 years) in Assam. While in the main workers, the girl's share was 55.4% in the marginal workers, they constituted a considerable share i.e., more than 25 percent. Though the component of marginal workers in the total child workers was only 2.6 percent, it's significance for women and girl workers who worked on part-time combining household chores in mitigating the household poverty was worth noticing.

Table 3.10

District-Wise Distribution of Marginal Child Workers in Assam, 2001

Sl. No.	District	Rural			Urban		
		% Share of Male Child Workers	% Share of Female Child Workers	Rank in the Share of Girl Workers	% Share of Male Child Workers	% Share of Female Child Workers	Rank in the Share of Girl Workers
1.	Bongaigaon	4.2	7.5	1	2.5	6.0	6
2.	Golaghat	7.2	6.6	2	8.6	6.1	5
3.	Morigaon	6.2	6.3	3	8.1	4.2	11
4.	Kokrajhar	6.1	5.6	4	1.6	3.5	14
5.	Dibrugarh	7.0	5.6	4	4.9	8.2	1
6.	Dhemaji	5.6	5.5	5	3.8	4.7	9
7.	Darrang	3.7	5.4	6	0.5	0.6	21
8.	Hailakandi	3.9	5.3	7	5.4	3.2	15
9.	Cachar	2.2	5.0	8	0	5.3	8
10.	Goalpara	3.5	4.8	9	3.2	4.1	12
11.	Karbi Angong	4.5	4.7	10	3.2	4.4	10
12.	Dhubri	3.4	4.5	11	2.2	1.8	18
13.	Nalbari	6.5	4.0	12	8.9	7.3	2
14.	Barpeta	7.3	3.7	13	3.1	0.9	20
15.	Sibsagar	3.5	3.5	14	2.7	3.8	13
16.	Karimganj	5.2	3.5	14	8.1	6.4	4
17.	Sonitpur	5.1	3.4	15	4.5	5.9	7
18.	Nagaon	2.6	3.3	16	1.6	3.5	14
19.	Lakhimpur	3.0	3.3	16	5.4	7.0	3
20.	Tinsukia	2.8	2.3	17	2.2	2.6	16
21.	Kamrup	2.9	2.2	18	17.3	7.0	3
22.	Jorhat	2.1	2.1	19	1.1	2.0	17
23.	NCHs	2.0	1.7	20	1.1	1.5	19
	Assam	100	100	-	100	100	-

Source: Census of India, 2001.

The details of the share of child workers in each district in the total marginal child workers of the State are presented in Table 3.10. It can be noted from table that Dibrugarh district had the largest share of urban marginal girl workers (8.2%) in 2001. In the rural areas, Bongaigaon, Golaghat, Morigaon, Kokrajhar and Dibrugarh ranked 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th in the concentration of marginal girl child workers in the State.

Table 3.11

Rural-Urban Distribution of Marginal Child Workers in Assam, 1991-2001

Region	1991					2001				
	Male	%	Female	%	Total	Male	%	Female	%	Total
Urban	31.5	5.4	68.5	3.2	100	35.2	6.3	64.8	3.6	100
Rural	21.1	94.6	78.9	96.8	100	23.3	93.7	76.6	96.4	100
Total	21.5	100	78.5	100	100	23.8	100	76.2	100	100

Source: Compiled from the Census Data 2001 & 1991.

During the census decade of 1991-2001, there was no change in the regional composition of marginal child workers in Assam. As revealed by Table 3.11, around 94 percent of boy workers and 96 percent of girl workers were reported to be living in rural areas of Assam in 2001. Within the region, girls predominately constituted marginal workers. While in the urban areas girls constituted 64.8 percent of total marginal workers, in the rural areas their share was 76.7 percent in 2001. In the rural and urban areas, girls normally worked on a part-time basis, as they were obliged to share household chores also, unlike boys. This was the main reason for the higher share of girls in the total marginal workers.

3.12 Work Participation Rates

The measurement of economic activity of the people had been attempted in every census of the country though there has been variation in the concepts adopted from time to time. The classification of the population as workers and non-workers based on the concept of work was introduced in 1961 census. In 1971 census, the main activity (how one engaged oneself mostly) of the people was enquired into, and based on this information, population was divided into two broad streams of main activity as workers and non-workers. The 1971 census registered a sharp decline in the work participation rate defined as the percentage of workers among population, as compared with the 1961 census. As already mentioned above (in section 3.11), the concept of work was again divided into two parts as main work and marginal work in 1991 census and this classification was continued in the 2001 census also. For all practical purposes, however, the main activity of the people termed as main workers was taken into consideration.

Table 3.12
Work Participation Rates by the Children in Assam

Census Year	Rural			Urban			All		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
A. Percentage of Child Workers to Child Population(5-14)									
1991	11.0	12.0	11.5	3.9	2.1	3.0	5.0	6.0	5.5
2001	8.2	10.5	9.4	3.0	2.0	2.5	4.6	5.7	5.1
B. Percentage of Child Workers to Total Workers									
1991	7.5	10.6	8.6	2.9	6.5	3.5	3.2	5.2	4.2
2001	4.9	8.1	6.1	2.0	4.5	2.4	2.8	4.8	3.8

Source: Compiled from the Census Data 2001 & 1991.

The figures from 1991 census were taken to compare the trends, which occurred in the work participation of children during the period 1991-2001. Details of work participation rates of the children in Assam are presented in Table 3.12. The figures of child workers as a proportion to child population show that while 11.5 percent of child workers were concentrated in rural areas, only 3.0 percent were in urban areas in 1991. There was a drastic decline in the participation rate in 2001. The rural participation rate declined from 11.5 to 9.4 and urban participation from 3.0 to 2.5. An important point regarding girl workers is that while the proportion of girl workers to total girl population was less than that of boys, the proportion of girl workers to total female workers was more as compared to that of boy workers. There was a steep decline in the proportion of rural boy workers from 7.5 to 4.9 percent during the census periods from 1991 to 2001. However, in the case of girl workers the decline during the same of census period (1991 to 2001) was also nominal from 10.6 to 8.1 percent. This explains the nature of immobility of girl workers in rural areas.

3.13 Industrial Activity of Child Labour in Assam

For an analysis of the employment into various activities in the economy, this sector uses the occupational classification adopted by the Census of India. Agricultural sector occupies the important place in providing employment to rural labour force in India. In urban areas, household industry provides a sizeable variety of employment to girl workers whereas for boy workers, manufacturing other than household industry, trade and commerce provides relatively more employment. Other activities such as quarrying, transport and communication have not been attributed much significance either as providers of income or employment to child workers in both urban and rural regions. In view of the significance of industrial activities in providing employment to workers in the country, it appears that 2001 Census classified all industrial activities into four groups. For the analysis and comparison of the trends which occurred in the composition of child workers in the employment from 1971 to 2001, the industrial activities classified in the census prior to 2001 have

been adjusted for the purpose of the present study to match them with those of 2001 census.

The particulars of the percentage share of child workers in the total workers in Assam as classified into four broad industrial groups during the census period of 1971-2001 are presented in Table 3.13. As per the table, while there was a gradual decline in the percentage of boy workers in the household industry from 4.7 in 1971 to 4.3 in 1981, while the decline in the girl workers' percentage was only nominal from 14.6 percent in 1971 to 14.0 in 1981. In the subsequent census years, much change was not registered and in 2001, the percentage of boy and girl workers in household industry was 2.1 and 9.2 respectively. In the case of "other workers" the boy workers recorded a decline by 6.6 percent during 1971 to 2001 (i.e., 8.6 to 2.0), whereas the corresponding decline in girl workers was only 6.3 percent (i.e., 11.5 to 5.2) during the same period. In all the industrial categories mentioned in the table, the decline in the proportion of boy workers in the total male workers was apparently more than that of girl workers during the 30 years of census period i.e., from 1971 to 2001.

Table 3.13

Industrial Classification of Child Labour in Assam, 1991-2001

Industrial Group	Industrial Activity	A. Percentage of Child Workers to Total Workers							
		Male				Female			
		1971	1981	1991	2001	1971	1981	1991	2001
I	Cultivators	5.4	4.7	3.0	2.5	8.5	8.0	5.8	5.2
II	Agricultural Labourers	12.2	11.6	7.2	6.7	11.6	11.2	8.5	7.5
Va	Workers engaged in Household Industry	4.7	4.3	2.8	2.1	14.6	14.0	10.7	9.2
III,IV,V,VI-IX	Other Workers	8.6	4.9	2.7	2.0	11.5	9.1	6.2	5.1
Total		8.2	6.6	4.2	3.5	11.1	10.3	7.7	6.5

Industrial Group	Industrial Activity	1971	1981	1991	2001	1971	1981	1991	2001
		B. Percentage Share of Child Workers in each Industrial Activity to the Total Child Workers							
		Male				Female			
I	Cultivators	24.5	26.4	22.2	19.6	14.9	18.4	16.9	15.2
II	Agricultural Labourers	41.1	46.8	52.5	58.1	65.8	63.9	66.4	69.4
Va	Workers Engaged in Household Industry	2.9	3.0	1.8	1.1	5.7	7.0	6.4	5.8
III,IV,V, VI-IX	Other Workers	31.4	23.8	23.4	21.2	13.6	10.6	10.3	9.6
Total		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Compiled from the Census Data 2001 to 1971.

Data pertaining to the percentage share of child workers in each industrial activity are also presented in the same table (i.e., 3.13). It can be noted from the table that girl cultivators had increased from 14.9 percent to 18.4 percent during 1971 and 1981, while the proportion of the girls as agricultural labourers had declined considerably from 65.8 percent to 63.9 percent during the same period. In 2001, the percentage share of girl workers as cultivators and agricultural labourers were 15.2 and 69.4 respectively. In respect of the boy workers, the percentage share as cultivators had declined from 24.5 in 1971 to 19.6 in 2001, and as agricultural labourers, it increased from 41.1% in 1971 to 58.1% in 2001. In the household industry, though the girl percentage in the total female workers was more than nine percent (9.2%) in 2001, their share in total girl workers was only 5.8%. In other words, household industry as a provider of employment to girl workers was not significant as compared to the agricultural sector, which provided 84.6 percent of employment to girl workers in 2001.

3.14 Concentration of Girl Workers in Agriculture

Since 94 percent of child workers in Assam were living in the rural areas, it was necessary to identify the activity in which they were mostly engaged. In all the districts of Assam, the largest and second largest working children groups were invariably engaged in the agricultural sector either as agricultural labourers or as cultivators, in 2001. There was however one exception. In Tinsukia district, the first largest group of working children were girls (12,250) and they were engaged in the last category of "other workers" which obviously includes manufacturing, processing and servicing activities in the sectors other than household work.

Table 3.14

Concentration of Girl Workers in Agricultural Activity of Rural Sector in Top 10 Districts of Assam, 2001

Sl. No.	District	% in Total Girl Workers	% in Total Child Workers
1.	Sonitpur	89.4	47.3
2.	Lakhimpur	88.1	49.2
3.	Nalbari	84.9	36.5
4.	Barpeta	84.7	42.5
5.	Nagaon	80.8	42.1
6.	Goalpara	79.9	45.9
7.	Kokrajhar	79.4	39.3
8.	Dibrugarh	75.8	40.1
9.	Dhubri	74.1	36.6
10.	Dhemaji	73.6	40.2
Assam		69.3	42.8

Source: Census of India, 2001.

Keeping the intensity of girls engaged in rural agricultural sector in view, their percentages were calculated for the top 10 districts of Assam as presented in the Table 3.14. The table reveals that in Sonitpur district, 89.4 percent of total girl workers were engaged as agricultural labourers and this percentage as calculated in the total child workers (male + female) was 47.3. The first five districts, which far exceeded the State average of 69.3 percent in employing girls as agricultural labourers were Sonitpur (89.4%), Lakhimpur (88.1%), Nalbari (84.9%), Barpeta (84.7%) and Nagaon (80.8%) districts. Illiteracy, backwardness, requirement of cheap labour in a variety of agricultural operations pulls the innocent girls into the poorly paid rural agricultural sector.

3.15 Child Education in the Districts of Assam

In Assam, nearly 51% children (57% of rural children and 34% of urban children) in the age group of 5-14 years were not attending school. The 2001 census shows that 82.4% children live in the rural areas. Over 20% of these children were full time workers. However, the marginal workers and non-workers who were not attending school were either actively or passively employed with or without wages. Although there is no clear basis to include all of them who did not attend school as child labourers, they still fall into the category of potential child labourers.

Level of education or attendance of children in school and child labour usually go in the opposite direction. Data relevant to this variable are presented in Table 3.16. As already observed earlier, while Dhubri and Nagaon districts were the worst affected districts of child labour in both rural and urban areas. Jorhat and Sibsagar districts had relatively smaller number of child workers in Assam. The Table 3.15 shows that in Jorhat district 58.1% of rural children were attending school as compared to just 27.8% in Dhubri district. Only 21.1% of the rural girls in Dhubri were attending school, which was far less than the State average of 34.0%. There were wide variations in the rate of children's school attendance across the districts and between rural and urban areas. Girls were less likely to be in school as compared to boys. The

gender gap as noticed in the earlier tables of all India figures tends to be wider in rural areas. In rural Sibsagar, for example, 65.3% of boys and only 39.9% of girls were attending school.

In urban areas, Kamrup ranked 1st in both the genders with 80.1% of boys and 70.9% of girls attending school. Even, Kokrajhar, the capital city of BTAD, could not record such a high rate of school attendance as witnessed in Kamrup. In Kokrajhar 68.1% of boys, just above the State average by 1.2% (State average being 69.3%) and 59.2% of girls above the State average by 3.9% (State average being 63.1%) were attending school. The gender gap in Kokrajhar, however, was the lowest, which obviously reveals the sign of development due to urbanization.

3.16 Child Labour and their Educational Levels in Assam

Child workers in Assam were grouped according to their levels of education. Table 3.16 presents a detailed account of child workers in both rural and urban areas in the State between 1991 and 2001. The second category, "Literates without educational level" in 1991 census was termed as "below primary level" in 2001 census.

Table 3.15

District-Wise Percentage of Children (5-14 years) Attending School in Assam, 2001

Sl. No.	District	Rural			Urban		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1.	Jorhat	68.4	46.8	58.1	73.2	67.3	70.6
2.	Sibsagar	65.3	39.9	53.1	71.2	60.6	66.2
3.	Darrang	54.3	48.1	51.2	66.7	62.8	64.8
4.	Barpeta	55.5	45.6	50.6	69.3	64.9	67.1
5.	Bongaigaon	55.7	40.2	48.2	71.1	66.1	68.6
6.	Dibrugarh	53.5	39.9	46.9	65.3	58.3	61.9
7.	Goalpara	57.3	33.2	45.4	78.5	66.1	72.5
8.	Tinsukia	54.6	35.0	45.1	69.2	63.8	66.6
9.	Morigaon	47.2	41.8	44.5	62.8	58.5	60.9
10.	Kamrup	54.6	33.4	44.2	80.1	70.9	75.7
11.	Nalbari	52.5	34.2	43.5	69.2	60.0	64.8
12.	Kokrajhar	49.9	34.5	42.5	68.1	59.2	63.4
13.	Lakhimpur	52.7	30.5	42.0	63.7	54.6	59.2
14.	Dhemaji	51.3	31.4	41.7	73.6	66.1	69.9
15.	Golaghat	48.2	31.6	40.1	69.0	59.9	64.5
16.	NCHs	51.6	29.5	39.2	69.4	64.9	67.1
17.	Hailakandi	47.2	30.3	39.0	71.8	64.8	68.4
18.	Sonitpur	46.2	26.7	36.7	64.0	57.7	61.0
19.	Karbi Anglong	46.4	25.5	36.2	68.4	58.7	63.6
20.	Cachar	42.2	23.1	33.0	69.3	62.8	66.2
21.	Karimganj	40.5	22.9	32.0	60.2	50.9	55.7
22.	Nagaon	36.8	20.2	28.7	70.4	60.8	65.6
23.	Dhubri	34.5	21.1	27.8	70.5	68.6	69.6
Assam		51.2	34.0	43.0	69.3	63.1	66.3

Source: Census of India, 2001.

Table 3.16

Educational Levels of Rural and Urban Child Labour in Assam, 1991-2001

Educational Level	Urban				Rural			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	1991	2001	1991	2001	1991	2001	1991	2001
Illiterates	70.04	62.21	88.37	78.95	85.6	77.26	93.65	86.54
Literates Without edu. Level*	8.96	15.51	4.02	10.05	5.59	10.15	2.46	6.37
Primary	16.79	19.09	6.27	9.45	7.76	11.02	3.54	6.46
Middle	3.88	2.69	1.25	1.37	0.99	1.40	0.33	0.55
Matriculation/ Secondary	0.29	0.42	0.09	0.14	0.05	0.15	0.02	0.06
Higher Secondary Inter/Pre-University	0.03	0.06	-	0.05	0.01	0.02	-	0.02
Non-technical Diploma/ Certificate not Equal to degree	0.01	0.01	-	-	-	0.01	-	0.01
Technical Diploma/ Certificate not Equal to degree	-	0.01	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Workers	100							

Source: Census of India, 2001 & 1991.

*Below primary in 2001 census.

As revealed in Table 3.16, there was a gradual decline in the category of illiterate child workers over the period of 10 years i.e., 1991 to 2001. In 2001, 77% of male child workers and 86% of female child workers in the rural areas were illiterate. In 2001, among urban child workers in Assam, 62% of male child workers and 79% of girl child workers were illiterate. The percentage of girl child workers who completed primary schooling increased from 6.3% to 9.5% in urban areas and from 3.5% to 6.5% in rural areas during the period. There was a considerable increase in the urban girl child workers who were literate without any educational level or who were below primary level from just 4% to 10% over the decade from 1991 to 2001. However, the percentage of girl workers who completed middle school level was very negligible, being 0.55% in rural and 1.37% in urban areas, in 2001.

3.17 Child Labour – Combining Work with School

It was a common phenomenon for child workers to combine work with other unpaid regular activities like attending household chores, looking after siblings, helping elders in a variety of agricultural related operations and also in cottage industries. It was difficult to enumerate as to how many child workers were engaged in unpaid activities at home. However, the census authorities could enumerate the child workers who combined work with attending school. The percentage of such child workers was very low. Table 3.17 presents the data relating to percentages of child workers attending school to total child workers as well as their percentage share of main and marginal workers in the total student workers. In 1991, the proportion of children attending school was just 0.47%. In 2001, this percentage rose slightly by 1.11. The increase in the percentage of marginal workers attending school during the period was 6.54 i.e., from 16.37% to 22.91%. In the case of girl workers, their proportion as students was still low. In 1991, only 0.2% of girls were attending school, and this percentage rose to 0.6% in 2001. The percentage of marginal girl workers attending school increased from 1.55 in 1991 to 4.56 in 2001, an increase of just about 3.01% much below the increase of marginal boy workers attending school (i.e., 6.54%).

Table 3.17

**Proportion of Child Workers Attending School in Assam, 1991-2001
(Combining School with Work)**

Area	A. Proportion of Student Child Workers to Total Child Workers											
	Male						Female					
	1991			2001			1991			2001		
	Main	Marginal	Total	Main	Marginal	Total	Main	Marginal	Total	Main	Marginal	Total
Urban	0.48	9.68	0.7	1.57	24.55	2.05	0.31	2.17	0.51	0.77	15.8	1.86
Rural	0.47	16.76	1.14	1.05	22.8	1.89	0.19	1.53	0.43	0.59	4.14	0.99
Total	0.47	16.37	1.1	1.11	22.91	1.91	0.2	1.55	0.43	0.6	4.56	1.04
	B. Percentage share of Child Workers attending school											
Urban	66.6	33.4	100	75.2	24.8	100	54.4	45.6	100	38.6	61.4	100
Rural	31.2	60.8	100	53.4	46.6	100	36.3	63.7	100	52.6	47.4	100
Total	40.8	59.2	100	60.0	40.0	100	37.4	62.6	100	51.2	48.8	100

Source: Census of India, 2001 & 1991.

The details of the percentage share of child workers attending school in the total student workers are also presented in the Table 3.17. In 1991, the numbers of child workers attending schools were higher among main workers in urban areas and among marginal workers in rural areas of both boys and girls, than their counterparts. However in 2001, for boys, it was main workers in both regions, urban as well as rural, who were attending schools more than their counterparts. During the period 1991-2001, their percentage increased by 8.6 (i.e., from 66.6% to 75.2%) in urban and by 22.2 (i.e., from 31.2% to 53.4%) in rural areas. For girls, their percentage in marginal workers increased by 15.8% (i.e., from 45.6% to 61.4%) in urban areas and in rural areas, the percentage of main workers increased by 16.3% (i.e., from 36.3% to 52.6%) during the same period.

3.18 Enrolment and Drop-Out Rates

Table 3.18 shows that over 41% of all children dropped out of the schools in the I-V Class levels in Assam in the year 2002-03. If the dropout rates of those in I to VII classes were considered, well over 70% of children left the school. About 72% of girls were out of schools before completing Class VII. While Karbi Anglong and Cachar districts topped the list of all the districts in the dropout rates of children between I-V Class levels of education, Kokrajhar and Dhemaji districts topped in the dropout rates of children between I-VII Class levels. That means, in Kokrajhar and Dhemaji districts, the dropout rates at the middle level (V-VII Classes) were considerably higher than the dropout rates in the primary school level (I-V Classes).

The dropout rates of girls were always more than those of boys except in Dhemaji and Sibsagar districts where girl dropout rates were far less than boys in I-V Class level. Even in Kamrup, the capital city of Assam, the dropout rate of girls was higher with 22.3% than that of boys with 19.9% in I-V Class level, and in I-VII Class level, the dropout rates of girls and boys were 36.7% and 29.7% respectively. However, these dropout rates in Kamrup were far less than the State average rates.

Table 3.18
District-Wise Dropout Rates for the Year 2002-03

Sl. No.	District	I-V Classes			I-VII Classes		
		Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
1.	Karbi Anglong	65.0	68.9	66.5	71.4	70.2	70.9
2.	Cachar	65.0	69.2	65.6	52.1	67.7	58.2
3.	Sonitpur	64.1	66.8	65.3	69.8	78.0	72.1
4.	Hailakandi	62.7	65.3	63.8	69.6	73.6	71.3
5.	NCHs	59.3	63.9	61.3	62.5	63.4	62.8
6.	Nagaon	58.3	62.9	60.4	65.1	76.9	70.5
7.	Barpeta	59.1	60.7	59.8	68.8	74.4	71.4
8.	Dhubri	60.7	56.9	59.1	68.1	69.7	68.8
9.	Lakhimpur	53.3	59.8	56.3	67.8	76.2	71.6
10.	Karimganj	50.2	65.2	55.9	41.3	65.8	51.0
11.	Morigaon	49.4	37.4	53.1	61.5	76.5	68.2
12.	Goalpara	52.1	53.2	52.6	55.8	65.5	60.1
13.	Dhemaji	54.2	19.7	52.3	69.4	79.2	74.0
14.	Darrang	53.5	50.2	52.2	58.8	73.6	65.4
15.	Kokrajhar	52.1	52.0	52.1	77.2	75.3	76.5
16.	Nalbari	49.7	53.2	51.4	61.8	65.5	63.6
17.	Bongaigaon	44.8	57.9	51.0	45.6	53.1	49.3
18.	Golaghat	47.4	51.4	49.0	54.6	69.7	60.9
19.	Jorhat	45.6	51.1	48.1	49.6	64.9	56.7
20.	Dibrugarh	36.8	40.0	38.4	57.6	65.0	61.3
21.	Tinsukia	33.9	34.0	33.9	66.3	72.6	69.0
22.	Sibsagar	28.9	9.9	22.6	50.8	58.6	53.9
23.	Kamrup	19.9	22.3	21.1	29.7	36.7	33.3
	Assam	40.9	42.4	41.6	68.3	72.3	70.3

Source: Child Labour in Assam-A Profile, Department of Labour and Women's Development & Child Welfare, Govt. of Assam with UNICEF Collaboration, 2003.

3.19 Elementary Education and Government Expenditure

It would be appropriate at this point to examine the status of Assam in the field of education. The Government of Assam, like all the other States and Union Territories of India, aimed at the removal of illiteracy and universalization of elementary education. Indeed Article 45 of the Constitution of India enjoins that the State should strive to provide within a period of ten years from the commencement of the Constitution (in 1950) free and compulsory education to all the children upto the age of 14 years. In order to achieve universalization of elementary education, the Government of Assam has been increasing its expenditure on education.

Table 3.19 furnishes data on the per capita expenditure of selected large States in India. From the table, it can be seen that Assam had steadily moved up from 5th rank in 1980-81 to 8th rank in 1989-90 in per capita expenditure on education in India. However, the per capita expenditure of Rs. 199 was still far below that of States like Punjab, Harayana and Kerala and also it was less than the national average of Rs. 245. Kerala, where school attendance of the children (5-14) was more than 85% and child labour was below 1%, was assigned 1st rank in the per capita expenditure on education during 1980-81 and 1989-90.

Table 3.19

Per Capita State Government Expenditure on Education (in Rupees)

Sl. No.	State	2001-02	1989-90	1980-81
1.	Punjab	890	130(2)	83(2)
2.	Harayana	687	105(6)	57(4)
3.	Kerala	658	153(1)	85(1)
4.	Uttar Pradesh	320	64(15)	32(15)
5.	Rajasthan	316	84(11)	43(11)
6.	Tamilnadu	267	107(5)	50(7)
7.	Maharashtra	266	114(4)	61(3)
8.	West Bengal	245	89(10)	45(9)
9.	Andhra Pradesh	234	92(9)	43(10)
10.	Bihar	230	69(13)	34(13)
11.	Orissa	199	72(12)	41(12)
12.	Assam	199	99(8)	54(5)
13.	Madhay Pradesh	193	67(14)	33(14)
14.	Gujarat	172	126(3)	53(6)
15.	Karnataka	132	103(7)	47(8)
All India		245	90	47

Source: The Financial Express, September, 2004.

Data from the Human Development Report 2005 (Table 3.20) shows that India spent much less on education than East Asian Countries such as Korea, Thailand Malaysia. These countries also allocated a higher share of budgetary resources to education than India, and the share of primary and secondary education in total spending on education was also higher in these countries.

Table 3.20
Public Expenditure on Education

Sl. No.	Country	Education (as % of GNP), 2001	Education (as % of Total Govt. Expenditure), 1999-01	Primary and Secondary Education (as % of all Levels), 2001
1.	Kenya	7.4	16.1	102
2.	Egypt	5.6	13.8	84
3.	Malayasia	5.3	15.5	96
4.	Thailand	4.2	20.1	93
5.	Iran	4.0	17.8	83
6.	Korea	3.7	17.4	99
7.	India	4.1	12.7	85
8.	Sri Lanka	3.1	8.1	93
9.	China	2.3	12.2	87
10.	Bangladesh	2.3	8.7	108

Source: Human Development Report, 2005.

With the introduction of economic reforms in India since 1991-92, the total expenditure on education was gradually reduced. The expenditure on elementary education was, however, maintained in the first few years of the reforms. In recent years, actual spending on social sectors was much lower than budgeted expenditure. In 1997-98, for example, the Central Government budgeted for an expenditure of Rs. 25,431 million on elementary education but the revised estimates showed an expenditure of Rs. 22,668 million only. So the Government failed even to spend the amount that had been allocated in the budget. In terms of the share of total plan outlay by the Central Government, the share of education fell after 1990-91 and recovered only in 1995-96.

Thus, it may be concluded that child labour is a complex phenomenon and it requires complementary strategies, one of which is compulsory elementary education. The impressive literacy rate in Kerala enabled the State to achieve the set goals in the sphere of health and of demographic change. The proportion of total expenditure spent on education in Kerala was higher than the corresponding proportion spent by other States, and most primary school children go to State run or State supported schools in Kerala.

The spread of education is the important factor that would eliminate the child labour in the long run. It is crucial and relatively easier to implement the policy of universal elementary education rather than enforcing laws that regulate the use of child labour.