

Share of Child Labour in India's Growth Story

By

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Over the past ten years of about 8% pa GDP growth, there has been widespread talk of India's Demographic Dividend (share of population in 15-60 age group) arising out of the young average age of India's population. The theory is that the smaller the share of population in the below 15 and above 60 the greater the contribution of the productive population to GDP growth. Among the propagators of the India Demographic Dividend story are Dr Manmohan Singh, Hon'ble Prime Minister and many notable figures around the world. Many present the story as though the demographic contours of India have been carefully sculpted through policy, management and governance. Far from it, India has a history of ignoring demographic trends and not preparing for it.

The 2001 census threw up the figures that children under 18 accounted for almost 43% of India's population- about 450 million. Yet, in spite of the first UPA government manifesto of a commitment of 9% of annual Union budget for children, even as of 2011, a little more than 4% is allocated towards children. In this gap between the needs of the world's largest children's population and (amongst) the world's lowest per child budgets that is allocated in India is the story of Indian Children's contribution to the GDP. The story of Child Labour in India.

The story is best unfolded by an examination of the Census data on child Labour.

The Census data for child Labour has traditionally been presented as children upto 14 years:

| year | Child Labour as reported by Census |
|------|------------------------------------|
| 1971 | 10753985 |
| 1981 | 13640870 |
| 1991 | 11285349 |
| 2001 | 12666377 |

This figure of 12.67 million as child labour has been widely reported. As can be seen in the period from 1971 to 1991 the child Labour figure was seen as declining. Economic liberalisation commenced in 1991.

The dept of Census, Govt of India has just published provisional census data for the Census of 2010 (<http://censusindia.gov.in/2011-common/censusdataonline.html>).

Once again the age wise data reported by the Census is 5-9 yrs, 10-14 yrs and 15-19 years. Since the Juvenile Justice Act, 2000 has pegged the age of children, in line with international conventions, at 18, we can no longer overlook the population of working children in the age group of 15-18. However, the Census does not show this breakup.

Population of **Main workers** in Census, 2010:

| All India Main Workers | Male | Female | Total |
|---|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 5-9 yrs | 501890 | 308209 | 810099 |
| 10-14 yrs | 3070300 | 1858116 | 4928416 |
| 15-19 yrs | 15098122 | 5448644 | 20546766 |
| Total India | 18670312 | 7614969 | 26285281 |
| % of child labour to total workforce | 7.78% | 10.47% | 8.41% |
| Total workforce (all ages) | 239923441 | 72708941 | 312632382 |

As can be seen in the table above, children upto 14 total

The Census also reports population of children in **Marginal workers** of India:

| All India Marginal Workers | Male | Female | Total |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 5-9 yrs | 495494 | 534927 | 1030421 |
| 10-14 yrs | 2711397 | 3146172 | 5857569 |
| 15-19 yrs | 5821090 | 5929351 | 11750441 |
| Total India | 9027981 | 9610450 | 18638431 |
| % to total workforce | 25.90% | 17.67% | 20.89% |
| Total workforce (all ages) | 34859808 | 54374298 | 89234106 |

Lets us see the picture when both Main workers and Marginal workers are combined:

| All India Total Workforce | Male | Female | Total |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 5-9 yrs | 997384 | 843136 | 1840520 |
| 10-14 yrs | 5781697 | 5004288 | 10785985 |
| 15-19 yrs | 20919212 | 11377995 | 32297207 |
| Total India | 27698293 | 17225419 | 44923712 |
| % to total workforce | 10.08% | 13.55% | 11.18% |
| Total workforce (all ages) | 274783249 | 127083239 | 401866488 |

If you take the children upto 14 the total number of children in the workforce is 12626505. Almost the same as previous census of 2001. The real picture emerges when you start adding the child work force in the ages 15-19. One could argue that 19 year olds ought to be excluded from the calculation of child Labourers. However the Census does not , as yet provide that data . However, if we consider the following:

Literacy level of workforce in 15-19 yrs

| | | Male | Female | Total |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| | | 15-19 yrs | 15-19 yrs | 15-19 yrs |
| Main workers | Urban | | | |
| | Literate | 738274 | 237927 | 976201 |
| | Illiterate | 2769859 | 503389 | 3273248 |
| | Literate below matric /secondary | 2007812 | 344226 | 2352038 |
| | Total Urban | 5515945 | 1085542 | 6601487 |
| | Rural | | | |
| Literate | 3440715 | 2343107 | 5783822 | |
| Illiterate | 8219134 | 2390011 | 10609145 | |
| Literate below matric /secondary | 6496471 | 1902774 | 8399245 | |
| Total Rural | 18156320 | 6635892 | 24792212 | |

The table shows that vast bulk of 15-19 yr olds have not completed 10th. So they have been in the workforce before they turned 18. For the sake of discussion we have to include this age group (15-19) in the workforce.

The shocking news is this:

11% of the workforce of india is child labour. One in every 10 workers in India is a child! If you allocate a tenth of India's GDP to this share you can see India's Child Labour has a stake in India's GDP.

We have done an detailed analysis of the various sectors presented in the Census data for both main and marginal workers (see table below). Clearly some sectors are more prone to child labour than others.

What can be done about Child Labour? In 1979, the Government appointed Gurupadswamy Committee studied the issue of child labour and observed that as long as poverty continued, it would be difficult to totally eliminate child labour and hence, any attempt to abolish it through legal recourse would not be a practical proposition. The Committee recommended a ban on child labour in hazardous areas and a multiple policy to deal with the problems of working children. Based on the recommendations of Gurupadaswamy Committee, the Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act was enacted in 1986. The Act prohibits employment of children in certain specified hazardous occupations and processes and regulates the working conditions in others.

Sectoral Child Labour (Census 2010)

| | 5-19 yrs | Total Urban | % to total urban workforce | Total urban workforce (all ages) | Total Rural | % to total rural workforce | Total Rural workforce (all ages) | Total India | % to total workforce | Total workforce (all ages) |
|---|----------|-------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------|----------------------|----------------------------|
| Cultivators | Male | 130764 | 6.74% | 1940647 | 7988550 | 9.57% | 83475851 | 8119314 | 9.51% | 85416498 |
| | Female | 66559 | 10.20% | 652457 | 5485489 | 13.30% | 41243896 | 5552048 | 13.25% | 41896353 |
| | Total | 197323 | 7.61% | 2593104 | 13474039 | 10.80% | 124719747 | 13671362 | 10.74% | 127312851 |
| Agricultural Labourers | Male | 298631 | 11.39% | 2622889 | 8842900 | 16.16% | 54706211 | 9141531 | 15.95% | 57329100 |
| | Female | 173494 | 10.08% | 1721223 | 7082393 | 14.84% | 47725007 | 7255887 | 14.67% | 49446230 |
| | Total | 472125 | 10.87% | 4344112 | 15925293 | 15.55% | 102431218 | 16397418 | 15.36% | 106775330 |
| Plantation, Livestock, Forestry, fishing hunting and allied activities | Male | 24739 | 1.78% | 1388815 | 1069456 | 16.61% | 6438608 | 1094195 | 13.98% | 7827423 |
| | Female | 16136 | 3.72% | 433949 | 773903 | 13.77% | 5620067 | 790039 | 13.05% | 6054016 |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--------|---------|--------|----------|---------|--------|----------|---------|--------|----------|
| | Total | 40875 | 2.24% | 1822764 | 1843359 | 15.29% | 12058675 | 1884234 | 13.57% | 13881439 |
| Mining and Quarrying | Male | 24362 | 2.99% | 814958 | 123388 | 9.81% | 1257991 | 147750 | 7.13% | 2072949 |
| | Female | 6626 | 8.33% | 79528 | 49777 | 16.36% | 304348 | 56403 | 14.69% | 383876 |
| | Total | 30988 | 3.46% | 894486 | 173165 | 11.08% | 1562339 | 204153 | 8.31% | 2456825 |
| Manufacturing (Household Industry) | Male | 336562 | 12.31% | 2734982 | 823630 | 13.72% | 6002209 | 1160192 | 13.28% | 8737191 |
| | Female | 318966 | 15.54% | 2052114 | 1122408 | 18.30% | 6133566 | 1441374 | 17.61% | 8185680 |
| | Total | 655528 | 13.69% | 4787096 | 1946038 | 16.04% | 12135775 | 2601566 | 15.37% | 16922871 |
| Manufacturing (Non Household Industry) | Male | 1233453 | 8.23% | 14987817 | 1168281 | 11.78% | 9918406 | 2401734 | 9.64% | 24906223 |
| | Female | 284905 | 13.76% | 2069796 | 513396 | 19.35% | 2653173 | 798301 | 16.90% | 4722969 |
| | Total | 1518358 | 8.90% | 17057613 | 1681677 | 13.38% | 12571579 | 3200035 | 10.80% | 29629192 |
| Electricity, gas and water supply | Male | 9737 | 1.19% | 817181 | 10301 | 1.63% | 630467 | 20038 | 1.38% | 1447648 |
| | Female | 901 | 1.59% | 56688 | 927 | 3.77% | 24598 | 1828 | 2.25% | 81286 |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--------|---------|--------|----------|---------|--------|----------|---------|--------|----------|
| | Total | 10638 | 1.22% | 873869 | 11228 | 1.71% | 655065 | 21866 | 1.43% | 1528934 |
| Construction | Male | 581967 | 8.72% | 6674908 | 690053 | 10.77% | 6407260 | 1272020 | 9.72% | 13082168 |
| | Female | 75758 | 9.28% | 816214 | 115301 | 15.18% | 759799 | 191059 | 12.12% | 1576013 |
| | Total | 657725 | 8.78% | 7491122 | 805354 | 11.24% | 7167059 | 1463079 | 9.98% | 14658181 |
| Wholesale and retail trade | Male | 1211519 | 7.37% | 16449379 | 880417 | 8.97% | 9816634 | 2091936 | 7.96% | 26266013 |
| | Female | 107560 | 8.41% | 1279139 | 133297 | 9.23% | 1444800 | 240857 | 8.84% | 2723939 |
| | Total | 1319079 | 7.44% | 17728518 | 1013714 | 9.00% | 11261434 | 2332793 | 8.05% | 28989952 |
| Hotels and restaurants | Male | 157180 | 10.00% | 1571329 | 133287 | 12.48% | 1067692 | 290467 | 11.01% | 2639021 |
| | Female | 6173 | 4.56% | 135278 | 8409 | 6.05% | 139034 | 14582 | 5.32% | 274312 |
| | Total | 163353 | 9.57% | 1706607 | 141696 | 11.74% | 1206726 | 305049 | 10.47% | 2913333 |
| transport storage and communications | Male | 282230 | 3.80% | 7433260 | 305514 | 5.85% | 5218254 | 587744 | 4.65% | 12651514 |
| | Female | 12315 | 4.15% | 296733 | 12777 | 9.45% | 135230 | 25092 | 5.81% | 431963 |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--------|--------|--------|----------|--------|--------|----------|---------|--------|----------|
| | Total | 294545 | 3.81% | 7729993 | 318291 | 5.95% | 5353484 | 612836 | 4.68% | 13083477 |
| Fuiancial intermediation, real estate renting and business activities | Male | 297808 | 5.04% | 5907615 | 285648 | 9.75% | 2929226 | 583456 | 6.60% | 8836841 |
| | Female | 126459 | 10.41% | 1214682 | 179400 | 15.63% | 1147581 | 305859 | 12.95% | 2362263 |
| | Total | 424267 | 5.96% | 7122297 | 465048 | 11.41% | 4076807 | 889315 | 7.94% | 11199104 |
| Public Administration and Defence, Compulsory Social Security, Education; Health and Social Work; Other Community, Social and Personal Service Activities; Private Households with Employed Persons; Extra-Territorial Organisations and Bodies | Male | 379473 | 2.99% | 12695856 | 408443 | 3.76% | 10874804 | 787916 | 3.34% | 23570660 |
| | Female | 278222 | 5.31% | 5243174 | 273868 | 7.40% | 3701165 | 552090 | 6.17% | 8944339 |
| | Total | 657695 | 3.67% | 17939030 | 682311 | 4.68% | 14575969 | 1340006 | 4.12% | 32514999 |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------|--------|---------|-------|----------|----------|--------|-----------|----------|--------|-----------|
| Total | Male | 4968425 | 6.53% | 76039636 | 22729868 | 11.44% | 198743613 | 27698293 | 10.08% | 274783249 |
| | Female | 1474074 | 9.18% | 16050975 | 15751345 | 14.19% | 111032264 | 17225419 | 13.55% | 127083239 |
| | Total | 6442499 | 7.00% | 92090611 | 38481213 | 12.42% | 309775877 | 44923712 | 11.18% | 401866488 |