Forced / Child Labor in spinning Mills in Dindigul District

There are around 176 spinning mills functioning in Dindigul district and approximately 90000 workers are employed in these mills, out of which 70% are women workers. Women are mostly employed under Sumangali / Camp labor schemes and were given accommodation in the hostels located within the factory premises.

Recently, it was observed through our field visits and interactions with community that children were engaged in spinning mills. School going children were trapped during the summer holidays and were forced to continue the employment, making them to get dropped out from school. TTCU and SSSSSS were informed that Shiva Mills (Unit of Bannari Amman I & II Group of Mills) had employed school going children. Based on the information, TTCU and SSSSSSS jointly made investigations and it was found that more than 60 children in the age group of 13 to 16 were working. These children were studying 7th / 8th standard and during summer holidays (May / June), they were taken to Shiva Mills by labor brokers. They were promised a daily wage of INR 220/- and worked for nearly two months. In June 2014, when the children wanted to leave the mill and to join the school to continue education, management did not allow them to leave, by withholding their wage. Mill management told them that they had to continue working to get the wage. During interaction with the children, they expressed their interest to continue schooling, but they were not able to receive their wage for the two months, they worked. Parents approached management and were informed that their children have to continue working to get wage.

TTCU and SSSSSS jointly filed petitions in Education Department to take appropriate action to ensure children continue their education and complaints were made with District Administration and Inspector of Factories. Subsequent to this, actions were taken and 18 children were released. We interacted with the children and came to know that around 75 Female and male children from Cuddalore, Villupuram,Tuchi,Tenj, Tanjavur districts were sent back to their homes. However none of these children have received their salary and efforts are taken to get the dues. UNICEF, National Child Labor Program (NCLP), SSA and Inspector of Factories are some of the institutions who had initiated action against the mill and taking up the issue seriously.

Savadaimuthu (Age – 14 yrs): He was studying 9th standard in Komperipatty Government Higher secondary school. Due to poor financial conditions, he went to work in Shiva Mills during summer holidays, hoping that with the salary he could buy school books and study materials. He was employed as Cleaner and had to work in night shift as well. He was beaten by the supervisors if the shop floor is not clean. He was abused verbally and no break is allowed during work hours. He said “there were around 100 boys and girls who were younger than me and some of them were staying in hostels”.

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Savadaimuthu said that he wanted to go to school, but the mill management was not giving his two month’s salary. His parents pressurized him to get the salary before going to school and he was forced to continue working.

Vijayakumar (Age – 14 yrs): After completing his 8th class in Komperipatty government school, he went to Shiva mills to make an earning during summer holidays. He was promised a monthly wage of INR 5720, but received only INR 1640/-.

My father is an alcoholic and gives no money to run the family. I went to Shiva Mills to support my family to some extent, but they betrayed me. They are not allowing me to go to school and forces me to continue working in their mill. “Now I hate working and love to continue my studies”, he added.

T.Sathy (Age – 14 yrs): I have completed 8th standard in Komperipatty government school and went to Shiva mills to earn during my summer holidays in May and June month. My father is sick and can not work and I thought my earning will help me in buying school note books when I join 9th standard. I want someone to help me to get my salary so that I can continue my schooling.

Balamani (Age – 14 yrs): I was forced to go to Shiva Mills during my summer holidays as my father is not supporting the family. I have an younger brother who is studying 5th standard and I want to help him. I worked in Shiva Mills because of family reasons, but I want to go to school.

After this issue was highlighted in the local newspapers, the staff team of TTCU and SSSSS had received anonymous phone calls and were threatened by unknown people. However major trade union like AITUC (Mr.Santhanam) had come forward to support our activities and to be part in our efforts to eliminate child labor and forced labor system in spinning mills in Dindigul district. On 09th July, there was a raid in Shiva Mills, by the Factory Inspector and we will update you with the developments. We also take this opportunity to thank you for your solidarity.

Below are some of the articles published in media about the incident and current trends in spinning mills in Dindigul region.

With Regards
Ms. S.Kavitha-President-TTCU(Tamilnadu Textile And Common Labour Union)
Ms. G.Flora Mary-President-SSSSS(Serene Secular Social Service Society)

Notes: TTCU is a women labour trade union
Fact Finding Photos

SSSSS-President-G. Flora Mary

TTCU-President - S.Kavitha

Child Labors in Spinning Mills
Indian Express Newspaper Clipings

Dindigul Mills ‘Harvest’ Child Workers in Crop Flop Areas

Textile Mills Now Target Schoolkids

Child Labors in Spinning Mills
Probe Confirms 22 School Dropouts Work at Siva Textiles

By Gokul Vannan

MADURA: After the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan last week probed the alleged exploitation of a few school dropouts in Dindigul by Siva Textiles, education officials have concluded that the mill has employed 22 dropouts from Komberipatty Government High School.

The educational officials from Dindigul had launched the inquiry after the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) wrote to Puja Kulkarni, State Project Officer, SSA, detailing that Siva Textiles in Velvakkottai in Dindigul district employed the children during holidays and later withheld their salaries to keep them employed.

“After we received a direction from our State Project Officer, we inspected Komberipatty Government High School records of the students. We were shocked to find that the 22 students were working at the mill,” P Murugan, Chief Education Officer, SSA, Dindigul, told Express.

After sending a detailed report to Puja Kulkarni, Murugan has also submitted a copy of the report to deputy labour officer requesting the students from the mill.

James Victor, secretary, Serene Secular Social Service (SSSS), an NGO that campaigns against the ‘Camp Coolie System’, had earlier submitted a fact-finding report to the UNICEF stating that nearly 18 students from Kampliyampathy village dropped out from the school because they were employed by the private mill. “We are happy to learn that the State government has reacted positively on this issue,” said a senior UNICEF officer requesting anonymity.

A senior Komberipatty Government High School teacher said that each year a minimum of 10 students from nearby villages would go to work in the textile mill.

“But this year as 22 students from Kampliyampathy village alone stopped coming, we called their parents for a meeting last month. The parents said that mill supervisors had withheld their children’s salary and forced them to work for one more month. Then we contacted S Kavitha, vice president of Pilathu panchayat and requested her to rescue those children from the mill,” the teacher said.

M A Britto, co-convener, the ‘Campaign Against Camp Coolie System’, Tirunelveli, said: “Our sample study on the ‘Camp Coolie System’ in Tirunelveli, Thoothukudi, Virudhunagar and Sivaganga districts two years ago found nearly 30 percent of children work in spinning and textile mills in Dindigul, Coimbatore and Tirupur.” “A decline in agriculture in rural areas of Tamil Nadu has deprived the people of agro-based employment opportunities. Hence, they send their children to work in mills,” Britto said. After rescuing the children from those mills, the government should also create employment opportunities for people in rural areas, he added.
Fear of Raid Frees Kids in Dindigul Mill

by Gokul Vannan

Dindigul: Fearing an imminent raid by government officials to check for child labour at spinning mills in Dindigul, a leading private textile mill in Vadalarmurug block clandestinely sent the children employed at their factory back home on Saturday night.

The mill management reportedly sent back nearly 100 children, including boys who stayed at a hostel owned by the factory, in a mill-owned vehicle to their respective hometowns. As many as 70 kids were from places such as Cuddalore, Theni and Tiruchy and were staying in the hostel.

The criteria that the mill management followed for allowing them to go was the height of the children. “The supervisor suddenly asked us to stop working and line up in the factory. Then he carefully checked the heights of each one of us and asked the short ones to leave the factory immediately,” said 16-year-old Siva (name changed) from Kollipalayamputty. However, the supervisor collected the addresses and numbers of their parents before they were let off, telling them to come back for work after a month.

Siva was among four others who are from the same village where the mill is situated and they were dropped in a car overnight.

“When we asked the supervisor why they were asking us to leave suddenly, he replied saying that the labour department officials are planning to conduct raids in our factory on Monday,” said Siva and his friends who seemed excited about going back to school.

The children also revealed that they had been forced to work double shifts if they took leave, got very poor quality food, and were beaten up if they complained or...
Child Labours at Dindigul

Textile Mill Hostels Tortured

Express News Service

Dindigul: Many private textile mill hostels in the city are found to be treating the children poorly. According to RMKSTU officials, the authorities have been receiving complaints from parents about the poor conditions in which the children are living in the hostels.

“Children are being mistreated in the hostels. They are being forced to work long hours and are not provided with proper food,” said a parent. “The conditions are very poor and the children are often subjected to physical abuse.”

The officials have asked the mill owners to improve the conditions in the hostels. They have also advised the children to report any cases of mistreatment to the authorities.

Exploited Children Reluctant to Return

by Sakshi Narayan

Exploited children are reluctant to return to their homes after working in the mills. Many parents are not in a position to provide for their children and are forced to continue working in the mills.

“I am working in the mill to provide for my family. I do not want my children to continue working in the mills,” said a parent.

The authorities have been trying to convince the parents to send their children back to school. They have also been providing scholarships to the children who want to return to school.

Child Labors in Spinning Mills