

ILO to help eliminate child labour, forced work in cotton fields

The project, in collaboration with CITI, aims to serve 65 lakh cotton farmers across 11 States

Updated - August 13, 2024 09:17 pm IST Published - August 13, 2024 09:12 pm IST - New Delhi

THE HINDU BUREAU



The collaboration will equip farmers with knowledge about various government schemes and initiatives aimed at their socio-economic upliftment. File | Photo Credit: Nagara Gopal

As cotton and hybrid cotton seeds from India continue to remain in the United States Labour Department's 'List of Goods Produced by Child Labour or Forced Labour', the Confederation of Indian Textile Industry (CITI) has joined hands with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to help farm workers and small and medium farmers engaged in cotton cultivation.

The joint project — Promoting Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (FPRW) — aims to promote effective recognition of freedom of association the right to collective bargaining, the elimination of child labour, the abolition of forced labour, the elimination of all forms of discrimination and the promotion of a safe and healthy

working environment among the cotton growing community in India. **The project was launched in Delhi on Tuesday and is expected to reach out to 65 lakh cotton farmers in 11 States.**

Also Read: [Breaking the cycle of child labour is in India's hands](#)

Insaf Nizam, ILO's Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work Specialist, said the issues in the fields can be addressed through a productive approach by understanding what is happening at the grassroots. "ILO's agenda is to promote freedom, equity, and dignity," he said and added that economic growth should not be at the cost of decent work.

"The fundamental principles and rights at work convention (of the ILO) applies to all ILO member-States whether they have ratified it or not. It is part and parcel of the ILO's Constitution," he said. ILO will work with all stakeholders to address problems of cotton cultivators, he added.

CITI's Secretary General Chandrima Chatterjee said that by leveraging the confederation's existing farmer connections and network in the region, and by capitalising on the knowledge products developed by the ILO, the new initiative will ensure stronger collaboration with government bodies, employers' and workers' organisations, and civil society groups. "Together, we will work to ensure that cotton-growing communities are well-informed and empowered to assert their rights under FPRW," she said.

Ms. Chatterjee added that by upholding FPRW, cotton-growing communities can foster a more equitable, sustainable, and prosperous environment for all workers, leading to long-term benefits for individuals and families.

"Apart from the awareness on FPRW, the collaboration will equip farmers with knowledge about various government schemes and initiatives aimed at their socio-economic upliftment, through dissemination of information related to schemes/programs for eligible families, outreach services to enhance access to selected schemes of the government, facilitate access to education for children in the target community and linkages with skill development / vocational training facilities for target community," she said.

The project also aims to promote social finance and financial inclusion/bank linkage for the farmers and agriculture workers and enhance their access to digital literacy programs of the government.