



## CASE STUDY: Creating opportunities for youth as an alternative to exploitative labor in India

In **India**, ChildFund works with poor rural communities in South Rajasthan to prevent the trafficking and migration of children and youth into exploitative labor in the cotton industry.

Between 2012 and 2015, ChildFund conducted a three-year project, *Combating Child Trafficking Through Sustainable Livelihood Development (Phase II)*,<sup>4</sup> in 50 villages across Udaipur district to increase awareness of the risks of child labor, and to empower local community and government actors to take coordinated action on child trafficking. Seeking to address the underlying poverty that drives children into the cotton industry, ChildFund conducted **vocational training for 374 youth** (for example, in masonry, mobile phone repairs and tailoring), enabling them to find alternative ways to support themselves and their families.

Each year, thousands of children are trafficked from South Rajasthan to work in cotton fields in the neighboring state of Gujarat.

Seen as a source of cheap labor, children often work long hours for minimal pay with inadequate food and poor shelter, and risk physical and sexual abuse by their employers. Deprived of their right to attend school, they are known to experience

An evaluation highlighted the project's impact: <sup>xxiv</sup>

- Cases of child trafficking and exploitative labor significantly decreased in project villages. Data showed that children reported that children who were out of school and involved in child labor decreased from 39% to 12%, and that there was a further decrease (from 33% to 7%) of children engaged in cotton work in all areas.
- Families and communities demonstrated a much higher awareness of child protection laws (from 14% to 88%) and programs (6% to 76%).
- A network of child protection actors teachers, police, lawyers, civil society organizations, as well as community vigilance committees joined forces to respond to cases of child trafficking and labor.
- Many of the trained youth, some of whom had previously worked in the cotton industry, reported that they had since found employment and were earning a decent income.

headaches, convulsions and respiratory conditions due to the adverse working conditions and exposure to pesticides.

Poverty is the major underlying cause of child trafficking and migration. For parents (and children) the journey away from home may be considered an opportunity to earn much needed income— rather than as a violation of their rights.

ChildFund has built on these successes with a second project in Udaipur district that trains young people on **business and entrepreneurial skills** and links them to employment opportunities.

**VIDEO:** Child Trafficking in India's Cotton Fields

