



E-Governance for Child Labour Enforcement in Bilaspur: A Legal Response Protocol

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ABSTRACT

Child labour in Bilaspur is governed by constitutional, labour, education, juvenile justice, bonded-labour, privacy, and international law. The main problem is fragmented implementation. This doctrinal and policy study examines legislation, judgments, parliamentary material, official portals, and Bilaspur-specific sources available up to 11 August 2026. It asks how existing legal duties can be connected through lawful e-governance without replacing human judgment or exposing children to surveillance. The analysis finds that the current framework already requires district nodal officers, task-force review, rescue and rehabilitation, electronic records, school-absence reporting, compensation, and inter-agency coordination. However, public sources do not provide a current district prevalence estimate. Complaint, protection, prosecution, education, compensation, and follow-up records also remain institutionally separate. The paper therefore proposes a Bilaspur Child Labour Legal Response Protocol. A protected case identifier would connect existing channels. Time-bound referrals, a rehabilitation and compensation ledger, school re-entry follow-up, privacy safeguards, and public reporting would make each remedy traceable. The Protocol creates no new offence and gives software no adjudicatory role. It converts existing legal duties into an auditable district workflow. The paper concludes that Bilaspur can narrow its enforcement gap through lawful interoperability, human review, and family support while avoiding surveillance and stigma.

1. INTRODUCTION

Child labour in Bilaspur does not persist because the law is absent. It persists despite a dense legal framework. The Constitution guarantees equality and permits special measures for children under *Articles 14 and 15(3)*. *Articles 21 and 21A* protect dignity and elementary education. *Articles 23 and 24* prohibit forced labour and the employment of children below fourteen in factories, mines, and other hazardous work. *Articles 39(e) and 39(f)* direct the State to protect children from abuse and support healthy development. These guarantees are given statutory effect by the *Child and Adolescent Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986*, the *Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015*, the *Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009*, and the *Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976* [1], [2], [3], [4], [5]. The main weakness is institutional fragmentation. A complaint may reach labour officials, the police, a school, Child Helpline 1098, or the Child Welfare Committee. Each office controls only part of the remedy. Rescue may occur in one system, while education, prosecution, compensation, family support, and follow-up remain elsewhere.

This paper asks: how can lawful e-governance in Bilaspur make these remedies continuous and traceable? It does not propose a new offence, predictive surveillance, or automated adjudication. It proposes a Bilaspur Child Labour Legal Response Protocol built around existing offices, statutes, and platforms. A protected case identifier would link intake, human verification, care orders, evidence, school re-entry, compensation, welfare benefits, and follow-up. Public reporting would use aggregate data. Only legally authorised officials would make decisions.

Recent Indian research shows why a cautious district approach is necessary. National estimates vary with the definition and survey method, and available surveys do not capture all forms of child labour. Education, household vulnerability, work hours, and sector also shape risk [6], [7], [8]. These studies improve national understanding but do not establish current prevalence in Bilaspur. Census data provide historical context, while the Bilaspur-specific reports describe limited settings rather than a district-wide census [9], [10], [11], [12]. The article therefore makes a narrower claim: Bilaspur can reduce the enforcement gap by making existing duties traceable, time-bound, and child-friendly.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study uses doctrinal legal research and policy analysis. It examines constitutional provisions, statutes, rules, judgments, official reports, parliamentary materials, government portals, and Bilaspur-specific publications available up to 11 August 2026. Legal propositions were checked against primary legal texts and judicial decisions. Administrative descriptions and reported counts were taken from official sources. News reports were used only to describe reported allegations or public responses, not to establish guilt or prevalence. The study did not collect personal data or conduct a survey, experiment, or interview.

2.1 Research Design and Source Selection

Sources were selected in three stages. First, the study identified legal duties concerning prohibition, rescue, care, education, compensation, rehabilitation, privacy, and criminal investigation. Second, it mapped the public institutions and digital platforms responsible for those duties. Third, it compared those duties with the available Bilaspur evidence to identify gaps in coordination. Priority was given to India Code, Gazette notifications, Supreme Court and Chhattisgarh High Court decisions, parliamentary materials, ministry publications, and official portals. The District Census Handbook and district webpage provide historical demographic context [9], [10]. MAP 16 and the railway-platform study provide limited Bilaspur-specific evidence [11], [12]. Recent Indian research on child-labour measurement and schooling was used to test the limits of prevalence claims [6], [7], [8]. Research on multi-agency child protection informed the analysis of controlled data sharing [13], [14]. PENCIL, Mission Vatsalya, Child Helpline, NCPDR, NALSA, and the Chhattisgarh labour portal were examined as existing digital institutions [15], [16], [17], [18], [19], [20], [21]. Each source was classified as a legal rule, reported fact, administrative statement, judicial holding, or design source. Conflicting categories were not merged.

2.2 Definitions, Geographic Scope, and Limitations

Statutory definitions govern the analysis. A child is a person below fourteen. An adolescent is a person who has completed fourteen but not eighteen years [2]. Bilaspur refers to the present district administration, but historical figures are reported with their original date and boundary. Complaints, rescued children, registered offences, prosecutions, and rehabilitated children are different units. None is treated as prevalence. Confidential administrative files were unavailable. The study therefore cannot estimate hidden child labour, measure current district compliance, or determine the merits of a pending allegation. It evaluates the public legal and administrative architecture and proposes a normative implementation design.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The law already provides for prohibition, investigation, care, education, compensation, and rehabilitation. Digital systems also provide several intake and case-management channels. The main deficit is coordination. Bilaspur needs one auditable legal pathway that connects these remedies without merging legal powers or exposing a child's identity.

3.1 Evidentiary Landscape in Bilaspur

The District Administration webpage reproduces Census 2011 figures: a population of 1,628,202; an urban population of 582,146; four blocks; 708 villages; literacy of 74.46 per cent; and a work participation rate of

42.34 per cent [10]. The District Census Handbook adds settlement and historical context [9]. Neither source measures current child labour. Administrative boundaries and labour patterns may also have changed since 2011. The MAP 16 India project covered former National Child Labour Project districts, including Bilaspur, and combined needs assessments from Bilaspur, Raipur, and Balodabazar. It identified children in home-based work, garages, construction, loading, shops, tea stalls, street vending, and other informal work. It also noted low awareness of welfare schemes, disrupted schooling, and household dependence on children's earnings [11]. These findings support integrated welfare and education responses, but they cannot be converted into a Bilaspur prevalence estimate. A 2017 study at Bilaspur railway station provides local evidence of vulnerability at one transport node. Its sample does not represent all wards, villages, workplaces, or households [12].

Two reported events show why administrative categories must remain precise. In 2023, Operation Muskaan reportedly recovered 559 missing children across Chhattisgarh, including 52 from Bilaspur [22]. The category 'missing child' does not itself prove child labour. Recovery should trigger confidential screening for exploitation, trafficking, abuse, homelessness, or no labour offence. In July 2025, a newspaper reported allegations that two minor tribal girls from Jashpur had been brought to Bilaspur on a promise of schooling and then forced into domestic work. It reported an FIR, placement at a Sakhi Centre, a Child Welfare Committee process, a trafficking inquiry, and the accused constable's denial. The report is not a final judicial determination [23]. A 2025 Lok Sabha answer reports 17 PENCIL complaints for Chhattisgarh and two cases registered under the child-labour Act from 2018 to 2022, both in 2019. The same answer publishes rehabilitation figures as a separate series [24]. These are separate administrative counts, not evidence that child labour is absent. Their discontinuity supports stage-based accountability.

3.2 Legal Framework

3.2.1 Constitutional and International Framework

The constitutional framework requires more than removing a child from a workplace. *Article 23* prohibits forced labour, including labour obtained through economic compulsion. In *People's Union for Democratic Rights v. Union of India*, the Supreme Court held that labour paid below the statutory minimum could amount to forced labour and placed an enforcement duty on public authorities [25]. *Bandhua Mukti Morcha v. Union of India* linked release from bondage with identification and effective rehabilitation [26]. *Article 24* directly prohibits child employment in specified settings. *Articles 21 and 21A*, read with *Articles 39(e) and 39(f)*, support safety, education, dignity, and development. Under the *Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009*, children aged six to fourteen have a right to free and compulsory elementary education, and government and local authorities must secure its completion [4]. School re-entry is therefore a legal remedy, not an optional welfare measure.

India ratified the ILO Minimum Age Convention No. 138 and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention No. 182 in 2017, declaring fourteen as the general minimum age under Convention No. 138 [27]. Convention No. 182 requires urgent action against slavery-like practices, trafficking, forced labour, commercial sexual exploitation, illicit activities, and work likely to harm health, safety, or morals [28]. *Article 32* of the Convention on the Rights of the Child recognises protection from economic exploitation. Its wider principles include the best interests of the child, survival and development, participation, and non-discrimination [29]. These obligations complement domestic law. They support a response that combines enforcement, education, and social reintegration.

3.2.2 Statutory Architecture and Operational Duties

The *Child and Adolescent Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986*, as amended in 2016, prohibits the employment of a child in any occupation or process. Limited exceptions allow a child to help the child's family or family enterprise after school or during vacations, or to work as an artist in specified audio-visual entertainment other than a circus. Neither exception may affect schooling [2], [30]. The *Child and Adolescent Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Rules, 2017* narrow the family-enterprise exception. The work must not be hazardous or part of a remunerative manufacturing, production, supply, or retail chain. The family must be the occupier. A child may not help during school hours, between 7 p.m. and 8 a.m., for more than three hours a day excluding rest, or as a substitute for an adult or adolescent. A principal or head teacher must report thirty consecutive days of unexplained absence to the nodal officer [31]. These conditions prevent commercial production from being mislabelled as family assistance. Adolescents may work only outside prohibited hazardous occupations and processes, subject to statutory limits on hours, rest, night work, weekly holidays, health, and safety. Age must be established through the statutory process, not by appearance or guesswork [2].

Enforcement duties are shared. The Act authorises inspectors to secure compliance and requires the appropriate government to provide periodic inspection and monitoring. A parent or guardian is generally not punished for a first offence; a subsequent offence may attract a fine [2], [30]. This recognises family vulnerability without immunising the employer or commercial beneficiary. A case-management system must therefore distinguish the employer, occupier, intermediary, contractor, recruiter, parent or guardian, witness, and beneficiary. Each status must rest on documented facts and remain open to correction. Notices, payment records, seizure records, age documents, and photographs must record their source, date, authority, and chain of custody. Administrative convenience cannot dilute procedural law, the right to be heard, or the presumption of innocence.

A violation of *section 3*, or the employment of an adolescent in hazardous work contrary to *section 3A*, is punishable with imprisonment from six months to two years, a fine of Rs 20,000 to Rs 50,000, or both. An employer's offence is cognizable. *Section 14B* establishes the Child and Adolescent Labour Rehabilitation Fund at district level. Employer fines are credited to the Fund, and the government must contribute Rs 15,000 for each affected child or adolescent. The amount, with interest, must be paid for the child's benefit in the prescribed manner [2], [30]. Electronic records required by the Rules should separately track detection, verified contravention, prosecution, lawful compounding, government contribution, fund credit, interest, and disbursement. A rescue count alone does not show whether statutory relief was delivered.

Under *Rule 17C*, the District Magistrate has a central role. The Rule requires nodal officers and a district task force that includes labour officers, police, district administration, the central labour authority, civil society, the District Legal Services Authority, the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit, the Child Welfare Committee, the District Child Protection Officer, and the District Education Officer. The task force must meet at least once a month. It must plan confidential rescue, rehabilitation, awareness, and enforcement, and upload its minutes to the central portal. *Rule 17E* provides for electronic or other records of children, contraventions, amounts, and rehabilitation [31]. Chhattisgarh's 2017 expression of interest for a statewide child-labour survey and the Shramev Jayate portal show prior administrative attention and an existing digital labour environment [15], [32]. They do not establish current district performance. They show capacity on which a lawful protocol can build.

The *Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015* provides the care pathway. A child found working in contravention of labour law is a child in need of care and protection. Production before the Child Welfare Committee must follow the statutory process. The Committee may order an inquiry, immediate care, restoration, rehabilitation, and an individual care plan. The child's identity is protected. *Sections 75 and 79* address cruelty and exploitation of a child employee, subject to proof [3], [33]. The *Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976* abolishes bonded-labour obligations and requires district authorities and vigilance machinery to identify, release, and rehabilitate affected persons [5]. When debt, coercion, or restricted freedom appears, a bonded-labour inquiry should proceed alongside child protection.

Criminal classification must be exact. Under *section 143* of the *Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023*, trafficking a child for exploitation is punishable with imprisonment from ten years to life and a fine. *Section 144* concerns sexual exploitation of a trafficked person; it is not a general labour-exploitation offence. *Section 146* punishes unlawful compulsory labour [34]. Software must not infer guilt from a keyword. A human investigator must record each legal ingredient and the supporting evidence. The four Labour Codes took effect on 21 November 2025. They alter labour administration but do not repeal the child-specific prohibitions and remedies addressed here [35]. The Ministry's annual report provides programme context, not district prevalence [36].

3.2.3 Judicial Doctrine: Enforcement, Compensation, and Proof

M.C. Mehta v. State of Tamil Nadu directed surveys, withdrawal from hazardous work, education, and a welfare fund supported by a Rs 20,000 contribution for each affected child from the offending employer. It also linked rehabilitation with the family's economic circumstances [37]. *Section 14B* now governs the statutory fund, but the judgment's central principle remains: an identified child must receive effective financial relief. In *Manilal Dayal Ji & Co. v. Competent Authority*, the Chhattisgarh High Court examined recovery from beedi manufacturers when children were found in home-based Gharkhata work. It treated the *M.C. Mehta* recovery as independent of criminal prosecution but applied the pre-2016 family-work proviso and found the evidence insufficient to establish manufacturing control [38]. That decision predates the 2016 amendment and the 2017 Rules. Its continuing relevance lies in evidence. Officials must document the primary producer, intermediary, household enterprise, material flows, payments, supervision, and commercial beneficiary. Electronic records can preserve that supply chain. They cannot remove a defence or reverse the burden of proof [2], [30], [31], [38]. People's Union for Democratic Rights, Bandhua Mukti

Morcha, and M.C. Mehta together support enforcement alongside release, education, and rehabilitation [25], [26], [37].

3.3 E-Governance Architecture and Fragmentation

3.3.1 Existing E-Governance Architecture

PENCIL is the platform most directly linked to child labour. At its launch in 2017, it included a complaint corner, child-and-adolescent tracking, a National Child Labour Project module, and a State Resource Centre. District Nodal Officers were expected to assess each complaint promptly and coordinate police-assisted rescue where necessary [16]. Child Helpline 1098 provides round-the-clock protection intake under Mission Vatsalya through district helpline units and integration with emergency response 112 [18]. The Integrated Mission Vatsalya Portal brings together TrackChild, Khoya-Paya, and GHAR and connects missing children information with CCTNS [17]. NCPCR's eBaalNidan handles child-rights complaints, and Baal Swaraj supports children in street situations [19], [20]. NALSA's 2024 scheme guides child-sensitive legal services [21]. The 2017 Rules already place the District Legal Services Authority on the district task force [31]. Research on child-protection information sharing also shows that coordination must preserve institutional context and professional judgment [13], [14].

These systems have different legal owners and purposes. This paper does not claim that they already share a Bilaspur child-labour file. It proposes controlled interoperability. Each original complaint number should remain intact. Only the tasks needed for coordination should be linked through a protected identifier. PENCIL should retain labour verification. Child Helpline and Mission Vatsalya should handle emergency protection and care referrals. The Child Welfare Committee should retain care orders. Police should retain criminal investigation. Schools should retain admission and attendance records. The District Legal Services Authority should retain legal-assistance records. The Chhattisgarh labour portal can support authorised state functions [15]. Interoperability should return an acknowledgement and authorised status to the originating channel. It must not create an unrestricted master dossier.

3.3.2 Fragmentation in the Present Response

Five points of fragmentation are visible. First, the same alert may enter through several channels. Second, legal screening may miss bonded-labour, trafficking, or juvenile-justice duties. Third, a rescue record may not trigger school, compensation, or benefit tasks. Fourth, inter-district restoration may break continuity. Fifth, closure may record an event rather than a completed remedy. Parliamentary data illustrate the problem: complaints, registered offences, and rehabilitation are published as separate series with no common denominator [24]. A child may be counted twice or lost between stages. One large database is not the solution. Legal ownership should remain distributed. The minimum status chain should be: received, reviewed, protected, legally assessed, referred, remedied, followed up, and closed with reasons.

Data gaps can also distort institutional incentives. If an office is measured only by rescues, it has little incentive to track school continuity or delayed compensation. A police count may omit a protective intervention that did not produce an FIR. A welfare benefit may be delivered without being linked to a child-labour case. The Protocol should keep these outcomes separate yet connect them by authorised status. Each aggregate needs a definition, source office, reporting date, geographic scope, and revision history. Small counts should be suppressed where they create a risk of re-identification. Independent review should examine unexplained attrition, repeated transfers, pending referrals, and differences between portal and paper records. The purpose is not to rank officials. It is to identify where legal duties repeatedly fail to reach the child.

3.4 Proposed Legal Response Protocol

3.4.1 The Bilaspur Child Labour Legal Response Protocol

The proposed Protocol would be authorised by an order of the District Magistrate within the current enforcement framework. It would begin whenever an alert is received through PENCIL, 1098, eBaalNidan, police, a labour official, a school, a panchayat, a municipal office, the District Child Protection Unit, the Child Welfare Committee, the District Legal Services Authority, or an authorised help desk. Reporting must remain accessible without Aadhaar, a smartphone, email, or a bank account. Assisted and offline routes must remain available. The receiving office would acknowledge the alert and generate a random protected identifier. Direct identity would be kept separate from operational status. A human officer would verify possible duplicates. A complainant should not have to move across departments or repeat a traumatic account because the first channel lacks jurisdiction.

A trained human officer would conduct immediate safety triage. Emergency risk would be referred to the police, Child Helpline, the District Child Protection Unit, and the Child Welfare Committee. The labour officer would plan inspection or rescue with police support, confidentiality, and witness protection as required by *Rule 17C(7)* [31]. The digital form would not automate decisions on age, the activity and place of work, hours and schooling, the family exception, hazardous work, wages or advances, restriction of movement, recruitment and transport, abuse, migration, or cross-district links. Each prompt would identify the legal source and responsible office. A negative decision would require a short reason. This makes omissions visible without turning software into an investigator or court.

After verification, parallel tracks would open. The Child Welfare Committee track would record production, interim safety, inquiry, the individual care plan, restoration, and follow-up under the *Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015* and its Model Rules [3], [33]. The education track would record age-appropriate admission, special training, books and uniforms, learning support, transport or residential support, and attendance review under the *Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009* [4]. The labour track would record inspection, statutory classification, warning, prosecution or lawful compounding, and reasons. The criminal track would record only authorised procedural statuses. Bonded-labour and trafficking indicators would trigger referrals, not presumptions [5], [34]. The District Legal Services Authority would receive timely tasks concerning representation, compensation, age disputes, release, restoration, and witness support [21].

Evidence quality must develop alongside care. A trained person should record the child's first account in language the child understands and avoid unnecessary repetition. The record should distinguish the child's words from an officer's observations. Age documents should be requested and assessed in the statutory order. A workplace inspection should preserve attendance and payment records, messages, transport details, intermediary links, and other digital material through lawful procedure. The Protocol may store a receipt or secure copy with its source and a tamper-evident hash; the original should remain with its lawful custodian. An audit log should record who collected, viewed, transferred, or altered a record. Reasons should also be recorded when no search, seizure, prosecution, or referral occurs. An electronic entry is not self-proving. It makes the administrative history auditable for a court, the Child Welfare Committee, the child, the employer, and a reviewing authority.

A remedy ledger would follow the child, not merely the case number. It would separately track the employer fine, government contribution, interest, fund credit, payment authority, beneficiary safeguards, and actual disbursement under *section 14B* [2], [30]. A family-support assessment would record eligibility for food, housing, livelihood, social security, health, scholarship, and migration support. MAP 16 found that poor access to schemes and household dependence on a child's earnings can impede withdrawal from work [11]. The Protocol should record application, sanction, delivery, refusal, and appeal. It cannot create eligibility that the governing scheme does not provide.

An inter-district case would use a limited transfer packet containing verified identity, safety needs, the care order, legal status, education needs, and pending remedies. The sending district would remain responsible until the recipient acknowledges each task. Restoration alone would not close the case. The monthly task force would review delays, responsible offices, and escalation. Public reports would contain only protected aggregates: alerts by source, time to first review, verified contraventions, Child Welfare Committee action, school plans, fund progress, benefit delivery, prosecution stage, follow-up, and unresolved duration. Each count would be labelled as children, alerts, inspections, establishments, or proceedings.

3.4.2 A Remedy-Centred Closure Standard

Closure must be a reasoned legal act. A false alert may close after competent verification, recorded evidence, supervisory review, and information about further complaint routes. A verified case must not close merely because a rescue occurred, an FIR was registered, the child was restored, or a referral was made. The record must address immediate safety; Child Welfare Committee orders; lawful placement or restoration; education; medical and psychosocial needs; labour and criminal proceedings; bonded-labour or trafficking action; the statutory fund; legal aid; family benefits; and follow-up. Some tracks may remain open after the protection case closes. They must remain visible and linked. Conviction cannot be the closure condition because welfare remedies do not depend on a criminal verdict. The system also cannot presume an employer's guilt. Reporting must distinguish a protective outcome, administrative completion, and judicial disposition. This protects child welfare and due process.

Sustained safety should be checked through proportionate follow-up, not guaranteed by the child. The competent officer should verify safety, school participation, service access, compensation status, and

renewed financial pressure at intervals set by the Child Welfare Committee or another competent authority. The contact method must not expose the child to an employer, recruiter, or community stigma. A missed school day or changed telephone number is not proof of renewed labour; it is a reason for careful human review. A case may reopen when there is new evidence, a risk of re-trafficking, failed restoration, or an unfulfilled remedy. Follow-up surveillance should end when its lawful purpose is complete. The closure order should record completed outcomes, outstanding tasks, the responsible office, the review path, and the date for deletion or restriction of personal data.

3.4.3 Privacy, Due Process, and Child-Safe Data Governance

Privacy is an operational safeguard. *K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd.) v. Union of India* recognises privacy as part of life and personal liberty and requires State intrusion to satisfy legality, a legitimate aim, and proportionality [39]. The *Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023* and the *Digital Personal Data Protection Rules, 2025* provide the current framework for processing digital personal data, including children's data [40], [41]. The *Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015* also restricts disclosure of a child's identity [3]. The Protocol must minimise collection, define each purpose, separate direct identity from evidence and analytics, encrypt data in transit and at rest, restrict access by role, log all views and changes, and apply a reasoned retention policy. A public dashboard must never contain names, photographs, precise addresses, school identifiers, family details, or small-cell combinations that permit re-identification.

The Protocol should not use a predictive risk score, facial recognition, a community map of rescued children, or an automated recommendation on guilt, trafficking, family separation, or closure. Decisions that affect rights require human reasons and legal authority. The child and guardian should receive clear information about use, sharing, correction, grievance, and support where this is lawful and safe. Investigation access should be need-based. Vendors should be prohibited from secondary use or model training. A security incident should trigger containment, assessment, any legally required communication, and a child-protection review. These safeguards improve evidence quality and reduce stigma, retaliation, and function creep.

3.4.4 Implementation and Accountability in Bilaspur

Implementation should begin with a legal order of the District Magistrate, not a software purchase. The order should appoint nodal officers and substitutes, confirm *Rule 17C* task-force membership, map each data field and decision to the legally responsible office, set time limits for escalation, and require monthly review of unresolved protection, education, compensation, and follow-up duties [31]. A district data dictionary should define child, adolescent, alert, verified contravention, rescue, production before the Child Welfare Committee, restoration, rehabilitation, prosecution, compensation initiated, compensation paid, benefit delivered, follow-up, and closure. For each term, it should identify the legal source and counting unit. Historical data must retain their date and boundary [9], [10]. The system should exchange the minimum necessary status or message through a secure connection. It should not duplicate an entire case file when an acknowledgement, status, or document hash is sufficient.

Access must reflect Bilaspur's urban and rural geography. Reporting and status support can be provided through labour offices, police stations, schools, Anganwadi centres, panchayats, municipal facilities, the District Child Protection Unit, the District Legal Services Authority, and authorised Common Service Centres. Assistance should be free. Interfaces and notices should use plain Hindi and, where useful, Chhattisgarhi. They should be accessible to people with low literacy and disabilities. Where the law permits, a child should be able to speak privately and with a support person. Outreach should explain prohibited child labour, regulated adolescent work, lawful family assistance, trafficking, and bonded labour. It should also explain that assistance may be sought without public disclosure. Accurate communication protects children and employers. It reduces both concealment and indiscriminate accusation.

Phase one should map the paper and portal journey and train labour, police, Child Welfare Committee, District Child Protection Unit, education, District Legal Services Authority, welfare, panchayat, municipal, and technical staff. Phase two should pilot intake, referral, and outcome-based closure in a limited administrative area. Phase three should add fund and family-benefit ledgers after legal, accessibility, child-rights, and cybersecurity review. Procurement should require transparent system logic, portability, access logs, independent testing, breach cooperation, deletion on exit, controls on subcontracting, and a ban on secondary use. Vendor payment should not depend on the number of children rescued, prosecuted, or cases closed. Aggregate reporting should show response time, stage attrition, unexplained delays, fund progress, school re-entry, benefit delivery, task-force meetings, and data incidents with explanations. Most measures require faithful administration under *Rules 17C* and *17E*, not a new statute. State action may still be needed for cross-district standards, portal interfaces, procurement, and privacy oversight.

3.5 Contribution, Limits, and Replicability

The paper contributes a remedy model grounded in Bilaspur's public record and existing Indian law. It links prohibition, care, education, compensation, legal aid, family support, and privacy without merging institutional powers. Its limits are substantial. Public sources cannot reveal confidential case files, task-force performance, district prevalence, costs, or staff capacity. Reported allegations may later be corrected or adjudicated. The model's transferability is conceptual. Each district would need its own evidence audit, institutional map, local-language and accessibility design, security assessment, and lawful data-sharing order. Future research should include an ethically designed prevalence study and an anonymised process audit from alert to sustained safety.

Beyond the mapped portals, evidence that AI adoption improves operational performance in information-technology-intensive work suggests a further digital-capability channel worth testing as district case systems mature [42]. As algorithmically mediated case triage expands across such systems, the governance of algorithmic agency becomes a policy consideration for these deployments [43].

4. CONCLUSION

Bilaspur's legal gap is an implementation gap. The relevant remedies already exist in constitutional law, child-labour law and rules, juvenile justice, education law, bonded-labour abolition, criminal law, privacy law, and international obligations. Harm occurs when public agencies maintain separate files that do not lead to a complete remedy. Evidence must also be used carefully. Census data are historical. MAP 16 findings combine several districts. The railway-platform study is geographically limited. Missing-child recovery is not a child-labour count. The 2025 domestic-work report records allegations, not adjudicated facts. Parliamentary figures describe different administrative stages. None should be treated as a current prevalence estimate.

The proposed Bilaspur Child Labour Legal Response Protocol would make existing responsibilities visible. It would connect intake, human screening, confidential rescue planning, Child Welfare Committee action, legal classification, school re-entry, compensation, family welfare, legal aid, and long-term follow-up through a protected identifier. Monthly task-force review would expose delay. Closure would depend on protective outcomes, not only prosecution or conviction. Privacy safeguards would prevent the system from becoming a permanent dossier. E-governance is useful only when it makes a legal remedy more reliable. Success should not be measured by database size. It should be measured by whether the child is safe, in education, supported, and free from labour.

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Use of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies. The author used OpenAI ChatGPT (Codex) during revision for language editing, structural organisation, and reference checking. The tool did not generate or alter empirical data or images. Bibliographic and legal information was checked against official repositories or publisher records. The author takes full responsibility for the analysis, references, language, and conclusions.

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