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Paper Title: **Bonded Labor in India: An Expanding Definition for an Expanding Nation**

Abstract:

Bonded labor is considered a modern-day form of slavery. India has the largest population of bonded laborers in the world. The desire for low wage workers combined with traditional Indian customs and caste stratifications has created a niche for bonded labor which requires the full force of international as well as domestic intervention to combat. Though the bonded labor problem in India is internationally recognized, the exact scope of the problem is unknown as estimates of Indian bonded laborers range from a few hundred thousand to hundreds of millions. The wide disparity reflects an interesting aspect of bonded labor in India where there has been an expanding definition of bonded labor that fuels confusion as to who is a bonded laborer.

This paper explores the expanded definition of bonded labor in India. First, section II describes the history of bonded labor laws and the evolving definition of bonded labor in India. Next, section III describes limitations in India's efforts to implement reform. Finally, section IV draws a comparative analysis to US efforts to abolish bonded labor. Much of the information was gathered through research into the international laws, conventions and reports by NGOs aimed at describing and eradicating the persistent problem of modern slavery. Additionally, further insight was gleaned through a 2-week research trip to India where we met with representatives from different NGOs as well as State representatives to discuss problems on the ground and potential solutions.