



CHILD LABOR. Indian boy Brijesh, who claims to be 16 years old but doesn't know his birthday, poses for a photo while sitting on corn stalks next to a busy expressway in Noida, India. Every 330 feet or so, there are children selling cooked corn along the expressway on the outskirts of New Delhi. According to India's 2011 census, boys like him are part of the estimated 8.3 million child laborers in India. Pictured on page one is Vikas, age 12, an Indian boy who also sells corn on the expressway. (AP Photos/Tsering Topgyal)

Hardscrabble children sell corn in the heat by India's roads

By Vaishnavi Sharma
The Associated Press

NOIDA, India — Every 330 feet or so along a busy expressway on the outskirts of New Delhi, you'll find a child selling corn — quite possibly a child too young to be working legally.

Twelve-year-old Prakash is one of them. Lolling amid the discarded husks from earlier sales, he doesn't seem bothered by the 100° Fahrenheit heat or the buzzing flies. "We all work together and live together," he says, gesturing toward 15 or so other boys working the highway.

Each is dropped off by their employer every morning with a sack full of boiled corn. They spend their days trying to flag down drivers. They don't leave until their sacks are empty, sometimes 12 hours later.

Are all as young as Prakash? There's no way to be sure. Each seems to change their age with each answer, often forgetting the number they previously mentioned. Most are careful, however, to use a number above 14 — the legal age in India to work in

non-family enterprises. Young men, whom the boys claim are their elder brothers, patrol the highway on motorcycles, ensuring business runs smoothly. They also tell them not to speak to visiting journalists.

Most comply, anxious to keep jobs that pay about \$80 per month — far more than they could earn back home. All the boys have moved to Noida, southeast of New Delhi, from rural villages in search of work.

On June 12, the World Day Against Child Labor, the International Labour Organization said 168 million children are laborers, or about one in nine children overall.

India, in its 2011 census, estimated the country had 8.3 million child laborers. Uttar Pradesh state, where Noida is located, alone accounted for 1.8 million of that total. UNICEF says child labor has declined overall in India but its urban areas have seen an increase.

Meanwhile, Prakash and the other boys are still selling their corn late in the afternoon. Their sacks are not yet empty.

Indian fishermen try new nets for healthier oceans

Continued from page 2
lapsed.

Meanwhile, the UNDP has also helped set up a crab farming project in the Sindhudurg area to encourage local preservation of the mangroves and resistance to land developers and those gathering firewood by chopping the saltwater-tolerant trees down.

Now, nurseries for crab seedlings line up along a two-acre stretch of backwater pools filled with the mud that crabs like to dig into. It takes up to nine months for the crabs to grow to full size, at which point

they are harvested and sold for about \$6.80 a pound.

Recently, the group of nine women and one man earned nearly \$1,000 in profits from a single harvest.

Local officials are delighted with the low-fuss process and positive results.

"With very little manipulation of the environment, you can grow crabs wherever you have mangroves," said N. Vasudevan, who heads a special unit dedicated to mangrove conservation for the government of India's western state of Maharashtra.

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