

9.1 The Bonded Labour System stands abolished throughout the country with effect from 25th October, 1975 with the enactment of Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976. It freed unilaterally all the bonded labourers from bondage with simultaneous liquidation of their debts. It made the practice of bondage a cognizable offence punishable by law.

9.2 The Act is being implemented by the State Governments concerned. Salient features of the Act are given below:

- On commencement of this Act, the bonded labour system stood abolished and every bonded labourer stood freed and discharged free from any obligation to render bonded labour.
- Any custom, agreement or other instrument by virtue of which a person was required to render any service as bonded labour was rendered void.
- Liability to repay bonded debt was deemed to have been extinguished.
- Property of the bonded labourer was freed from mortgage etc.
- Freed bonded labourer was not to be evicted from homesteads or other residential premises which he was occupying as part of consideration for the bonded labour.
- District Magistrates have been entrusted with certain duties and responsibilities for implementing the provisions of this Act.
- Vigilance committees are required to be constituted at district and sub-divisional levels.

- Offences for contravention of provisions of the Act are punishable with imprisonment for a term, which may extend to three years and also with fines, which may extend to two thousand rupees.
- Powers of Judicial Magistrates are required to be conferred on Executive Magistrates for trial of offences under this Act. Offences under this Act could be tried summarily.
- Every offence under the Act is cognizable and bailable.

CENTRALLY SPONSORED PLAN SCHEME FOR REHABILITATION OF BONDED LABOUR

9.3 With a view to supplement the efforts of the State Governments; a Centrally Sponsored Plan Scheme for rehabilitation of bonded labour was launched by this Ministry in May, 1978. Under the Scheme, State Governments are provided Central assistance on matching grants (50:50) basis for the rehabilitation of bonded labour. The said Plan Scheme has been drastically modified in May 2000 to provide for 100% assistance for conducting district wise surveys for identification of bonded labour, awareness generation activities, and evaluatory studies. The Rehabilitation grant has also been raised from Rs.10,000/-per identified bonded labour to Rs.20,000/-per identified bonded labour. Further, in the case of Seven (7) North-Eastern States, 100% rehabilitation grant is provided in case they fail to provide their matching contribution.

9.4 Besides, the State Governments have also been advised to integrate/dovetail the Centrally Sponsored Scheme for rehabilitation of bonded labour with other ongoing poverty alleviation schemes, such as, Swarn Jayanti

Name of the State Governments	Number of Bonded Labourers		
	Identified and Released	Rehabilitated	Central assistance provided (Rupees in Lakh)
Andhra Pradesh	37,988	31,534	850.00
Arunachal Pradesh	3,526	2,992	568.48
Bihar	14,351	13,533	454.38
Chattisgarh	124	124	12.40
Gujarat	64	64	1.01
Haryana	591	89	4.93
Jharkhand	196	196	19.60
Karnataka	63,437	57,185	1578.18
Kerala	823	710	15.56
Madhya Pradesh	13,317	12,392	164.49
Maharashtra	1,404	1,325	15.52
Orissa	50,029	46,900	903.34
Punjab	69	69	6.90
Rajasthan	7,488	6,331	72.42
Tamil Nadu	65,573	65,573	1661.94
Uttar Pradesh	28,846	28,846	633.30
Uttrakhand	5	5	0.50
West Bengal	267	267	20.41
Total	2,88,098*	2,68,136	6,983.36

Note:

- 19962 Bonded Labourers are not available for rehabilitation . Either they have died or left the place without leaving their addresses.
- Rehabilitation grants equal to Rs.6933.97 lakh has also been provided by the State Governments as State's Share for rehabilitation of bonded labour.
- In the case of Arunachal Pradesh, 100% central assistance amounting to Rs.568.48 lakh has been provided by the Ministry of Labour & Employment. In the case of North-East regions and Sikkim , 100% Central Grants (without matching States share) are provided for rehabilitation of bonded labour.