

'No kids working in Tirupur's famed garment industry'

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CHENNAI: There are no child labourers in the garment industry in the country now as compared to the year 2000, says an audit conducted by the Netherlands-based NGO Fair Wear Foundation (FWF). The audit was conducted in various garment companies situated in Delhi, Noida, Tirupur and parts of Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka between 2013 and 2016.

"Child labour was not found during FWF audits. Since 2013, violations have, however, been found in two to three factories in relation to the employment of people 15 to 18 years old. Most factories were found to have a lack of maintenance of appropriate license and permission from

the labour department when employing young workers. Only one factory in south India was found to be compliant," said the NGO.

In 35% of audits conducted, age records of workers are not appropriately maintained or verified by the management. Some of the violations include missing dental certificate when no proof-of-age documents are submitted by the worker; forged dental certificates, either containing a wrong date of birth or fake doctor's signatures; and no age records of contract workers. The NGO has found there is also no bonded labour within any company but there are practices like Sumangali scheme in some working hostels in Tamil Nadu. Under the scheme, the textile factory or firm does not pay daily or monthly wages to the unmarried young woman, but at the end of her tenure, makes a lump sum payment towards her marriage expenses. But, again

compared to a decade ago, there is more awareness on the rules and laws, especially among women workers, in the garment industry.

"Though Sumangali like practices were found in some hostels in Tamil Nadu, the government takes care with legislation like the hostels and homes for women and children (Regulation Act). There are many decent accommodation provided for adolescent girls," said the NGO audit. The NGO study said there was no discrimination either on religion or caste and women are generally paid equal pay for equal work. Agreeing with the NGO study, Southern India Mills Association (SIMA) general secretary K Selvaraju said the situation in various garment companies in Tirupur had improved over the years.