

Forum: Human Rights Council (HRC)

Issue # 1: Measures to address child labor

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Guiding Questions as you Read

What is your country's perspective and policies regarding child labor?

What are the possible reasons that may lead countries to support child labor and how could your country prevent them?

What role does your nation play in the protection of children and their human rights?

Introduction



Child labor is defined as work that is dangerous to children's mental and physical health, and that robs them of their potential and dignity. Usually, this work interferes with children's schooling and childhood development (What is Child Labour). For a form of work to be considered "child labor", several factors are considered such as the type of work done, conditions under which it is performed, amount of hours performed, objectives pursued by those in charge, and the individual's age. Some of the most common reasons children are used for labor include debt bondage, recruitment for armed conflict, or for any illicit activity, such as the production and trafficking of drugs (What is Child Labour). Most often, the conditions under which child labor occurs are dangerous, harmful, and unhealthy. For instance, this can include working in confined spaces, underground, at unsafe heights, handling dangerous equipment and machinery, and being exposed to hazardous substances (Challenges and Perspectives). The main controversies surrounding child labor regard the form of work done by the child and the effects of child labor on the country's economy. For instance, while some work can be considered harmful exploitation of the child, it can be argued that other forms of work may even be beneficial for the child's development (Child Labour). Regarding economic development, while some argue that child labor can reduce poverty in a country, others argue that by depriving children of their education, child labor only maintains poverty. Various countries, however, still operate with child labor used as a practice, with poor regulations, or even in secret. The United Nations' stance on this matter is very clear, as it opposes the use of child labor, claiming that it is a strong violation of human rights. The United Nations firmly believes that legalizing child labor would result in an increase in social inequality while limiting children's access to education and harming their physical, mental, and social growth

(Child Labour).

Comprehension Question(s): How and why has the use/abolishment of child labor affected your country's economy and what does it say about a country?

Key Terms

Debt Bondage: The pledge of a person's services as security for the repayment of a debt or other obligation.

Trafficking: The illegal trade and selling of humans for the purpose of forced labor.

Social Inequality: Inequality—the state of not being equal, especially in status, rights, and opportunities—is a concept very much at the heart of social justice theories.

Exploitation: the action of making use of and benefiting from resources and in this case children.

Armed Conflict: An armed conflict is a situation where opposing groups or countries use weapons and violence to resolve their disagreements or achieve their goals

Child Labor: The use of children in industry or business, especially when illegal or considered inhumane.

General Overview

Key Terms

Prison
Inmate
Rehabilitation
Dehumanizing
Overcrowding
Justice system
Confinement

Child labor is a big problem where kids under 18 years old work instead of going to school. This kind of work can be bad for their health and safety, and it can stop them from learning, which is important for their future. There are different kinds of child labor, from easy work like helping with house chores, to dangerous work like mining or using harmful chemicals. Sometimes, children are forced into really bad situations, like slavery or being involved in illegal activities.

Child labor happens for many reasons, such as not having enough money, not being able to go to school, and some cultural beliefs. It can be found in different industries, like farming, making things, mining, and helping at home. It happens more often in poor countries, but it can also happen in richer ones.

Current Situation

People have been trying to stop child labor by making laws, helping kids go to school, and creating programs to help families have more money. They also tell others about the dangers of child labor so that more people can help stop it. Even though some progress has been made, child labor is still a big issue today. About 152 million kids between 5 and 17 years old are involved in child labor around the world. Many of them work in dangerous jobs. To fix this problem, we need to work together to make sure all kids can go to school, families have enough money, and laws against child labor are followed.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

United Kingdom

The United Kingdom (U.K.) has supported multiple acts and alliances that call for the end of forced labor. However, like the U.S, the U.K. believes children can

work, as long as the conditions under which they do so are safe and do not harm the child mentally, physically, or socially (UK Government). One of the efforts by the U.K. to tackle the issue of child labor has been to show its support for the International Labor Organization's (ILO) Alliance 8.7 initiative by calling on other countries to stand up for it as well (UK Statement). The ILO Alliance is a UK-funded program that encourages the termination of child labor in South Asia by working with law enforcement and governments to strengthen regulations, raise awareness with campaigns, and improve data collection (UK Government). Lastly, the United Kingdom also initiated the Modern Slavery Act 2015, which aims to combat modern slavery in the nation.

United States of America

The United States (U.S.) has expressed its strong opposition to certain types of child labor multiple times. While the U.S. allows minors to work, it emphasizes that said work is done in a safe manner that does not harm the child's educational opportunities, well-being, or health (Child Labor). This was established in the 1938 Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), a federal law that sets the conditions for jobs where child workers will perform (The Fair Labor).

China

China has prohibited child labor for minors under 16 years old for all forms of child labor except those classified as "sports", "arts", "occupational training", and "educational labor", that do not endanger the child (China). However, while these regulations are set in place, they are very vague, as they fail to provide a definition of each labor category, as well as the overall duration and intensity of the work allowed. Additionally, there is poor supervision in places where children work, which has led to the widespread abuse of children by employers and schools. Because of this, the number of cases of children working in abusive conditions in China has risen drastically in recent years, so much that

in 2010, 7.74% of Chinese children ages 10-15 years old were working 6.75 hours a day in such conditions (Zhao).

India

Like China, India is one of the countries with the highest levels of child labor. In an attempt to study this issue, in 1979, the government formed the Gurupadswamy, the first committee dedicated to tackling child labor (Child Labour and Exploitation). Taking into account the recommendations made by the committee, in 1986, the Child Labor (Prohibition & Regulation) Act was enacted. This Act aims to prohibit child labor in specific workplaces where the risk of putting the child in danger is high (About Child Labor). Nonetheless, since then, the implementation of these regulations has been very poor, which is why as recorded in data from the Census 2011, there are 10.1 million minors performing child labor in India. This is because the Indian government argues that it is not a practical solution to completely eradicate child labor as long as poverty continues, which is why no severe action has been taken (Child Labour and Exploitation).

UN Involvement

The United Nations (UN) has been actively involved in addressing child labor issues through several of its agencies and programs. Some of the most significant efforts have been made by the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

The ILO, a specialized agency of the UN, plays a crucial role in combating child labor by setting international standards and providing technical assistance to countries. Since its founding in 1919, the ILO has adopted numerous conventions related to child labor, including the Minimum Age Convention (No. 138) and the

Worst Forms of Child Labor Convention (No. 182). These conventions aim to eliminate child labor by setting minimum age requirements for work and targeting the most hazardous and exploitative forms of child labor.

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) UNICEF works to protect the rights of children worldwide, including their right to be free from harmful labor. UNICEF supports programs and initiatives that promote access to quality education, improve children's well-being, and strengthen child protection systems. By collaborating with governments, civil society organizations, and the private sector, UNICEF aims to create an environment where children can grow and develop without being subjected to exploitative labor.

United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) UNESCO is committed to ensuring that all children have access to quality education, which is a key factor in preventing child labor. Through its Education for All (EFA) initiative, UNESCO works with countries to develop and implement policies that expand access to education, improve the quality of teaching, and address the specific needs of vulnerable and marginalized children. By promoting education as a fundamental human right, UNESCO helps to create alternatives to child labor and empower children to build a better future. V. Collaboration and Partnerships

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of the event
October 1919	The International Labour Organization (ILO) was founded as part of the Treaty of Versailles, with the purpose of highlighting the importance of social and economic

justice through the settling of international labor standards. This organization aims to eliminate the worst forms of child labor through the creation of various conventions.

- June 25, 1957, The ILO adopts the Convention (No. 105) concerning the Abolition of Forced Labour, as one of the eight conventions with the aim of protecting labor rights. It sets up stricter principles regarding what forms of forced labor should be prohibited, such as its use as a punishment for holding certain political views.
- 1973 The ILO adopts the Minimum Age Convention (No. 138) designed to guarantee the eventual abolition of child labor, while progressively raising the minimum age for children allowed for admission to employment. Even though the minimum age differs for each nation, 15 years old was established as the minimum in general.
- 1989 The Global March Against Child Labour occurs. This was a campaign designed to bring awareness to the issue through a march across 103 countries. This movement motivated several organizations and individuals to fight against the economic exploitation of children, which paved the path for the creation of the Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labor (No. 182).
- 1990 This year, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) came into effect with the aim of establishing the political, social, civil, economic, and cultural rights of every child. Article 32 of this convention refers to the protection of children against any form of child labor that could

interfere with their “physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development” (Convention on the Rights of the Child).

- 1992 The ILO initiates the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), with the objective of progressively eliminating child labor. The IPEC planned to do this by advocating for an international movement dedicated to the issue and supporting countries in finding ways to combat child labor. Since 2008, this program has been effective in 88 countries and has an annual expenditure on technical cooperation projects of over 61 million US dollars.
- 1999 The Convention Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor, also known as the Worst Forms of Child Labor Convention (No. 182) is adopted by the ILO. This convention urged countries to take immediate action to eliminate child labor in all its forms, including slavery, and the use of children for illegal and dangerous activities.
- 2010 The Child Labor Platform (CLP) is launched at the Hague Global Conference on Child Labour. This platform builds on the UN Global Compact and the Dutch Sustainable Trade Initiative (NGO), a previous initiative by the Dutch Government to encourage more governments, businesses, and organizations to address and overcome child labor.
- 2011 The United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) are adopted. These consist of a set

of 31 principles for States and companies to prevent and resolve human rights abuses, including those of children, committed in business operations.

2015 The UN adopts the Sustainable Development Goals, which includes Alliance 8.7 — a target to end all forms of child labor, including slavery and the use of child soldiers by 2025.

Past International Action

The 1833 Factory Act

In 1833, the United Kingdom adopted the 1833 Factory Act, which included the first law to regulate child labor. It was set that for children aged 9 to 13 years old, the maximum working week was of 48 hours, limited to eight hours a day; for those between 13 and 18 years of age, the daily working limit was 12 hours. Furthermore, this Act also required those under 13 who were working to receive elementary schooling for two hours each day. To ensure these regulations were kept in place, the Act established a four-man 'inspectorate of factories', who held the power to enforce sanctions if the conditions were not met. Even though, in the end, the Act was not the most efficient, it was a necessary first step to combat the issue of child labor.

Keating-Owen Child Labor Act

In 1916, the United States passed the Keating-Owen Child Labor Act, which banned the interstate sale of any goods produced by child labor, and limited the working hours for minors. This Act was the result of a 1900 Census which revealed that there were approximately 2 million children were working in stores,

mills, fields, mines, and factories across the United States. This gave rise to a national movement to end child labor in the United States, so the Act was a step in the right direction to solve the problem.

International Conference on Child Labour Oslo, 27-30 October 1997

From October 27-30, 1997, the International Conference on Child Labour was held in Oslo, Norway, with the aim of raising awareness and promoting cooperation among countries to address the issue of child labor. This conference resulted to be highly effective as it led to the adoption of the Global March Against Child Labor and the ratification of the ILO's Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention.

The Global March Against Child Labor

After the International Conference on Child Labour, social movements and campaigns began to join the fight against child labor. One of the most notable campaigns was the Global March Against Child Labor, which brought awareness to the issue through a march across 103 countries. This movement motivated several organizations and individuals to fight against the economic exploitation of children, which paved the path for the creation of the Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labor (No. 182).

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN)

In 1990, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) came into effect with the aim of establishing the political, social, civil, economic, and cultural rights of every child. Article 32 of this convention refers to the protection of children against any form of child labor that could interfere with their “physical,

mental, spiritual, moral or social development” (Convention on the Rights of the Child). As a result of this convention, several countries have taken measures to protect children from economic exploitation.

Possible Solutions

To deal with the problem of child labor, we need help from governments, groups that work for the community, businesses, and people living in those areas. One way to help is by making stronger laws. Governments should make and enforce laws that don't allow child labor and set a minimum age for working, following international guidelines (ILO, n.d.). Another way to help is by making sure all kids can go to school and get a good education. This can stop child labor from happening. Governments should aim for the United Nations' Goal 4, which wants everyone to have a good education and opportunities to learn (United Nations, n.d.). Also, it's important to deal with the bigger problems that cause child labor, like poverty and not having equal chances in life. Governments and community groups should create programs, like giving money to families who need it and creating jobs, to help people who are struggling (World Bank, 2018).

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)

#8 Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

Child labor is connected to SDG 8, which promotes “inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all” (Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 8)). Specifically, Target 8.7 of this SDG aims to “eradicate forced labor, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labor, including

recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labor in all its forms" (Sustainable Development Goals). Child labor is a major obstacle to achieving this goal as it takes away children's right to education and deprives them of their health, preventing them from acquiring the necessary education and skills to get a quality job in the future. This sustainable development goal strives to achieve a society where individuals all receive equal economic and employment opportunities which can only be done through addressing child labor.

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Useful Links for Research

I. Links

- I. <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/child-labour/events/lang--en/index.htm>
 - Understanding what child labor is and events that have occurred regarding child labor.
- II. <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/child-labour/>

- This link provides data and information about the current state of child labor as well as some solutions to limit the expansion of child labor.
- III. <https://www.hrw.org/topic/childrens-rights/child-labor>
- Provides videos as well as many other links and articles regarding child labor expansion it also provides examples and events of specific countries.

ii. Tips:

- Remember to always use in-text citations as the information that you obtain is not your original ideas.
- UN websites are the best sources of information, make an effort to always try to use **CREDIBLE** or **UP TO DATE** websites to have the most accurate information.
- When researching about your country's position use more than one source, do not blindly trust a source before diving deep into your country's position in the issue discussed.