

# UNICEF – United Nations Children’s Fund Committee

Measures to eradicate child  
labour



<b>Forum</b>	United Nations Children’s Fund Committee
<b>Issue:</b>	<b>Measures to eradicate child labour</b>
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## Introduction

The increase in the global awareness of child labour has accelerated the case for action, targeting and combating the eradication of child labour. Millions of children, especially in less economically developed countries (LEDCs), still work full time jobs rather than staying in school. Child labour prevents children from achieving a normal childhood by for example explicitly preventing the child from attending school and receiveing the rightful education and thus being socially and morally damaging for the child, and additionally decreasing literacy rates in the area. Child labour should not be confused with teenagers engaging in part-time work which does not have a correlating effect on their health or social life, or interfere with school and is pointed out to be beneficial and positive. What classifies as child labour, is when the work the child is performing intevenes with their social, physical and mental wellbeing, as well as interfering with their education. Examples of child labour include working in factories, mines, selling goods on the streets, being a servant or maid. Limiting or completely stopping the child's rightful access to education keeps their knowledge frame small, thus providing a narrow range of future job opportunities with good salaries.

Although child labour has been successfully eradicated in the majority of countries around the world, child labour is still common in most LEDCs such as Bangladesh, Nigeria and Pakistan. In the world’s least economically developed states, 1 in 4 children are involved in child labour. Poverty in the rural areas of the LEDCs is common, and so children take on jobs hopes of providing enough money for their family’s survival. Unfortunately, children are often exploited in this way by multiple companies, who use cheap child labour in order to recive cheap goods, and later sell at highly profitable prices. Child labour has existed in different forms throughout history, such as when poorer families in the West could not afford to send their children to school to receive education, and so children mainly worked in agriculture to help with family income. From 1960 to 2003, child labour rates dropped by 15%, nevertheless, in modern day child labour still remains frequent. The countries with the



highest child labour rates and worst working conditions, where children are forced into dangerous work or sex trade, include Bangladesh, Chad, The Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia and India. Not only does child labour rob children from their education, but also results in high mortality rates. With 73 million children working in hazardous zones. Around 22,000 children die every year from poor safety and hazardous work zones.

The four main Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) working together to eradicate child labour are “The Global March against Child Labour”, “International Initiative to End Child Labour (IIECL)”, “Love 146” and “Stop child labour coalition”. They are all non-governmental and non-profitable organisations which work to promote children’s rights globally. They provide solutions for eradicating child labour, in ways such as sending teachers assigned from the UN to areas where child labour is high, to provide sufficient education to children who need it.

## Definition of Key Terms

### Child Labour

Child labour is specifically classified as when the work the child is performing directly affects their health, and or affects them mentally, physically or socially. Additionally, interfering with their education, taking away their opportunity to learn.

### Labour

Labour is known as the physical work done.

### Industrial Economies

An industrial economy is one which produces materialistic goods in the economy for the market.

### Poverty

Poverty is defined as the state of being insufficient or extremely poor.

### Rural areas



Areas of the country in which population density is low, mostly considered the countryside or farmland areas. Rural areas of countries majority of the time consist of higher child labour rates due to agricultural availability.

## General Overview

Child labour began in pre-industrial societies, in rural areas where families could not afford to send their children to school. Children needed to provide sufficient labour in order to keep their families alive rather than spending time in school, making children of less wealthy family's incompetent of reading and writing. (Watima, Tony.) As soon as children were able to, they began working in order to support their families in ways such as child rearing, hunting and farming. In modern day there are millions of children who are victims of violence and exploitation, physically and emotionally vulnerable. Since children are not fully developed making them unprepared for labour, it becomes much easier to abuse children physically and verbally. Child labour does thus not abide by the rules in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. (Hay, Douglas)

## Brief history of child labour

With the industrial revolution taking place in the 18th and 19th century, there was a rapid increase in jobs and the rates of child labour. Small villages began to grow, such as Manchester, into larger Cities, and urban areas. Industries also created more jobs for people to work in, including children who would earn incomes for families lacking in wealth and struggling to live. Employment of children reached a peak mainly during the Victorian era, children as young as four years worked in factories or coal mines. The jobs were generally hard long hours of labour in hazardous conditions. Specific jobs were assigned to children that could not be done by adults due to features children had. Coal mines were a common place for boys to work, since they were very small and could fit in narrow places, and they could crawl through the tunnels. Girls would commonly work with machines in factories using their small hands for the machines. (Watima, Tony.) The coal mines were a very hot and hazardous working environment with little light and numerous occurring casualties. Additionally, jobs such as errand boys, shoe blacks and selling goods, were common jobs for children. Wages were very low in comparison to the long hours of labour per day.

Although child labour played a large role during the industrial revolution, during the late 19th century, there was a decline in child labour rates due to the regulation and implementation of



rules. In 1803, the very first act to set rules for child labour was approved in Britain. The act stated that children should not be working any more than 11 hours per day, instead of the previous heavy 18 hours a day workload. After the 19th century, child labour became a larger global issue and governments began to work cooperatively to implement new rules against it. Additionally, laws for the education rights of children increased, thus meaning lower rates of child labour. ( Watima, Tony.)

### *20th and the 21st century*

During the early 20th century, in many parts of Europe, heavily in the United Kingdom, millions of boys were employed in glass factories, making and modifying glass. This was a very dangerous job due to the shattering of glass and the fires that are a necessity in glass making. Fatal injuries and deaths became common. Workers were paid with how much glass was made leading to long hours of work in the industries and resulting in more serious injuries including eye damage, cuts and burns. During 1910, 2 million children were employed in the United States, working a common job such as rolling cigarettes. (Hay, Douglas) It was common for children under the age of 15 to work during this time period.

Today, child labour is still common in the less economically developed areas of the world, in countries such as Bangladesh or India. Estimated amounts of children in child labour during 2008 was approximately 135 million. (Hay, Douglas) Over the past centuries, stronger laws have been implemented in countries in order to eradicate child labour. In the United Kingdom, during the 18th and 19th century child labour was very common, however in the 21st century has become illegal. However, countries which are still developing or have not developed as much make them less economically developed and rates of child labour still remain high.

Laws that eradicate child labour have not been developed due to the financial instability of the country. The clothing industry has played a large role in modern day child labour. Despite the fight to eradicate child labour, there are still many large companies employing and cooperating with child labour due to the economic benefits towards the company. Their products are manufactured in countries in which child labour can be taken advantage of and thus manufacturing their products for cheap prices. Many companies do not directly admit to using child labour making sure it is kept a secret from the public.



Companies such as H&M, Primark, Philip Morris and Microsoft all use child labour to keep the manufacturing expenses at minimum. Conditions for labour are also dangerous in some cases and puts the child at a heavy health risk. (Maki, Reid)

### **Causes of child labour**

There are multiple cases of child labour and explanations to why child labour is much more common in LEDCs and in rural areas. As mentioned previously, child labour has not become eradicated in all countries. Establishing the causes of the problem are the beginning to eradicating the problem at hand. There are primary and general causes and cultural causes.

#### ***Primary and general causes***

A primary cause of child labour has been suggested by the International Labour Organization (ILO), which is due to poverty. For areas where poverty is common, this means families struggle to survive with lack of sufficient living needs, in order for the family of a certain household to maintain their food in order to survive, the workings of a child is crucial. Time cannot be wasted in school as the earnings that come from a child doing labour tend to make up around 20-40% of the total households incomes. Lack of education in a certain area can also lead to child labour. If the family is not wealthy and lives under poor conditions, unless free, education can be an expense they are not willing to invest in or cannot afford. Due to the high expenses of education, and the lack of wealth in the family, children spend their time working and helping the family, instead of attending school. Another reason for the lack of education is due to the lack of proper schooling facilities or unequal opportunities/rights to education. For example, in rural areas of a less economically developed country, the community may face limited schools or proper schooling facilities. Some countries may not be able to provide schools with sufficient teachers due to the low pay and not many being available for the job. The two main primary causes of child labour are poverty, the child must aid the family with an income and a lack of sufficient education, which forces them to begin working at young ages.

#### ***Cultural causes***



In some areas of the world, child labour is something cultural and said to help the child develop skills, therefore has been praised and supported. Additionally, in some countries, education is considered less valuable for girls and so are made to stay at home being forced into child labour and learning domestic household chores. In rural areas especially of less economically developed areas, where some households run small businesses, the child is expected to take over the business and continue the household name. In order to keep heritage, children work from a young age where they are said to pick up responsibility and discipline.

### ***Companies involved in child labour***

A reason why child labour continues is due to companies such as Primark, or most cheap clothing lines, who use child labour as a cheap source of goods production. Cheap goods are sold which attract consumers, however this increases rates of child labour as more production of goods are required. The Rana Plaza incident in Bangladesh provides clear evidence of child labour and the hazardous conditions provided for workers. In September 2013, the Rana Plaza, an eight-story factory in Bangladesh. (Maki, Reid) A large inequity was exposed to the public, this was the largest industrial accidents to ever happen. Inside the factory, child labour was used, employees worked under hazardous conditions, wages were extremely low. Reports of child labour in the rana plaza was common, they produced goods for companies such as Walmart and C&A. Children would work under heavy hours from 8am until 10 pm. The use of child labour for the manufacturing of cheap goods is also another cause of the continuation of child labour. Companies like Primark provide masses of job opportunities for young children who are then forced into labour.

## **Major Parties Involved**

### **Bangladesh**

Bangladesh has the world's highest rate of child labour with approximately 4.8 million children ages from 4 till 14 work in full time jobs. Employment of children are the most common in rural areas. Children work in agriculture, leather making, soap making. In 2006 Bangladesh agreed to the law starting labour could only start from the age of 14. Although Bangladesh has high rates of child labour, new laws have been implemented to attempt to



eradicate child labour. Bangladesh signed the ILO's Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention as well as UN convention on the Rights of a Child. The main causes for such prevalence in child labour in the country is due to poverty, demography and lack of education. (Maki, Reid)

## India

India is one of the top five countries in which child labour is the most common. With 10 million workers aged 4-14. The main production that children work under in India are the diamond industry, firework manufacturing, silk manufacturing, carpet weaving, mining and domestic labour. The literacy rate in India is 74.04%. The Indian government is aware of the child labour and have implemented laws to control the rates. In 1979 the Indian government formed the Gurupadaswamy Committee to discuss child labour issues and ways to tackle this problem. (Maki, Reid)

## United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF)

United Nations International Children's Fund strives to protect children and fight for their individual rights. UNICEF therefore plays a large role in eradicating child labour in different parts of the world. UNICEF works together with the ILO. UNICEF has focused on developing child protection systems in rural and urban areas. As an outcome more than 9000 children have been freed from terrible forms of child labour. They have been returned to their families safely, provided with food and shelter.

## International Labour Organisation (ILO)

The International Labour Organisation has sector to work in order to eradicate child labour. It is a United Nations agency which promotes safe labour globally. The ILO convention 182 has a section describing terrible forms of child labour including hazardous working conditions for children putting them in risk of fatal injustires or death.

## Timeline of Key Events

Child labour timeline

Date	Description of event
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June 6th 1832	During the industrial revolution, the New England Association of Farmers, Mechanics and other Working men declare that children should not be working in factories till so late at night, and shorten their work hours in order to improve children's health.
June 6th 1836	The first state law. State of Massachusetts passed a law which states that children under the age of 15 must attend school for minimum 3 months a year.
June 6th 1842	States in the US limit the daily work hours of children for fewer hours per day.
June 6th 1876	A labour movement suggests that children under the age of 14 should not be working, urge for a ban.
June 6th 1904	The National Child Labour Committee is created.
June 6th 1916	Goods that have been made by children are now illegal to buy for the government
1949	A new amendment passes from Fair Labour Standard Act banning any forms of child labour in the US
1999	ILO convention number 182, it is one of the eight important conventions by the ILO.
2000	ILO's 182 convention becomes an international law. The law includes the bannign of child labour for the health and safety and morality of a child.
2013	ILO releases a report stating the 48 million drop in child workers, however the still high number of child workers that remain.

## UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

- Rights of the Child 19th December 2016 (**A/RES/71/177**)
- Promotion and protection of the rights of children 14th October 1996 (**A/51/492**)
- Resolution concerning statistics of child labour (appendix 3)
- UN convention on the rights of a child (appendix 4)

## Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

The first ever action taken against child labour was in Britain in 1803, where the government decided to lower the working hours of children. Since then, slowly and gradually, larger



measures have been taken to abolish child labour completely. UNICEF has played a major role in this, and is one of the key organisations involved in eradicating cases of child labour. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) is also another major NGO which has been heavily involved in the matter, and has worked towards combatting child labour. UNICEF helped to create and develop places in Bangladesh in which schooling was made available for children, recreational activities were offered, and health services were built. UNICEF has also helped in Morocco by removing hundreds of children from labour factories, who were made to work more than 15 hours a day.

Civil-society organisations which operate in over 100 countries worldwide launched a Global March Against Child Labour in 1998. The March also crossed the ILO conference taking place in Geneva, where attendees called on governments, international organisations, companies and civil societies to work together and eradicate child labour. Later in 2002, ILO decided to introduce the World Day Against Child Labour, in order to raise awareness against child labour and decrease the number of cases. The official day was marked to be observed on 12 June each year. In this regard, ILO has played a huge role in the dropping rates of child labour.

Furthermore, the US department of Labour has also taken measures to raise awareness about the issue. Raising awareness about child labour in both developed and developing countries has been urged, and has also proven to deliver positive effects and reduce child labour. The US Department of Labour have been producing detailed reports about the issues of child labour and the terrible effects it has on children, for the public to see. Movies and pictures were made available for the public to get an idea and visualise the many children that are still involved with child labour.

USAID has worked together with the government of Haiti to improve the education system and provide more children with the needed education. In Haiti around 24,000 children work in domestic servants, the majority of which lack sufficient education. There have been no reports on the increase of rates of child labour after the rate of education was increased.

Since, as discussed earlier, play large roles in using child labour, companies can have a large involvement in erradicating child labour. Awareness campaigns for child labour have succesfully flagged child labour as a major business issue for companies manufacturing masses of goods. Companies are working towards ethical and moral goals that make sure that their employees in the production of goods are not being



exploited and are being treated fairly. (Watima, Tony.) In 1994 Goodweave was founded, who are a group of business experts who are dedicated to ending child labour as well as forced labour, specifically ensuring child labour is not used in carpet and rug production. The program works in India and Nepal, recently extended to Afghanistan. The program provides educational programmes who work with schools to ensure that children who are working as a form of child labour are provided with the assistance they need to attend school. Since 1995 and the number of children working in those carpet industries have dropped from 1 million to 250,000. The US Department of Labour supports the GoodWeave. (Hay, Douglas) Progress is occurring slowly and steadily, eradicating child labour.

## Possible Solutions

Although there have been previous attempts to resolve this issue, there is still large room for improvement. There are various ways in which child labour could be eradicated at a faster rate and more effectively.

Firstly, the possibility of creating a new UN branch which is solely focused on abolishing child labour all around the world should be explored. The new branch would create annual reports about the rates of child labour, in order to keep track of progress. The reports would be available to the public and national governments. Additionally, urging all member nations to attend the Annual Meetings to discuss the issue at hand, especially in those countries with high rates of child labour should be looked at. During these meetings, each country would present the cases of child labour and improvements throughout the year. (Maki, Reid) It is also crucial that this branch works together with UN organizations such as UNICEF, WHO, FAO, UNESCO, OCHA and WFP to share best practices and increase the rate of progression against child labour. Additionally, cooperating with NGOs such as ILO is crucial as they have played a key role in tackling the issue thus far, and hence already have the expertise and knowledge to further solve this problem. (Hay, Douglas)

Secondly, seeing as one of the main causes of child labour is lack of education, sending teachers from the United Nations to provide these children with the education they deserve and need, is crucial. With a higher rate of education, children can learn and reach higher potentials, rather than working for their families, and go on to work in better jobs in the future. Hence, with an increased literacy rate, child labour rates can be decreased. Encouraging



MEDC to donate a part of their GDP each year in order to support children who lack education and basic rights, and whose lives have been destroyed due to the labour is also very important. These funds can hence help the UN send sufficient teachers to provide the right education.

Raising global awareness in parts of the world where child labour does not exist is also critical in eradicating child labour. It should be ensured that schools educate children about child labour around the world so that future generations can continue to fight against it. By making sure that children and teenagers are aware of the occurrence of child labour in other places could also encourage them to take action. Raising awareness by means of, such as but not limited to, social media or charity events to raise money to provide children involved in the child labour market with education should also be considered. Moreover, awareness should be raised on child labour occurring in companies, such as Primark, so that consumers are aware of how their products have been made and what they are investing in, and hopefully feel discouraged to buy such products. Discouraging the public to buy from stores which use such child labour methods can have a positive outcome and decrease rates in child labour. Events can also be set up collaboratively with non-governmental organisations. Similarly, to the Committee created in India during 1979, countries with rates of any child labour can be urged to form a governmental committee where the issue can be discussed.

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## Appendix or Appendices

Appendix 1

Resolution (**A/RES/71/177**)

[https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A\\_RES\\_71\\_177.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_71_177.pdf)

Appendix 2

Resolution (**A/51/492**)

<https://www.un.org/documents/qa/docs/51/plenary/a51-492.htm>

Appendix 3

**ILO resolution**

[https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dqreports/---stat/documents/normativeinstrument/wcms\\_112458.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dqreports/---stat/documents/normativeinstrument/wcms_112458.pdf)

Appendix 4

<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/crc.pdf>

Appendix 5



[https://ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/normativeinstrument/wcms\\_112458.pdf](https://ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/normativeinstrument/wcms_112458.pdf)

