

UNICEF

Preventing child labor on third world countries.

Topic Background

Through history, several injustices on children have been perpetrated throughout the entire world. Slavery being one of the most impactful. On modern days, slavery is presented under different names and forms, such as exploitation. An increasingly alarming issue on the modern world is child exploitation in the form of child labor.

Even though significant progress has been made in reducing child labour over the last two decades, progress has slowed over time, and it has even stalled during the period 2016-2020. Today, 160 million children are still engaged in child labour – some as young as 5 years old.¹

Child labor begins to be considered as such when they are either too young to work, or when they are involved in hazardous activities that may compromise their development, either physical, mental, social or academic. This problem is far more frequent in the least developed countries, as slightly more than one in four children from ages five to seventeen engage in labor that is considered detrimental to their health. Africa is the region that ranks highest in percentage of child labour – one-fifth – and in the absolute number of children in labour – 72 million.² While Asia and the Pacific ranks second highest in both measures. The remaining child labour population is divided among the Americas (11 million), Europe and Central Asia (6 million), and the Arab States (1 million). In terms of incidence, 5% of children are in

¹ United Nations. (s. f.). World Day Against Child Labour.

² *ibid*

child labour in the Americas, 4% in Europe and Central Asia, and 3% in the Arab States.³

According to data from Census 2011, the number of child laborers in India is 10.1 million of which 5.6 million are boys and 4.5 million are girls. A total of 152 million children – 64 million girls and 88 million boys – are estimated to be in child labour globally, accounting for almost one in ten of all children worldwide.⁴

In South Asia, child labour and exploitation are the combined product of many factors, such as poverty, social norms condoning them, lack of decent work opportunities for adults and adolescents, migration and emergencies. These factors are not only a cause but also a consequence of social inequities reinforced by discrimination. A UNICEF's recent study points out that inequality, which stems from gender, age, socio-economic status, caste/ethnicity, influences the chance of children engaging in child labour, types of work they engage and severity of exploitation.⁵

Children around the world are routinely engaged in paid and unpaid forms of work that are not harmful to them. However, they are classified as child laborers when they are either too young to work or are involved in hazardous activities that may compromise their physical, mental, social or educational development. In the least developed countries, slightly more than one in four children (ages 5 to 17) are engaged in labor that is considered detrimental to their health and development.⁶

Acknowledging the importance of this threat and the issue it represents for children and the several and alarming injustices that generates, a fast and effective solution is more than needed.

³ United Nations. (s. f.). World Day Against Child Labour.

⁴ Child labour and exploitation. (s. f.). UNICEF India.

⁵ Child labour and exploitation. (s. f.-b). UNICEF South Asia.

⁶ Child Labor Statistics. (2022, 20 mayo). UNICEF DATA.

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