



Anti-Slavery International
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Child Labour

What is child labour?

The International Labour Organisation estimates that there are over 317 million children aged 5-17 in the world who are 'economically active'. This includes most labour activities undertaken by children, whether paid or unpaid, for a few hours or full time, casual or regular, legal or illegal. It excludes chores undertaken by children at home.

Child labour is where a child is working below the minimum legal working age and/or where the work is hazardous. The defines child labour in Convention 138 as 'Labour performed by a child who is under a certain age specified for that kind of work and is thus likely to impede the child's education and full development'.

What is the difference between child labour and child slavery?

There are three distinct forms of child labour which Anti-Slavery International works to eradicate immediately and in the long-term:

- 1) Child Labour 'Labour performed by a child under a certain age specified for that type of work which is like to impede the child's education and full development. This affects 218 million children aged 5-17.
- 2) The worst forms of child labour which jeopardises the physical, mental or moral well being of a child because of its nature or the conditions in which it is being carried out. This affects 126 million children aged 5-17.
- 3) The unconditional worst forms of child labour which constitutes slavery and is trafficking, debt bondage and forms of forced labour, forced recruitment for use in armed conflicts, prostitution and pornography and illicit activities. This affects 8.4 million children.

How many children are in slavery in the world today?

It is estimated that children make up 40 to 50 per cent of all forced labourers.

126 million children work in the worst forms of child labour and 8.4 million are in the unconditional worst forms of child labour would constitute **child slavery**.

The unconditional worst forms labour constitute

- Forced and bonded labour 5.7 m
- Prostitution and pornography 1.8 m
- Child soldiers 0.3 m
- Other illicit activity (drug smuggling) 0.6 m
- *Trafficked children (no of children trafficked into child slavery) 1.2 m

The ILO estimated in 2006 that there are 218 million children in the world who work. Out of this figure, 92 million children perform work which is appropriate for their age and maturity meaning that the work may make useful and positive contributions to a child's development and the income can help to sustain children and their families.

The worst forms of child labour affects 126 million children and is the unacceptable form of child work and is work which jeopardises the physical, mental or moral well-being of a child based on its nature or condition. This would include work in mining, construction and work which prevents children from receiving an education. Interestingly most child labourers work in the informal sector and only five percent of child labourers work in export related jobs.

Where in the world do children work?

It is estimated that there are 191 million economically active children aged 5-14 across the world. They are

- **Asia-Pacific** has 122 million (nearly 65 per cent of the world's total). This means that one in five of all Asia's children are working;
- **Sub-Saharan Africa** has 49 million has 26 per cent of the world's total. This means that one in four of all children in Sub-Saharan Africa estimated to be working .
- **Latin America and the Caribbean** 5.7 million working children. This means that one in 19 children (just over 5%) in the region are now working
- **All other regions (Middle East, North Africa, Europe and North America)** have 13.4 million and so together account for under 6% of the overall total.

What type of work do children do?

Child labourers work in a number of different settings

- 69 per cent of children work in developing countries in agriculture, fishing hunting and forestry
- 9 per cent of children work in manufacturing, construction, mining and quarrying
- 22 per cent work in services, including hotels, restaurants and retail

Children work:

- on the land
- In households as domestic workers
- In factories – making products such as matches, fireworks and glassware
- On the streets as beggars
- In the outdoors industry in brick kilns, mines and construction
- In bars, restaurants and tourist establishments
- In sexual exploitation
- As soldiers

What circumstances do working children face?

Some of the circumstances that working children face are:

- Full time work from five years of age
- Dangerous working places
- Excessive working hours
- Verbal, physical and sexual abuse
- Forced to work by circumstances or individuals
- Limited or no pay
- Work and life on the streets in harsh conditions
- No access to education – inability to escape from a cycle of poverty

Why do children work?

Most children work because their families are poor and their labour is necessary for their survival. Discrimination on grounds of gender, race, religion or ethnic group also plays a part in why some children work.

Children are often employed and exploited because compared to adults they are more vulnerable, cheaper to hire and are less likely to demand higher wages or better working conditions. Some employers falsely argue that children are particularly suited to types of work because of their small size and “nimble fingers”.

For many children school is not an option. Education can be expensive and some parents feel that what their children will learn is irrelevant to the realities of their everyday lives and futures. In many cases, school is also physically inaccessible and/ or lessons are not taught in the child’s mother tongue.

As well as being a result of poverty, child labour also perpetuates poverty. Many working children do not have the opportunity to go to school and often grow up to be unskilled adults trapped in poorly paid jobs and will in turn look to their own children to supplement the family’s income.

If we stop children working won't they and their families starve?

There is a difference between work that contributes to a child and their family's life and slavery. Some types of work make useful, positive contributions to a

child's development. Often, work is a vital source of income that helps to sustain children and their families.

But with slavery, the child is denied their right to education, rest and recreation. They are subjected to extremely hazardous work in harmful conditions, putting their health, personal and social development, and even their lives, at risk. Many are forced into full-time work at a very early age. They are frequently made to work long hours for little or no pay. Many are subjected to verbal, physical, psychological and sexual abuse. A child in slavery is kept in the cycle of poverty.

We work with local partners to ensure that there is rehabilitation and training so that children and their families can have an income and a life with opportunities.

What do children want?

Many children have formed their own organisations and movements to force leaders to hear their concerns and take action to improve their situation. These include the African Movement for Working Children and Youth and the National Movement for Working Children in India.

These are some of the things that working children across the world have said that they want the right to:

- Opportunities for education and training allowing them to move on from working
- Express and organise themselves
- Equitable justice in case of problems/disputes
- Longer term interventions
- Healthcare
- Access to state infrastructures that can help them (enrolling in school, locating families and returning home).

What international laws are available to protect child labourers?

There are a number of existing international conventions that Anti-Slavery International uses in our work for the eradication of child labour.

The Conventions of the International Labour Organization, the 1926 and 1956 Slavery Conventions and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child are the major tools we use.

ILO Minimum Age Convention No. 138 (1973):

Identifies the minimum age at which children should work and defines child labour as labour performed by a child who is under a certain age specified for that kind of work and is thus likely to impede the child's education and full development.

Article 32 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989):

"State Parties recognize the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to

interfere with the child's education or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.”

ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention 182 (1999):

The main aim of Convention 182 is to eliminate the worst forms of child labour. It stresses that immediate action is needed to tackle the worst exploitation of children, and that measures taken by the authorities should start as soon as the government is able following ratification. The main provisions of the convention are to clarify which situations should be classified as the worst forms of child labour, and to specify what governments must do to prohibit and eliminate them.

Do I contribute to a continuation of child labour through my consumer choices?

The International Labour Organisation estimates that five percent of children involved in forced labour work for the formal export-related industry, so there is a chance that some of the goods you buy may have had an element of child labour at some point in the supply chain. To address this problem you can write a letter to retail chains' company headquarters asking what measures the company is taking to identify child labour in their supply chain and eradicate child labour if there is any found.

How does child labour relate to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)?

The Millennium Development Goals cannot be met if the issue of slavery is not addressed. Achieving MDG 1 (to eradicate extreme hunger and poverty) cannot be eradicated while children are enslaved. As slavery prevents children from going to school, protecting children from slavery, addressing the poverty of their families and providing them with education would help to meet the MDG 2 goal of universal primary education. Halting trafficking in children and work in the sex industry would help towards achieving MDG 3 (reversing the spread of HIV/AIDs).

What can I do to help child labourers?

Students and young people have a vital role to play in the fight to eradicate slavery from the world today. The first step is awareness of the issue, once you are aware, you can make a lot of other people aware and they in turn can make more people aware. When a lot of people are armed with facts then they can start to lobby decision makers, both governments at home and internationally as well as international organisations. Sufficient lobbying can make a massive difference to decision makers, who will either be counting on your votes now or in a few years time. For example six years ago in the UK, not many people knew about trafficking, but with education, the general public and organisations like Anti-Slavery International lobbied the government started to take steps to address the problem and produce a protection and rehabilitation focused action plan. Whilst there is still a way to go, the UK government has now signed the Council of Europe Convention on Trafficking, which offers victims of trafficking minimum protections.

Activities that students can carry out to help raise awareness and fight for the eradication of slavery include:

- Visiting the Anti-Slavery International website and learning about the different forms of slavery
- Joining the Campaigns Network and taking regular actions on campaigns
- Writing a letter to your local MP and asking for action on a particular campaign
- Becoming a member of Anti-Slavery International
- Holding an awareness raising day at school/college/university/place of worship/youth club/community centre
- Organising a writing group and asking each one in the group to write a letter to your favourite shops asking what measures they are taking to identify, prevent and end the use of slavery in their supply chain
- Organising a fund-raising activity to raise funds to help support Anti-Slavery International's partners in their release and rehabilitation of enslaved people
- Supporting the Niger Schools Development project which provides education for children descended from slavery.