

CHILD PROTECTION ADVOCACY BRIEF

Child Labour



Dana, 7, attends school in Mafraq, Jordan, where UNICEF's Hajati cash grant programme aims to reduce families' reliance on negative coping mechanisms including child labour and early marriage and help Syrian refugee children stay in school.

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Child labour¹ deprives children of their childhood and their future. Unlike activities that help a child to develop, such as contributing to housework for a few hours a week or taking on a job during school holidays, child labour interferes with schooling and is harmful to a child's physical, mental, social and/or moral development.

Economic vulnerability associated with poverty, risks and shocks plays a key role in driving children into work, and is both a cause and a consequence of poverty, reinforcing social inequality and discrimination. Studies in Togo and Zambia show that households can respond to health shocks, such as the sudden illness of caregivers or primary wage earners, by sending children to work. This suggests that child labour acts as a buffer or insurance against the impact of health-related shocks to the household. A study looking specifically at unemployment in urban Brazil

Child labor represents multiple cycles of poverty and abuse...

found that adult job loss had a sizeable effect on the likelihood of children dropping out of education and taking up work.

Globally, nearly one in ten children are subject to child labour, which rises to nearly one in every five children in Africa. In its worst forms, child labour can result in slavery, sexual and economic exploitation, and death.

An estimated 250 million children live in countries or areas affected by conflict. The incidence of child labour in countries affected by armed conflict is 77 per cent higher than global averages, and incidence of hazardous² work is 50 per cent higher.³

In 2008–2012, child labour decreased by just 1 per cent, and progress made in reducing labour of girls was 50 per cent less than of boys. At current rates of progress, 121 million children will still be in child labour in 2025,

In its worst forms, child labour can result in **slavery, sexual as well as economic exploitation and death.**

Without specific, targeted action against child labour, the future of the 1.2 billion adolescents⁴ in the world will be vulnerable to reinforcing cycles of intergenerational poverty and exploitation.

1 International Labour Office (ILO) Convention No. 182 - Worst Forms of Child Labour; ILO Convention No. 138 - Minimal Age for Admission to Employment and Work; ILO 189 - Domestic Work, Slavery Conventions of 1926 and 1956, <<https://www.ilo.org/ipec/facts/ILConventionsonchildlabour>>

2 Any work which is likely to jeopardize children's physical, mental or moral health, safety or morals should not be done by anyone under the age of 18. <<https://www.ilo.org/ipec/facts/ILConventionsonchildlabour>>

3 Ending Child Labour by 2025: A review of policies and programmes International Labour Office (ILO), Geneva, 2017.

4 UNICEF, The State of the World's Children 2011: Adolescence – An Age of Opportunity, 2011.

Towards 2030 - Sustainable Development Goals



Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8 builds on Article 32 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which requires governments to protect children from harmful and exploitative work. SDG 8 underpins the commitment to eliminate child labour with a key focus on the promotion of inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all by 2030.

SDG Target 8.7 calls for States to “take immediate and effective measures to [...] secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.” This Target is linked to several other targets and SDGs, including Target 16.2 aimed at ending abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children, SDG 1 on poverty, SDG 4 on Education and SDG 5 on ending all forms of violence against women and girls, including harmful practices such as child marriage, and achieving gender equality.

of whom 52 million will be in hazardous work. Without specific investments and interventions to eliminate child labour, it will continue this unacceptable upward trajectory.⁵

Child labour represents multiple cycles of poverty and abuse, and ending this practice requires concerted action on all fronts: removal of children already in child labour and their return to school or training, equal educational opportunities for girls, freedom from sexual exploitation, support to parents, and comprehensive and disaggregated data to make children and their circumstances more visible. The private sector must address and prevent child labour in their supply chains (production, distribution and retail of products and services) and governments must increase the availability of decent work.⁶

Challenges

Child labour is both a cause and a consequence of poverty, reinforcing social inequality and discrimination, denying children productive futures and undermining the well-being of both the state and the individual. Evidence has demonstrated that child labour actively undermines education,⁷ health,⁸ including progress against HIV/AIDS;⁹ and subsequently hinders the ability of children and their families to benefit from opportunities for social and economic development.

For girls, more so than boys, the ‘triple burden’ of school, work and household chores is a reality that often undermines achievement and access to quality education and economic success, which further diminishes their social status and access to rights.

As of 2017, around 30 million children were living outside their country of birth. This group moved for a range of reasons, including to join family members, pursue educational opportunities – or flee conflict, violence or persecution.¹⁰ When they migrate alone, children can be forced into labour, including hazardous labour, and are at risk of being trafficked for sexual exploitation and other work. Without specific investment and interventions to prevent child labour in countries affected by armed conflict, it will continue to remain higher than global averages or even increase.

At the current pace of progress, 121 million children will still in child labour in 2025, of which 52 million will be in hazardous work.¹¹

UNICEF impact

In 2017, UNICEF supported the Ministry of Defence (MOD) in Somalia to screen soldiers as a strategy to prevent recruitment of children by armed forces and armed groups and to facilitate release of any found to be recruited. Prevention mechanisms were bolstered when the MOD signed and disseminated a command order to stop the recruitment of children by the Somali National Army and enhanced the capacity of the National Intelligence and Security Agency officers to screen children released from Al-Shabab.

UNICEF’s integrated, innovative and evidence-based approach

UNICEF promotes an integrated approach to eliminating child labour, which includes strengthening parenting initiatives and addressing harmful social norms that perpetuate child labour, in addition to strengthening legal, social support and reporting systems to curtail it. These systems seek to increase access to quality education and reinforce poverty reduction strategies, including comprehensive social protection that goes beyond cash transfers and provides social service support to keep children safe and with their families.

5 ILO Global Estimates of Child Labour Geneva 2017.

6 ILO’s definition of ‘decent work’ involves, “opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.” <www.ilo.org/global/topics/decent-work/lang-en/index.htm>

7 ILO, Child Labour and Education for All, <www.ilo.org/fpec/Action/Education/ChildlabourandEducationforAll/lang-en/index.htm>; Ibrahim, A., S. M. Abdalla, M. Jafer, J. Abdelgadir and N. de Vries, Child Labor and Health: A systematic literature review of the impacts of child labor on child’s health in low- and middle-income countries, *J Public Health*, Feb., 2018., <https://academic.oup.com/pubhealth/advance-article/doi/10.1093/pubmed/tdy018/4835667>.

8 World Health Organization (WHO) Children’s environmental health <www.who.int/ceh/risks/labour/en>.

9 UNESCO HIV and Health Education Clearing House, HIV/AIDS and Child Labour <<https://hivhealthclearinghouse.unesco.org/library/documents/hivaids-and-child-labour>>.

10 <https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Data-gaps-and-mixed-migration-snapshot.pdf>

11 According to Article 3 (d) of the ILO Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999 (No. 182), the term the worst forms of child labour comprises: (d) work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children. This includes construction, ship breaking, agriculture, industries where there is exposure to chemicals.

UNICEF'S THREE PRIORITIES ARE INCREASING COLLECTION OF DATA; BOLSTERING THE SOCIAL SERVICE WORKFORCE; AND PREVENTING VIOLENCE, EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

UNICEF plays a key role in collecting and developing new methodologies to make child labour visible, as joint custodian with the International Labour Organization (ILO) of the SDG indicators concerning child labour. UNICEF's work on the worst forms of child labour emphasizes the core role of the social service workforce in preventing, responding to and removing children from child labour. Strengthening the reach, calibre and funding of the social service workforce is crucial to effective intervention by those who are at the frontline against child labour.

UNICEF's efforts to eliminate child labour is reinforced by its work in establishing legal identity at birth to determine when children are too young to work, in addition to collaboration with the private sector to prevent and mitigate child labour in supply chains.

UNICEF works closely with national and local governments to support development and implementation of comprehensive strategies to address child labour. In Guinea Bissau, UNICEF advocated with the Ministers of Tourism and of Women, Family and Social Affairs to implement the 2016 Code of Conduct against sexual exploitation of children, one of the worst forms of child labour, in the tourism and travel industry, and supported their work on a joint Action Plan for implementation. Additionally, the Government reinforced the regulation to ban access of children and adolescents to inappropriate entertainment place. Further, tourism inspectors from all nine country regions were given training on

the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism¹² legislation and child rights instruments.

In India, 12 states developed a child labour plan of action, and eight have scaled up their programmes to prevent

and end child labour with UNICEF support, which includes a child labour social and behaviour change strategy for seven districts spanning over 44 blocks in the state of Bihar. UNICEF's support on a child-tracking system for children rescued from labour is fully operational across all 38 districts of the state.



Djibrill, 11, plays checkers at a UN 'hostel' for migrants in Agadez, Niger, a town infamous as the last way station for people being smuggled to Europe, or Algeria and Libya where many end up having to beg for a living.

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¹² The Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism, <www.thecode.org/about>

Key Asks

UNICEF CALLS FOR ACTION TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOUR:

1 Make children visible. Governments must invest in collecting new and better data on child labour and include: children under ten or those living in institutions, children on the move and those living outside of households - on the street, in emergencies, or hidden in the worst forms of child labour, such as sexual exploitation and domestic labour.

UNICEF and ILO are building the evidence base on child labour by harmonizing databases to develop new shared global estimates that capture the work of the most vulnerable – particularly the often hidden labour of girls and children recruited by armed forces and armed groups. Comprehensive data will make child labour visible and its elimination possible.

2 Include child labourers in social protection initiatives and programmes, in addition to supporting decent work for adults. National governments should design and provide employment opportunities for adults. Where not possible, state-sponsored social protection initiatives should specifically target child labourers and their families, who are particularly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, to prevent child labour.

In 2016, 31 UNICEF country offices directly supported service delivery initiatives, improving access to informal and formal education and strengthening better detection mechanisms for child labour. In Bangladesh, collaborative multi-sectoral efforts reached over 28,500 children with a package of social protection services, including early identification, registration, and interim rehabilitation and referral services. In Nepal, improved case management systems across ten municipalities contributed to the removal from child labour of over 1,900 children (50 per cent girls), of whom 71 per cent were provided with educational support.

3 Change social norms and enable empowered communities. Governments and community-based organizations (CBOs) should design and implement parenting and community education initiatives to change harmful social norms that support and perpetuate child labour. They must bolster



Moussa, 17, learnt to be a mechanic at the vocational training course he was referred to after having to drop out of school in the State of Palestine.

economic and gender empowerment in vulnerable communities through social saving groups and cooperatives; enhanced family and community security; and the understanding and disruption of harmful coping mechanisms, social norms and practices associated with child labour.

In 2016, ten UNICEF country offices supported specific advocacy and awareness-raising activities to change social norms that perpetuate and reinforce child labour. In the Syrian Arab Republic, awareness messages for parents, employers and children were promoted through national counterparts, non-governmental organization (NGO) partners and the media. More than 24,700 Facebook users engaged in an online debate about child labour and more than 13,000 children and 4,000 caregivers were reached with information on child labour risks.

4 Make education accessible and responsive to the needs of child labourers. Most out-of-school children – currently more than 260 million¹³ – are engaged in some form of work activity. For those in school, involvement in work makes them more susceptible to premature drop-out. Governments, civil society and CBOs must invest in and organize additional programmes to enable children to meet

gaps due to child labour in their education, which include curriculum, teachers and funding. They must also ensure that informal qualifications and standards gained are recognized by formal education systems. National governments must remove fees and other obstacles from notionally free state education.

In Bangladesh and Pakistan, UNICEF's key focus on preventing and addressing the drivers of child labour led to progress with out-of-school children; more targeted and effective programming and service provision, particularly in rural areas; and focused work with key groups such as local informal Koranic providers and teachers. The recognition of accelerated education and equivalence programmes supported child labourers with educational opportunities to catch up with their peers.

FOR MORE INFORMATION,
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¹³ Global Partnership for Education (GPE), More than 260 million, 2016 <www.globalpartnership.org/data-and-results/education-data>