

<b>Forum:</b>	The committee on the rights of the child (special conference)
<b>Issue:</b>	Insuring restriction of child labour in all member states
<b>Student Officer:</b>	Sarah Ryan
<b>Position:</b>	Deputy Chair

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## Introduction

During the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century the Industrial revolution brought many great things to our society, however, one of the tribulations of such a growing (previously impoverished) economy was the lack of capital to invest in workers, and so factories had to employ young children to complete the work. This awarded the factories many benefits; the children were less likely to unionise, they were more tractable than adults and were priced at a smaller expense. However, this was recognised as highly disadvantageous as the employed children were unable to receive a state education and did not grow up to contribute to the economy any more than they did at their premature years. Fortunately with the assistance of reformers the act of child labour in the western hemisphere was abolished under the notion that it led to harmful future repercussions to the economy. However, even during the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there are still child labour acts that are taking place, noted generally in less economically developed countries. Many notions are presented by hegemonic authoritative figures of the employed children claiming that if the children were not able to work and contribute to the family's earnings then they would be at a higher risk of poverty than their current state. This raises the issue of questioning where we find middle ground; we have to still empathise with the fact that in the world's poorest countries, nearly one in four children are engaged in work that is potentially harmful to their health, out of the 168 million children in child labour, 85 million are in hazardous work and yet if child labour ceased to exist there would be no informal economy that generates an estimated \$150 billion annually.

## Definition of Key Terms

### **Reformers**

A person who is committed to bringing out reform in their society, child labour reformers were those who rejected child labour.

### **Bonded labour**

People become bonded labourers by taking or being tricked into taking a loan for as little as the cost of medicine for a sick child. Many may never pay off the loan, which can be passed down for generations.

### **Forced labour**

People are illegally recruited by individuals, governments or political parties and forced to work, usually under threat of violence or other penalties.

### **Trafficking**

Trafficking is the transport and/or trade of people from one area to another for the purpose of forcing them into conditions of slavery. Human trafficking ranks as the second largest criminal industry globally, second to drug smuggling, and equal with illegal weapons transactions.

### **Civil and Political Rights**

The rights to liberty and equality. Such rights include freedom to worship, to express oneself, to vote, to take part in political life, and to have access to information.

### **Ageism**

Prejudice or discrimination on the basis of a person's age

### **International Labour Organization (ILO)**

An organization established in 1919 as part of the Versailles Peace Treaty to improve working conditions and promote social justice; the *ILO* became a specialized agency of the UN in 1946.

### **Convention No. 138**

An agreement set out by the ILO that states the minimum age for admission to employment shall not be less than the age of completion of compulsory schooling.

### **Convention No. 182**

An agreement set out by the ILO, in 1999 it consolidated the global consensus on child labour elimination.

## **Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights**

Rights that concern the production, development, and management of material for the necessities of life. These rights also include the right to preserve and develop one's cultural identity, as well as rights that give people social and economic security, sometimes referred to as security-oriented rights. Examples of such rights include the rights to adequate education, food, shelter, and health care.

## **Passivity**

The condition of being inactive or submissive.

## **Persecution**

Violation of the rights of an individual or group by another individual or group. The most common forms are ethnic, racial, and religious persecution. Such types of persecution overlap to some degree, as religion is commonly an aspect of culture and ethnic identities are often intertwined with racial identities. The most common persecution scenario is a majority group mistreating a minority group.

## **Ratification**

Ratification is the process by which a government confirms a state's action in becoming legally bound by a treaty; formal procedure by which a state becomes bound to a *treaty* after acceptance.

## **Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)**

An organization (in partner with the UN) that works to promote the human rights of children throughout the world. UNICEF has a variety of programs that address the organization's priority areas of child protection, early childhood, girl's education, HIV/AIDS, and immunization.

## **Key Issues**

### **Poverty**

According to the UK Committee for UNICEF, poverty is the most common factor contributing to child labour. In addition, "debt, bloated military budgets and structural adjustment programmes imposed by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, have eroded the capacity of many governments to provide education and services for children, and have also pushed up prices for basic necessities".

### **Education**

Child labour is a critical obstacle in the path of children's development and society's sustainable development. Children who must spend the most important stage of their lives striving merely to survive are denied the opportunity to develop to their full potential. Many of the world's 215 million child labourers are denied their fundamental rights, including the right to education. Discovering and learning to one's fullest potential during childhood determines what opportunities will be available not only to the individual but also to the next generations to follow. A fully educated society is assured of breaking the cycle of poverty. The absence of education is one of the primary factors, which prevent us from protecting children from all forms of economic exploitation. Education is the vehicle through which people are empowered to improve their quality of life and by which they are protected from all forms of exploitation.

### **Child trafficking**

Child trafficking, a part of human trafficking is a crime involving the movement of children for the purpose of their exploitation. A child is a person under the age of 18 years. Trafficking implies that someone has organised the movement of a child with the immediate or ultimate aim of the child's exploitation. This could involve a transaction where someone receives payment or a benefit to agree to a child being exploited. Children at this age need to play and study but are instead victims of a silent organised crime. Children make up 26% of all forced labour victims.

## **Exploitation of children**

### **Sexual violence**

Sexual violence against children is a gross violation of children's rights. Yet it is a global reality across all countries and social groups. It can take the form of sexual abuse, harassment, rape or sexual exploitation in prostitution or pornography. The 2014 UNICEF study, *Hidden in Plain Sight*, estimates that around 120 million girls under the age of 20 (about 1 in 10) have been subjected to forced sexual intercourse or other forced sexual acts at some point of their lives. Boys also report experiences of sexual violence, but they do so to a lesser extent than girls. Millions of more children are likely exploited in prostitution or pornography each year around the world, most of the times lured or forced into these situations through false promises and limited knowledge about the risks. Yet the true magnitude of sexual violence is hidden because of its sensitive and illegal nature. Most children and families do not report cases of abuse and exploitation because of stigma, fear, and lack of trust in the authorities. Social tolerance and lack of awareness also contribute to under-reporting. Evidence shows that sexual violence can have serious short- and long-term physical, psychological and social consequences not only for girls or boys, but also for their families and communities. This includes increased risks for illness, unwanted pregnancy, psychological distress, stigma, discrimination and difficulties at school.

### **Hazardous conditions**

Working conditions that are deemed safe for adults may not be safe for children who have smaller statures and frailer bodies. Each year, an estimated 2.7 million of healthy years are lost because of hazardous child labour working conditions. Several factors contribute to hazardous working conditions, these include a lack of experience with machineries and sharp tools, exposure to chemicals such as pesticides, lack of sanitary facilities such as toilets and working at a very young age (5 to 7 years old). Worldwide, the ILO estimates that at least 22,000 children die at work each year.

## **Major Parties Involved**

### **Eritrea**

Eritrea is ranked number one as one of the worst countries for child labour in the world. In Eritrea, the government holds programs under which children in grades 9 to 11 are asked to offer their labour in various fields like agriculture and public services. Children are also often forced to participate in compulsory military training programs. Though laws are there against the employment of children as labour, the implementation of the laws are weak

and many children are often dragged into forced labour where they are heavily exploited.

## **Somalia**

39.8% of children between the ages of 5 to 14, numbering around 1,012,863, are child labourers in Somalia. Only half of children within this age range attend school. Fishing, threshing grain, and livestock raising are just some of the agricultural activities where Somali children are employed to work as labour. Construction and mining industries operating within the country also use children as part of the workforce. Children are also engaged in armed conflicts, illegal and anti-national activities. Sexual exploitation and human trafficking of children are also common. The high rates of poverty prevailing in Somalia often force parents to surrender their children to the labour world. The education system in the country is poorly developed due to the high social, economic and political insecurity prevailing in the country.

## **Democratic Republic of the Congo**

Children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are often forced to work in gold, wolframite, and coltan mines, as well as being engaged in the armed conflicts prevalent in the region. 3,327,806 children in the country are child labourers working in various sectors like agriculture, industry and services. Sexual exploitation of children is very common here.

## **Timeline of relevant treaties**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Description of Event</b>
2 December, 1990	The United Nations adopted the Convention on the Rights of a Child, which was ratified by 193 countries.
17 January 1998	The Global March Against Child Labour is an important event with marches in many major cities around the world drawing global attention towards the most heinous human rights violation: child labour and child slavery. The six-month long intercontinental March took off from Philippines in mid-January 1998, culminating in Geneva to coincide with the Debate Session of the International Labor Organization (ILO) on the Draft Convention on Child Right.
17 June, 1999	The ILO led the Worst Forms Convention, signed by 151 countries, which prohibits the worst forms of child labour such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Debt Bondage</li><li>• Child Trafficking</li><li>• All forms of Slavery or Slavery-like practices</li><li>• Forced Recruitment of Children in Armed Conflict</li><li>• Prostitution</li><li>• Production of Pornography</li><li>• Drug Production and Trafficking</li></ul>

- Any Hazardous Work

## Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

In 1990, the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Rights of a child (or the UNCRC), which was ratified by 193 countries. The UN Convention consists of 41 articles, each of which details a different type of right. They themes are as followed; survival rights (these include the child's right to life and the needs that are most basic to existence, such as nutrition, shelter, an adequate living standard, and access to medical services), development rights (these include the right to education, play, leisure, cultural activities, access to information, and freedom of thought, conscience and religion), protection rights (these ensure children are safeguarded against all forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation, including special care for refugee children; safeguards for children in the criminal justice system; protection for children in employment; protection and rehabilitation for children who have suffered exploitation or abuse of any kind) and finally participation rights (these encompass children's freedom to express opinions, to have a say in matters affecting their own lives, to join associations and to assemble peacefully. As their capacities develop, children should have increasing opportunity to participate in the activities of society, in preparation for adulthood).

Moreover, in 1999, the ILO led the Worst Forms Convention, signed by 151 countries, which prohibits the worst forms of child labour such as: debt Bondage, child trafficking, all forms of slavery or slavery-like practices, forced recruitment of children in armed conflict, prostitution, production of pornography, drug production and trafficking, any hazardous work. The Convention has enjoyed the fastest pace of ratifications in the ILO's history since 1919.

Furthermore, the Global March Against Child Labour which is a momentous event in numerous major cities around the world draws global attention towards the most heinous human rights violation: child labour and child slavery. The six-month long intercontinental March took off from Philippines in mid-January 1998, culminating in Geneva to coincide with the Debate Session of the International Labour Organization (ILO) on the Draft Convention on Child Right. The march had the intention of seeking a proliferation of education in all its 140 countries.

## Possible solutions

If children are in full-time education, they are not working. Therefore, the provision of education to all children is the key to eliminating child labour. Governments and Donors

(such as the European Union) must continue to increase funding for basic education in developing countries and support initiatives that aim to get 'out-of-school' children back to the classroom - and keep them there. They must also develop policies that actively target the elimination of child labour as part of their Official Development Assistance. Listed below are simple yet effective guidelines for the extermination of child labour:

### **Prevention**

Through access to education, creating awareness and community mobilization.

### **Protection**

Through adoption and enforcement of child rights, sensitive laws and policies, victim responsive child sensitive programmes and rescue operations.

### **Prosecution and Conviction**

Of offenders to create a legal deterrent.

### **Provisions**

Through victim-sensitive care and assistance, facilities to ensure safe return, social recovery and reintegration including economic-social empowerment.

### **Participation**

Through community, child participation in activities to protect child rights, involving key actors like government, employees and employers.

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