



Minsk International Model United Nations
2-5 November, 2017
Inclusion of vulnerable groups: Adolescents in focus

Guide

Social, humanitarian & cultural committee

Topic 1: Protection of children and adolescents with a focus on child prostitution, child pornography and sex tourism

Topic 2: Prevention of illegal abuse of children and adolescents as workers

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Topic 2: Prevention of illegal abuse of children and adolescents as workers

Introduction

The illegal abuse of children and adolescents as workers has always been a tempting issue throughout the history. There were never truly a period in modern labour system in which this issue has been non-existent. Of course the form of the problem, the way these workers have had been abused, has changed and formed many times, making it significantly more difficult to deal with and tackle. The issue of illegal abuse of children and adolescents as workers, or child labour has been a topic addressed by several international organisations, mainly by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), but nevertheless by the UN as well.

As the title of the topic suggests, the issue does not suggest that all work done by non-adult people is essentially harmful. The term of “child labour” that is to be eliminated could be described as “work that deprives children from their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development.” Work done by non-legal aged people that does not meet the criteria of illegal child labour, such as helping their parents in house works, contributing to a family business or even work for pocket money in a legal environment is something positive and to be appreciated, since it not only does not harm but contradicts to their development.

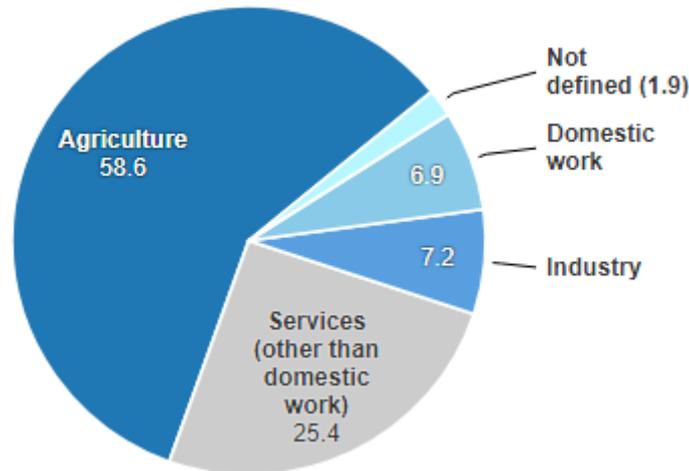
Bearing these in mind, child labour to be eliminated, from now on mentioned as simply child labour refers to work that is harmful or dangerous to the children physically, mentally or morally, or if it interferes with their schooling in a harmful way.

The most affected sector is by far the agriculture, taking around 59% of all child labourers overall. With quarter of total child labour comes industry second, mainly in factories, mining or in constructions. The rest is mostly taken by services, usually businesses in hotels or restaurants.

Since the issue can not be tackled overall, actions raised are usually targeting children affected by the worst forms of child labour, which is any form that involves recruitment in armed conflicts, slavery, prostitution, forced labour, child trafficking, and work that potentially seriously damages their health in any way. Including these, any labour that “jeopardises the physical, mental or moral

well-being of a child, either because of its nature or because of the conditions in which it is carried out, is known as ‘hazardous work’.” Sadly, the majority of child labour is hazardous work.

Percentage of children aged 5-17 years old



Definition of key terms:

Child labour: “work that deprives children from their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development.”

Hazardous work: labour that “jeopardises the physical, mental or moral well-being of a child, either because of its nature or because of the conditions in which it is carried out.”

Slavery: is, in the strictest sense of the term, any system in which principles of property law are applied to people, allowing individuals to own, buy and sell other individuals, as a form of property.

Commercial sexual exploitation: is a commercial transaction that involves the sexual exploitation of a child, such as the prostitution of children and child pornography.

Child trafficking: taking the kids out of their environment and forcing them to move in order to be abused and exploited.

Forced labour: any work or service which people are forced to do against their will, under threat of punishment.

Light work: work that is not harmful in any way thus allowed to do by children over the age of 13.

Background information:

At ILO convention no. 138, the legal ages of employment are determined as follows:

The minimum age of hazardous work: 18 (16 under strict condition) of all countries;

The basic minimum age: 15, possible exception in developing countries: 14;

Light work: 13-15, for developing countries: 12-14;

Agriculture: As the most affected area of child labour, agricultural child labour itself includes 98 million young boys and girls. Their majority is unpaid family members. What is an even bigger issue is the fact that these kids often enter the work at 5-7 years old. On top of these, agriculture is among the 3 most dangerous sectors with many work-related fatalities, non-fatal accidents and occupational diseases. Usually the main reason behind agricultural child labour is poverty. Alongside with things like lack of quality education, inadequate agricultural technology, limited access to adult labour and attitude towards children.

Despite these, especially in family based activities, non-hazardous light work, such as helping parents while learning the skills of eg. fishing, farming, is in fact an important part of growing up, and it contributes to transfer of skills through generations.

With these in mind we can state that though agriculture is the most problematic sector in terms of child labour and even in terms of hazardous child labour, not every child doing work in agriculture is to be labelled child labourer.

Armed conflicts: Obviously, without question, child labour used in armed conflicts is the worst form of child labour, determined by every international organisation several times. It is a violation of the human rights and a serious war crime. This is the form of child labour that has been put the most emphasis on, and have been tried to tackle many times before.

2 types of child labour in armed conflict can be separated: the one where they are directly taking part in hostilities, and the one where they are playing a supportive role in the conflict, such as cooks, porters, messengers or spies.

The reasoning behind using children in wars is simple, to have more resources than their enemies. Right now there are at least 17 countries where kids are used in wars.

Commercial sexual exploitation: Commercial sexual exploitation includes these: child prostitution, child trafficking for sex trade, production of child

pornography and the use of them in sex shows. These kids are: victims of trafficking for the purpose of sex exploitation, or engaged in prostitution, or used in pornography or sex shows, or used to satisfy pedophiles.

Trafficking: Child trafficking is taking them out of their environment, and placing them in human rights-violating environments in order to abuse, exploit them. At ILO convention no. 182, trafficking was classified among “forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery”. Trafficking is not a separate part of child labour, it usually comes together with another sector of it, may it be exploitation or armed conflicts.

Countries and organisations involved:

International Labour Organisation(ILO): Specialised agency of the UN, deals with labour related issues, thus dealing with child labour.

International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour(IPEC): A programme launched by the ILO, they are the main combatants of child labour.

Myanmar, DPR Korea, Somalia, DR Congo, Zimbabwe, Afghanistan, Burundi, Pakistan, Ethiopia: In order these are the top 10 most risky countries in terms of child labour.

Timeline

1992: the launch of ILO's IPEC

1999: ILO convention no. 182

Previous attempts to solve the issue:

ILO conventions:

182: on the worst forms of child labour;

138: on minimum age for admission to employment and work.

Nowadays, more and more companies are concerned about child labour since it seriously damages their reputation, so this holds some companies back from child labour. Of course this is not nearly enough.

A simple yet effective way to approach this problem is to monitor big companies. Child Labour Monitoring (CLM) is the process ensuring it. This is an effective way of reducing child labour, but it has some problems. First, it can

hardly eliminate the problem overall, since it can only fight it reactively, and in order to deal with the problem properly, the solution should be proactive.

Second, monitoring every company is impossible, and this leaves a lot of possibility for child labour.

The other way of tackling the issue according to IPEC is through education. They claim that there can not be given a single explanation of child labour and its growth, but their experience suggests that the combination of economic growth, respect for labour standards, universal education and social protection, together with a better understanding of the needs and rights of children, can significantly reduce child labour.

Possible solutions:

As above mentioned, since the exact reasoning behind child labour can not be determined, making this issue incredibly difficult to solve. With the issue being this widespread, this complex and difficult to cover, it is truly among the hardest tasks.

One possibility would be to monitor more companies more often. This could mean the further reduction of child labour, but would not mean a perfect permanent solution. Unfortunately that perfect solution is yet to be found. Hopefully the best possible solution will see world and be passed in the form of a resolution during the session of the third committee.

Useful links:

<http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/50/ares50-153.htm>

<http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/51/ares51-77.htm>

<https://www.crin.org/en/library/legal-database/un-security-council-resolution-1261>

<http://www.ilo.org/ipec/lang--en/index.htm>

https://www.unicef.org/protection/57929_child_labour.html

<http://www.history.com/topics/child-labor>