



## **Don't Steal My Childhood! Child Labor and Children in Migration**

Despite significant progress in reducing child labor in the past two decades, most recent data show that global progress has stalled since 2016. Forced child labor deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity. It is harmful to their physical and mental health and development, ultimately with severe consequences for the entire society. Therefore, it is crucial to address the problem, especially if we are to reach the ambitious 2025 target date for ending child labor (SDG 8.7).

At the beginning of 2020, the latest global estimates indicated that 1 in 10 children aged 5 and over were involved in child labor worldwide – equating to an estimated 160 million children. A further 8.9 million children will be in child labor by the end of 2022 as a result of rising poverty driven by the pandemic.

Within the already ‘at risk’ group of child laborers, recent analysis points to an even more vulnerable group, namely child migrants. Children in migration, mainly the youngest ones, are at particularly high risk of being exploited and trafficked along migration routes and in host countries.

Some of the literature refers to them as the ‘invisible group,’ suggesting that amongst child laborers, migrant children receive less pay, work longer hours, attend school less often, and face higher death rates at work in comparison to local children.

Most governments have failed to develop effective policy responses to assist and protect child laborers despite the fact they are obliged to do so by multiple international acts.

Real progress, however, requires translating these commitments into national laws that are then actually used as tools for action. Nations must also protect and promote other child rights, including birth registration, strong social protection systems, quality education, health care and nutrition starting with mothers and infants. They must also extend protection from violence, abuse, neglect, dire poverty and exploitation, by supporting meaningful economic and livelihood opportunities for adult family members. These rights are guaranteed to all children, all child laborers,

and those who need additional special protections, such as migrant children working in child labor.

In particular, measures to prevent and respond to child labor during a humanitarian crisis should link the humanitarian, development, and peace dimensions by using the transformative power of Early Childhood Education and Care Programs. All the measures should help build social cohesion, resilience and peace, and strengthen existing government, economic and social structures.

As an outcome we expect that Member States, UN agencies and NGOs will honor and renew pledges made at the 5<sup>th</sup> Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labor -Durban 2022 and most importantly, share their good practices and policies to end child labor, paving the way for a global strategic partnership committed to achieving SDG Targets 8.7 and 16.2 while recognizing synergies between progress on SDG 8 and SDGs 1 (end poverty), 4 (quality education), 5 (gender equality), 10 (reduced inequalities) and 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions).

## **Recommendations**

- Recognize Child Labor as a serious violation of children’s rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in multiple international acts, and in SDGs 8.7 and SDGs 16.2;
- Promote birth registration;
- Stop hiring children below the minimum age and invest in eradicating all forms of slavery;
- Encourage businesses to prohibit child labor;
- Use the link between the labor inspection and workplace occupational safety and health committees to establish a monitoring system;
- Create and enforce policies for reducing the risk of child exploitation and trafficking along migration routes and in host countries;
- Address the special protection needs of smuggled and or trafficked children, those who are seeking asylum, unaccompanied and separated minors and refugees;
- Provide support to children found in child labor, ensuring that they and their families can benefit from all social protection measures;
- Listen to the voices of children currently in child labor, as well as those who survived the experience.