

GA3

(Social, humanitarian and cultural)

“Debating actions to combat child labor and ensure education in South Asia“

1. General information:

Child Labor is the term used to describe the exploitation of kids for financial benefit that deprives kids from their fundamental rights to health and education and deprives them of their dignity and an exploitation-free childhood. It remains a significant challenge in South Asia, where millions of children are engaged in dangerous environments such as plantations, mines and factories. It includes work that is mentally, physically or morally dangerous and harmful. There are various forms of labor such as forced labor, bonded labor and trafficking.

2. Background:

According to the ILO, approximately 168 million children worldwide were engaged in child labor in 2012¹, with South Asia accounting for a significant portion of this figure. There are various reasons for child labor including inadequate enforcement of labor laws and accountability of companies, lack of access to quality healthcare and education, poverty and cultural norms.

Since the industrial revolution in Europe and the United States of America child labor has been a problem in the industrial sector due to the pressure to reduce expenses and boosting profitability. Asia has some of the biggest and fastest growing economies in world. The industrial sector contributes to that expansion. The desire for cheap labors has resulted in the exploitation of children and a huge amount of money has been invested in the manufacturing sector in South Asia by international firms to benefit from these cheap labor costs. They produce a variety of products such as toys, electronic and textiles. Child labor in these supply chains mainly keep being unreported due to the complex supply networks that are often being divided into different countries.

Child labor includes the restricted or denied access to education and healthcare. Working hours in dangerous places for little to no ages has effect on childrens development: They are more likely to drop out of school, face hunger and develop health problems including sadness, anxiety, depression and the mental health issues. They are exposed to chemicals, heavy machinery and deadly instruments without safety gear or training. Education is a fundamental right and a critical factor in breaking the cycle of poverty. In many South Asian countries, the education systems are underfunded and access to education is limited, particularly for marginalized groups.

An ILO survey estimates that 80% of children are employed in agricultural to support their families income. Gender Norms and cultural perception of choosing play a huge role: Boys being often expected to work to support their families in dangerous and exploitive environments and girls frequently being expected to assist with home duties and provide care for younger siblings and being denied access to school. .

3. Issues that are likely to arise:

- Cultural norms and practices: In South Asian countries, child labor is normalized and children are expected to contribute to family income.

¹ <https://webapps.ilo.org/ipeinfo/product/download.do?type=document&id=26977#:~:text=Some 168 million children remain,other basic decent work attributes.>

- Economic factors: Many factors rely on the income generated by their children to survive with no alternative income sources for said families.
- Access to education: The quality and accessibility of education vary significantly across the South Asian Region, where the effectiveness of current educational policies is questionable.
- Government Accountability: The enforcement of existing labor laws and educational policies is often weak.
- International Cooperation: Addressing the root of child labor and ensuring education requires collaboration among countries, NGOs and international organizations.

4. Main Countries involved:

- India: With 10.1 million children in 2011², India has the highest number of child laborers in South Asia. The government has implemented various laws and programs aimed to reducing child labor and improving education, but challenges remain.
- Bangladesh: With a significant portion of its population living in poverty, Bangladesh faces high rates of child labor. The government has made strides in educational forms, but access remains a challenge, particularly in rural areas.
- Pakistan: Child labor is prevalent in various sector, including agriculture and manufacturing. Pakistan ratified several international conventions but struggles with enforcement.
- Nepal: Following a decade long civil conflict, Nepal faces challenges in rebuilding its educational infrastructure and addressing child labor.

5. List of questions delegates should ask themselves in regards to the topic:

- What are the current statistics on child labor and education in your country?
- What government policies exist to combat child labor and promote education?
- What past efforts has your government made to reduce child labor and improve educational access?
- What socio-economic factors contribute to child labor in your country (e.g.: poverty, lack of access to education, etc.)?
- How can your country collaborate with neighboring nations and international organisations to solve the issue on a regional scale?
- What metrics should be established to ensure accountability and progress?

6. Key-terms and explanations:

- Forced Labor: *Children who are pressured or forced work by physical or psychological methods.*
- Bonded Labor: *Circumstances in which children have to pay off debt that they often inherited by their parents.*
- Trafficking: *The recruitment, transportation, harboring or receipt of an individual by means of threat or use of force of coercion.*
- ILO (International Labour Organization): *A United Nations agency that sets international labor standards and promotes social justice.*
- UNICEF (United Nations International Childrens Emergency Found): *An agency that provides humanitarian and developmental aid to children worldwide*

² <https://www.ilo.org/media/424531/download>

7. Useful sources:

https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@asia/@ro-bangkok/@sro-new_delhi/documents/publication/wcms_359371.pdf

[https://www.ilo.org/international-programme-elimination-child-labour-ipecc/what-child-labour#\[ilo_url_NOT_FOUND_id:WCMS_817699\]](https://www.ilo.org/international-programme-elimination-child-labour-ipecc/what-child-labour#[ilo_url_NOT_FOUND_id:WCMS_817699])

<https://www.unicef.org/about-unicef>

<https://www.statista.com/chart/32416/children-aged-5-17-in-hazardous-work-worldwide/>

<https://endchildlabour2021.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Child-labour-Global-estimates-2020.pdf>

<https://www.globalpartnership.org/>