



**WHEN WILL  
EVERY CHILD  
HAVE FREEDOM?**



FREE. SAFE. EDUCATED.

**CHILD LABOUR BRIEF**

## WHAT IS CHILD LABOUR?

Child labour is work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development.

It refers to work that:

- is mentally, physically, socially or morally **dangerous and harmful** to children; and
- **interferes with their schooling** by: preventing them from going to school; forcing them to leave school prematurely; or requiring them to try to combine school with excessively long and heavy work.

Child labourers do many different types of work. 70% of children working are in the **agriculture** sector and other work can include **manufacturing** products such as garments, shoes and toys, domestic chores like **cleaning and cooking**, **mining** minerals, **selling goods**, and even **fighting in wars**.

**Almost half of all child labourers work in the worst forms of child labour**, which trap children in especially dangerous situations. For example, children working in agriculture, industry or mining can be exposed to **dangerous chemicals and machinery**. Child domestic workers are vulnerable to **physical and sexual abuse** from their employers, and child soldiers are exposed to horrific levels of **violence**.

**Child labour still exists in almost every country** across the world, with **almost half** of child labourers aged between **5 and 11 years old**.

**Girls are often hardest affected**. For example, many girls are forced to do domestic work within the family home, and it is far more difficult to find out how many girls are doing this kind of work, compared to those working in factories, mines, or other industries. This makes their work 'hidden'. Girls can also face the double burden of household domestic work *and* labouring outside the home and sadly they are also far more vulnerable to commercial child sexual exploitation.

## WHY IS CHILD LABOUR AN INJUSTICE?

Every child is born with basic human rights, and child labour denies children's rights to freedom, safety, and education. This is a fundamental injustice.

- It exposes millions of children to serious physical and psychological harm, which can impact them from the moment they start work and for the rest of their lives.
- It prevents children from receiving their right to go to school and benefit from good quality education, which in turn prevents them from being able to break out of the cycle of poverty and injustice.
- Many child labourers are in 'forced' or 'bonded' labour. This means that they are forced to work without any pay, sometimes because their labour is intended to pay off a family loan or other debt, or because they or their families have been tricked into believing they will be looked after and working in good conditions. When a child is forced to work in such conditions, this is child slavery.

# 152 MILLION

children are still working as child labourers. That is almost

# 1 in 10

of all children in the world.

# 186

states have internationally agreed to eliminate the

# WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOUR

but they are still happening.

At least

# 73 MILLION

children across the world are still working in the 'worst forms' of labour, such as slavery, sexual exploitation, and armed conflict.

Between the years

# 2000–2016

the number of children working fell by

# 134,000,000



## WHY DOES CHILD LABOUR STILL EXIST?

“ I had several scrapes and injuries at my work in the factory... the owner beat us with whatever he could lay his hands on. ”

FARDEEN, FORMER CHILD LABOURER, INDIA

Governments and laws across the world have, (as a result of incredible work by dedicated activists), made some progress towards ending this exploitation.

The United Nations has set the goal of eradicating child labour by 2025, but at the current rate, the world is far from meeting this important milestone. The reasons for child labour remaining a scourge that is difficult to eradicate are multiple.

There are still countries without enough laws to completely prevent child labour, for lots of reasons. For example, many countries do not meet the international criteria of banning child labour until the age of 14 or 15. There may be pressure from companies to stop laws banning child labour, as it would mean they would have to pay much higher salaries for adult workers. It could also be because child labourers are often marginalised from the political process and it is not an issue that more privileged citizens regard as enough of a priority.

Even when there are laws, they are difficult to police. For example, children who are labouring in ‘hidden’ conditions, such as in their own homes or private homes, or children who are in slavery, are difficult to find – sometimes on purpose. A lack of resources, such as enough labour inspectors, also make it difficult to enforce any laws that do exist.

There is not enough effort to end extreme poverty. The overwhelming reason children are forced to work is because their families live in extreme poverty. They usually face multiple forms of deprivation, including a lack of access to healthcare, free, quality and public education, or even clean water, which makes the challenge of escaping such poverty enormous.

## WHAT CAN I DO TO END CHILD LABOUR?

The world has already ensured that 9 out of 10 children are not working. We KNOW it’s possible to end child labour worldwide if we work together to protect the freedom and childhood of the final one.

We can take action by looking at what is happening in our own villages, towns and cities, and by achieving change community by community. Collectively, we can make a huge difference by using some simple principles of action which anyone can take.

- Find out what’s happening in your community.
- Identify who can make a difference.
- Ask them to take a specific action.
- Work out the best way to ask your question.
- Give clear reasons for asking them to take action.
- Monitor their response and any commitments they make.

The next page has ideas on how to do this in your community.

“ Complete elimination can be done by collective efforts of all sections from society. ”

SHUBHAM, ACTIVIST & FORMER CHILD LABOURER, INDIA

“ Children are facing inhuman behavior in our society, and we are responsible for this by remaining silent. I cannot remain silent, can you? ”

SUNIL, ACTIVIST & FORMER CHILD LABOURER, INDIA

# ENDING CHILD LABOUR IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Child labour affects different communities in different ways. It could be anything from products being sold in your local shops or used in your local schools which have been made using child labour, to child labour happening directly in your community. This means that how you tackle the challenge can vary. Whatever role child labour plays where you live, YOU have a voice in your community, and YOU have the power to make a difference.

## STEP 1: FIND OUT WHAT'S HAPPENING IN YOUR AREA

Child labour occurs in almost every country in the world, but it is more common in poorer countries. Almost half of child labour (72.1 million) is found in Africa; 62.1 million in Asia; 10.7 million in the Americas; 1.2 million in the Arab States and 5.5 million in Europe and Central Asia. You may already be aware of children who are working instead of going to school in your community – are they working in homes, or for local companies such as shops or restaurants?

If child labour is not prevalent where you live, are there any companies based near where you live? You can research their policies on child labour – they may have reports on their website, as some countries have laws making it compulsory for employers to disclose the risk of child labour happening across their business. This includes other companies that supply them (supply chains). If your country does not have a law on child labour, or child labour in supply chains, is this something you could campaign for?

## STEP 2: WHO CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Think of a person or body who has the power to change local laws, practices or attitudes relating to child labour. This could be:

- Your local parliamentarian or community leader
- A trade union or employers' guild
- The manager or owner of a business or a headteacher of a school.

## STEP 3: WHAT WILL YOU ASK FOR?

Once you've decided who to influence, think about something realistic and effective that you can ask them to do. This could include:

- Strengthening laws against child labour
- Stop selling or buying products made using child labour
- Ensuring that no local businesses employ children

## STEP 4: HOW WILL YOU ASK FOR IT?

Now you have a target and a demand, decide how you are going to contact them. You could:

- Write a letter, co-signed by your group and others from your community.
- Ask for a meeting in person
- Use social media to target them publicly

**TIP** Be as creative as possible to make your action stand out. For example, if you write a letter could you include photos, toys or pencils to represent the right to play and learn, not work? Or, if you use social media, why not upload a video with your demand?

## STEP 5: WHY SHOULD THEY DO IT?

As constituents, consumers and members of the community YOUR opinion matters to local decision-makers.

They will want to be seen positively by you, as this will impact who you vote for and where you spend your money and time.

So, however you choose to contact them, include why taking action on child labour is important to you!

## STEP 6: MONITOR THEIR ACTIONS!

If you receive a response making any commitments or promises, make sure you follow-up – there is no guarantee that they will do what they have said! You can keep up the pressure by writing a thank you message, and suggesting regular updates or meetings with them. You can also research their actions: if they DO make a change, they will probably make this public –and so should you!

## WHAT NEXT? HOLD A RALLY FOR EVERY CHILD!

Take your activism further by joining the 100 Million campaign's Rally for Every Child, starting on 17 October. On this day, young people all over the world will be asking, loud and clear: 'WHEN WILL EVERY CHILD HAVE JUSTICE?' You can join them – go to [www.100million.org](http://www.100million.org) to find out more.