

**Committee: Human Rights Council**

**Issue: Protecting children's rights in the rise of child labor in industrialized Asia**

**Student Officer: Maria Loukia Mantelou**

**Position: Deputy President**

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## **PERSONAL INTRODUCTION**

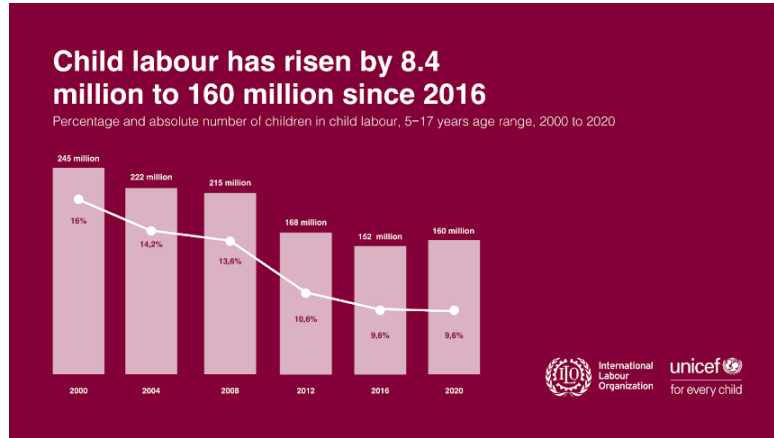
Dear delegates,

My name is Marilou Mantelou, and it is my honor to serve as a deputy-president in the Human Rights Council of this year's ACG Model United Nations Conference. I am a B' lyceum student in Pierce-The American college of Greece and in this year conference I was assigned to introduce you to the topic of protecting children's rights in the rise of child labor in industrialized Asia and help you into forming helpful resolutions. MUN has given me the opportunity to develop as a person, become a well-educated citizen and cultivate the ability to judge matters based on many and different perspectives. Having participated in a variety of conferences, having a deeper understanding of the reality that we live in and getting engaged on matters that concern different corners of the world, is what you will gain after this conference. So, in this year's conference I will try to help each and every one of you gain these knowledges.

The topic that I was assigned with 'Protecting children's rights in the rise of child labor in industrialized Asia' is of high importance, since it concerns children, whose rights, education and living conditions affect crucially the future, that we are going to live in. So, this guide aims to provide you with all the information you will need for constructing clauses such as; past attempts to resolve the issue, important Treaties and Conventions and possible solutions. I would also suggest that you conduct your own personal research on the topic and especially regarding the policy of your country on it. If you have any questions regarding the Rules of Procedure or the topic itself, please do not hesitate to contact me via email at [m.mantelou@acg.edu](mailto:m.mantelou@acg.edu).

## TOPIC INTRODUCTION

Globally, a total of 152 million children are estimated to be in child labor<sup>1</sup>. More specifically, when referring to Asia even though it enjoys a reputation as a vibrant economic zone, it is also home to more working children than any other region in the



world since an estimated 122 million children aged 5-14 years are compelled to work for their survival and not receiving any education<sup>2</sup>. Although, child labor indicates a decline of about one third since 2000, the progress is far too slow,

with the years 2016-2020 being the first ones that didn't reduce the numbers of child labor.

Children are used in some severe forms of child labor such as bonded labor, child soldiers, and trafficking and can be found in a variety of industries with also being at risk for sexual exploitation.

In Asia, child labor and exploitation come as the result of poverty, cultural and social limitations, lack of decent work opportunities, migration and emergencies, with all of them being a consequence of social inequities reinforced by discrimination. So, inequalities, discrimination and racism influence the chance of children engaging in child labor, types of work they engage and severity of exploitation.

In the 33 years since the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the nations of South Asia have made great progress in implementing its provisions. Yet millions of children in South Asia experience violence and harmful practices – including at home, school and in the community – which can have serious consequences that can last a lifetime, such as violence, child marriage, child labor and exploitation, lack of birth registration and supportive justice system for children.

<sup>1</sup> *Global Estimates of Child Labour - International Labour Organization*, [www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms\\_575499.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_575499.pdf). Accessed 31 Jan. 2024.

<sup>2</sup> *Child Labour in Asia and the Pacific - International Labour Organization*, [www.ilo.org/asia/areas/child-labour/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/asia/areas/child-labour/lang--en/index.htm). Accessed 31 Jan. 2024.

Child labor and other forms of exploitation are preventable through integrated approaches that strengthen child protection systems, while addressing poverty and inequity, improve access to and quality of education and mobilize public support for respecting children's rights. So, protecting children rights in the rise of child labor in industrialized Asia, will aid in reducing inequalities and social stereotypes, while promoting better living conditions and equal opportunities, in order to build a safer, equal and better future.

## DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

### Child labor<sup>3</sup>

The term "child labor" is often defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development. More specifically, it is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous to children and interferes with their schooling by minimalizing the quality of their education or completely eliminating it. The continuing persistence of child labor and exploitation poses a threat to national economies and has severe negative short and long-term consequences for children, such as extreme bodily and mental harm, and even death. It can lead to slavery and sexual or economic exploitation, while restricting children's fundamental rights and threatening their futures.

### Industrialized Asia<sup>4</sup>

The term 'industrialized Asia' came into use around 1970, when the Four Asian Tigers of Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong and South Korea rose to become globally competitive in science, technological innovation and economic prosperity in the 1970s and 1980s, with exceptionally fast industrial growth since the 1960s; all four countries having since graduated into high-tech industrialized developed countries with wealthy high-income economies. So, the need for workforce in these countries is enormous, resulting frequently the exploitation of children as cheaper and more vulnerable employers.

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<sup>3</sup> *What Is Child Labour (IPEC)*, [www.ilo.org/ipecc/facts/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/ipecc/facts/lang--en/index.htm). Accessed 01 Feb. 2024.

<sup>4</sup> "Newly Industrialized Country." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 1 Jan. 2024, [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Newly\\_industrialized\\_country#:~:text=The%20term%20came%20into%20use%20around%201970%2C%20when,high-tech%20industrialized%20developed%20countries%20with%20wealthy%20high-income%20economies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Newly_industrialized_country#:~:text=The%20term%20came%20into%20use%20around%201970%2C%20when,high-tech%20industrialized%20developed%20countries%20with%20wealthy%20high-income%20economies). Accessed 01 Feb. 2024.

## Childrens' rights<sup>5</sup>

Children's rights are human rights, which highlight that children must be treated with equality, respect and dignity, not because they are "the future" or the "adults of tomorrow", but because they are human beings today, since all humans are born inherent with fundamental freedoms and rights. Children must enjoy the same human rights as everybody else - from the right to freedom of expression to the right to privacy, meaning all human rights laws apply equally to children and adults. However, children are afforded a low status in most societies. So, their protection is often denied or overlooked, leading to many inequalities and difficulties such as child labour.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

#### Causes of child labor

##### Poverty

'Poverty is certainly the greatest single force driving children into the workplace.' Families with limited to no means often choose to send their children to work, because they don't have enough income and nor do they have access to decent work. Moreover, poverty is linked to other driving factors of child labor. More specifically, in less economically developed countries child labor is common and not protested upon, and families do not understand the dangers of child labour, and how these impact on the health, safety, well-being and future of their child. Also, some cultural beliefs and social norms can also be drivers of child labour.

##### Lack of regulations

Informal work encourages the development of child labour as it lacks both regulation and inspections, since very often, working children are a cheap workforce reservoir. In some areas, the significant availability of child workers undermines decent working conditions for adult workers, keeping wages low and making it even harder for families to meet their economic needs.

##### Lack of quality education

Lack of education definitely plays a huge role in the continuation of the cycle of poverty and horrid living and work standards. Educational gaps impact on child labourers as they move into adulthood as low levels of literacy and

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<sup>5</sup> "What Are Children's Rights?" *CRIN*, [archive.crin.org/en/guides/introduction/what-are-childrens-rights.html](https://archive.crin.org/en/guides/introduction/what-are-childrens-rights.html). Accessed 01 Feb. 2024.

vocational qualifications deprive them of decent work opportunities not allowing them to get out from poverty. It also makes them more vulnerable into being victims of exploitation and mistreatment.

### Armed conflicts

According to the ILO children make up more than half of the total number of people displaced by war<sup>6</sup>. These children are particularly vulnerable to forms of exploitation, including child labour and being enlisted as child soldiers or used in military operations (this is considered one of the Worst Forms of Child Labour). The possibility of child labour in countries affected by conflict is almost twice as high as the global average.



Figure 2 Children in the LTTE in Sri Lanka- Info. "The Worst Form of Child Labor: Child Soldiers." *The Worst Form of Child Labor: Child Soldiers*, [aatopchicago.blogspot.com/2013/07/the-worst-form-of-child-labor-child.html](http://aatopchicago.blogspot.com/2013/07/the-worst-form-of-child-labor-child.html). Accessed 01 Feb. 2024.

### Natural disasters

The effects of natural disasters and climate change are becoming more and more concerning in terms of increasing child labour. With any natural disaster, rural families who depend on reliable seasons for farming are particularly vulnerable, sending their children to work as a solution. Also, migration caused by natural disasters also puts migrants' kids in a vulnerable condition, due to the living conditions and lack of economic means of their families. It is likely, that with climate change the numbers will increase.

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<sup>6</sup> foundation, Eclt. "Why Does Child Labour Happen? Here Are Some of the Root Causes." *ECLT Foundation*, 31 Jan. 2024, [www.eclt.org/en/news/child-labour-causes](http://www.eclt.org/en/news/child-labour-causes). Accessed 01 Feb. 2024.

## Consequences of child labor

### Health

Child labor affects significantly children's health, since they often work with dangerous machinery and are exposed to harmful chemical, while they work long and strenuous hours with little or no regard for their education and mental health. More specifically study<sup>7</sup> conducted in Jaipur, India, focusing on the health implications children face working in the gem polishing industry, showed that the industry employed more than 20,000 children and the mean age was only about 11.3 years and high percentages of them had health issues originated from work., while working with unprotective equipment. Simultaneously, the affect it has on children's mental health is of high importance. Horrid working conditions, exploitation, and inability to experience a proper childhood all create feelings of vulnerability and insecurity. Also, exposure to abuse and exploitation at a vulnerable age, can create mental illnesses. It

### Deprivation from education

It is known that working children don't have access to proper education and resources. As a result, they have limited opportunities in the future, making impossible to end the vicious circle of child labor. Also, they have no contact with culture, new ideas and different interests, meaning that they don't necessarily develop as multangular open-minded individuals willing to work for a better future. Depriving children from education leads to a less skilled workforce, reduced productivity, and limited opportunities for economic advancement. Since, future citizens won't have received the necessary education in order to develop as whole, express new and innovative ideas while ideologies of the past that are mostly possessed from people that had been provided limited education will continue as well as social-stigma and the stereotypes that come with them.

### Social effects

Child labor, violates the fundamental rights of children and results in the loss of potential human capital, since children are not educated and specialized. Moreover, it is a short-term solution that keeps families trapped in a cycle of poverty, as children's earnings contribute minimally to the household income. It also minimalizes the nation's capacity to compete globally and achieve sustainable development goals. Lastly, it disrupts family and community

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<sup>7</sup> Momentum. "Child Labor: What Are the Health and Social Implications?" *Baylor College of Medicine Blog Network*, 19 Oct. 2021, [blogs.bcm.edu/2021/10/19/child-labor-what-are-the-health-and-social-implications/](https://blogs.bcm.edu/2021/10/19/child-labor-what-are-the-health-and-social-implications/). Accessed 01 Feb. 2024.

dynamics as children are forced into work instead of receiving proper care and education.

### **Childrens rights in industrialized Asia**

Children in industrialized Asia do not fully enjoy their rights, even though progress has been made in recent years. The trafficking of children, disparities between different regions in health and education, are still very important. Child trafficking is a known phenomenon with nearly 100,000 women<sup>8</sup> and children trafficked in China when parents decide due to the one-child policy to sell their daughters to have a second chance having a boy. When in India, children's rights are at a very low point with children being exposed to poverty, inequalities and child labor. In many countries of Asia, children are victims of violence, sexual exploitation, unable to receive any education and forced into labor.

## **MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED**

### **India**

According to the ILO, a shocking 10.1 million<sup>9</sup> children in India find themselves engaged in various forms of labour while facing some of the harshest conditions anywhere in the world, with high malnutrition rates, and childhood illnesses such as diarrheal disease. Since, the country faces a significant poverty issue with poor living conditions, low levels of income, and a lack of job diversity, families have no alternative but to put their children to work instead of teaching them. The Indian government has adopted several laws in the past few decades to combat child labor

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<sup>8</sup> "Children of China." *Humanium*, 3 Apr. 2019, [www.humanium.org/en/china/](http://www.humanium.org/en/china/). Accessed 01 Feb. 2024.

<sup>9</sup> Editor, Insights. "The Issue of Child Labour in India." *INSIGHTSIAS*, 20 June 2023, [www.insightsonindia.com/2023/06/20/the-issue-of-child-labour-in-india/](http://www.insightsonindia.com/2023/06/20/the-issue-of-child-labour-in-india/). Accessed 01 Feb. 2024.

and create committees and institutions such as the Gurupadswarmy Committee to investigate children exploitation.



Figure 3 Child Labour in India: How We Can Collectively End This Social Sinful Act!, [wethepeople.org.in/blog/child-labour-in-india-24](https://wethepeople.org.in/blog/child-labour-in-india-24). Accessed 01 Feb. 2024.

## China

China is the world's largest manufacturer in terms of output and has gained a reputation as the "world's factory". Cheap labour is what characterized their industry. Aided by state investment, China has since become a world leader in the manufacture of steel, car parts, chemicals, electronics, and robotics. The country makes up 28.4% of the total global manufacturing output.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, child labor is a growing concern. About 7.74 percent<sup>11</sup> of children between the ages of 10-15 are laborers although the legal working age in China is 16, with children from China's less developed regions having higher rates of child labor. China's incredibly competitive economy makes companies take any opportunity they can to get a leg up over their competitors, even illegally. Many of these children are from poor families and are often between the ages of 13 through 15. Employment agencies will either trick or kidnap them and send them to work in any part of the country for up to 300 hours a month. However, the Chinese government is working to stop child labor. China has signed many laws into effect to prevent child labor, so child labor in China is minimal in comparison to other industrialized nations.

## UNICEF

UNICEF, United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, is a special program of the United Nations devoted to aiding national efforts to improve the health, nutrition, education, and general welfare of children. UNICEF's aims are "to advocate for the protection of children's rights, to help meet their basic needs and to expand their opportunities to reach their full potential." UNICEF initiates programs and

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<sup>10</sup> *Manufacturing by Country 2024*, [worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/manufacturing-by-country](https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/manufacturing-by-country). Accessed 01 Feb. 2024.

<sup>11</sup> *What Is Child Labour (IPEC)*, [www.ilo.org/ipecc/facts/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/ipecc/facts/lang--en/index.htm). Accessed 01 Feb. 2024.



projects to achieve these aims. Talking about child labour, UNICEF works to prevent and respond to it, especially by strengthening the social service workforce. They also focus on strengthening parenting and community education by working with national and local governments, in order to reduce child labor. Lastly, it aids Children removed from labour to be safely returned to school or training.

## ILO

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is a United Nations agency whose mandate is to advance social and economic justice by setting international labour standards. The ILO has four principle strategic objectives: *' to promote and realize standards and fundamental principles and rights at work; to create greater opportunities for women and men to secure decent employment;*<sup>12'</sup> The fundamental ILO standards on child labour are the two legal pillars of global action to combat child labour (Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138)), ( Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182))

## TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of event
<b>11 December 1946</b>	UNICEF was founded
<b>26 June 1973</b>	C138 Minimum Age Convention
<b>November 20th, 1989</b>	International Convention on the Rights of the Child
<b>17 June 1999</b>	Convention 182 on The Worst Forms of Child Labour
<b>2000-2016</b>	Reduced number of child labour
<b>2016-2020</b>	Rise of child labour by 2016

<sup>12</sup> "International Labour Organisation (ILO) in India: Definition, Objectives and Membership." *Your Article Library*, 15 Apr. 2014, [www.yourarticlelibrary.com/organization/international-labour-organisation-ilo-in-india-definition-objectives-and-membership/35427](http://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/organization/international-labour-organisation-ilo-in-india-definition-objectives-and-membership/35427). Accessed 01 Feb. 2024.

## RELEVANT UN RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

### Convention on the Rights of the Children

The Convention on the Rights of the Children (CRC) is a UN international treaty that sets out the basic human rights that all children everywhere are entitled to. It was drafted in 1989 and came into force in 1990. The articles in the CRC spell out all the rights of all children, which is everyone aged 0-18. It is the most ratified of all the international human rights treaties. Every country in the world has ratified the CRC except the United States. It is the first legally binding text that protects the rights of children, meaning that it establishes an obligatory force to the body of all the rights it stipulates. So, the States that ratified the Convention are obligated to respect and to ensure that all rights it establishes in the name of children are respected. It comprises 54 articles that establish the body of all children's civil and political rights, as well as their economic, social and cultural rights. This Convention establishes 4 principles that must govern the implementation of all the rights it advocates, Non-discrimination, best interest of the child, Right to life, survival and development and Respect for the views of the child.

### Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138)

The most concrete international agreements on combating child labour is the convention concerning the minimum age for the admission to employment. It requires ratifying states to pursue a national policy designed to ensure the effective abolition of child labour and to raise progressively the minimum age for admission to employment or work. It is one of eight ILO fundamental conventions. It states that countries are free to specify a minimum age for labour, with a minimum of 15 years. This convention had an effect on previous and future conventions as well. It helped into setting basic standards concerning the proper age of workers as well as the reduce of the numbers of working children and their exploitation.

### Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182)

The Convention Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, known in short as the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, was adopted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 1999). It is one of eight ILO fundamental conventions. Convention No 182 has been signed by all ILO Member States by 4 August 2020. This has become the fastest ratified agreement in the UN's 101-year history. By ratifying this Convention , a country commits itself to taking immediate action to prohibit and eliminate the worst forms of child labour, including slavery, child prostitution, use of children in criminal activities, and dangerous labour.

## PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

### OECD guidelines

The OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises are government recommendations on responsible business conduct to encourage sustainable development and enduring social progress. Practical actions for companies to identify and address the worst forms of child labour in mineral supply chains is for use by companies to help them identify, mitigate and account for the risks of child labour in their mineral supply chains. The report was launched on 26 November 2019 at the UN Forum on Business and Human Rights during the panel session on Ending child labour, forced labour and human trafficking in global supply chains.

## POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

### Labelling initiative to certify products free from child labor

Citizens should participate actively in helping reducing child labor. Through a labelling initiative to certify products free from child labor, individuals are going to be aware of the 'ethical' origin of the products that they choose to buy. This could help into boycotting certain products that aren't child labor free, which can lead to its reduce. The labelling should also motivate the citizens to make ethical investments. It is important to understand that this problem could be solved by the power of the people, since they choose what to buy and from which company.

### Create a monitoring system, which check that businesses comply with industry codes, local law or international standards.

This monitoring system is of high importance. It should observe and check the working conditions for the workers of the business as well as whether they comply with international treatments and frameworks. This system could work in partnership with the government of each country and its regulations and frameworks in order to have a more efficient result.

### Ensuring proper education for children in industrialized countries

As mentioned, unawareness and lack of education of children is one of the main reasons for child labor. It is vital that children in industrialized countries are aware of their rights and what child labor can really do to them in the field of their physical and mental health. Education should be concerning on different ethnical and gender groups, in order to assure that every child is informed. Education about the matter should also be provided to students of more economically developed countries in order for them to be aware of the reality and to grow into citizens that make ethical decisions, when buying products.

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