

# Child labor economic injustice in asia



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Although efforts to stamp out child labor are continuing the world over, many children in Central Asia are being forced by circumstances to skip school and start working in farms or cities as skilled laborers. It is shocking to note that in some Asian countries, national policies facilitate child labor. In almost every bazaar, you are sure to find children who are barely into their seventh birthday selling cosmetics, clothing and even food. It is also common to see preteen boys struggling to push carts in order to deliver wares to the market. Very young girls often easily find employment in cities as housekeepers.

For some of these young children, the money earned this way is used to fend their family members who are in rural areas. In Tajikistan, for example, international labor organization experts say that the greatest challenge is to create awareness on child labor since there is always resistance from a large section of local communities. It is disheartening to note that child labor takes place under the watch of police and employer organizations.

The case of Uzbekistan child labor situation is an even sadder one since it is the government machinery that is used to force children into cotton plantations in the rural areas. During the soviet era, child labor was as rampant as it is today.

The greatest challenge that activists face is that of campaigning against child labor in a region where the elite are the ones who benefit from national coffers obtained from sale of cash crops such as cotton.

With the independence of many Asian countries in 1991, international agreements were put in place. This intervention strategy was meant to ban child labor. According to Jovid Juraev, an employee of Save the Children, an

organization based in Dushabe, Tajikistan, the stance of authorities concerning child labor ought to be blamed for the existence of rampant child labor practices in Asia. He adds that despite official pronouncements, there is lack of political will end child labor practices.

Economic exploitation of children is not limited to Tajikistan; in the neighboring Uzbekistan, it is a state policy for children to be involved in child labor in order to increase input from export of cotton. This country is the third biggest exporter of cotton in the whole world.

In terms of future strategies, it is hoped that the habit of authorities shutting down schools in order to bus children into fields will end. No wonder Uzbekistan has been on the receiving end of sharp criticism by the international community for facilitating child labor.

According to an International Labour Organization Report released at CornellUniversityILRSchool in 2005, the future looks bright especially with the adoption of a law that guarantees that the right of the child in Uzbekistan will be respected and protected. According to Kabeer et al (2003: 55)the willingness of authorities in Asian countries to hold talks with international labor organization experts is not in doubt. What is in doubt is the ability by these poor Asian countries to amicably do away with low pay or unpaid child labor, especially with continued denial that child labor is very serious problem in these countries.

Turkmenistan is signatory to the UN convention that spells out and safeguards children's rights. Between 2002 and 2005, the government of this country also passed legislations that prohibited employment of children

who are below 16 years old. The laws also safeguarded the freedom of the child from being economically exploited. Similar stories might be told of many other poor Asian countries. Legislation is therefore not a major problem. The main problem is to implement the laws for the benefit of millions of children who continue to be economically exploited.