

Child labour defined as economic exploitation



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CHILD LABOUR

Child labour is unacceptable in developed countries for its negative impact and should be discouraged in every society. Child labour can be defined as economic exploitation and performing any work that is likely to be dangerous or hinder the child's education, and harmful to the child's health.

Children under labour are denied their educational right and a normal childhood. Some children are restricted and beaten; some are denied freedom of movement that is, the right for them to leave the workplace and join their families while some are abducted and forced to work.

Child labour deprives children of their childhood and their dignity. Many of the children in every society today work long hours for low or no wage, often under the conditions harmful to their health, physical and mental development. They are also deprived of an education and they may be separated from families. In my interview with Dr Quaye, a faculty member in American University of Nigeria, he stated that “ Children who do not complete their primary education are likely to remain illiterate and never acquire the skills needed to get a job and contribute to the development of the current economy”. It was stated by United Nations Secretary - General Kofi, Annan that “ Child labour has serious consequences that stay with the individual and with society for longer than the years of childhood”. Young workers not only face dangerous working conditions but they also face long-term physical, intellectual and emotional stress. They face an adulthood of unemployment and illiteracy.

Furthermore, child labour occurs because of the high level of poverty and lack of development. For example, there were these two kids in my own town Benin, Osagie and Uwa. Their parents were very poor and had no jobs, because of the level of hardship their parents were facing; these kids were forced to work in a block industry for there were no other alternative than sending their kids to work. At the workplace these kids were tortured by their employers'. They were beaten anytime they made a little mistake and they were given heavy load of blocks to carry. This over a long period of time stunted their growth.

More also, there was a case of an abused eighteen year old girl in Casablanca. She narrates her story

I started working when I was fourteen, my mother died when I was twelve. I lived with my father's wife. We needed money so I went to work. It was me and my half sister, who is now eight years old. My father's wife works now [that I don't work anymore], but I haven't seen her for a year. A neighbor found me the job. I wanted to commit suicide, but then I thought, " No one will miss me." So I went to the neighbor and she found me work in Casablanca. We were very poor and I didn't see a way out. The work was prostitution, and I thought that killing myself would be better morally than dying of AIDS from prostitution but I had no choice, I have to do it. (Human Rights watch 2005).

Therefore, child labour is a source of income for poor families. A study conducted by the international labour organization (ILO) agent of statistics found that " children's work was considered essential to maintaining the

economics level of households, either in the form of work for wages, of help in household enterprises or of household tasks in order to free adult household members for economics activity elsewhere” (Mehra - Kerpelman 1996, pg 8). In some cases, the study found that a child's income accounted for was 34 to 37 percent of the total household income.

The study concludes by pointing to the population of people living in India “ the percentage of the population of India living in poverty is high. In 1990, 37% of the urban population and 39% of the rural population were living in poverty” (International labour organization 1995, 107). Poverty has an obvious relation with child labour, and study have “ revealed positive links in some case a strong one between child labour and such factors as poverty” (Mehra - Kerpelman 199, 8). Family that are poor need money to survive and their children are the only solution. They thought by sending their children to work, will yield more income to their financial aims.

In addition, child trafficking led to child labour. Receipt of a child for the purpose of sexual or labour exploitation, severe physical abuse, as in a case cited by Human Rights watch report, Contemporary form of slavery.

Pakistan: July, 1995. Two year ago at the age of seven, Anwar started weaving carpets in a village in Pakistan's province of sindh. He was given some food, little free time and no medical assistance. He was told repeatedly that he could not stop working until he earned enough money to pay an alleged family debt. He was never told who in his family had borrowed money or how much he had borrowed. Any time he made an error with his work, he was fined and the debt increased. Once when his work was considered to be too slow, he was beaten with stick. Once after a particularly

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painful beating, he tried to run away, only to be apprehended by the local police who forcibly returned him to the carpet looms.

More also, thousands of children are also bought and sold within and across national borders. They are trafficked for sexual exploitation, for begging, and for work on construction sites, plantations and into domestic work. The vulnerability of these children is even greater when they arrive in another country. Often they do not have contact with their families and are at mercy of their employer.

For child labour to be totally eradicated these things must be fully met.

Firstly, the government of every society should ensure that the needs of the poor are met before attacking child labour. If poverty is totally addressed, the need for child labour will diminish. No matter how hard the society try, child labour will always exist until the need for it is removed. The development of the society is being held back by child labour. Children are growing up as illiterates because they have been working all of their life and not attending school. Sequential rate of poverty is formed and the need for child labour is reborn after every generation. Every society that is affected by this act of child labour, need to address the situation by dealing with the primary cause of child labour through the governmental policies and the enforcement of these policies. Only then will the society succeed in the fight against child labour.

Secondly, government should try improving schooling and health care in general will help child labourers because if children are healthy and well educated, they will grow to up to help their society which will become a

better place. For instance, making education compulsory and free will motivate most parents to send their children to schools, instead of engaging them in commercial jobs.

Finally, employers should not use child labour in ways that are socially unacceptable and that lead to a child losing his or her educational opportunities. The difficulty of the issue of child labour means that companies need to address the issue sensitively, and not take action which may force working children into more abusive forms of work.