

Concept note for a thematic session on

Addressing Child Labour in South Asia: Emerging insights from a cross-institutional collaboration

at the 5th Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labour, Durban, South Africa

Tuesday 17 May from 11:15 to 12:15 pm

Objective

To share preliminary insights, findings and joint messages on emerging lessons from the Asia Regional Child Labour Programme – which is generating key shared learning and sectoral collaboration across institutions, that will link directly into the Conference Call to Action. Since 2018, the programme has supported initiatives to build evidence on the drivers and causes of child labour in South Asia and to introduce a range of innovative interventions to reduce the vulnerability of children and protect them from exploitation.

Overview

Deep institutional and sectoral collaboration is needed in order to engage effectively with the complex, systemic problem of child labour. Despite this, and even whilst the SDGs are premised on coordinated and integrated approaches, real collaboration and integration is challenging to achieve in practice. Yet it remains critical to bring together international / UN agencies that focus on addressing policy, legislation and large-scale data gathering, with research that delivers comprehensive analysis (which might not be read easily or used by policy makers) and with civil society, which engages with local communities and children engaged in child labour (often through small-scale programmes that are rarely studied for connection to broader policies). Actions to deepen collaboration and foster synergies across these actors can help accelerate commitments and solutions.

This session will share insights into developing strong, collaborative approaches as well as lessons on promising approaches to building evidence on the root causes of child labour and innovative measures to addressing these, based on the experience of the multi-stakeholder FCDO-funded Asia Regional Child Labour Programme. Since 2018, this multi-level programme has been generating learning and shared understanding across institutions and sectors on tackling child labour in South Asia. It supports initiatives to build evidence on the drivers and root causes of child labour and pilots a range of innovative interventions to reduce the vulnerability of children and protect them from exploitation. The programme works in Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and some civil-society-led work in Myanmar, through three, primary delivery partners, each bringing a different area of expertise: the International Labour Organisation (ILO), UNICEF (Regional Office for South Asia and Office of Research-Innocent) and a civil society consortium led by the Institute for Development Studies (IDS).

The programme uses mixed methods, including participatory action research, large-scale surveys and in-depth analysis of the dynamics of particular supply and human chains, to identify the needs of the



most marginalised working children, including children living with disabilities, migrant children, and children in the worst forms of child labour. The programme explores a range of solutions across sectors including education, social and child protection (as well as those in response to Covid). Initial learning from programme partners has generated some clear joint messages - even at the halfway stage of the programme.

This side-event will share these emerging insights, findings and joint messages, contributing to the objectives of the Fifth Global Conference and its Call to Action around discussing challenges, viable solutions and actionable commitments for the elimination of child labour. In particular, the event will focus on how evidence can support policy making and interventions to tackle the worst forms of child labour, including:

- propositions on children's rights including the right to be heard and to participate
- evidence on the specific challenges faced by children in child labour
- the extent to which data can identify children's needs and characteristics
- the degree to which laws, policies, and child labour programmes on education, social protection, and child protection sectors are fit for purpose and can effectively accelerate change for children.

