

Concept note for a thematic session on

Vulnerabilities

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

Thursday 19 May 2022, 12.30 – 14.15

The Background

Child labour is partly driven by household vulnerabilities associated with poverty, risk and shocks. Poor households, without access to finance, health services, social protection, are less likely to be able to postpone children's involvement in work and invest in their education. Hence, they are more likely resort to child labour in order to meet basic needs and deal with uncertainty. Exposure to shocks can have a similar impact on household decisions. Continued progress against child labour and more particularly its worst forms will require national policies that help to make households less vulnerable to the effects of poverty and economic shocks.

Both the ILO Minimum Age for Admission to Employment Convention (No. 138) and the universally ratified ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No. 182) set legal boundaries for child labour and provide grounds for action to end it. Combating the worst forms of child labour (WFCL) does not override the imperative to end child labour in general. While children in hazardous work account for the overwhelming majority of those in the worst forms of child labour, other worst forms, including children in bonded and forced labour or in commercial sexual exploitation, need to be addressed as well.

A host of economic and social vulnerabilities exacerbate the risks and exposure to child labour and other human and labour rights violations, in particular extreme poverty, forced labour, trafficking in persons. In certain circumstances, it is characterised by a combination of factors linked to ethnicity, gender, age, geographic conditions, migration status, discrimination. Certain communities or population profiles are known to be more vulnerable than others and hence more exposed to human and labour rights violations.

Issues to be addressed

The panel presentations will examine what contextual, socio-political, and economic factors are at play in making communities or population vulnerable to child labour and, in particular, WFCL. The panel discussions will aim to understand and shed light on the complex root causes of child labour and its consequences in terms of perpetuating the cycle of poverty and situations of child labour. The panel will seek to open a discussion around solutions that will look at both, more immediate mitigation and longer term, multidimensional interventions that address root causes of child labour and its



vulnerability factors and contribute to reducing the occurrence of WFCL and other major rights violations.

The panel will address the following issues:

- First, the panel will reflect on the range of vulnerabilities at play in heightening the risk of child labour: poverty, inequality, gender and others. This will provide information on how the occurrence of the worst forms of child labour is grounded in specific vulnerabilities.
- The panel will then aim to delve deeper into one of the worst forms of child labour, that of Commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC). Other sectors with high vulnerability will also be considered.
- The issue of undocumented children and their vulnerability to child labour and trafficking in the context of migration.
- The panel will also examine some of the challenges, opportunities and progress in implementing ILO Convention 182 on eliminating the worst forms of child labour at national/federal level, e.g., by taking the example of a National/Federal Action Plan or a Roadmap on the elimination of child labour.

