

Concept note for a thematic session on

The Role of Education to Eliminate Child Labour

Access to Education - Key for Ending Child Labour

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

Tuesday 17 May from 12:30 to 14:15 pm

The Background

Globally, 160 million children aged 5 to 17 are in child labour. About half of them (79 million) perform hazardous work that places their health, safety, or moral development at risk. There has been an increase of 8.4 million children in the last four years, with 9 million additional children at risk of being pushed into child labour by the end of 2022 due to the impact of COVID-19.

There is a significant rise in the number of children aged 5-11 years in child labour, who now account for just over half of the total global figure, according to a new report by the International Labour Organization ILO and UNICEF. Involvement in child labour is higher for boys than girls in all ages, among all boys, 11.2 percent compared to 7.8 percent for all girls. However, when the definition for child labour expands to include household chores for 21 hours or more each week, the gender gap in prevalence among boys and girls aged 5 to 14 is reduced by almost half (Child Labour: Global estimates 2020, trends and the road forward - UNICEF DATA).

More than one third of children in child labour are completely outside the education system, and those that do attend are likely to perform poorly. There are now more children in child labour in sub-Saharan Africa than in the rest of the world combined. Schooling is a key factor in eliminating child labour. Many communities do not have enough schools, or do not view education as a good alternative to work. Economic hardship can lead to family dysfunction and, ultimately, child labour. Child labour results from poverty and economic instability which make it more likely that families will deprive their children an education by resorting to child labour. Sometimes, children seek work themselves because their families are financially strained. The agriculture sector accounts for 70% of child labour-- two-thirds of which is family-based. Today, tens of millions of family farms are functionally dependent on child labour.

Ending child labour and ensuring that children complete their education is a complex process, but it is within reach. The key components are enforcing legislation and investing in proven solutions, such as:

- Aligning the minimum working age with the end of compulsory schooling.
- Ensuring access to early childhood development services, childcare, and pre-primary education, which increase the chance that students not only stay in school but also succeed.

- Improving the overall quality of education and ensuring access to all children, including abolishing school fees and eliminating costs for books, uniforms and transport which often serves as deterrent for families to enroll and keep their children in school.
- Providing or increasing universal child benefits to address poverty as a driver to school leavings.
- Education sector leadership to support back to school campaigns and outreach, establish flexible school calendars and curricula to promote school attendance for all children (including children with disabilities, pregnant and young mothers, children engaged in hazardous or harmful work) This is of particular importance given the harmful impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education for school age children.

Issues to be addressed

- Share data on recent trends around child labour, drawing attention to a significant rise in the number of children aged 5-11 years and additional children at risk of being pushed into child labour by the end of 2022 due to the impact of COVID-19.
- Provide information on status of access to education and obstacles to enrollment in schools which has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic with a focus on support to households and education systems to enable returning to school and catching up on lost learning.
- Highlight the on-going importance of education for achieving SDG 8.7 and other SDG Goals that protect the rights of children, adolescents and women.
- Share examples of effective and high-impact interventions based in schools that help children to succeed in school and protect students from exploitation and harm.

