



UNICEF

Tackling the Crisis of Child Labour Worldwide



**TOYO MODEL
UNITED NATIONS**

INTRODUCTION TO THE CHAIRS

Greetings Delegates!

My name is Daniel Jonathan Parluhutan Pangaribuan or in short you may call me Daniel. I am currently working as a Trainee Officer Development Program with concentration in General Banking at the Indonesian State Bank (or in Indonesia we call it *Bank Negara Indonesia*). I have been in the MUN circuit since 2019 and it has been a roller coaster ride for me. I am hoping to see intense debate and exciting negotiations within the council. Remember that the fate of millions of impoverished children around the world lies within your resolution! *¡Hasta la victoria siempre!*

- **Daniel Jonathan Parluhutan Pangaribuan**

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to UNICEF at Toyo MUN! My name is Chok Jia Xuan, but everybody has known me as Chok ever since elementary school. I'm currently a third-year studying Anthropology at Okayama University with an interest in environmental activism and alternative knowledge systems. Last year's February marked my first exposure to MUN. In 4 months since I first started training, I attended 2 official MUNs and one joint-training session - it has been a good brain-cell-burning phase for me where I also got to meet a lot of crazy people. So, here's my message for all the new MUN-ers here: give yourself some spice in life, play your role to the fullest, and don't forget to have fun! This will be my first-time chairing, and I'm beyond excited to hear what kind of debate you all will bring to the table.

- **Chok Jia Xuan**

Hi Delegates!

My name is Dasha Rhenaldi Arne Wibowo but everyone calls me Arne. I am a second-year student in ITS University studying Biomedical Engineering. Joined the MUN circuit in last year's Toyo MUN and now I'm back here for my first-time chairing. MUNs have a special place in my heart for lots of reasons but it's mostly because I enjoy the thrill of debate. I look forward to seeing all the amazing discussions that are going to take place and for the first timers reading this, make sure you have fun!

- **Dasha Rhenaldi Arne Wibowo**

INTRODUCTION TO THE COUNCIL

Historical Background

The United Nations Children's Fund or UNICEF is a special program of the United Nations (UN) devoted to aiding national efforts to improve the health, nutrition, education, and general welfare of children and women. One might ask why the acronym for the United Nations Children's Fund is not UNCF but UNICEF? This is because the organisation was originally known as the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund. It was created in 1946 by the UN to provide emergency food and healthcare to children and mothers in countries devastated by World War II - regardless of the country's role in the war. Since its establishment, UNICEF has been active in more than 190 countries and territories to bring life-saving and long-term support to children whose lives and futures are endangered by conflict, crises, poverty, inequality, and discrimination.

Structure and Membership

The Executive Board is the governing body of UNICEF, providing intergovernmental support and oversight to the organisation in policymaking, programs development, and financial management in accordance with the overall policy guidance of the United Nations General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. It comprises 36 members, representing the five regional groups of Member States at the United Nations - the African Group, Asia-Pacific Group, Eastern European Group, Latin American and Caribbean Group, and Western European and Others Group. The organisational structure includes divisions and departments that focus on specific program areas, such as health, education, child protection, and emergency response.

Mandates and Power

In 1950, UNICEF's mandate was extended from its war-responsive origins to advocate for the protection of children's rights, to help meet their basic needs, and to expand their opportunities so that they reach their full potential. Hence, they often find themselves centring long-term development programs on the needs of the most disadvantaged children - those living in conflict zones and poverty-stricken areas, those facing various forms of exploitation and violence, those affected by the symptoms of rapid urbanisation and environmental degradation, and those with disabilities.

Since 1996, UNICEF programs have been guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history and has helped transform children's lives around the world. The Convention affirms the right of all children to "the

enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health.” UNICEF strives to establish this statement as enduring ethical principles and international standards of behaviour toward all children. UNICEF also aims to promote gender equality through its country programmes by supporting women and girls in their participation in the political, social, and economic development of their communities.

By promoting the ratification and supporting the implementation of the Convention and its Optional Protocols, UNICEF plays a significant role in strengthening laws and policies as well as raising awareness of the Convention at all levels of society. The scope of their responsibilities include:

- Supporting governments to enact the Convention through laws and policies, which can include providing institutional and professional capacity development;
- Engaging and participating in different stages of the monitoring process such as assisting governments in organising major consultations prior to drafting their reports;
- Supporting the [UN Committee on the Rights of the Child](#) such as reviewing the Committee’s submitted reports;
- Working with governments to identify implementation strategies in response to the Committee’s recommendations;
- Ensuring that marginalised voices are reflected in the information presented to the Committee.

Today, UNICEF continues to play a pivotal role in all aspects of social issues where the well-being of children is concerned. This includes, but not limited to, overlooking child health, providing safe water and sanitation, ensuring quality education and capacity-building, supporting HIV prevention and treatment for mothers and babies, protecting children and adolescents from various forms of violence and exploitation, and bolstering climate resilience amongst children.

INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC

Child labor has been a long-standing issue in human history. While we have made significant strides as a global community to address the prevalence of child labor, our progress has stalled and has even worsened due to the global pandemic. Which adds around 9 million more children at risk of child labor on top of the 160 million that are exposed to it by 2020 (UNICEF & ILO, 2021). That means that almost 1 in 10 children worldwide are subjected to child labor with the number being closer to 1 in 5 children for the world's poorest countries (UNICEF, 2023).

The impact of the pandemic has worsened many of the root causes towards child labor with the number of children in poverty increasing by about 142 million. Due to this, many families have been forced to use child labor to survive. With the closing of schools during the pandemic, many children were also put into increased risk of participating in child labor (UNICEF & ILO, 2021).

The agricultural sector is one of the biggest venues of child labor; accounting for 70% of all children in child labor. Many of which are found in sub-Saharan Africa, where children often work in the cocoa industry (UNICEF & ILO, 2021). Other than the agricultural sectors, children are often employed in other industries such as in the garment and footwear industries where in countries like Bangladesh, 11% of the workers are from out of school children (UNICEF, 2020).

Certain types of child labor however, need to be regarded with higher priority. In the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999, held by the International Labor Organization (ILO), the worst forms of child labor are defined as:

- All forms of slavery, trafficking, or compulsory labor of children;
- The use and trade of children for prostitution;
- The use of children for illicit activities;
- Work that is in nature likely to harm children.

Even with these conventions in place, research shows that in 2021, around 357 million children are living under armed conflict and directly take part in at least 18 of those conflicts. This highlights a major issue as armed groups often employ physical and sexual abuse when recruiting children (U.S. Department of Labor, 2020). Outside of conflict zones, most children also experience abuse with a study in Iran showing that 77.6% of child laborers there experience at least one type of abuse (Jalili Moayad et al., 2021).

The main underlying reason for child labor is poverty. Many families depend on their children's extra income as a means to survive. This inherent dependence towards children's income also manifests itself in culture and people's views on child labor. Other times, families are locked

in a predatory cycle of debt called bonded labor as a method of exploitation. In countries such as Pakistan, millions of people, including children.

AREAS OF THE DEBATE

Defining Child Labor

The International labor organization defines child labor by two factors; work that is mentally, physically, socially, or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and/or interferes with their schooling by: depriving them of the opportunity to attend school; obliging them to leave school prematurely; or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work (ILO, 2004). While that definition generally describes the types of child labor that we are used to, many children around the world are exposed to more discrete types of child labor; usually under the pretence of working for the family. A study shows that around 30% of African children and 11% of Asian children engage in more than 15 hours of discrete child labor in a week (Webbink et al., 2012).

Besides economic factors, child labor is often done due to cultural norms which makes child labor acceptable in many societies. Where even economically stable families engage in some form of child labor. The employment of children however is not necessarily viewed as harmful as it is often done as a form of training for children to be working adults. These types of activities are named 'Child Work'. Which is defined as all productive activities that are carried out by children (either in a family business or common market; remunerated or not) that last for a minimum of 1 h duration within a day. These two definitions often overlap and change from country to country, where looser definitions often risk promoting and legitimizing child labor (Abdullah et al., 2022). These types of norms are not only present in developing nations as countries such as the US have been moving towards looser child work laws (Gourarie, 2024) as a means of preparing children for the workforce.

Addressing quality education and social protection for children

It is widely known that the best way to keep children out of child labor practices is by sending them to school. Where the lack of effective education systems has been shown to both be the cause and effect of child labor (Mondal et al., 2016). However, sending children to school is not as simple as building schools or other infrastructure. The main underlying problem lies in the fact that in many countries, child labor is an important supplement towards families with a study in Bangladesh showing that a majority of children engage in work for economic reasons (Quattri & Watkins, 2019). Children freed from child labor may also find it difficult to adapt to school environments resulting in dropouts and grade repeats. This causes families to think that schooling is not worth the effort.

Another thing to highlight regarding education for children is its accessibility for marginalized groups such as migrants. In the US alone, the New York Times reports that more than 250,000

minors have entered the country with a majority of them ending up with a full-time job. Even kids aged 14 years old find themselves working a construction job (Dreier & Luce, 2023). The lack of accessibility for schooling and other social protection allows these children to be exploited even in first-world countries.

Effects of a consumerist culture

Everything arises from demand and the exploitation of children in the workforce is no different. The global demand of the fashion industry grows in tandem with the industry itself; projected to rise up to \$2.25 trillion in 2025 (Centobelli et al., 2022). With demands like these, companies are pushing for faster and cheaper ways of producing textiles and in turn resort to the exploitation of workers, employing them in 'sweatshops'. Due to this, low-income countries such as India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh fill in the demand for fast fashion through child labor and low safety standards. In the fashion industry, children are often targeted as they are better at working with things that require precision (Baruta, 2021).

It is important to realize that the brands responsible for these types of exploitation are very much well known. A 2023 benchmark of over 60 of the world's biggest apparel and footwear shows that almost half of the benchmarked companies have forced labor allegations. Trends from 2021 also show that there has barely been any improvement in regards to the ethical sourcing of items (Know the Chain, 2023). As long as consumers demand cheap fashion, the free market will always find ways to cut corners. A multifaceted approach from governments, investors, and observers is needed to properly remedy this situation, however it cannot be denied that the consumer itself plays a big role in perpetuating the use of child labor in many industries.

Effects of neoliberal policies

Questions surrounding whom neoliberalism benefited and whether it has reduced or encouraged child labor have become a widely discussed topic as it has come to characterise the development trend around the world. States have increasingly embraced market-friendly policies such as establishing "business friendly" regulatory environments, encouraging privatisation through decreasing state presence, and promoting free-market policies and global trade to spur innovation and economic growth. However, as neoliberal approaches to economic policy increasingly become the norm, so did contempt against human trafficking for the purposes of labor exploitation (Peksen, Blanton, & Blanton, 2017). Free trade agreements such as NAFTA and the Structural Adjustment Programs created by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have given the impression that economic globalisation will reduce the need for families to send their children to work as income opportunities flourish, but the potential human rights costs of widening inequality and poverty were also part of the debate. For example, child labor rates in Bangladesh have significantly decreased after adopting neoliberal economic policies as its macroeconomic gains may have facilitated the promotion of education programs that encouraged schooling (Ettinger, 2013), yet the attention being paid to schooling might have been influenced by wider trends in promoting education opportunities for all.

Structural and intergenerational poverty

Often seen as a vicious and never-ending cycle, structural and intergenerational poverty are reasons why many children become subjected to harsh labor work, in which their goal is to just live their life day by day, trying to make ends meet. Some might argue that such difficult conditions bring a new set of skills to these working children, where they get to learn different sets of skills they would not learn in classrooms (Mintz, 1996), but some might contest against such statements to expound on the horrors of child labor with respect to their mortality, well-being, and socio-economic security (Hope, 2005). However, it is clear that child labor is a symptom of much wider and expansive social, political, and environmental issues such as huge disparity in resource distribution, poor social protection, gender biases, vulnerability to climate disasters and political conflicts (De Schutter, Frazer, & Marlier, 2023). While tending to the symptoms of an issue is important, the root aspects of child labor demand closer scrutiny.

PAST ACTIONS

Convention Concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment, 1973

The Convention Concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment, 1973 or more commonly known as the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 is the convention ratified by International Labour Organization (ILO) Member States to help each respective Member State formulate their respective national policy to align and ensure the effective abolition of child labour and raise the minimum age for working admission or employment (International Labour Organization, 1973). As of 2023, 176 nations have ratified the Minimum Age Convention, of 1973.

Convention Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999

The Convention Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999 or more commonly known as the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 is the convention ratified by ILO Member States to define and ensure the global elimination on the worst forms of child labour, such as child slavery, prostitution, other criminal activities (such as drug trafficking and etc) and other dangerous labours (such as child soldiers, child pornography and etc) (International Labour Organization, 1999). As of 2023, 187 nations have ratified the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999. The United Nations Special Rapporteur monitors the compliance of the Convention on the Sale and Sexual Exploitation of Children which is under the supervision of the United Nations Human Rights Council.

International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour

The International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) is a programme run by ILO. The programme has been on the run since 1992 and is aimed to progressively eliminate all forms of child labour by 2025. The programme has supervised operations to achieve its goals in 88 countries and is the biggest programme led by the ILO (International Labour Organization, n.d).

BLOC POSITIONS

Strong Law Enforcement Capability

Nations that have a strong law enforcement capability tend to be proactive in monitoring and tackling child labour. We can see this with the example of Trinidad and Tobago which has a Steering Committee for the Prevention and Elimination of Child Labour and the Labour Inspectorate Unit under the Ministry of Labour to develop the national action plan for child labour and child labour protocol (Ministry of Labour, 2021). Nations that have strong law enforcement capabilities have the capacity to help nations with medium and weak law enforcement capability but must be careful to not harm their foreign policy and interest.

Medium Law Enforcement Capability

Nations that have a medium law enforcement capability are active in monitoring and tackling child labour in their respective areas, examples of nations that have a medium law enforcement capability are Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam. Nations with medium law enforcement capability although have the potential to be proactive in monitoring and tackling child labour on the world stage, must be careful to not overexert, overstretch or overextend their capability on doing so.

Weak Law Enforcement Capability

Nations that have a weak law enforcement capability are struggling to monitor and tackle child labour in their own country, examples of nations with weak law enforcement capability are Eritrea, Ethiopia, and India. The root causes of nations with weak law enforcement capability are the endemic corruption, social upheaval, underpayment of law enforcement officers with noncompliance to previous agreements and conventions in regard to child labour made the country almost incapable of tackling the issue. Nations with weak law enforcement capabilities need nations with strong and medium law enforcement capabilities to tackle child labour, however, must be careful about maintaining their sovereignty while doing so.

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