

Committee: SF2 - Child Labor

Issue: The issue of children working for fast fashion companies

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### Introduction:

According to the UN, the term “child labour” is defined as a type of “work for which the child is either too young – work done below the required minimum age – or work which, because of its detrimental nature or conditions, is altogether considered unacceptable for children and is prohibited”. This type of work is often classified as the most dangerous or the most harmful types of work. By dangerous, not only is it physically dangerous, it can be mentally, socially and morally harmful too. This is not to be confused with the participation of children or adolescents above the minimum age for admission to employment in work that does not affect their health and personal development or interfere with their schooling as this is definitely a positive thing. No child wants to be a part of child labour, it is not something in their control. Most child workers are obtained through child trafficking. Child labour has become one of the biggest issues recently, more and more children, as young as the age of eight or seven forced to work in the worst conditions at the risk of their own life. Their life conditions decrease severely and they are subjected to physical abuse. The work environment these children suffer in commonly causes diseases such as malnutrition, fatigue, anemia etc. It can even go so far it causes different types of cancer. In our day, we see child workers the most in the fashion industry. These may be cotton field workers or factory workers. Some of your favorite fashion brands might be using child laborers. H&M, a well-known textile company, was revealed to have child workers in two of their factories in Myanmar. This had been going on since 2013 but was only discovered recently. About 90% of the roughly 300,000 workers in the fashion industry are young women, who work up to 11 hours a day. Sadly, H&M isn't the only one...

### Definition of key terms:

**Developing country**: a poor agricultural country that is seeking to become more advanced economically and socially.

**Child Labour**: the employment of children in an industry or business, especially when illegal or considered exploitative.

**Hazardous Work**: work which is likely to jeopardise the health, safety or morals of a child, and sets the minimum age for such employment at the age of 18 years.

**Harmful Work**: work that is likely to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development

**ILO**: an organization working to eliminate rates of child labor

**UNICEF:** A Non-Government funded organisation that works to free children from work

**Bonded child:** phenomenon of children working in conditions of servitude in order to pay off a debt

**LDC:** Least developed country

### Background Information:

All countries should aim for getting rid of child labour. 51 countries use child labour in a minimum of one section of their textile supply chains. Half a million children are forced to work in producing cotton seeds for garments. Children working in this sector are forced to have fake IDs or no birth certificates.

Uzbekistan's issue: In Uzbekistan, for two months of each year, the government will force 1.5-2 million school children as old as nine to miss class to help harvest cotton. These children will work from early morning until late in the evening. They live in horrible conditions with poor hygiene. Due to this, they will often contract illnesses. These children receive little to no pay. If the children do not collect as much as fifty kilos of cotton per day, they are threatened with bad grades and expulsion from school. Migrant children are less protected in these situations, therefore they are more common. This same issue takes place in Turkmenistan. Truckloads of children every year will go to the cotton fields

Although child labour has increased in numbers recently, it is not a new phenomenon. It was quite popular in the UK and other countries since the beginning of the 20th century. The term "child labour" was originally coined from the US from when children were forced to work in exploitative factory conditions. As an attempt to go against child labour, many schools were established. For instance, in the U.S. where industrialization impacted school development, there was a conspicuous increase in the number of formal schools during the 1880s-1890s; twice as many formal schools as professional schools were constructed.

Chart 1:

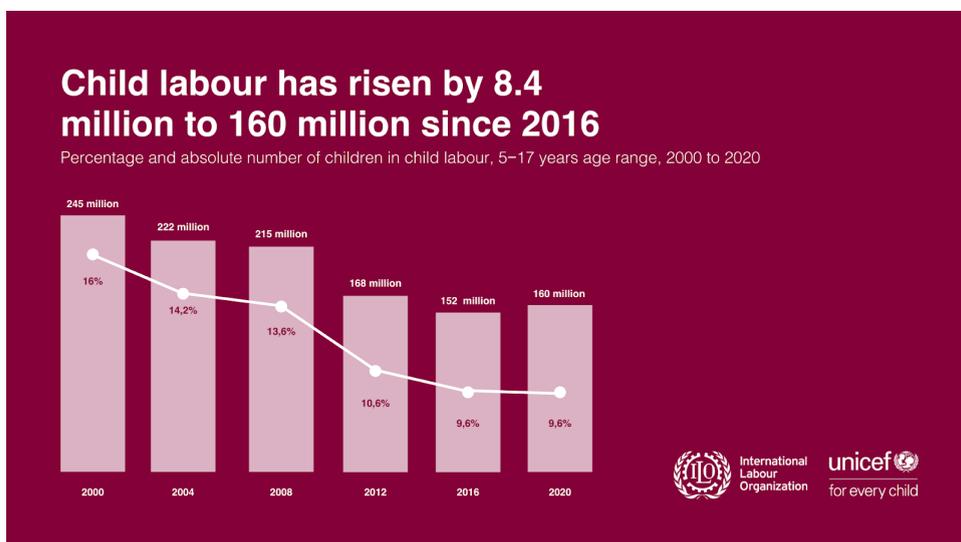
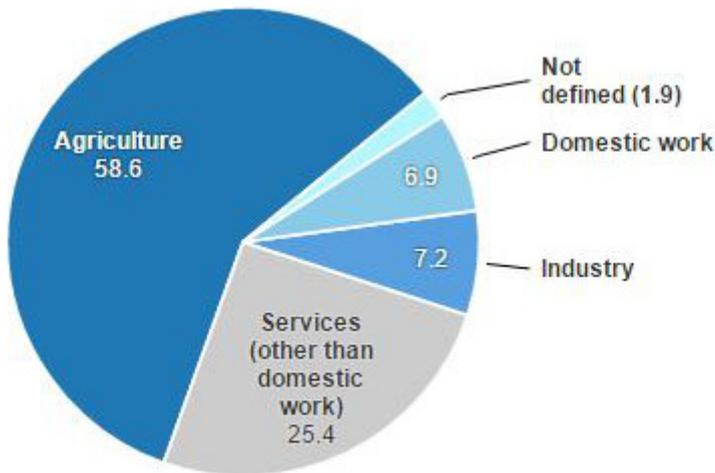


Chart 2:



Involved countries and organizations:

**ILO:** ILO (International Labour Organization) is an organization which has a programme called IPEC (International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour) working to eliminate rates of child trafficking. IPEC currently has operations in 88 countries, with an annual expenditure on technical cooperation projects that reached over US\$61 million in 2008. It is the largest programme of its kind globally and the biggest single operational programme of the ILO.

**UNICEF:** UNICEF is a non- governmental organization working alongside ILO to decrease rates of child labor. UNICEF also works with their United Nations partners and the European Union on initiatives that reach 13 countries across Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America. UNICEF helps countries develop and implement comprehensive programs to address child labor, from legal and policy frameworks, to increasing government capacity, to promoting positive social change and challenging cultural norms that underpin child labor.

**Countries with the most Child workers in the fashion industry:**

**India** (5.8 million)

**Bangladesh** (5.0 million)

**Pakistan** (3.4 million)

**Nepal** (2.0 million)

**Uzbekistan** (2.0 million)

## Egypt (1.0 million)

### Timeline of events/laws:

EVENT/LAW	DATE	AIM
Minimum age convention	1973	Aims to set the general minimum age for legal work to be 15
Medical Examination of Young Persons (Industry) Convention	1946	Aims to control underage workers to see if they are healthy enough to work.
Night Work of Young Persons (Industry) Convention (Revised)	1948	Aims to decrease work shift hours for persons under the age of 18.
Worst forms of child labour convention	1999	Aims for the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour
First world day against child labour	5 June 2002	Aims to bring awareness to child labour

### Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue:

Sustainable Development Goals: The Eighth Goal in the UN's 2030 Agenda for the international community calls for the abolishment of any and all forms of child labor.

### Possible solutions:

1. Investing in education systems and making schools more accessible.
2. Buying companies can work with civil society organizations
3. Enable workers to stand up for their rights
4. Responsible purchasing practices

### Useful Links:

- <https://www.un.org/en/observances/world-day-against-child-labour>
- <https://www.ilo.org/ankara/projects/child-labour/lang--en/index.htm>
- <https://shapecharity.org/2021/07/19/child-labour-in-the-fashion-industry/>
- [Ending child labour by 2025:](#)
- [CHILD LABOUR](#)

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