Child Labour

Edited by Justin Healey

ISSUES IN SOCIETY
Child Labour

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Child Labour is Volume 413 in the ‘Issues in Society’ series of educational resource books. The aim of this series is to offer current, diverse information about important issues in our world, from an Australian perspective.

KEY ISSUES IN THIS TOPIC
It is estimated that 168 million boys and girls work as child labourers in farms, fields, factories, homes, streets and battlefields around the world. A staggering 85 million are engaged in illegal, hazardous work which is harmful to physical, mental, spiritual, moral and educational development.

What is the extent of child slavery around the world, and what are the industries which exploit children? This book tackles the myths and misunderstandings surrounding child labour and explains the international labour standards and approaches aimed at eventually eliminating the exploitation of children.

The book also measures global progress in reducing child exploitation, including the role of Australian companies and consumers in ensuring the goods they produce and purchase meet minimum age standards. Child labour is everyone’s business.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION
Titles in the ‘Issues in Society’ series are individual resource books which provide an overview on a specific subject comprised of facts and opinions.

The information in this resource book is not from any single author, publication or organisation. The unique value of the ‘Issues in Society’ series lies in its diversity of content and perspectives.

The content comes from a wide variety of sources and includes:
- Newspaper reports and opinion pieces
- Website fact sheets
- Magazine and journal articles
- Statistics and surveys
- Government reports
- Literature from special interest groups

CRITICAL EVALUATION
As the information reproduced in this book is from a number of different sources, readers should always be aware of the origin of the text and whether or not the source is likely to be expressing a particular bias or agenda.

It is hoped that, as you read about the many aspects of the issues explored in this book, you will critically evaluate the information presented. In some cases, it is important that you decide whether you are being presented with facts or opinions. Does the writer give a biased or an unbiased report? If an opinion is being expressed, do you agree with the writer?

EXPLORING ISSUES
The ‘Exploring issues’ section at the back of this book features a range of ready-to-use worksheets relating to the articles and issues raised in this book. The activities and exercises in these worksheets are suitable for use by students at middle secondary school level and beyond.

FURTHER RESEARCH
This title offers a useful starting point for those who need convenient access to information about the issues involved. However, it is only a starting point. The ‘Web links’ section at the back of this book contains a list of useful websites which you can access for more reading on the topic.
WHAT IS CHILD LABOUR?

This fact sheet was reproduced courtesy of the International Labour Organization

Considerable differences exist between the many kinds of work children do. Some are difficult and demanding, others are more hazardous and even morally reprehensible. Children carry out a very wide range of tasks and activities when they work.

Defining child labour

Not all work done by children should be classified as child labour that is to be targeted for elimination. Children’s or adolescents’ participation in work that does not affect their health and personal development or interfere with their schooling, is generally regarded as being something positive. This includes activities such as helping their parents around the home, assisting in a family business or earning pocket money outside school hours and during school holidays. These kinds of activities contribute to children’s development and to the welfare of their families; they provide them with skills and experience, and help to prepare them to be productive members of society during their adult life.

The term ‘child labour’ is often defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development.

It refers to work that:
- Is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children, and
- 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.

In its most extreme forms, child labour involves children being enslaved, separated from their families, exposed to serious hazards and illnesses and/or left to fend for themselves on the streets of large cities – often at a very early age. Whether or not particular forms of ‘work’ can be called ‘child labour’ depends on the child’s age, the type and hours of work performed,
Child labour takes many different forms, a priority is to eliminate without delay the worst forms of child labour as defined by Article 3 of ILO Convention No. 182:

a. All forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict

b. The use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances

c. The use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties

d. Work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.

Labour that jeopardises the physical, mental or moral wellbeing of a child, either because of its nature or because of the conditions in which it is carried out, is known as ‘hazardous work’.

What are the causes of child labour?

Child labour is often present where the enforcement of laws against child labour is limited, where social protection for children and families is lacking, particularly free, quality education, where poverty is endemic, and where the rule of law is poor. In addition, there are a range of contextual factors that contribute to heightened risk of child labour impacts. Within contexts where child labour occurs, there are both ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors leading to a child being more likely to become a child labourer.

The following information builds on a more extensive discussion of the causes of child labour in ILO-IOE guides for employers. It includes general contextual factors that heighten the overall risk of child labour impacts, as well as specific push and pull factors.

Causes and general contextual factors include:
- Poor enforcement of child labour laws
- Inadequate social protections
- Lack of quality education for the poor
- Endemic poverty
- Weak rule of law
- Absence of systems for workplace collaboration
- Large parts of the economy are informal
- Rural areas with inadequate infrastructure.

Push factors include:
- Household and community poverty
- Economic shocks (e.g. unanticipated health problems)
- Social acceptance of child labour
- Insufficient educational opportunities and/or social or bureaucratic barriers to education
- Discrimination in access to schooling or certain jobs
- Lack of parental guidance and support.

Pull factors include:
- Attraction of earning an income
- Unregulated enterprises in informal economy
- Unprotected migrants seeking income earning opportunities
- Family enterprises that rely on their children’s work because they are not able to employ adult labour
- Certain work that is commonly organised such that it can be performed only by children (e.g. artisanal mining without proper equipment to dig shafts large enough for adults)
- Hiring practices of recruitment or employment agencies or approaches by individual labour brokers.

NOTE

CHILD LABOUR: PROTECTION FROM VIOLENCE, EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

CHILD LABOUR IS PREVENTABLE – NOT INEVITABLE – ACCORDING TO THIS FACT SHEET INFORMATION FROM UNICEF

Despite a steady decline in child labour, progress is far too slow. At current rates, more than 100 million children will still be trapped in child labour by 2020.

**Definition**

According to the 2008 Resolution II adopted during the 18th International Conference of Labour Statisticians, the term ‘child labour’ covers:

- The worst forms of child labour, including slavery; prostitution and pornography; illicit activities; and work likely to harm children’s health, safety or morals, as defined in ILO Convention No. 182.
- Employment below the minimum age of 15, as established in ILO Convention No. 138.
- Hazardous unpaid household services, including household chores performed for long hours, in an unhealthy environment, in dangerous locations, and involving unsafe equipment or heavy loads.

Millions of children around the world are trapped in child labour, depriving them of their childhood, their health and education, and condemning them to a life of poverty and want.

Of course, there is work that children do to help their families in ways that are neither harmful nor exploitative. But many children are stuck in unacceptable work for children – a serious violation of their rights.

Recent global estimates based on data of UNICEF, the ILO and the World Bank indicate that 168 million children aged 5 to 17 are engaged in child labour. Some 120 million among them are below the age of 14, while a further 30 million children in this age group – mostly girls – perform unpaid household chores within their own families.

In addition, millions of children suffer in the other worst forms of child labour, including slavery and slavery-like practices such as forced and bonded labour and child soldiering, sexual exploitation, or are used by adults in illicit activities, including drug trafficking.

Despite a steady decline in child labour, progress is far too slow. At current rates, more than 100 million children will still be trapped in child labour by 2020. The continuing persistence of child labour poses a threat to national economies and has severe negative short- and long-term consequences for the fulfilment of children’s rights guaranteed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) – including denial of education and frequent exposure to violence.

Child labour spans various sectors, including agriculture, manufacturing, quarrying and mining, and domestic service. Often, it is hidden from the public eye. For example, the estimated 15.5 million child domestic workers worldwide – mostly girls – are often hardly visible and face many hazards. Child labour is the combined product of many factors, such as poverty, social norms condoning it, lack of decent work opportunities for adults and adolescents, migration, and emergencies.

Child labour reinforces inter-generational cycles of poverty, undermines national economies and impedes achieving progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (see 2010 Outcome document of the MDG summit, p.13). It is not only a cause, but also a consequence.
of social inequities reinforced by discrimination. Children from indigenous groups or lower castes are more likely to drop out of school to work. Migrant children are also vulnerable to hidden and illicit labour.

Child labour is preventable, not inevitable. UNICEF believes that effective action against child labour requires children to be placed squarely at the centre of programmes designed to protect children’s rights. Looking at child labour through a broader lens – addressing the full range of children’s vulnerabilities and protection challenges – comes as a result of the recognition that these wider concerns are not always fully addressed in action against child labour.

UNICEF supports the 2010 Roadmap for achieving the elimination of the worst forms of child labour by 2016 and its follow-up Brasilia Declaration on Child Labour (2013) which provide guidance for an integrated response to child labour. UNICEF supports communities in changing their cultural acceptance of child labour, while supporting strategies and programming to provide alternative income to families, access to nurseries, quality education, and protective services. UNICEF works with governments to strengthen the application of national laws and regulate the working conditions of children old enough to work. At the policy level, UNICEF assists governments to provide support to child workers; promote decent youth employment; include child labour concerns in national education plans; and make social protection systems ‘child-sensitive’.

In various countries and regions, UNICEF and partners have strengthened child protection systems, which have led to a comprehensive response to children’s issues. In turn, this has resulted in decreased child labour and an overall improvement of children’s wellbeing.

- In Burkina Faso, UNICEF, in partnership with government and civil society partners, developed a project to provide children working in artisanal gold mines with a comprehensive package of social resources and service. The package included support for schooling, vocational training, and literacy in their communities, accompanied by income generating activities for mothers. The project has contributed to more than 15,000 child workers leaving the artisanal mines.

- In Nepal, UNICEF collaborates with local government to develop district and

Child labour reinforces intergenerational cycles of poverty, undermines national economies and impedes achieving progress towards the Millennium Development Goals. It is not only a cause, but also a consequence of social inequities reinforced by discrimination.
municipality plans for eliminating child labour. As a result, more than 9,000 children, who had been in child labour and without family care, were provided with goods and services for their successful rehabilitation and reintegration services (including shelter, food, clothes, medical assistance, counselling, mediation with parents and employers, and legal support) and reunited with their families. After family reunification, children were given education support or vocational training, and families were offered help to increase their family income to reduce the risk of the child returning to labour.

• In Bolivia, UNICEF strengthened links between different levels of government and provided advice during the drafting of legislation to establish a minimum age for employment and protection for International standards and instruments

Three widely-ratified United Nations international conventions (see below) lay the groundwork for international and legal laws governing when and how children can work. These standards do not forbid all employment of people under the age of 18, rather they define what work constitutes ‘child labour’ – that is, work which interferes with schooling, forces a child to leave school prematurely, or is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children.

ILO Convention No.138 on the minimum age, 1973
- Sets minimum ages for various types of work
- Ratified and implemented by 168 countries
- Exemptions for developing countries exist, but few have applied them.

ILO Convention No.182 on the worst forms of child labour, 1999
- Defines certain types of child labour as the ‘worst forms’, which should be abolished as a matter of priority
- Most rapidly ratified ILO Convention with 179 ratifying countries
- Adhering countries should develop ‘hazardous work lists’ that identify activities that should not be carried out by anyone under 18.

ILO MNE Declaration, 1977
- Guidance for multinational companies, governments and employers’ and workers’ organisations
- First ILO instrument to directly address companies
- Contains provisions on minimum age and worst forms of child labour.

ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, 1998
- Commits countries to respect, promote and realise fundamental principles and rights, whether or not they have ratified the relevant ILO Conventions
- Includes principles concerning the fundamental rights in Conventions No.138 and No.182 regarding child labour
- Referenced in the UNGPs
- Many companies have committed to its implementation.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989
- United Nations treaty
- Most ratified UN treaty (194 countries)
- Covers a broad set of children’s rights, including child labour.

NOTES


Child Labour is preventable, not inevitable. UNICEF believes that effective action against child labour requires children to be placed squarely at the centre of programmes designed to protect children’s rights.
adolescent workers. UNICEF, the Departmental Service of Social Management of Santa Cruz, and the Bolivian Institute of Foreign Trade also launched an advocacy campaign to eradicate child labour in sugarcane harvests.

UNICEF also works with employers and the private sector to assess and address the impact of their supply chain and business practices upon children, and promote programmes that contribute to the elimination of child labour through sustainable solutions to address its root causes.

UNICEF also partners with civil society organisations to support a holistic child protection approach to child labour, contribute to the evidence base on child labour through research and data collection, and advocate across all stakeholders to end child labour.

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There are some 5.5 million children in slavery or practices similar to slavery, explains Anti-Slavery International.

Despite the fact that many people believe that slavery no longer exists, the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimated that there are some 5.5 million children in slavery or practices similar to slavery.

They are all in child slavery, as defined by the 1956 UN Supplementary Slavery Convention. In these cases, as well as being in a hazardous situation, there is an intention to exploit these children for someone else’s gain.

This group of children includes:

- Children who are used by others who profit from them, often through violence, abuse and threats, in prostitution or pornography, illicit activities, such as forced begging, petty theft, and the drug trade
- Forced child labour, for example in agriculture, factories, construction, brick kilns, mines, bars, restaurants or tourists environment
- Children who are forced to take part in armed conflict. They don’t only include child soldiers but also porters or girls taken as ‘wives’ for soldiers and militia members. According to UNICEF there are about 300,000 child soldiers involved in over 30 areas of conflict worldwide, some even younger than 10 years old. Children involved in conflict are severely affected by their experiences and can suffer from long-term trauma
- Child domestic workers, many of whom are forced to work long hours, in hazardous and often abusive environments, for little or no pay, and often far from home.

HOW BIG IS THE PROBLEM?

- There are 168 million child labourers aged between 5 and 17 years old (ILO 2012). This is considerably less than the estimated 215 million in 2008.
- Around five per cent of child labourers are estimated to be in the worst forms of child labour (ILO 2010).
- Worldwide, 5.5 million children are in slavery, trafficking, debt bondage and other forms of forced labour, forced recruitment for armed conflict, prostitution, pornography and other illicit activities (ILO 2012).
**CHILD WORK, CHILD LABOUR, CHILD SLAVERY?**
The terms around exploitation of children can be quite confusing so here is a short explanation:

**Child work**
Some types of work make useful, positive contributions to a child’s development. Work can help children learn and develop particular skills that will benefit them and the rest of society. Often, work is a vital source of income that enables children to help sustain their families.

**Child labour**
According to the ILO, however, there are over 200 million child labourers around the world. Child labour is not slavery, but nevertheless hinders children’s education, development and future livelihoods. For example, children who are working below the legal minimum age for employment.

**Worst forms of child labour**
Of the children in child labour, some five per cent are engaged in ‘hazardous work’, otherwise known as the worst forms of child labour (ILO, 2012). This is work that irreversibly threatens children’s health and development, through, for example, exposure to dangerous machinery or toxic substances, and may even endanger their lives. The worst forms of child labour also include the 5.5 million children in slavery and slavery-like practices, who are also subject to exploitation by others, and are the priority for us all to address.

**Child trafficking**
Trafficking involves transporting people away from the communities in which they live, by the threat or use of violence, deception, or coercion so they can be exploited for sex or labour. When children are trafficked, no violence, deception or coercion needs to be involved, it is merely the act of transporting them into exploitative work which constitutes trafficking. The vulnerability of these children is very serious, often they do not have contact with their families and are at the mercy of their employers.

**Child marriage**
Marriage involving children under 18 years old remains a widely culturally accepted practice in many corners of the globe. Estimates suggest that 11 per cent of women aged between 20 and 24 worldwide were married before reaching the age of 15 (UNICEF 2012).

Child marriage can operate as a shield behind which slavery and slavery-like practices occur with apparent impunity. Although many marriages involving children will not amount to slavery, particularly between couples aged 16 to 18 years, many married children can experience levels of suffering, coercion and control that meet international legal definitions of slavery and slavery-like practices.

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NEW ILO STUDY POINTS TO THE LONG-TERM IMPACT OF CHILD LABOUR

A new International Labour Organization report shows the need for coherent policies tackling child labour and the lack of decent jobs for youth together

Around 20 to 30 per cent of children in low-income countries complete their schooling and enter the labour market by the age of 15, says a new ILO report prepared for World Day against Child Labour. Most of these children were in child labour before.

The World Report on Child Labour 2015: Paving the way to decent work for young people shows that young persons who were burdened by work as children are consistently more likely to have to settle for unpaid family jobs and are more likely to be in low paying jobs.

“Our new report shows the need for a coherent policy approach that tackles child labour and the lack of decent jobs for youth together. Keeping children in school and receiving a good education until at least the minimum age of employment will determine the whole life of a child. It is the only way for a child to acquire the basic knowledge and skills needed for further learning, and for her or his future working life,” ILO Director-General Guy Ryder said.

To take up this challenge, 2014 Nobel Peace Prize co-Laureate Kailash Satyarthi who will address the ILO’s International Labour Conference on 11 June, calls for a change of mindsets: “When we consider our biological children, we think that they are born to become doctors, engineers, and professors – the whole world is for them. But when we talk about other children, we think, OK, they are poor children, let them work, we will slowly help them. Let us consider all children our children.”

Main findings

The report addresses the twin challenges of eliminating child labour and ensuring decent work for young people. Based on a 12 country survey, it examines the future careers of former child labourers and early school leavers.

The main findings of the report are that:

- Prior involvement in child labour is associated with lower educational attainment, and later in life with jobs that fail to meet basic decent work criteria
- Early school leavers are less likely to secure stable jobs and are at greater risk of remaining outside the world of work altogether
- A high share of 15-17 year olds in many countries are in jobs that have been classified as hazardous or worst forms of child labour, and
- Those in hazardous work are more likely to have left school early before reaching the legal minimum age of employment.

The report recommends early interventions to get children out of child labour and into school as well as measures to facilitate the transition from school to decent work opportunities for young people.

Particular attention should be given to the 47.5 million young people aged 15-17 in hazardous work and the special vulnerabilities of girls and young women.

“National policies should be directed towards removing children and young people from hazardous jobs and, of course, towards removing the hazards in the workplace,” Ryder said.

The ILO’s most recent estimate is that 168 million children are in child labour, with 120 million of them aged 5-14. The report underscores the critical importance of intervening early in the life cycle against child labour.
Industries affected by child labour

Over half of the 168 million children around the world are engaged in ‘hazardous’ labour – that which is harmful to the child’s physical, mental, spiritual, moral or educational development.

Children work in a range of sectors in the global economy, the largest being agriculture, which accounts for about 60% of all child labourers globally. Agricultural workers are typically the lowest paid workers in many countries; parents are often unable to make enough money to support their children unless they also join them working in the fields. Children are also trafficked onto large plantations to harvest crops which include cocoa, tea, tobacco and palm oil.

Manufacturing is also another particular area of concern. It is estimated that around 14 million children produce clothing in sweatshops, or in dangerous informal home-based or small-scale manufacturing operations in many countries, including Bangladesh, China, India, the Philippines and Vietnam. Another dangerous manufacturing activity involving child labour is in brick kilns, where children commonly work in countries including India, Nepal, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Chocolate industry
Over 70% of the globe’s supply of cocoa comes from two West African countries: Cote d’Ivoire and Ghana, where there is a century-long history of forced and child labour in cocoa production. This child labour goes into a large proportion of the chocolate sold in Australia.

In these two countries, entire communities grow lucrative cocoa crops at below-poverty wages for the farmers who produce it. Due to the low pay, farmers cannot hire the labour needed for harvesting their crop, instead relying on children to do it, perpetuating child trafficking and the worst forms of child labour.

Children are exposed to chemicals and work long hours. Impoverished smallholder farmers are left with little choice but to remove their children from school and have them help on the plantation, low educational access further locking these families into a vicious cycle of poverty.

Cocoa producers also have little power to bargain with the handful of large multinational companies which control the supply chain.

Tea industry
Tea is the most popular drink in the world, after water. The industry employs around 50 million people worldwide, however forced labour, gender discrimination and wage theft are common in India’s tea industry.

The entrenched conditions in the Indian tea industry are due in large part to an extended history of colonialism and the repression of adivasi (ethnic and tribal groups who form the aboriginal population of South Asia).

The income-expenditure gap and resulting indebtedness is the reason for a re-emergence of child labour in the tea industry, both inside and outside plantations.

The drop-out rates among children is very high for families working in the tea industry, in spite of the free midday meals provided at schools in India. A language barrier for adivasi children (who belong to tea families) in government-run schools has also proven to be a disincentive for them to remain in school.

Tobacco industry
For over a century the tobacco industry (cigarette makers and leaf buyers) have exploited farmers to obtain profits from below-cost leaf, unpaid child labour and low-cost and bonded adult labourers.

Tobacco companies offer unfair loan arrangements to farmers who require credit to acquire (at above-market rates) seeds, seedbeds, fertiliser and pesticides. These farmers are trapped in a cycle of debt servitude, further compounded by bad harvests and climate change.

The health risks of growing tobacco are passed on to children, as parents are forced to send them to work in the fields instead of going to schools. Increased hunger, stunted growth and school drop-out rates are common among children working in the tobacco industry.

Rubber industry
Improved working conditions can limit child labour, as evidenced by recent wins at a Firestone plantation in Liberia, however rubber is Liberia’s top export and the industry still has a lot more to do before it effectively eliminates child labour entirely.
Cotton industry
Cotton is among the most common crops grown around the world. Child exploitation is evident in every stage of cotton production, including seed cultivation, crop harvesting, the processing of the raw material into threads and in clothes manufacturing.

One of the largest exporters of cotton in the world is Uzbekistan, located in Central Asia. For many years, the Uzbekistani government has forced adults and children as young as 10 to pick cotton under appalling conditions each harvest season.

Palm oil industry
Palm oil is a common vegetable oil used as a key ingredient in a broad range of products including cosmetics, soaps and snack foods. The harvesting of palm oil not only causes environmental damage, it also exploits forced and child labour. The oil is harvested on plantations mostly found in Indonesia and Malaysia by workers who are kept hidden from public view; many are children who work in unsafe conditions for wages which are far below the legal minimum. Other workers are caught up in debt-bondage after being deceived by labour brokers and ending up trapped in remote areas with no ability to pay for transportation back home.

Rather than tainted household brand names such as Unilever, Kraft, IKEA and McDonalds adopting a human rights-based approach to expose and reform these abuses in an industry in which they are key players, the palm oil industry has sought to address these problems through a confidential, 75% industry-governed voluntary certification system. The existing system is however still failing to protect workers and their human rights.

Seafood industry
Australia imports thousands of tonnes of seafood every year. Most of it is imported from Asia, where men are often trafficked onto fishing boats; many women and children are also forced to endure exploitation in fish processing factories.

Coffee industry
The coffee industry is heavily reliant on cheap labour. Over 90 per cent of coffee production occurs in developing countries, where farmers are not paid a decent wage for their product and often use bonded labour. Children are a key part of the coffee industry’s cheap labour supply. Children brought by their parents to coffee plantations are technically not employed by the owner, and therefore do not receive any labour protections. These children are taken out of school and expected to toil in the fields for up to 10 hours a day. Injuries may result from extended heat exposure, poisonous agrochemicals, heavy lifting and other sharp tools involved in coffee processing.

Electronics industry
Consumer demand and industry competition drive the cheap pricing which underpins manufacture of the latest electronic devices in the global electronics industry. Forced and child labour are often used to mine the raw materials needed to make electronic components, which are then often assembled by other exploited labourers in the manufacture of the final products.

Jewellery industry
Forced and child labour are being used in the mining of raw materials for jewels around the globe; further down the supply chain, children are used to cut and polish gem stones and make jewellery.

Sources
International Labor Rights Forum, Child Labor.
World Vision Australia, Buy ethical, and exploitation.
State of the fashion industry: child labour, forced labour and worker exploitation

This extract from The Australian Fashion Report 2015 provides a geographical overview of where child and forced labour is used in apparel production today. In it, Baptist World Aid Australia looks at three main phases: cut-make-trim manufacturing, textiles production, and cotton growing and harvesting. We use this information to understand companies’ specific supply chain risks.

SPOTLIGHT: BANGLADESH

The garment industry in Bangladesh has become an economic and social phenomenon. In the last decade alone, the size of the industry has doubled. It now employs over four million workers (85% of whom are women) and comprises 80% of the country’s exports.

Bangladesh attracts garment producers because the costs of production are so low. These low costs come with a hefty price, including the lowest manufacturing wages in the world ($68 US per/month) and a history of appalling, potentially life-threatening working conditions. The exploding garment industry has done too little to lift the economic fortunes of the Bangladeshi people, with around one third still living in poverty.

Since the 2013 Rana Plaza factory collapse where over 1,100 workers lost their lives, there has been significant global pressure for changes in the industry. And change is underway, with substantial improvements being made in the safety of many factories and a rise in the minimum wage. The minimum wage has increased almost 75% from $39 to $68 a month. Additionally, over 190 apparel brands have signed the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh, a five-year independent, legally binding agreement between global brands, retailers and trade unions designed to build a safe and healthy Bangladesh Ready Made Garment Industry.

However Bangladesh still has a long way to go. The increase to minimum wage still falls far short of the $104 per month living wage that unions are asking for. And while 1,800 of the 4,500 garment factories in the country are now covered by the Accord, this still leaves the majority uncovered and predisposes many workers to an unsafe working environment where injuries, harassment and the potential for child labour remain prevalent.

The World Bank, World Development Indicators, 2015.
NPR, Next Stop Bangladesh As We Follow Planet Money’s T-Shirt, 2013.
War on Want, Sweatshops in Bangladesh, 2013.
Reuters, Bangladesh Exports up 10pc on garment sales, 2013.
Garrett Brown, Bangladesh Blowback: hopes are raised for improved garment factory safety, 2014.

CHILD AND FORCED LABOUR IN CUT-MAKE-TRIM MANUFACTURING

Due to decades of international exposure, child and forced labour is less prevalent in export apparel factories today than it was twenty years ago. Nonetheless, modern slavery and exploitation remain a significant concern in most apparel-producing regions around the world. Global exporters, including China, India and Bangladesh are known to use child and/or forced labour in their garment production.

Yellow icons represent countries that lead the world in garment exports.

Red represents countries known to use child and/or forced labour in garment production.

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CHILD AND FORCED LABOUR IN TEXTILES PRODUCTION

Most apparel companies have taken significant steps to monitor the working conditions in at least some portion of their cut-make-trim (CMT) factories, the final stage of apparel production. Since the 2013 report we have seen an increase in companies taking action to know the suppliers deeper in their supply chain (those that provide inputs and raw materials like cotton), however the majority of these suppliers remain untraced, unmonitored and out of sight. This opacity significantly contributes to the risk of abuse in these production phases. Child and/or forced labour is documented in seven countries at the textiles level.

Yellow icons represent countries that lead the world in textiles production.

Red represents countries known to use child and/or forced labour in textiles production.


SPOTLIGHT: INDIA

As a global textiles manufacturing hub, certain areas of India are home to some of the worst incidences of child and forced labour.

In Tamil Nadu in southern India, a practice known as the ‘Sumangali Scheme’ has forced many young women into labour bondage. These schemes see recruiters target unmarried girls (as young as 14) from poor families, offering them work for a 3-5 year period with false promises of professional development, comfortable accommodation,
adequate food and a lump sum payment at the conclusion of their contract, which will serve as a dowry.

Once the girls arrive at the mills however, they face a very different reality. Many encounter terrible living and working conditions, poor food quality, lack of access to adequate sanitation, forced overtime, gender discrimination and sexual abuse. It is estimated that less than 35% ever receive their lump sum payment.

While a limited number of brands have some awareness of Sumangali schemes and a desire to address them in their supply chain management, it is a largely invisible issue. Local NGOs estimate that 200,000 young women and girls are currently caught in this kind of trafficking, a situation which begs for international intervention and a stronger stance from global apparel companies.


SPOTLIGHT: UZBEKISTAN

Uzbekistan, a nation now infamous for its use of forced child labour, is currently the world’s fifth largest exporter of cotton.

Every year the Karimov government forces up to a million people into the cotton fields. For decades this has included children as young as 10. Here they work under appalling conditions, oppressed by threats of violence and penalties.

Recently, due to immense global pressure and the actions of hundreds of apparel companies pledging to boycott Uzbekistani cotton, the government has renounced the use of child labour. A 2014 monitoring report by the International Labour Organization (ILO) revealed that forced child labour is no longer “used on a systematic basis” in Uzbekistan. This is a significant step forward that has meant thousands of children have been liberated from forced labour; however there remain concerns that pockets of child labour remain, particularly with children over the age of 15.

What is more, forced labour amongst adults remains high, particularly within public services such as health care and education. In schools across the country 50% of teachers are absent at any given time, which is a significant impediment to the education of children. Citizens who speak out against these abuses face being punished with detention, torture and exile. As long as these human rights breaches persist, so must global pressure from international brands and consumers.


CHILD AND FORCED LABOUR IN COTTON PRODUCTION

Much of the apparel we buy contains cotton which is produced and harvested by people held in modern forms of slavery. It is reported that at least 17 countries are known to use child and/or forced labour in cotton production. Even though awareness of this kind of inhumane labour has increased, of the top ten global cotton producers, only Australia and Greece have no reported incidences of child and forced labour.

It is reported that at least 17 countries are known to use child and/or forced labour in cotton production.

Yellow icons represent countries that lead the world in cotton production.


Red represents countries known to use child and/or forced labour in cotton production.


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The following brands have taken substantial steps to ensure that they are not using Uzbekistani cotton (see box).

The companies on this list have taken steps in one of the following four ways:

1. Provided a public commitment by signing the Cotton Pledge with the Responsible Sourcing Network. The full list of companies which have signed this pledge may be viewed here www.sourcingnetwork.org/the-cotton-pledge
2. The company has provided Baptist World Aid Australia or Stop the Traffik with a commitment to not knowingly use cotton sourced from Uzbekistan, along with confirmation that they have either communicated this commitment to their suppliers and have undertaken audits to enforce this commitment
3. The company has provided a public commitment to not knowingly use cotton sourced from Uzbekistan, or
4. The company has traced the origins of 100% of their cotton supply chain.

Companies boycotting Uzbekistani cotton
- 3 Fish
- Abercrombie and Fitch
- Adidas Group
- Audrey Group
- Cotton On Group
- David Jones
- Etiko
- Gap Inc.
- Fruit of the Loom
- H&M
- Inditex
- Jeanswest
- Kathmandu
- Kmart
- Lacoste
- Levi Strauss
- Liminal Apparel
- Lululemon Athletica
- Myer
- New Balance
- Nike
- Pacific Brands
- Patagonia
- Puma
- Repp
- Sussan Group
- Target
- UNIQLO
- Woolworths

Companies that are signatories to the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh
- Abercrombie and Fitch
- Adidas Group
- Cotton On Group
- Forever New
- Fruit of the Loom
- H&M
- Inditex
- Kmart
- Pacific Brands
- Pretty Girl Fashion Group
- Puma
- Specialty Fashion Group
- Target Australia
- UNIQLO
- Woolworths

The Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh is a legally binding agreement to protect the safety of workers; it gathered significant momentum in the aftermath of the Rana Plaza building collapse in 2013 and is regarded as the best practice health and safety initiative in Bangladesh.

The agreement consists of six key components:
1. A five-year legally binding agreement between brands and trade unions to ensure a safe working environment in the Bangladeshi RMG industry
2. An independent inspection program supported by brands in which workers and trade unions are involved
3. Public disclosure of all factories, inspection reports and corrective action plans (CAP)
4. A commitment by signatory brands to ensure sufficient funds are available for remediation and to maintain sourcing relationships
5. Democratically elected health and safety committees in all factories to identify and act on health and safety risks
6. Worker empowerment through an extensive training program, complaints mechanism and right to refuse unsafe work.

Electronics industry: child and forced labour

This chapter from the ‘Electronics Industry Trends’ report by Baptist World Aid Australia provides a geographical overview of where child and forced labour are used in electronics production today. We use this information to understand companies’ specific supply chain risks.

Spotlight: China

The presence of child and forced labour in China’s manufacturing sector has been well-documented by NGOs and companies operating in the country. China Labor Watch, a human rights advocacy NGO, has been assessing the prevalence of child and forced labour in electronics factories for a number of years. Similarly, Apple has been reporting on the extent of worker exploitation in their supply chain since 2012, when they committed to achieving greater transparency.

Insights regarding the improvements made within the sector stand to be gained from its consistent monitoring. For years, China Labor Watch has been reporting on HEG Electronics Co. Ltd., an electronics processing company and major

CHILD AND FORCED LABOUR IN ELECTRONICS AND COMPONENT MANUFACTURING

China is the global leader in electronics manufacturing. Child labour and forced labour continues to be prevalent in export factories in China today according to the US Department of Labor (DOL). Forced labour is a major issue in the Malaysian electronics industry.

Countries known to use child and/or forced labour in electronics manufacturing.


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had audited, a total of six supplier facilities used child labour. This is a significant drop from their 2013 findings which revealed 19 of its factories were using bonded and child labour.

Such change is evidence of an industry that is slowly making improvements. However, the risk of child and forced labour remain present. And beyond this, there are widespread reports of excessive working hours within the industry, including reports of children being made to work 10 hours per day without rest, for a wage less than what is owed to them.

Sources:

Spotlight: Malaysia

A 2014 report by Verité, an NGO focused on labour issues, found that foreign workers are especially vulnerable to exploitation, with 32% of all foreign workers in Malaysia trapped in situations of forced labour. Concerningly, these findings are based on conservative assessments and should, therefore, be viewed as a minimum assessment of the problem.

One factor contributing to the problem of forced labour in Malaysia includes the excessive recruitment fees which are charged to workers on commencement of their employment. Workers are forced to remain in their jobs indefinitely, as they work to pay off their debts. Employers will often use these debts as leverage, coercing workers to work overtime as a means of getting ahead on their repayments.

Deception during the recruitment process of foreign workers is common. Often workers are not told the truth about the details of the job they are being recruited for. Information regarding wages, hours, difficulty level and safety risks, as well as specific information about the termination of the job, are frequently omitted or manipulated. And once a worker is employed, it is very difficult for them to change the arrangements or leave before the end of the contract. When housing is provided by the employer, it is often unsafe.

Furthermore, in the majority of cases workers reported that their passports were held by their recruitment broker, violating their right to have freedom of movement.


Spotlight: Democratic Republic of the Congo

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has been plagued by civil conflict for over a century. This conflict is driven by greed for natural resources (like tin, tungsten, tantalum and gold). The conflict over these mineral deposits is dominated by multiple armed groups, many of whom use brutal violence – including mass rape – as a deliberate strategy to intimidate and control local populations and thereby secure their own control of the mines.

As the vast majority of electronics companies do not know where their raw materials are sourced, there is a risk that the minerals in our devices are fuelling these atrocities.

Additionally, child labour is a major issue in the artisanal mines of the DRC, where coltan, copper and cobalt are mined. Copper is commonly used in the manufacture of electronic components, while cobalt is a key element of electrical devices. In 2013, the CNN Freedom Project reported that children make up 40% of the two million people working in these mines. These children receive very little pay and work in extremely unsafe
conditions. As a result, illness, injury, disability and even death are common. Soil collapses in Katanga, a province of the DRC, lead to approximately 6.6 deaths every month.

Sources:
Raise Hope for Congo, Conflict Minerals, 2014, www.raisehopeforcONGO.org/content/initiatives/conflict-minerals

Spotlight: Indonesia

One third of the world’s tin is mined in Indonesia. This tin is used in a variety of different electronics products including mobile phones, tablets, laptops and cars.

A 2015 Bloomberg report found that men and children work in these mines in very dangerous conditions with most mines found to be unlicensed and unregulated. Workers often die as a result of collapsed mines. Overall, more than one hundred workers die each year due to the unsafe conditions. With Indonesia being the world’s biggest exporter of tin, this is a major concern for this industry.
CHILD AND FORCED LABOUR | BRAND INITIATIVES

With some of the worst forms of worker exploitation occurring at the raw materials stage of production, it is encouraging to see that companies are investing in projects addressing these risks.

Solutions for Hope

Solutions for Hope (SFH) describes itself as “a platform to support responsible sourcing, peacebuilding, and community development.”

Operating in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Columbia where civil conflict have led to extreme labour exploitation, SFH partners companies, civil society organisations and governments to responsibly source minerals from the region.

SFH creates what it describes as a "closed pipe" secure supply chain. It delivers in-region traceable materials through independently assessed transport routes to a validated conflict-free smelter and on to participating companies and their customers. In an industry that is notoriously opaque in regards to supply chain traceability, SFH aims to provide traceable minerals; giving companies and consumers more confidence that their products are conflict-free.

Companies involved in this initiative include: BlackBerry, Hewlett-Packard, Intel, Motorola Mobility, Motorola Solutions, and Nokia.

Source: Solutions for Hope, www.solutions-network.org

Public-Private Alliance for Responsible Minerals Trade

The Public-Private Alliance for Responsible Minerals Trade (PPA) is a multi-sector and multi-stakeholder initiative that supports supply chain solutions to conflict minerals challenges in the DRC and the Great Lakes Region (GLR) of Central Africa.

The PPA provides funding and coordination support to organisations working within the region to develop verifiable conflict-free supply chains; align due diligence programs and practices; encourage responsible sourcing from the region; promote transparency; and bolster in-region civil society and governmental capacity.

Some of the initiatives the PPA has funded include Save Act Mine’s implementation of a telephone hotline to receive and verify reports of smuggling and fraud in tin, tantalum, tungsten and gold mines in supply chains, and the development of a graphic manual to educate upstream suppliers on the importance of due diligence.

With increasing pressure on companies to implement conflict-free sourcing initiatives, the PPA is helping to develop a legitimate means by which companies can source conflict-free minerals. This reduces the risk of companies boycotting minerals from the DRC and the GLR, which would significantly hurt the people whose livelihoods depend on the industry in those regions.

Companies involved in this initiative include: Acer, Apple, BlackBerry, Dell, Google, Hewlett-Packard, Intel, Microsoft, Motorola Solutions, Panasonic, Sony, and Toshiba.


IDH Indonesian Tin Working Group

IDH is a Dutch organisation, with an objective of delivering impact on Millennium Development Goals. Its focus is particularly on Goals One (poverty reduction), Seven (safeguarding the environment) and Eight (fair and transparent trade).

Indonesia is the world’s biggest exporter of tin. It is also home to some significant labour (particularly child labour) and environmental concerns. IDH’s Tin Working Group is a multi-stakeholder initiative which aims to positively influence the hazardous reality of tin mining in the country.

It works with Indonesian tin mining companies negotiating agreements on a set of responsible mining practices that are intended to lead to more post-mined land being rehabilitated and better working conditions for miners.

The group recognises that while the social and environmental impacts of tin mining are high, economic benefits of the sector (in terms of development and poverty reduction) are significant. For this reason, it is actively working to formalise Indonesian tin production and ensure that it is economically beneficial for local communities.

Companies involved in this initiative include: Apple, Asus, BlackBerry, Dell, LG Electronics, Philips, Samsung, Sony, HP, Microsoft, and Tata Steel.


Sources:


The internationally agreed definition for a child associated with an armed force or armed group (child soldier) is any person below 18 years of age who is, or who has been, recruited or used by an armed force or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to children, boys and girls, used as fighters, cooks, porters, messengers, spies or for sexual purposes. It does not only refer to a child who is taking or has taken a direct part in hostilities.


Since 2000, the participation of child soldiers has been reported in most armed conflicts and in almost every region of the world. Although there are no exact figures, and numbers continually change, tens of thousands of children under the age of 18 continue to serve in government forces or armed opposition groups. Some of those involved in armed conflict are under 10 years old.

Both girls and boys are used in armed conflict and play a wide variety of roles. These can involve frontline duties including as fighters but they may also be used in other roles such as porters, couriers, spies, guards, suicide bombers or human shields, or to perform domestic duties such as cooking and cleaning. Girls and boys may also be used for sexual purposes by armed forces or groups.

Many children that participate in armed conflict are unlawfully recruited, either by force or at an age below that which is permitted in national law or international standards. Although international standards do not prohibit the voluntary recruitment of 16 and 17 year olds by armed forces, it is contrary to best practice. Today close to two thirds of states recognise that banning under-18s from military ranks is necessary to protect them from the risk of involvement in armed conflict and to ensure their wellbeing, and that their other rights as children are respected.

WHO ARE CHILD SOLDIERS?

Child Soldiers International explains how children become involved in armed conflicts.

VOICES OF CHILDREN

MAUNG ZAW OO – MYANMAR

“They filled the forms and asked my age, and when I said 16 I was slapped and he said, ‘You are 18. Answer 18’. He asked me again and I said, ‘But that’s my true age’. The sergeant asked, ‘Then why did you enlist in the army?’ I said, ‘Against my will. I was captured.’ He said, ‘Okay, keep your mouth shut then,’ and he filled in the form. I just wanted to go back home and I told them, but they refused. I said, ‘Then please let me make one phone call,’ but they refused that too.”

Maung Zaw Oo, describing the second time he was forced into the Tatmadaw Kyi (army) in 2005.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

“When they came to my village, they asked my older brother whether he was ready to join the militia. He was just 17 and he said no; they shot him in the head. Then they asked me if I was ready to sign, so what could I do – I didn’t want to die.”

A former child soldier taken when he was 13 (Source: BBC report).

INDONESIA

“I know the work [monitoring the apparatus] is dangerous, and my parents had tried to stop me from getting involved. But I want to do something for the nanggroe therefore I was called for the fight. I am ready for all risks.”

Boy interviewed in March 2004: worked as an informant for the armed political group Free Aceh Movement, to spy on the Indonesian military when he was 17 years old.

**CHILD SOLDIERS FAQS**

**COMMON QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY CHILD SOLDIERS INTERNATIONAL**

**Why do children join armed forces or armed groups?**

Children join armed forces or groups for many reasons. In some situations children are forcibly recruited as a result of coercion, abduction or under threat of penalty. However, many children ‘volunteer’ often as a result of economic or social pressures, or because they believe the group will offer an income, food or security.

Children are particularly vulnerable to recruitment if they are poor, separated from their families, displaced from their homes, living in a combat zone or have limited access to education.

**Is the child soldier problem worse among armed groups than government armed forces?**

Child soldier use by non-state armed groups is widespread: dozens of groups are known to unlawfully recruit and use boys and girls. However, the record of some governments is also poor. Since 2010, child soldier use by 20 states has been reported either directly in government armed forces or indirectly in armed groups which they support or are allied to. In addition, around 40 states still have a minimum voluntary recruitment age below 18 years.

Child Soldiers International considers that any military recruitment of under-18s creates unnecessary and unacceptable risks to children.

**Are there girl child soldiers?**

Girls are recruited and used as soldiers in virtually all conflicts. They are most often present in non-state armed groups but are also used by government forces. Though exact numbers are impossible to know, worldwide estimates suggest that girls may account for between 10 and 30 per cent of children in fighting forces. Girls are used to perform similar tasks to boys in both combat and non-combat roles. They are especially vulnerable to sexual violence.

There have been repeated calls to take into account the special needs and vulnerabilities of girls affected by armed conflict and to consider their requirements during disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) process.

**Why does Child Soldiers International campaign for a minimum age for recruitment set at 18 years?**

Child Soldiers International bases its work on international legal standards for child protection. The Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as any person below the age of 18. It states that children and youth below 18 require special protection because of their evolving physical and mental maturity. Virtually all states have pledged to implement the provisions of the Convention.

Under international law (the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, OPAC) the minimum age for recruitment and use by non-state armed groups is 18 years. States are also prohibited from using under-18s in hostilities, but enlistment (voluntary recruitment) is permitted from 16 (although regional standards set the age at 18).

The anomaly of this provision in OPAC is a product of compromise during the treaty drafting process and is contrary to the practice of almost two thirds of states and to the position of UN and other international experts. The dominant trend is towards a “straight-18 ban” (prohibition on the military recruitment or use of children under 18 years without exception).

**Should child soldiers who have committed war crimes or other serious violations of human rights or humanitarian law be held to account?**

International human rights and child protection experts generally recognise that child soldiers are first and foremost victims of grave abuses of human rights, and that states must prioritise the prosecution of those who unlawfully recruit and use them.
Child soldiers should never be prosecuted solely for their association with the armed forces or group. However, there will be cases where a child soldier was clearly in control of his or her actions, was not coerced, drugged, or forced into committing atrocities. In such cases, excluding criminal responsibility for these children may deny justice to the victims and may also not be in the child’s own best interests.

While in these cases criminal investigations and prosecutions should not be ruled out a priori, the individual concerned must be afforded all the guarantees and protection of international juvenile justice standards.

Where are child soldiers used today?
There have been reports of child soldier use in the following countries since January 2011:
- Afghanistan: national army and other elements of state security forces; armed opposition groups.
- Central African Republic: state-allied armed groups.
- Colombia: national army (for intelligence purposes); armed opposition groups.
- Côte d’Ivoire: national army/state security forces; state-allied armed groups.
- Democratic Republic of the Congo: national army and other elements of state security forces; Congolese and foreign armed opposition groups.
- India: armed opposition groups.
- Iraq: elements of state security forces.
- Israel: national army (for intelligence purposes).
- Libya: national army and other elements of state security forces; armed opposition groups.
- Mali: armed opposition groups.
- Myanmar: national army and other elements of state security forces; armed opposition groups.
- Pakistan: armed opposition groups.
- Philippines: national army (for intelligence purposes) and other elements of state security forces; armed opposition groups.
- Thailand: other elements of state security forces and armed opposition groups.
- Somalia: national army; state-allied armed groups; armed opposition groups.
- Sudan: national army and other elements of state security forces; state-allied armed groups; armed opposition groups.
- South Sudan: national army; armed opposition groups.
- Syria: national army and state-allied armed groups (use of children as human shields); armed opposition groups.
- Yemen: national army and other elements of state security forces; state-allied armed groups; armed opposition groups.

In addition the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), an armed opposition group which originated in Uganda and which recruits and uses child soldiers, is present in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and South Sudan.

Eritrea and Rwanda are reported to have provided military support to armed opposition groups in neighbouring states (Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo respectively) during this period.

NOTES
- National army refers to army, navy and air force.
- Other elements of state security forces refers to government forces established by law or otherwise officially recognised.
- State-allied armed groups refers to non-state armed groups that are backed by or allied to government forces but which are not officially part of them.
- Armed opposition groups refers to non-state or irregular armed groups which use arms for political reasons.

CHILDREN USED IN ARMED CONFLICTS

There are an estimated 250,000 children involved in armed conflicts, some as young as 7 years of age. These children’s health and lives are endangered and their childhoods are sacrificed. Child soldiers are coerced, enticed or abducted by government forces, paramilitaries and rebel groups. About 40% of all child soldiers are girls, who are often used as sex slaves for the male combatants. Children are used not only as combatants and sex slaves, but also as cooks, cleaners, porters, couriers, messengers, guards, spies, suicide bombers, human shields and human mine detectors. Children are sometimes forced to kill or maim a family member, in order have the bonds with their community broken, thereby making it difficult for them to return. Children are being exploited in conflicts around the world, including in the following countries:

Afghanistan
According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), armed insurgent groups, including the Taliban, use children for fighting in armed conflicts, as well as in suicide attacks. There are also United Nations reports of children being recruited by the Afghan National Police.

Cambodia
In the 1980s many children joined armed groups in Cambodia to secure food and protection. UNICEF says some rebel groups in Cambodia and Mozambique turned children into fierce warriors by subjecting them to a brief period of terror and physical abuse – ‘socialising’ them into violence.

Central African Republic
According to War Child, around 6,000 children have been linked to armed forces or armed groups in this African nation. The Lord’s Resistance Army has abducted children as young as 12 in the south-east of the country; children are also serving with various rebel groups.

Chad
Thousands of children have served in both government and rebel forces in Chad, however the recruitment of child soldiers has significantly declined since the government signed an action plan to end the practice.

Colombia
A Child Soldiers International report alleges that thousands of boys and girls have been both forcibly and voluntarily recruited by the two armed opposition groups – the ELN and FARC. The children have used as combatants, laying explosives and mines, and carrying out other military tasks. Girls have been sexually abused, enduring rape and forced abortion. Human Rights Watch Childen also claims that children are being recruited into successor groups to paramilitaries.

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)
The United Nations estimates over 30,000 boys and girls were fighting with the government armed forces and also various rebel forces at the height of the war in DRC. Most of these children have now been released or demobilised, however active recruitment continues in the east of the country due to renewed conflict there, according to reports by Human Rights Watch. The Lord’s Resistance Army is also alleged to be abducting children in the north-east of Congo where girls are being used as sex slaves and boys as combatants.

India
According to a report by the Asian Center for Human Rights, armed opposition groups are responsible for the recruitment of at least 3,000 child soldiers to various conflicts across India. Around 500 children are thought to be involved in militant groups in the northern state of Jammu and Kashmir and about 2,500 children are fighting in the eastern provinces, which are infiltrated by the radical armed group, Left Wing Extremism (LWE).

Iraq
The United Nations has reported that Islamic State insurgents are using child soldiers in Iraq. Although the UN considers this recruitment to constitute war crimes worthy of prosecution, it appears that all sides of the conflict – including government-affiliated forces – reportedly recruit child soldiers to fight, inform, suicide bomb and for manning checkpoints. Human Rights Watch alleges that Al-Qaeda also recruits children to spy, scout, transport military supplies, plant explosive devices and take part in attacks against security forces and civilians, including suicide attacks.

Liberia
In Liberia, approximately 20,000 children as young as 7 joined various fighting factions and were used in combat in 1990. The United Nations Children’s Fund believes that currently up to 60 per cent of the armed fighters in Liberia are under the age of 18, and that both government and rebel troops are guilty of recruiting children.

Mali
According to Amnesty International, Islamist armed groups fighting against Malian and French forces in the north of the country have been recruiting children aged between 10 and 17.

Myanmar
Child Soldiers International alleges both state armed forces and non-state armed groups are using children in armed conflict in Myanmar. Hundreds of underage boys, as young as 11, have been recruited mostly off the streets by the national army and deployed to fight in various areas against armed opposition groups. Children involved in combat operations also serve with some armed ethnic opposition groups.

Philippines
In the Philippines, children are recruited by rebel forces, including the New People’s Army, Abu Sayyaf Group, and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. Many children in this country become soldiers as soon as they enter their teens. Human Rights Watch says that the Philippine army has fabricated stories claiming that children taken into custody are rebel ‘child warriors’. The life of a warrior can seem...
attractive to many children who come from fragmented families and don’t attend school due to decades of war.

**Somalia**
Amnesty International has labelled the situation in Somalia as a “human rights crisis and a children’s crisis” due to the scale of war crimes affecting Somali children. There is systematic recruitment of child soldiers under 15 by armed Islamist groups, while Islamist group al-Shabaab forcibly recruits children as young as 10, often by abducting them from their home or school, and coercing some to become suicide bombers. Children also serve in the country’s Transitional Federal Government (TFG) forces.

**South Sudan**
The South Sudanese government has pledged to end its use of child soldiers, however it continues to recruit children and has not yet demobilised all of them from its forces.

**Sri Lanka**
During the brutal 26-year civil war in Sri Lanka between the government forces and separatists from the Tamil minority both sides used child soldiers. Armed groups targeted young people with propaganda, such as indoctrinating children into the school system. If children did not volunteer to be involved in the fighting, they would be forced to join up.

**Sudan**
Over a dozen armed forces and groups use child soldiers in Darfur, including the Sudanese Armed Forces, pro-government militias and rebel Sudan Liberation Army factions.

**Syria**
According to HRW, non-state armed groups in Syria have used children as young as 15 to fight in battles, sometimes recruiting them under the guise of offering education. Extremist Islamist groups such as Islamic State have sought to recruit children through free schooling campaigns which include weapons training. These children are subsequently given dangerous combat roles, including suicide bombing missions.

**Thailand**
Child Soldiers International reports that children are being recruited as part of the armed separatist struggle in Thailand’s four southern border provinces for various roles including intelligence gathering, diversion tactics and arson attacks. Boys are also recruited by village defence volunteers to join Chor Ror Bor, a government-supported militia which forms part of state counter-insurgency forces in the affected areas of separatism-related conflict.

**Uganda**
According to United Nations estimates, two million children have been killed bearing arms in the African nation of Uganda since 1987; three times that number have been seriously injured or permanently disabled. Both government and rebel armies abduct children, forcing them to fight; some children join these armies willingly out of desperation and hunger.

**Yemen**
Human Rights Watch says that the Yemeni government recruits children as young as 14. Before the Arab Spring, the government also used children to fight Huthi rebels in the north, and in 2011, rebel forces in Taizz used children to patrol roads and operate checkpoints. Some of these children had previously served with government forces before defecting to the rebels.

Information compiled from the following sources:
news.com.au (27 October 2015), At least 250,000 being used in wars around the world.
Children’s labour entails both benefits and harm that should be assessed at the local level, writes Alula Pankhurst for The Conversation.

Images of children working in hazardous and abusive conditions naturally provoke strong emotional reactions. For this reason, measures designed to stop children from working, and make sure they go to school, attract little opposition or debate.

Yet the reality is that a rigid approach to child labour has a downside. Work is neither all good nor all bad for children. It is often both.

Clearly the worst forms of child labour need urgent action. However, the solution is not necessarily a ban. Conditions sometimes can be changed to reduce the risk of harm. Working conditions can be rendered benign or even beneficial, which is more constructive than simply banning work that children often need or want for their own and their family’s survival.

Both benefit and harm in most work

The common assumption that, for children, work in the home is harmless while work for pay is harmful is wrong. There is both benefit and harm in most work depending on conditions, aptitude and training of children. So rather than classifying particular activities as harmful, we should recognise that the same work can entail both benefits and harm that should be assessed at the local level.

So how do we regulate children’s work in Africa, and what can be said about interventions seeking to control children’s labour? The African Union (AU) prohibits work that interferes with children’s development but unlike the UN and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions, the AU also recognises that rights are accompanied by responsibilities to family and society.

The term ‘child labour’ results in conceptual confusions. And given the widespread adoption of the 1999 ILO convention, the 1973 convention is now redundant. The 1973 convention prohibits work that is not harmful and is often beneficial. Also, sometimes children are overburdened with work in the home, which is not considered by this legislation.

Cultural norms contrast with global legal regime

Cultural norms suggest what work children of particular ages and genders can or should do from a young age, with a gradual increase in responsibilities. This contrasts with the international legal regime which says only work after a specific age should be allowed.

Children’s work also has a social and an economic context. International trade can affect children’s work and their relationships with their families – a point illustrated by an Ethiopian case study.

The production of cash crops generates income for families, but it also creates pressures within families, exacerbates gender inequalities, and competes with the production of food for the family. The net effect is that cash crops increase the contribution of children as producers and carers. So, the system of international trade can lead to exploitation of children.

Research also shows how changes in communities and crises within families affect children’s lives and...
schooling. It also highlights how children perceive benefits as well as harm in their work. The benefits of working are not just material contributions to families and being able to overcome ‘shocks’ (unplanned difficult events), but also the gaining of skills and the enhancement of children’s moral status and esteem.

**Work is bound with social relations**

The risk of harm to children needs to be measured against these benefits. For these children, not working would be inconceivable. Children’s work is inextricably bound with their social relations with their peers, parents and employers. Work gives meaning to their lives.

Research about poor children working on the streets of Ethiopia and Sudan shows how income from work is essential for the livelihoods of children and their families.

The ability to earn money gives children some control over their lives. Working children develop networks to help each other. Many are able to save money and help their families.

Then there is the issue of the relationship between schooling and work. Our research shows that children undertake work to help their families and earn money for school expenses. While work can keep children from school, force them to drop out, or affect their performance, some children have successfully combined school and work. Others are able to continue schooling because of their work.

In Burkina Faso, the parents and children working on the mines and quarries acknowledge the work as hazardous. But they view it as a necessary response to extreme poverty. Also, children may be better off by accompanying their parents to work than being left alone at home. Interventions to remove children from work tend not to address problems facing their families and the need for alternative support.

In Kenya, a Save the Children programme supports working children, which has led to children’s perspectives being included in a new draft for a child labour policy. However, the programme excludes children under the age of 14 who are supposed to be in school.

**Listening to what children say about work**

The African Movement of Working Children includes “the right to light and limited work” among its ‘Twelve Rights’ with no mention of age. It is high time that we direct attention to reducing harm in child labour rather than seeking rules that impose a blanket ban on children taking on any work.

A more enlightened approach to children’s work would start by listening to what children have to say and working with local communities to raise awareness of problems faced by working children, especially in balancing work and school, and to enhance the accessibility, flexibility and quality of schooling to cater for working children.

Clearly the worst forms of child labour need urgent action. However, the solution is not necessarily a ban. Conditions sometimes can be changed to reduce the risk of harm.

**El Sod, Ethiopia – 8 March 2012: Unidentified Borana boy helps his father to mine salt from the crater lake El Sod, Ethiopia.**

**Global standards miss the nuance in local child labour**


**Alula Pankhurst** is Young Lives Ethiopia Country Director, University of Oxford.
No to child labour, yes to quality education

ON WORLD DAY AGAINST CHILD LABOUR (2015) THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION FOCUSED ON THE IMPORTANCE OF QUALITY EDUCATION AS A KEY STEP IN TACKLING CHILD LABOUR

The most recent global estimates suggest some 120 million children between the ages of 5 and 14 are involved in child labour, with boys and girls in this age group almost equally affected. This persistence of child labour is rooted in poverty and lack of decent work for adults, lack of social protection, and a failure to ensure that all children are attending school through to the legal minimum age for admission to employment.

The World Day Against Child Labour this year will focus particularly on the importance of quality education as a key step in tackling child labour. It is very timely to do so, as in 2015 the international community will be reviewing reasons for the failure to reach development targets on education and will be setting new goals and strategies.

On this year’s World Day Against Child Labour we call for:
- Free, compulsory and quality education for all children at least to the minimum age for admission to employment and action to reach those presently in child labour
- New efforts to ensure that national policies on child labour and education are consistent and effective
- Policies that ensure access to quality education and investment in the teaching profession.

NO to child labour – YES to quality education!
Many child labourers do not attend school at all. Others combine school and work but often to the detriment of their education. Lacking adequate education and skills, as adults former child labourers are more likely to end up in poorly paid, insecure work or to be unemployed. In turn there is a high probability that their own children will end up in child labour. Breaking this cycle of disadvantage is a global challenge and education has a key role to play.

Free and compulsory education of good quality up to the minimum age for admission to employment is a key tool in ending child labour. Attendance at school removes children in part at least from the labour market and lays the basis for the acquisition of employable skills needed for future gainful employment. The global youth employment crisis and problems experienced by young people in making the school to work transition highlight the need for quality and relevant education which develops the skills necessary to succeed both in...
the labour market and in life generally.

In the Millennium Development Goals the United Nations set the target of ensuring that by 2015 all boys and girls complete a full course of primary education. We know now that this target will not be met.

Recent UNESCO data on school enrolment indicates that 58 million children of primary school age and 63 million adolescents of junior secondary school age are still not enrolled in school. Many of those who are enrolled are not attending on a regular basis.

As the international community reviews reasons for the failure to reach the targets, it is clear that the persistence of child labour remains a barrier to progress on education and development. If the problem of child labour is ignored or if laws against it are not adequately enforced, children who should be in school will remain working instead.

To make progress national and local action is required to identify and reach out to those in child labour.

Many child labourers do not attend school at all. Others combine school and work but often to the detriment of their education. Lacking adequate education and skills, as adults former child labourers are more likely to end up in poorly paid, insecure work or to be unemployed. In turn there is a high probability that their own children will end up in child labour.

Ensure that national policies are consistent and effective

The ILO’s Convention No. 138 on the minimum age of employment emphasises the close relationship between education and the minimum age for admission to employment or work. It states that the minimum age “shall not be less than the age of completion of compulsory schooling and, in any case, shall not be less than 15 years.” However recent research suggests that only 60 per cent of States that have fixed both a minimum age for admission to employment and an age for the end of compulsory education have aligned the two ages. There is a clear need for greater coordination of national policies and strategies on issues of child labour and education. In this effort the ILO and other specialised agencies of the United Nations can play an important role in working with governments to identify the policies and financing requirements to tackle child labour.

Ensure access to quality education and investment in the teaching profession

Education and training can be key drivers of social and economic development and they require investment. In many countries, however, the schools which are available to the poor are under-resourced. Wholly inadequate school facilities, large class sizes, and lack of trained teachers constrain rather than enable learning, and act as a disincentive to school attendance. For far too many children the provision of education stops at primary level simply because of the physical absence of accessible schools, particularly in rural areas. This inevitably leads to children entering the labour force well before the legal minimum age for admission to employment. National policies therefore need to ensure adequate investment in public education and training.

The ILO also supports the key people who deliver education: teachers. Together with UNESCO, the ILO promotes principles of quality teaching at all levels of education through recommendations concerning teaching personnel. Ensuring a professional and competent teaching force with decent working conditions based on social dialogue is a vital step in delivering quality education.

Making progress – action required

Despite the challenges some progress has been made and more progress is possible. There has been a downward trend in child labour over the past ten years and the numbers attending school have increased. However much more needs to be done to end child labour. The urgent need now is to learn from where progress has been made, and apply the lessons learned to significantly accelerate action.

Among the most important steps required are:

- Providing free, compulsory and quality education
- Ensuring that all girls and boys have a safe and quality learning environment
- Providing opportunities for older children who have so far missed out on formal schooling including through targeted vocational training programmes that also offer basic education support
- Ensuring coherence and enforcement of laws on child labour and school attendance
- Promoting social protection policies to encourage school attendance
- Having a properly trained, professional and motivated teaching force, with decent working conditions based on social dialogue
- Protecting young workers when they leave school and move into the workforce, preventing them being trapped in unacceptable forms of work.

NOTE

1. In the broader age group of all children aged 5-17, 168 million children are estimated to be in child labour.

Eliminating child labour in supply chains is everyone’s business, according to the International Labour Organization.

World Day Against Child Labour 2016 focuses on supply chains. Increasingly complex, they span sectors, countries and regions. And all supply chains – including in agriculture and fishing, manufacturing and mining, services and construction, and whether global or national – may involve some of the 168 million children still in child labour. Eliminating child labour in supply chains is everyone’s business, and requires the commitment of governments, workers’ and employers’ organisations and enterprises themselves.

The ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy (the MNE Declaration) makes clear that all enterprises have the responsibility to obey national law and to contribute to the realisation of all fundamental principles and rights at work – including the elimination of child labour as defined in ILO Conventions No. 138 on Minimum Age and No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour.

Child labour occurs in many occupations, in particular in the rural and informal economies, and in areas where labour market governance, trade unions and employers’ organisations are often weak or absent and in areas that labour inspectors lack the capacity to reach. In supply chains, child labour may be performed in small workshops or homes, making it difficult to identify and remedy. While many children may be engaged in child labour in the production of internationally traded goods or services, a much larger number work in producing items destined for national consumption.

Urgent action needed now
Child labour denies girls and boys their rights – to be safe from harm, to quality education and vocational training, and to play and rest. Freedom from child labour is a fundamental human right and, alongside the other fundamental principles and rights at work, in particular freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, it is indispensable for the achievement of decent work for all.

The specific target (8.7) of the new Sustainable Development Goal No. 8 on decent work and economic growth calls for immediate measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.

To reach this target, collective action must accelerate progress and make better use of existing knowledge and resources. Enterprises should pursue responsible business practices that respect human and other labour rights in the countries and communities in which they operate. Dialogue between enterprise management and trade unions should support – and be an example of – such practices.

Responsible business means no child labour
The ILO MNE Declaration provides guidance to companies about contributing to social and economic development and respecting fundamental labour rights.

It sets out principles which governments, employers’ and workers’ organisations and enterprises are recommended to observe including on child labour:

“Multinational enterprises, as well as national enterprises, should respect the minimum age for admission to employment or work in order to secure the effective abolition of child labour and should take immediate and effective measures within their own competence to secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour as a matter of urgency.”

The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, endorsed by the Human Rights Council in 2011, also refer to internationally recognised human and labour rights, including those enshrined in the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. The UN Guiding Principles rest on three pillars: states’ duty to protect against human rights violations by third parties, corporate responsibility to respect human rights, and victims’
rights to greater access to effective remedy.

**Taking action**

Child labour can be difficult to see. Multinational enterprises may be linked to it in international supply chains directly – through their own facilities, suppliers or subcontractors – or simply by having operations in areas where child labour is common.

Child labour is driven in many cases by family and community poverty, caused by a lack of decent work for adults and youth of legal working age – by inadequate wages, income security and social protection – often linked to insufficient sourcing prices paid to supplier companies; and by a lack of access to health care, free quality education and vocational training. It prevails in circumstances where labour relations are weak and freedom of association is lacking and in informal family enterprises that are unable to hire adult workers to replace the unpaid work of their children.

Effective governance and social dialogue are keystones of the fight against child labour. Primary responsibility for eliminating child labour rests with governments, but effective action requires collaboration between government agencies, including labour inspectorates, national social partners, and management and workers’ representatives in enterprises.

The ILO assists their efforts to eradicate child labour by supporting mechanisms for increased compliance with national legislation and respect for internationally recognised human and labour rights and by supporting the development of labour relations systems. Every enterprise linked to a supply chain can contribute positively – and dialogue between management and trade union representatives is crucial to building confidence and to finding sustainable solutions.

The ILO provides specific support to business in a number of ways.

**The ILO and UN Global Compact-led Child Labour Platform** (CLP) is a global forum connecting companies from different sectors and regions of the world to share experience of what works – and what doesn’t – in combating child labour in supply chains. Co-chaired by the International Organisation of Employers (IOE) and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), and engaging regularly also with the relevant global union federations, the CLP enhances linkages of global enterprises with national tripartite structures and processes to eliminate child labour in the countries concerned.

Benefitting from the technical expertise, field experience and policy advice of the ILO, the CLP provides training on how to identify and address child labour risks, leads research projects and develops new global manuals and guidelines. The CLP also facilitates collaboration between member companies on child labour remediation activities covering different sectors in the same location.

In addition to the facilitation of peer-to-peer sharing of best practice and knowledge through the CLP, through public-private partnerships the ILO supports enterprises directly to address child labour in their supply chains and provides practical support and advice to address on-the-ground realities. It supports the development of child labour monitoring systems, helps vulnerable communities to become economically empowered, supports the capacity of workers’ and small producers’ organisations, promotes equal access to quality education for children in vulnerable communities and conducts research.

The ILO Helpdesk for Business provides free and confidential assistance on a wide range of labour issues – in particular for managers and workers’ organisations. This includes advice about applying in business operations and supply chains the principles contained in the ILO Conventions on child labour.

The Helpdesk website comprises all ILO knowledge resources that enterprises can use freely to apply the principles of ILO standards in policy and practice.

Queries can be submitted by email to assistance@ilo.org or telephone +41 22 799 6264.

**Building commitment**

Tackling child labour in supply chains requires concerted efforts on all fronts. States need to consider whether national law and policy really protect against business involvement in child labour and, if not, how their content or enforcement could be strengthened.

Social dialogue has been and continues to be crucial to sustainable progress. Employers’ organisations are increasingly engaged in efforts to end child labour in supply chains by providing advice and guidance to their members on how to address child labour. Trade unions are playing a central role in fighting child labour by training to prevent child labour, by promoting safe and healthy working conditions and by mainstreaming child labour concerns in collective bargaining agreements – including in global agreements – with enterprises.

For companies, compliance with law and respect for internationally recognised human and labour rights is paramount: they should follow the guidance of the ILO MNE Declaration and the findings of the ILO’s supervisory bodies to take action to avoid infringing the right of children to be free from child labour.

The recently published *ILO-IOE Child Labour Guidance Tool for Business* helps businesses learn how to address child labour in a holistic and effective way. And the 2016 publication *Trade Unions and Child Labour: A Tool for Action* is a manual developed to support effective trade union action aimed at the eradication of child labour.

**NOTE**

1. Supply chains are the sequence of activities/processes involved in the production and distribution of a product.

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Building a global alliance against child labour and forced labour

Beate Andrees, Chief of the International Labour Organization’s Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work Branch, explains how we can achieve the Sustainable Development Goal target which calls for an end to forced labour and child labour

While heads of state were delivering their speeches at the UN Sustainable Development Summit in New York in September 2015, the ILO convened a small meeting with partners to talk business: How can the global community achieve target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which calls for an end of all forms of forced labour, modern slavery and child labour by 2025? How is this target connected to the other SDGs? How will the necessary resources be mobilised to ensure that commitment leads to action?

Significant progress has already been achieved in recent decades, as declining numbers of child labour suggest, but the challenge is nevertheless daunting:

• 21 million people are victims of forced labour, 5.5 million of whom are children
• The illicit profits generated by forced labour and modern slavery amount to at least US$ 150 billion a year
• And 168 million children are still in child labour, 85 million of them in hazardous work and other worst forms of child labour, while 83 million are simply too young to be working.

The underlying root causes of child labour and forced labour are often related to violations of other fundamental rights. Hundreds of millions of people suffer from discrimination in the world of work, while half of the world’s population lives in countries that have not ratified either of the ILO’s two Conventions protecting freedom of association and collective bargaining.

A need for strong partnerships

As the world comes together to adopt universal goals considered mutually reinforcing, the SDGs hold a unique promise: Policy integration is possible. Such a vision requires strong partnerships. Hence the idea of launching the Alliance 8.7 as a platform for those actors already involved in the struggle against child labour and forced labour, and those who would like to join it.

The Alliance 8.7 proposal received strong support from the participants gathered in New York. The consultation process will now continue at the global and regional levels, gradually involving a greater number of partners.

Alliance 8.7’s mission is to assist all member States of the United Nations in making measurable advances for achieving target 8.7, thereby significantly decreasing the prevalence of child labour and forced labour in the coming years. We can reach this goal through effective advocacy, innovative programmes and policy initiatives as well as coordinated mobilisation of resources. Progress will be measured against a set of agreed criteria and methodologies.

Clearly, Alliance 8.7 will be connected to other SDGs and targets. Imagine a big tent with different poles, with the top goal for the ILO to achieve decent work for all, and the Alliance 8.7 being a supporting pole. Using the same image, Alliance 8.7 could become a tent for many smaller issue-based alliances which have emerged in recent years, such as the International Partnership for Cooperation on Child Labour in Agriculture or the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking.

Bringing the knowledge and resources of those initiatives together could turn out to be a game changer in the fight against child labour and modern slavery. Furthermore, by linking the Alliance to the target on fundamental freedoms (goal 16) and discrimination (goal 5 and target 8.5), it will be possible to address some of the systemic root causes of child labour and forced labour. This does not exclude the possibility of building other partnerships around the issues of discrimination, freedom of association and collective bargaining, and other labour rights.

Who is going to build the tent? It’s a collective responsibility but someone has to start: Given the ILO’s mandate and experience, it is well placed to start driving
poles into the ground, through preparatory meetings and developing a comprehensive strategy towards reaching target 8.7.

Building on lessons learnt

The strategy needs to reflect lessons learnt from national policy initiatives. Countries like Brazil, Mexico, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, India or Indonesia have developed integrated policy responses and as a result, achieved notable progress in the fight against child labour and/or forced labour. This was done through a combination of legal and social protection measures, community-based interventions and national level advocacy.

Many others have shown commitment by adopting the 2012 Resolution on fundamental principles and rights at work of the International Labour Conference and the 2014 Protocol to the Forced Labour Convention, 193. The 2013 Brasilia Declaration provides further guidance on the eradication of child labour.

The next milestone is the World Conference on Child Labour in 2017, hosted by Argentina. These commitments, as well as those made in other fora, will need to be incorporated into the strategy. To this aim, coordination with UN partner agencies and the social partners is crucial. This also concerns data and monitoring: Partners have to agree on a set of quality criteria and on new ways of sharing data. The ILO is already paving the way with a consultative process leading to the publication of new global estimates on child labour and forced labour in 2017.

One key element of building an inclusive Alliance is financing. The Outcome Document of the recent Addis Ababa Conference on Financing for Development provides some ideas as regards resource mobilisation. Traditional funding sources will still play a major role; however, new forms of development collaboration, including through ‘blended’ financing models, will have to be further explored.

Finally, think of the tent again: Its poles reinforce each other and hold the top. The same will apply to the Alliance. While some important details still need to be worked out, ultimately, what matters most is that we build a solid and inclusive tent which will be effective in preventing and fighting forced labour, child labour and other labour rights violations around the globe.

Growing human rights disclosure and procurement requirements

- From 2016, the 6,000 largest listed companies in the European Union (EU) will be required to disclose how they are managing human and labour rights risks, including child labour impacts. EU countries are currently transposing the relevant EU Directive into national laws.
- Companies doing business in California with over US$100 million in worldwide revenue are required to report on their actions to eradicate slavery and human trafficking, including of children, in their supply chains.
- The UK Modern Slavery Act has introduced due diligence reporting requirements for companies with regard to slavery and trafficking risks throughout their supply chains.
- Stock exchanges in India, Malaysia, Singapore and South Africa among others require companies to report on how they manage their human rights impacts.
- US companies investing in Myanmar, a country with substantial child labour, are required to disclose their human rights due diligence efforts, including in relation to suppliers that may use child labour.
- Governments are demanding increased transparency from companies through their procurement requirements. For example, in the Netherlands, adherence to the ILO Core Labour Conventions, including on child labour, is a requirement for companies to be eligible for government contracts. In the United States, the federal government now requires due diligence in relation to trafficking in persons, including for the purposes of forced and child labour, from companies seeking federal contracts.¹

NOTE


CHAPTER 2
Australia’s response to child labour

GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAINS LINK US ALL TO SHAME OF CHILD AND FORCED LABOUR

Child labour remains widespread in our region, observes Martijn Boersma

The fragmentation of global production has dramatically increased the length and complexity of supply chains. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) estimates that more than half of the world’s manufactured imports are intermediate goods. These are used as inputs in the production of other goods, sourced from different parts of the globe.

A serious problem with such long and complex supply chains is that this can lead to a lack of oversight and worker exploitation such as the use of child and forced labour, for estimated profits of US$150 billion a year. At our end of the supply chain, demand for low-cost goods can push suppliers towards abusive practices. These malpractices can affect individuals, producers and consumers anywhere in global supply chains.

This makes Australia part of the problem and the potential solution. Increasingly, companies and investors work with trade unions and NGOs to deal with labour and human rights abuses in supply chains. Yet, in a report launched this week, Catalyst Australia shows that misunderstandings about child labour persist and room for improvement remains. The report coincides with the Australian government’s announcement of a Supply Chains Working Group to tackle these problems.

CHILD LABOUR REMAINS WIDESPREAD

Global initiatives and national laws have not made child labour history. Although it is estimated to have declined by 33% since 2000, 168 million children continue to be exploited worldwide. While global conventions are in place, their existence does not guarantee local take-up, nor does the existence of national child labour laws mean they are actively enforced.

A false perception persists that child labour affects only developing countries. However, in 2013, more than half of Australia’s imported goods came from the Asia-Pacific region, which has the largest absolute number of child labourers: 78 million. It is also incorrect that only isolated industries use child labour. While 59% of child labour happens in agricultural settings, the manufacturing and services sector are significant contributors.

Catalyst Australia finds that self-regulatory standards and voluntary initiatives alone do not drive change. They are often merely public relations tools. Neither do charitable donations absolve companies of their
responsibilities. As John Ruggie, author of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, states:

*There is no equivalent to buying carbon offsets in human rights: philanthropic good deeds do not compensate for infringing on human rights.*

**FORCED LABOUR GENERATES HUGE PROFITS**

The International Labour Organisation estimates that 20.9 million people globally are subjected to forced labour, 90% of whom are exploited in the private sector. Of these individuals, 68% are forced to work in agriculture, construction, domestic work, mining and manufacturing. The Asia-Pacific region accounts for 11.7 million individuals in forced labour – 56% of the global total.

The ILO estimates that forced labour in the private economy generates US$150 billion in profits annually. Two-thirds is estimated to come from sexual exploitation. The rest comes from forced labour in construction, manufacturing, mining and utilities (US$34 billion), agriculture, forestry and fishing (US$9 billion) and households not paying or underpaying domestic workers held in forced labour (US$8 billion).

**SUPPLY CHAINS PUT UNDER SCRUTINY**

Federal justice minister Michael Keenan spoke this week of the formation of a Supply Chains Working Group, which will examine ways to overcome exploitative practices in the production of goods and services. The government is developing a National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking and Slavery, to be launched in coming months.

The working group has the challenge of tackling labour and human rights abuses in the supply chain of goods imported into Australia. The composition of the group will be critical to its success. Ideally, it will include representatives of government, industry bodies, businesses and investment funds, as well as members with academic and civil society backgrounds.

The Catalyst Australia report identified that a common obstacle to improving labour and human rights in supply chains involves stakeholders going their own way. Distinctive partnerships are pivotal to an effective response. Flagging concerns, consulting (local) experts and expanding existing knowledge are essential elements of such a response.

**WHAT CAN WE DO TO END ABUSES?**

While active government involvement through legally enforceable standards is desirable, merely having laws against labour exploitation does not stop abuses. Many abuses occur outside legal frameworks, such as in the informal economy.

Increasing global co-ordination can cause discrepancies between proposed measures and their local effect, whether through legislation or self-regulation. This underlines the need for closer alignment of initiatives and partnerships at all levels.

Proposed measures should avoid a ‘one size fits all’ approach. Solutions require pragmatic mapping of the local landscape and the issue, ongoing dialogue to see which stakeholders are on board, who can be influenced and which approaches best suit the country and industry context. Examples of sector and country-specific approaches can provide useful guidance, but only when these suit particular circumstances do they drive improvement and have maximum impact.

It is important to note that labour and human rights risks are significantly reduced where workers are allowed to organise freely and have representative trade unions. Consequently, any stakeholder who is serious about tackling these issues must be serious about supporting a free trade union movement and be willing to engage in continuing worker dialogue.

Finally, due diligence must include responsibility for human rights. Companies often narrowly define due diligence as economic and reputational risk. By scrutinising potential business partners in advance, the notion of business responsibility takes a precautionary turn.

We need to shift from merely auditing existing activities, towards promoting, protecting and advancing labour and human rights. In this way businesses can help minimise abuses and play a transformative role in all regions where they operate.

**Martijn Boersma** is Researcher in Corporate Governance, University of Technology Sydney.
**Tackling the myths around child labour**

While the movement to eradicate child labour has gained significant pace, there is still a lot of ground to be covered and work to be done by companies and investors in conjunction with trade unions and NGOs, writes corporate social responsibility researcher Martijn Boersma from Catalyst Australia

In its latest report, Catalyst Australia examines the efforts and collaboration of global unions, NGOs, companies, and investors in dealing with child labour in global supply chains.

Extensive interviews highlighted a number of myths and misunderstandings that limit public perception of the issue and undermine the fight against child labour including:

**Myth 1: Child labour is only an issue for developing countries, not for Australia and other developed countries.**

Over half of Australia’s imported goods come from the Asia-Pacific region, an area with 78 million child labourers. As such, child labour can affect producers and consumers across the entire economic spectrum, while demands for low cost goods can turn suppliers towards exploitative practices and use of child labour.

**Myth 2: Global initiatives and national legislation have almost entirely made child labour a thing of the past.**

While it has been estimated that the number of child labourers has declined by 33 per cent since 2000, 168 million children continue to be exploited. Although global conventions are in place, their existence does not guarantee local take-up, nor does the existence of national child labour laws mean they are enforced.

**Myth 3: Child labour only occurs in isolated industries and geographical regions.**

59 per cent of child labour is found in the agricultural sector. Other infamous industries are the manufacturing and materials industry. It is clear however that any unskilled labour can involve the use of children. Furthermore, over half of the world’s imports are intermediate goods, used as inputs in the production of other goods, sourced from and intricately connecting different parts of the globe.

**Myth 4: The distinction between children working in industrial or in smaller settings is often mistaken and misused.**

A frequent misconception is that children in agriculture are largely working to support the family farm. This leads to the trivialisation of child labour and can implicitly justify children working. It also undermines the rights of children to a childhood and education. As one participant put it: “...it’s nice for a young person to have a job, but child labour is an abuse, it is a human rights abuse.”

**Myth 5: Self-regulatory standards or donations to charities are effective in offsetting the impact of child labour.**

CSR disclosures and voluntary labour and human rights initiatives are not regarded to be driving change, but as public relations tools for companies. They can however be a force for good when Governments are incapable or unwilling to act. In addition, there is no equivalent to buying carbon offsets in human rights: philanthropic good deeds do not compensate for infringing on human rights.

While the movement to eradicate child labour has gained significant pace, there is still a lot of ground to be covered. Most importantly, worker organisation is crucial, as child labour occurs less where there are representative trade unions. Companies and investors too can play an emancipatory role. It is important that these parties avoid tackling the issue alone, and instead flag concerns, consult stakeholders, and draw on remediation and prevention programs from trade unions and NGOs.

There is a need to shift from a standards-based approach to child labour towards a compliance-based approach, and expand the current narrow definition of risk to include risks of human rights abuses.

It is encouraging to see that Australia’s responsible investment industry is growing, as the partnership between shareholders and companies is unique and free of the tension that exists between NGOs and companies. However, the level of sophistication among funds varies, and the Catalyst research highlights a number of gaps and future considerations in addressing child labour.

Most notably, investors focus on human rights without full understanding any initiatives abroad, or trade union and NGO engagement. There is no history of investors actively and publicly engaging with companies on child labour issues, there is little evidence of Australian investors applying responsible investment strategies regarding child labour, and investors often react to ethical issues rather than proactively dealing with them.

Martijn Boersma is a researcher at Catalyst Australia, a policy institute and think tank, which works closely with trade unions, non-governmental organisations and academics to promote policy solutions for pressing social and economic issues.

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UNLUCKY FOR SOME: 13 MYTHS ABOUT CHILD LABOUR

Child labour is not an inevitable part of global development, according to World Vision Australia

There are 168 million child labourers around the world today. Contrary to popular belief, these are not teenagers doing light work or after-school jobs: they work in dangerous and dirty jobs that deprive them of a childhood and their education. Some 73 million of these child labourers are between five and 11 years old.

Child labour is not an inevitable part of global development. In fact, it slows global economic growth and has been linked to an increase in adult unemployment.

Whilst the Australian public may be shocked by this moral and ethical injustice, they may unwittingly be supporting companies that profit from child labour.

In order to end child labour, we must get the facts straight so we can all play our part.

Myth #1: Child labour is necessary if children are going to survive extreme poverty.

Child labour is commonly viewed as the only way families can survive extreme poverty, however in most cases child labour actually exacerbates the problem. Education is critical to ensuring children can gain the skills needed to secure better jobs and opportunities in the future. But if they are spending their days working instead of attending school, they may not have the chance to gain even a basic education.

If children are engaged in hazardous work that impacts their physical or mental health and development, this may affect their ability to work in the future.

For example, child labourers in cotton fields breathe toxic pesticides that are sprayed on the crops. This can cause tremors and in some cases paralysis, as the pesticides are designed to impede the nervous systems of pests. When suffering these conditions, children will have more limited employment opportunities in the future, and often increased medical costs, making it more difficult for them to escape poverty.

If children are going to survive extreme poverty, adult wages need to increase, so parents can afford to send their children to school. Parents will usually withdraw their children from the labour market once the household income earned by adult workers surpasses a certain threshold. This shows that higher adult wages can result in a reduction in child labour.

Myth #2: I worked as a child – child labour doesn’t do any harm.

Child work is different to child labour. Child labour refers specifically to work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity. It is work that is mentally or physically dangerous and harmful to children, and that interferes with schooling.

Child labour is not an inevitable part of global development. In fact, it slows global economic growth and has been linked to an increase in adult unemployment. Whilst the Australian public may be shocked by this moral and ethical injustice, they may unwittingly be supporting companies that profit from child labour.
working can help a child’s personal development by teaching them life skills and developing their levels of responsibility and maturity. This type of work could include vocational education opportunities or an after-school job.

Child labour, however, does not have a positive effect on children’s lives. Any work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children, that interferes with their schooling or exceeds a minimum number of hours should not be tolerated.

**Myth #3: Most child labourers are almost adults anyway, so it’s okay.**

Alarming 44 per cent of all child labourers are aged between five and 11 years. That’s 77 million children. Of the 85 million children estimated to be in a hazardous form of labour, 37.8 million are aged between five and 14 years, with more than half that number under 12.

**Myth #4: Child labour is an inevitable consequence of growth and development.**

Child labour is not a consequence of growth and development. In fact, it is an obstacle to achieving growth.

It’s widely acknowledged that there is a strong negative correlation between the existence of child labour and per capita GDP\(^2\). In other words, more child labour equals lower national income.

Child labour is linked to a range of negative impacts on macro-economic growth, including: depressed wages, increased adult unemployment, slow technological progress and difficulties attracting foreign inward investment\(^3\).

Investing in ‘human capital’ – the skills and capacities that reside in people – is one of the most important determinants of a nation’s economic success\(^4\). The use of child labour undermines this, as it means that workers are not being invested in, nor given appropriate wages for their work.

**Myth #5: Child labourers work in sweatshops.**

The majority of child labourers actually work in the agricultural sector.

Whilst there has been more media coverage of child labour in sweatshop-like conditions, the industrial sector, which includes sweatshops, factories, construction sites and mines, accounts for only 7.2 per cent of child labourers. Some 58.6 per cent work further down the supply chain on farms and plantations. This work includes planting, cultivating and harvesting raw materials like cotton that may end up in products manufactured around the world.

This type of child labour can be extremely harmful to children as they work long hours ploughing, weeding, planting, spraying toxic pesticides, harvesting and carrying heavy loads. Often they will not have protective clothing to protect them from sharp equipment or harmful pesticides. Exposure to pesticides can lead to ongoing respiratory and nervous system problems. They may also have to carry heavy loads repeatedly, which can damage their skeletal development.

**Myth #6: Some countries’ economies couldn’t survive without child labour.**

Child labour doesn’t just hurt children – it also hurts a country’s economy.

Child labour drives down wages and increases adult unemployment, especially among young workers, because children are used to do the same jobs for less pay\(^5\). This means adults are not able to productively contribute to the economy – which is essential in ensuring ongoing economic prosperity.

**Myth #7: All businesses that use child labour should be shut down immediately.**

Simply shutting down businesses that use child labour is seldom in the best interests of children and their communities.
Such actions can exacerbate the root causes of the poverty that force children to work in the first place and drive businesses that use child labour underground, making it more difficult to identify and provide support to child labourers. In some cases, it may drive child labourers into more dangerous industries.

Companies and employers that enable or benefit from child labour must change their policies to uphold the rights of children and actively discourage exploitative practices.

Governments, business and civil society must work together to address the root causes of child labour, to ensure that families can earn a decent wage so they can support their children's education and that there are safe alternative solutions in place to help children transition from labour to education.

Myth #8: The work that child labourers do isn’t very hard, so it’s okay.

The persistent belief that most work carried out by children is not particularly burdensome is sadly not true. More than 63 per cent of employed children work in conditions that are classified as child labour, and more than half that number work in hazardous conditions. So, for the majority of children, their labour is seriously detrimental to their development.

They can suffer long-term health problems due to malnutrition, exposure to chemicals, abuse and exhaustion. In agriculture, children may be exposed to toxic pesticides or fertilisers. They work with dangerous blades and tools and carry heavy loads. In mining, children may use poisonous chemicals, face the risks of mine collapse and sometimes work with explosives. In construction, children may carry heavy loads, work at heights and risk injury from dangerous machinery. In manufacturing, children may use toxic solvents, perform repetitive tasks in painful positions and risk injury from sharp tools. In domestic work, children risk abuse, work long hours and often live in isolation from their families and friends.

Children who are engaged in child labour can suffer serious psychological harm, which can result in behavioural problems. This can seriously impact on their social development and their ability to successfully complete their schooling.

Myth #9: It’s a cultural practice to start work younger overseas than here, so it’s not so bad.

In some contexts child labour is so widespread that it has become an ‘accepted’ norm. However, this makes the practice no less damaging to the child or the community.

Parents will usually withdraw their children from the labour market once adult wages increase the household income8, which shows that child labour is not a preferred practice. There is also evidence to suggest that reductions in child labour, accompanied by an increase in household income, can have a ripple effect, leading to the emergence of new social norms that oppose child labour, leading again to even greater reductions in child labour participation rates8. Education is also key to breaking this cycle in the future. When an educated child grows up they will be better placed to make informed decisions that will help influence future generations.

Myth #10: Children can go back to school later once they’ve made a bit of money.

Child labourers face significant barriers in going back to school. Often children earn far less than adult workers, however poverty forces them to work alongside adult family members in order to have enough to survive. Therefore it’s unlikely that children could earn enough to save for future schooling. A better solution would be for companies, and the governments of the countries in which those companies operate, to ensure that adult workers are paid a decent wage which allows them to send their children to school, rather than into child labour.

Also, once removed from school, children often find it difficult to catch up. Child labour can affect the health and wellbeing of children which can impact their ability to learn. Millions of children have to work long hours in hazardous conditions. This can have lasting psychological, social and intellectual impacts, which can have drastic effects on a child’s development. This may include behavioural problems and learning difficulties that can impair their ability to successfully complete their schooling.

Myth #11: Parents don’t care about their children if they let them be exploited.

Most parents don’t want to send their children to work, but often have no other choice because their earnings are too low to provide for the basic needs of their family. If parents have a decent wage and living conditions they won’t need to send their children out to work.

Many parents may have been child labourers or kept out of school themselves. With little education about alternative solutions or the risks that face their children, they may not see another choice.

Increasing access to education and working with communities to keep children in school are important in protecting children from exploitation and ensuring they gain the life skills required to help them secure work in the future.

Myth #12: It’s not Australia’s job to end child labour.

Australia and almost every other country in the world have committed under international law that governments are responsible for protecting children from child labour.

Australia is a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states its obligation to guarantee “…the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child’s education, or to be harmful to the child’s health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development”.

Addressing child labour is not just the right thing to do – it is also in Australia’s best interest. Ending child
labour is critical to ensuring the sustainable growth, development and technological advancement of the countries that we rely on to produce the materials, goods and services that we buy. Also, increased prosperity in other countries creates a bigger market for the goods and services that Australia exports.

So Australia has a moral, economic and legal responsibility to address child labour.

Where once individual firms, and even entire countries, specialised in certain industries and the manufacture of finished products, most things we purchase today can be said to be “made in the world”. Reliance on a global workforce to produce many of the goods that we purchase here in Australia means that we are implicitly linked with the people behind the products we buy – and the prosperity of the communities and countries that they live in.

Myth #13: There will always be child labour – it’s too big a problem to end.

It is possible to end child labour. The number of child labourers around the world has declined by one-third since 2000⁶. That’s 78 million children who are no longer working in exploitative conditions.

Child labour is declining because of the collective efforts of governments, business, civil society and individuals. But there is still much more to do.

Continuing this trend requires collective action to address the ‘supply’ of child labour and the global ‘demand’ for cheap goods produced through child labour.

Businesses must protect children from exploitation within their workplace, supply chain, marketplace and the wider communities in which they operate. Companies should transparently report on their efforts to mitigate their risk of labour exploitation and to seek third party auditing of these efforts.

Governments should take steps to ensure vulnerable children are not exploited within their borders through the implementation of legislative and judicial measures to eradicate exploitative practices. Governments can also discourage the use of child labour through public procurement policies, particularly when purchasing products sourced through agricultural and industrial sectors.

Individuals must ask questions of the companies they buy from, to ensure they are not indirectly supporting the use of child labour in the products they buy. They must put pressure on companies to provide transparent information about how their products are made and their company’s practices. Just as governments can encourage better practice through public procurement policies, by demanding more ethical products, the public can send a message to corporations that they will not tolerate children being exploited for profit.

THREE STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TO HELP END CHILD LABOUR

The Australian public may be purchasing products made with child labour and supporting companies that profit from the exploitation of children. Follow these simple steps and help end child labour.

1. Purchase more ethical products
   Download the Shop Ethical! app today and start making more informed decisions about which products you buy.

2. Tell businesses to end child labour
   If you can’t find products that are free from child labour, leave a card in store asking retailers to start stocking more ethical alternatives. Card available from the Don’t Trade Lives advocacy campaign website at: http://campaign.worldvision.com.au/campaigns/dont-trade-lives/

3. Tell others that they can help #EndChildLabour
   Post a photo of your ethical purchases on social media with the hashtag #EndChildLabour and help others to start taking ethical actions against child labour.

NOTES


FORCED AND CHILD LABOUR IS EVERYONE’S BUSINESS

DON’T TRADE LIVES, CAUTIONS WORLD VISION IN THIS FACT SHEET

Global demand for cheap goods and services and big profits means many people around the globe are exploited for their labour, paid little or no wage and often work in dangerous conditions. Even children are victims of labour exploitation.

Australian businesses may encounter forced or child labour in many aspects of their business, such as when suppliers or sub-contractors use forced or child labour to make products that the business then uses or sells on to consumers. Businesses may also encounter forced or child labour if staff are overseen by a third party, such as labour brokers, and they cannot fully assess whether the conditions of employment meet minimum labour standards.

Our daily contact with businesses – the products and services we buy, the businesses we work for, the companies we support – means we may be indirectly supporting the use of forced or child labour.

When you talk, businesses listen

Forced or child labour is forcing a person (man, woman or child) into an exploitative working situation they cannot escape from. They are not free and are exploited for profit over and over again.

Although the crime of forced and child labour can seem too big and complicated to fight, we can all do our bit to make sure Australian businesses and companies are not involved in exploitative labour practices.

As a consumer your voice and purchasing power can put a lot of pressure on companies to improve their business practices.

- Before you make a purchase, educate yourself about a business’ policies and practices in this area so you are satisfied that it is not involved in forced or child labour, either through its own activities or its supply chain.
- When you don’t have clear information about what the company is doing to avoid involvement in forced or child labour, ask the company about their policies and processes.

As an investor you can ask questions of the businesses you have shares with about what they are doing to avoid involvement in labour exploitation.

All businesses and companies can help combat forced and child labour by:

- Carefully choosing who to work with to make sure that a business partner is not using or linked to forced or child labour.
- Adopting a corporate culture that promotes responsible business conduct at all levels of the company. Set up policies and practices – endorsed at the highest levels – that will enable the company to effectively avoid any connection to forced or child labour.
- If companies do not respond to your enquiries or make statements that you reasonably believe are misleading or deceptive, tell regulators like the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission or your state consumer law regulator. They may decide to investi-gate whether these companies have engaged in misleading and deceptive conduct in relation to your enquiries about their actions to prevent and/or address forced or child labour.
- Raise awareness among other consumers about these issues.

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Labour exploitation in the fishing industry

Fishing is just one of many industries where labour exploitation exists. In the Thai fishing industry for example, boys and young men, especially from Cambodia, Myanmar and Laos, leave their villages looking for work in Thailand but are instead tricked or coerced onto fishing boats. Once onboard these offshore boats, the boys and men are trapped and forced to work.

Bounmy* from Laos was tricked onto a fishing boat and forced to work for nine years without pay. “We worked 24-hour shifts and slept three to four hours per day. If we could not complete the work during work hours, the chief worker would beat us,” says Bounmy.

Australia is a large importer of seafood from Asia, so the seafood we eat here may have been caught using exploitative labour. Companies that brand and package seafood sold in Australia may source their goods from numerous contractors and have a responsibility to know and address the conditions workers endure.

* Name has been changed

- What do you know about their policies and practices to prevent and address their potential or actual involvement in forced or child labour?
- What can they tell you about their policies, processes and performance on preventing and addressing their potential or actual involvement in forced or child labour?
- Encourage other shareholders to get involved at annual general meetings (AGMs) and other forums.
- When you don’t have enough information, write letters to key people in the business or use shareholder resolutions or other opportunities at AGMs to ask for more detail on their due diligence processes with regards to labour exploitation across all aspects of their operations.

As an employee you can think about whether your own role may have implications for your company’s involvement in labour exploitation. You may also have access to colleagues and business partners, like suppliers and customers, who may not be aware of the strong business case for avoiding involvement in labour exploitation. Ask about and better understand your employer’s policies, processes and performance on these issues, including how they decide who they do business with.

- Consider establishing a working group in your company to identify and learn how to better deal with challenges relating to labour exploitation facing your company and the broader industry, as well as opportunities to make a positive change in this area.
- Highlight best practice to managers and direct reports and conduct training and other awareness-raising activities where appropriate.
- Make use of internal complaints mechanisms when you have a concern about your company’s involvement in forced or child labour.

**As a constituent and voter**

You have the right to ask questions of your Federal MP and the Australian Government about what they are doing to address forced or child labour.

You could:

- Write to your MP to tell them your concerns about the potential/likelihood of Australian businesses’ involvement in labour exploitation overseas.
- Encourage them to raise the issues with companies within their constituency and for the government to ensure that Australian businesses are acting responsibly at home and abroad.
- Ask them to review the government’s own purchasing practices and update their Procurement Guidelines so these meet the minimum labour standards set by the International Labour Organisation.

**Get involved**

World Vision Australia, through its Don’t Trade Lives campaign, is uniting Australians against forced and child labour. As part of this campaign it is asking Australian businesses to ensure they have transparent, traceable and independently verifiable supply chains free of labour exploitation. It is also asking businesses to proactively engage with networks and coalitions on this issue to ensure they follow relevant international norms, treaties and mandates. Visit dontradelives.com.au

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Tainted technology

There have been reports of labour exploitation in the Democratic Republic of Congo where vast quantities of coltan, tungsten and tin are mined. These minerals are commonly found in the computers, mobile phones and other technological equipment we use daily at work and at home. Miners may be forced to work without pay by armed forces or rebel groups that control the mines. Children are sometimes forced to work deep below ground breathing dusty air and using no protective equipment.

After these minerals are extracted they are sold to trading houses. From here they are sold on to exporters that transport them to refining companies around the world. They then turn the ore into metal and electronic components. These will then be bought by manufacturers who produce the items we use and sell them under some of the world’s most well-known brands.

At all points of this supply chain it is important for companies to transparently document the source of the items they purchase and conduct independent audits to determine whether they are taking appropriate steps to make sure their business is not profiting from forced or child labour.

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Almost two years since the 2013 Rana Plaza factory collapse in Bangladesh, which saw over 1,100 workers lose their lives, a new Australian fashion industry report reveals that fashion brands aren’t doing enough to protect workers in their international supply chains.

The research, conducted by international aid and development organisation Baptist World Aid Australia, highlights what 219 major global and domestic fashion brands have been doing to ensure workers in their supply chains are being protected from exploitation.

Grading companies based on their policies, supply chain traceability, monitoring programs and worker rights, the research stemmed from a need to educate consumers to shop ethically.

The 2015 Australian Fashion Report also assessed whether companies are paying a wage that meets their workers’ basic needs and found only 9 per cent of fashion brands are paying their workers a living wage.

In Bangladesh, the current minimum wage of US $68 per month falls short of the US $104 per month, which is being touted as a fair living wage.

“It doesn’t take much for the end-consumer to make a difference to the lives of those making our clothes. Research shows an additional 30c per t-shirt would ensure living wages are met in Bangladesh,” said Gershon Nimbalker, Advocacy Manager at Baptist World Aid.

One of the worst overall performers was iconic Australian fashion brand the Just Group, who received an overall D grade, with an F grade for worker rights. Also performing badly was Best & Less receiving a D grade and Lowes receiving an F grade.

However, some Australian companies have made significant improvements and engaged deeply with the research process. Since 2013, Kmart and Cotton On have improved their traceability of suppliers throughout their supply chains and Country Road and the Sussan Group have improved worker wages.

“It’s really encouraging to see companies make high impact and lasting changes like publishing lists of direct suppliers and paying wages that actually meet workers’ basic needs,” said Nimbalker.

“The 2013 factory collapse sparked the collective conscience of consumers and retailers to know more about the people producing our clothes and how they are treated.”

“While an increased number of companies know the factories where their final manufacturing takes place, only nine per cent have traced down to the people picking their cotton. If companies don’t know or don’t care who is producing their products, it’s much harder to know whether workers are being exploited or even enslaved.”

“We hope consumers use this research to make every day ethical purchasing decisions because we know that when consumers call for change, they have the power to...”
Two thirds of companies which were F-graded in the first Australian Fashion Report (2013) have subsequently improved their practices; more than a dozen have now signed the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh, which pledges a safe work environment in the ready-made garment industry. Kmarts was notable for improving its supply chain traceability, while Cotton On was the highest rated non-Fairtrade Australian retailer.

To date, twenty-three companies have boycotted cotton from one of the world’s largest cotton exporters, Uzbekistan, which has a history of forcing children as young as 10 to work in government-owned cotton fields. Coles, Lowes, Best & Less, Billabong and Quiksilver have not yet boycotted Uzbekistani cotton. David Jones has recently signed the pledge, and has lifted its grade from an F to a C over the past two years.

A+ Etiko, Audrey Blue
A Fruit of the Loom, Hanesbrands Inc (Bali Bras, Barely There), Liminal Apparel, Repp
A- 3 Fish, Cotton On (Cotton On, Factorie, Rubi), H&M, Inditex (Zara), Patagonia
B+ Adidas, Country Road Group (Country Road, Mimco, Witchery), Cue Clothing Co (Cue, Veronika Maine), Levi Strauss & Co (Levis, Dockers), Athletica (Lululemon), Timberland
B Gap Inc (Gap, Athletica, Republic), Jeanswest, Kathmandu, Kmart, Lacoste, Nike (Nike, Converse, Hurley), Pacific Brands (Bonds, Berlei, Holeproof, Jockey), Puma, Sussan Group (Sussan, Sportsgirl), Uniqlo, VF Corporation (Lee, Nautica, North Face, Vans)
B- Coles (Mix Apparel), Woolworths (Big W, Peter Morrissey, Mambo), New Balance, Simon de Winter, Target Australia (Target, Free Fusion, Lily Loves)
C+ Forever New
C Abercrombie & Fitch*, Billabong (Billabong, Element, Von Zipper), Orotom Group (Orotom, Brooks Brothers), Specialty Fashion Group (Katties, Millers, Rivers)
C- David Jones (David Jones, Agenda, Alta Linea), Myer (Basque, Blaq, Sass & Bide), Retail Apparel Group (Taro cash, Yd)
D+ Fusion Retail Brands (Colorado, Diana Ferrari, Mathers, Williams), Quiksilver (Quiksilver, Roxy, DC)
D Just Group* (Just Jeans, Jay Jays, Dotti, Jacqui E, Portmans), Pretty Girl Fashion Group* (Rockmans, Table Eight)
D- Apparel Group (JAG, Saba, Sportscraft), Best & Less*

* Did not take part in the questionnaire (most companies that received an F grade had limited or no publicly available information about their supply chains and did not engage with Baptist World Aid for the study).

Sources:

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In its biggest week of the year, the AFL has had to respond to reports that it was using footballs stitched by Indian child labourers who are paid mere cents for the work.

Child labour is a serious evil and needs to be combated everywhere. Not only are child labourers exploited economically, but their health and safety is often endangered, and they are deprived of the chance to get an education.

I would expect the football codes and clubs to take this issue seriously, and I am pleased they have done just that. The AFL, and North Melbourne in particular, pride themselves on social responsibility. So it must have come as a shock for North when The Age reported that commemorative balls to be given away at their Grand Final Breakfast had been made with child labour. The club has acted quickly and decisively, redirecting payments for these footballs to World Vision, their charity partner.

But the truth is that sport is just the tip of the iceberg. Child labour, and other forms of exploitation – including modern forms of slavery – are part of the reality of the global economy. It is a long-term, systemic issue, and it needs long-term, systemic remedies. Bans and boycotts are all very well but they don’t necessarily address the root causes of the problem.

As consumers, we are all too often partners in exploitation. Often this is unknowing and unwilling. But the excuse of not knowing is no longer good enough.

For example, we love our mobile phones, iPads and all the other devices that have transformed our way of communicating. But we conveniently overlook that all these gadgets use the mineral coltan, much of it mined in appalling conditions in the Congo.

And we also love chocolate. Can you imagine Easter without the eggs? But while huge progress has been made, much of the world’s chocolate production still involves trafficked and child labour recruited for work in the cocoa farms of West Africa.

Sports equipment, mobile phones, chocolate, cheap clothing, cheap overseas holidays – the list goes on. The answer is not to throw our hands up and say nothing can be done. Nor is it to retreat from the global economy – these products and services are a big part of lifting people up from poverty.

We have to acknowledge when ethical lines have been crossed. Sometimes, if a thing is cheap, it’s cheap for a reason, and that reason might be troubling exploitation and abuse.

However things are changing. Public awareness continues to grow. More and more people realise that the advantage we gain as global consumers comes with an ethical demand to also behave as global citizens.

This does demand of us that we be ethical consumers and also ethical investors. The Fairtrade movement has done a power of good in waking us up to the fact that as consumers we have the opportunity to make real difference by the choices we make.

But we also need to think about the reasons child labour happens in the first place. We need to recognise the plight of families who put children to work instead of sending them to school. If we really care about the rights and wellbeing of children, we have to go beyond legal rules and focus also on the context of poverty that gives rise to child labour.

I have met thousands of parents in poor developing
countries, and overwhelmingly they want the best for their children, just like Australian parents. But for millions of people their choices are limited by the systemic denial of opportunity that comes from extreme poverty and injustice.

If the reporting about child labour in India helps end some of the worst forms of child labour, that will be a great achievement. But it mustn’t stop there.

I am proud that so many Australians show solidarity with poor communities by supporting agencies like World Vision. I am proud that our government demonstrates commitment to our neighbours through an effective aid program focused on reducing poverty. I am proud that so many young Australians choose to volunteer and to advocate in the cause of a more just world.

Australians love sport and for millions of us Grand Final Week is a time of genuine joy and celebration, even for those of us whose team ended their season weeks ago.

This is a time when we celebrate the energy and exuberance of youth and watch in wonder and awe at the skills and strength of the players. We also reflect on the fantastic power of sport to lift many people up from disadvantage and let them grow to their full potential.

I think this is a great time to count our blessings. Time to pause and think seriously about what each of us can actually do to help create a world that is safe for children – a world where all children share that same chance to grow and achieve.

Because just like on the football field, good intentions and hopes are not enough. If we really care about children, we will take personal responsibility and do something.

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Child labour scandals in football manufacturing

Recent investigations by Fairfax Media into child labour practices of Australian companies with manufacturing operations in India have revealed the use of children to assemble footballs for the Australian market. Below is a summary of events relating to the companies’ responses to the revelations.

H and stitching is dangerous and demanding work in which balls are stitched using two heavy needles and wax-coated string. Child stitchers can end up with chronic back injuries, septic wounds to their hands, weakened eyesight, and depression and other psychological disorders. Child labour is illegal in India. It is against the law to employ anyone under the age of 14. The Right to Education Act mandates that every child must go to school until the age of 14.

September 2012

- Football manufacturer Sherrin pulled all football manufacturing from its Indian subcontractors, after admitting some of its balls were being hand-stitched by children as young as 10 for as little as 12 cents a ball.
- The children, almost all of them girls, were being pulled out of school to stitch balls for up to 10 hours a day, seven days a week.
- Sherrin claimed it knew nothing of the child labour and promised an investigation. In response to pressure, Sherrin’s parent company, Russell Corporation, promptly announced no balls would be allowed to be subcontracted out for stitching.
- Sherrin recalled all balls sent to that subcontractor for stitching in 2012, totalling about 9,000 balls after revelations that a Melbourne boy had been injured by a needle found in a ball linked to an Indian subcontractor using child labour.
- Sherrin also recalled an estimated 450,000 to 500,000 Auskick balls manufactured in 2011 and 2012 at an estimated cost of more than $1 million to the company.
- Sherrin subsequently offered employment to the parents of all of the child labourers who previously worked stitching its footballs, and claimed that 90 per cent of its former home stitchers were taking up offers to work for better pay in the factory of Sherrin’s Indian manufacturer, Spartan; the other 10 per cent had apparently elected not to.

October 2013

- Summit Sport admitted it was using children in India to stitch rugby balls sold in Australia, taking full responsibility and vowing to refund all balls sold.
- Following days of denying allegations by Fairfax journalists, Summit Sport’s owner subsequently conceded that the company had failed in its compliance process.
- Summit Sport said it had ‘demanded’ that manufacturers not allow any stitching to occur outside their factories.
- The Fairfax investigation found hundreds of children were secretly being employed to make balls for Australian children the same age, pressed into harmful, back-breaking labour for little more than one dollar a day.
- Following the child labour revelations, retailers Harvey Norman and Rebel Sport pulled all Summit products, including footballs and soccer balls, from their shelves.

**Sources**

Doherty, B (26 September 2012). ‘Ball back-down as Sherrin ends child labour’, *The Sydney Morning Herald.*


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Today is World Day Against Child Labour, and there is a simple way that Australia can demonstrate its commitment to allowing children to grow up before becoming part of the paid workforce.

The Australian Parliament is currently considering whether to ratify an important international convention to protect children from entering the paid workforce at too young an age. The International Labour Organisation Minimum Age Convention is the only one of eight fundamental labour standards that Australia has not adopted. We are one of just 20 countries that have not ratified this convention.

While significant progress has been made in reducing the number of child labourers worldwide in recent years, a staggering 215 million girls and boys aged under 15 remain at work, over half of them in the worst forms of child labour, according to estimates by the ILO. We are not talking about part-time, after-school jobs to earn a little pocket money. These are children who at a young age are put to work full time.

Today, the ILO is releasing a major new report on the extent of child labour in domestic work. This is frequently a hidden form of the workforce, with few rights and protections.

Two out of every three children engaged in domestic work are working below the minimum age or in hazardous conditions.

“Child labour is a fundamental abuse of human rights. It denies girls and boys the right to be a child, to access quality education, and to hope for the future,” says the ILO’s Secretary-General Guy Ryder. “In its worst forms it exposes children to slavery, hazardous work and illicit activities, including drug trafficking and prostitution.”

Thankfully, child labour has not existed in Australia for many decades. There is a legally enforceable minimum age of 15 in this country.

But that just makes it more perplexing why it has taken so long for Australia to ratify the international convention on the minimum age of employment and work. The convention merely restates what is already the practice in Australia. The Government tabled the convention in Parliament in March, but some employer groups have opposed ratification.

In a submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties, the ACTU said Australia’s failure to adopt the convention put us at risk of being seen internationally as a barrier in the way of this campaign for universal recognition of fundamental labour rights for children.

It said adopting the convention would have negligible impact on employment arrangements in Australia,
but would send a powerful message to our neighbours and give Australia a stronger platform from which to campaign against child labour in our region.

“Countries should have laws and policies in place to protect and foster the development of young people through ensuring that they do not engage in work that interferes with their education, or endangers or harms their physical, mental and social development,” the ACTU said.

“At the same time, it’s important to recognise that many young people benefit from participation in the workforce, through engaging in decent quality ‘light work’ that doesn’t interfere with their schooling. For young people, work can help build social skills, independence, self-esteem, financial awareness and skills.”

The ACTU acknowledges that ratifying the convention would make little difference on the ground in Australia, but it would send an important message to the rest of our region.

As the Uniting Church said in its submission to the Joint Standing Committee:

“There can be no doubt there are goods entering Australia that are produced using exploited child labour, meaning there is a direct link for Australia to seek an end to the use of exploited child labour in our region to seek to ensure goods produced through such criminal human rights abuse do not enter our market.”

These products include cotton, sugarcane, tobacco, coffee, rice and cocoa.

The ACTU says Australia plays an important role in promoting respect for basic labour rights and better working conditions in the Asia-Pacific region.

“We pride ourselves on our regional leadership in this area. It is central to Australia’s ongoing credibility and authority on these issues in the region that we can not only claim to but demonstrate our commitment to respecting fundamental rights at work. The best way to do this is to have ratified all eight ILO fundamental conventions.”

How soon can you send your kids to work in Australia?

Child labour laws in Australia are far from uniform, with some states sending kids as young as 11 to work. After McDonald’s was busted for underage employment, ‘Crikey’ intern Luca Zuccaro examined the legalities.

How young is too young to send your kid off to the coal mines? It depends what state you live in.

In Western Australia, McDonald’s was fined $15,000 last week in the Perth Industrial Magistrates’ Court for illegally employing a 14-year-old girl to work overnight shifts in its Rockingham outlet. State Commerce Minister Michael Mischin said the Department of Commerce had initiated the action against the company after learning the child was spending too many hours at work and working past 10pm, breaching the Children and Community Service Act 2004.

Mischin said in a statement: “During one shift, the child commenced work at 3.21pm on a Saturday afternoon and did not conclude her shift until after 6am the following day … Our employment laws seek to provide children with the benefits of participating in employment while balancing the remaining important aspects of their lives, including their education.”

It’s not the first time Macca’s has fallen foul of WA’s child labour laws, which are among the strictest in the country. Between July 2006 and February 2007 it was fined $88,000 in relation to unlawful employment of 40 children.

The employment of children, considered those individuals under the age of 18, is regulated by a number of state, federal or territory laws in Australia. Western Australia, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory have the most detailed legislation …

What are all these kids doing?

Australian Bureau of Statistics figures from 2006 show the most common occupation for boys between five and 14 during school terms was newspaper delivery (24%), while for girls it was sales worker (20%). According to the 2006 Child Employment Survey, there were some 175,000 children between five and 14 years who had a job, representing the 6.6% of all Australian kids. Usually, they worked to spend money (80%) and to save (60%).

The Northern Territory and WA had the highest proportions of workers (12% and 9.5%), followed by NSW and Victoria (6%). Across Australia, children in state capital cities were less likely to have worked than children in rural areas. Some 10% said they worked more than 10 hours a week during school term, and the percentage doubled during school holidays.

What are the laws in Western Australia?

In WA, children need to be 15 years of age to be employed in part-time, casual or holiday jobs. Those aged between 13 and 15 may be employed in a shop, retail outlet, restaurant, delivering newspapers or pamphlets, or collecting shopping trolleys between 6am and 10pm and if the work is outside school hours.

... and in New South Wales?

In New South Wales the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) (Child Employment) Regulation 2010 states the total period of time for which a child is employed during any week, when added to the time that the child is in school, must not exceed 50 hours. So, if a child spends 35-40 hours a week at school, he could work 10-15. But children must not work more than four hours on any day on school days.

... and in Victoria?

In Victoria, the Child Employment Act 2003 allows children aged 13 and over to go to work. Children can be employed for a maximum of three hours per day and 12 hours per week during school term, and a maximum of six hours per day and 30 hours per week during school holidays. Moreover, kids cannot work earlier than 6am or sunrise (whichever is later) or later than 6pm or sunset (whichever is earlier) if the child is employed in street trading; and earlier than 6am or later than 9pm in any other case. Children as young as 11 can work delivering newspapers and advertising material or making deliveries for a registered pharmacist.

... and in Queensland?

The Child Employment Act 2006 of Queensland allows employers to hire children for a maximum of 12 hours during a school week to a maximum of 38 during a non-school week. The sunshine state defines the minimum age as 11 for delivery work and 13 for any other work. The maximum allowable hours of work for school-aged children are four on a school day and eight on a non-school day.

... and in South Australia?

South Australia has no current child labour laws but is considering a government act to limit the amount of work children can do.
... and in Tasmania?
Tasmania does not have legislation specifically addressing the employment of children and the working hours allowed, although the Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1997 provides regulations considering the protection of children in employment. Tasmania is currently reviewing its child labour laws.

What about the entertainment industry?
The entertainment industry has a different set of criteria entirely, allowing for child actors and models. Generally speaking, children under three are allowed to work in the entertainment industry for no more than four hours a week under the approval of a guardian and with the presence of a registered nurse.

There is also no minimum age regarding employment in a family business.


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**Minimum working age in Australia**

According to the Fair Work Ombudsman, the age you can start working in Australia generally depends on the state or territory that you work in. The minimum age you can start work applies to all workers, including those starting an apprenticeship or traineeship.

**Australian Capital Territory**
No set age for starting work, however if you are under 15 there are limits to the type of work you can do and how many hours you can work.

**New South Wales**
No set age for starting work.

**Northern Territory**
No set age for starting work, however if you are under 15, you are not allowed to work between 10pm and 6am.

**Queensland**
If you are 13 or older you can start work. If you are under 13, you may work in some circumstances including:
- If you work in a family business
- If you work in the entertainment industry
- Some forms of supervised employment are allowed such as deliveries and charitable collections.

**South Australia**
No set age for starting work, however there are limits on the type of work you can do.

**Tasmania**
No set age for starting work, however there are limits to the type of work you can do when performing in public and selling things in public places.

**Victoria**
If you are 15 or older you can start work. If you are under 15 years of age, you may work in limited circumstances including:
- If you work in a family business
- If you work in the entertainment industry.
If you are under 15 but older than 13, you may work with your parental permission where you have been granted a child employment permit.

**Western Australia**
If you are 15 or older you can start work. But if you are under 15, you can only work some jobs with restricted hours.

**Working during school times**
To work during school times you must be of the minimum school leaving age. The minimum school leaving age is 15 years for all states and territories, except Tasmania and Victoria, where the leaving age is 16 years.

Source: Fair Work Ombudsman, *What age can I start work?*
EXPLORING
ISSUES

WORKSHEETS AND ACTIVITIES

The Exploring Issues section comprises a range of ready-to-use worksheets featuring activities which relate to facts and views raised in this book. The exercises presented in these worksheets are suitable for use by students at middle secondary school level and beyond. Some of the activities may be explored either individually or as a group.

As the information in this book is compiled from a number of different sources, readers are prompted to consider the origin of the text and to critically evaluate the questions presented.

Is the information cited from a primary or secondary source? Are you being presented with facts or opinions?

Is there any evidence of a particular bias or agenda? What are your own views after having explored the issues?

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Brainstorm, individually or as a group, to find out what you know about child labour.

1. What is child labour, and what are some reasons why children may end up working in these conditions?

2. What does the term ‘the worst forms of child labour’ refer to, and what are some examples?

3. What is the definition of a child soldier? Provide examples of roles a child soldier may be given.

4. What is child slavery, and how does it relate to child labour?
Complete the following activity on a separate sheet of paper if more space is required.

“Millions of children around the world are trapped in child labour, depriving them of their childhood, their health and education, and condemning them to a life of poverty and want.”

UNICEF, Child labour.

Consider the above statement. In the space below, explain how each of the following industries uses child labour. Identify the major countries involved, and explore the impacts on child workers.

CHOCOLATE

TEXTILES

ELECTRONICS

COFFEE
DISCUSSION ACTIVITIES

Complete the following activity on a separate sheet of paper if more space is required.

The Australian public may be purchasing products made with child labour and supporting companies that profit from the exploitation of children ... Reliance on a global workforce to produce many of the goods that we purchase here in Australia means that we are implicitly linked with the people behind the products we buy – and the prosperity of the communities and countries that they live in.

World Vision, Unlucky for some: 13 myths about child labour.

Form into groups of two or more people and identify three products that potentially could be linked to child labour. Using the space provided below, compile a list of the products, including examples of how they could be linked to child labour. Also consider steps you could take to reduce child labour associated with such products available for purchase in Australia. Discuss your ideas with other groups in the class.

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MULTIPLE CHOICE

Complete the following multiple choice questionnaire by circling or matching your preferred responses. The answers are at the end of the next page.

1. Which of the following international conventions lay the groundwork for laws governing when and how children can work? (select all that apply)
   a. ILO Convention No. 138 on the Minimum Age, 1973
   b. UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989
   c. UN Convention on Work Rights for Children, 1990
   d. ILO Convention No. 123 on Rights for Children, 2001
   e. ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999
   f. UN Convention on Children Going to Work, 2010

2. Hundreds of companies are pledging to boycott cotton from which country known for a history of forced child labour?
   a. Great Britain
   b. Norway
   c. New Zealand
   d. Uzbekistan
   e. South Africa
   f. Greenland
   g. France

3. In which country is there a practice known as the ‘Sumangali Scheme’, which forces many young women into labour bondage?
   a. Afghanistan
   b. Thailand
   c. Singapore
   d. India
   e. Sudan
   f. Philippines
   g. Libya

4. Since 2011, there have been reports of the use of child soldiers in which of the following countries? (select all that apply)
   a. Afghanistan
   b. Australia
   c. Colombia
   d. Democratic Republic of the Congo
   e. India
   f. Iraq
   g. Israel
   h. Libya
   i. Mali
   j. New Zealand
   k. Philippines
   l. Thailand
   m. Somalia
   n. Sudan
   o. Syria
   p. Yemen
5. Respond to the following statements by circling either ‘True’ or ‘False’:

(a) In New South Wales there is no set age for starting work.  
(b) In September 2012, football manufacturer Sherrin pulled all football manufacturing from its Indian subcontractors, after admitting some of its balls were being hand-stitched by children as young as 10 for as little as 12 cents a ball.  
(c) Child labour drives wages up.  
(d) 44 per cent of all child labourers are aged between 5 and 11 years.  
(e) The majority of child labourers work in sweatshops.  
(f) Recent research data on school enrolment around the world indicates that all children of primary school age are currently enrolled in school.  
(g) Girls are never recruited as child soldiers.

MULTIPLE CHOICE ANSWERS

a. True / False  
b. True / False  
c. True / False  
d. True / False  
e. True / False  
f. True / False  
g. True / False
In 2012, the global number of children in child labour had declined by one third since 2000, from 246 million to 168 million children. More than half of them, 85 million, were in hazardous work (down from 171 million in 2000) (ILO, At a glance – Child labour: Facts and figures). (p.2)

In 2012, agriculture remained by far the most important sector where child labourers were found (ibid). (p.2)

Child labour is often present where the enforcement of laws against child labour is limited, where social protection for children and families is lacking, particularly free, quality education, where poverty is endemic, and where the rule of law is poor (ILO, How to do business with respect for children’s right to be free from child labour: ILO-IOE child labour guidance tool for business). (p.3)

Every day, an estimated 168 million boys and girls work as child labourers, in the farms, fields, factories, homes, streets and battlefields. They face hunger, hard work, ill-health and poverty (Global March Against Child Labour, Child Labour). (p.4)

At least 2 million children are trafficked annually for child labour and sexual exploitation (ibid). (p.4)

Some 120 million of children engaged in child labour are below 14, while a further 30 million children in this age group – mostly girls – perform unpaid household chores within their own families (UNICEF, Child labour). (p.5)

Despite a steady decline in child labour, at current rates, more than 100 million children will still be trapped in child labour by 2020 (ibid). (p.5)

Worldwide, 5.5 million children are in slavery, trafficking, debt bondage and other forms of forced labour, forced recruitment for armed conflict, prostitution, pornography and other illicit activities (Anti-Slavery International, Child slavery). (p.8)

Child marriage can operate as a shield behind which slavery and slavery-like practices occur with apparent impunity (ibid). (p.9)

Around 20-30% of children in low-income countries complete their schooling and enter the labour market by the age of 15 and most of these children were in child labour before (ILO, New ILO study points to the long-term impact of child labour). (p.10)

It is estimated that around 14 million children produce clothing in sweatshops, or in dangerous informal home-based or small-scale manufacturing operations in many countries, including Bangladesh, China, India, the Philippines and Vietnam (International Labor Rights Forum, Child Labor). (p.11)

Over 70% of the world’s supply of cocoa comes from two West African countries: Cote d’Ivoire and Ghana, where there is a century-long history of forced and child labour in cocoa production in dangerous conditions. This child labour goes into a large proportion of the chocolate sold in Australia (ibid). (p.11)

For over 100 years the tobacco industry (cigarette manufacturers and leaf buyers) has exploited farmers to obtain profits from below-cost leaf, unpaid child labour and low-cost and bonded adult labourers (ibid). (p.11)

Cotton is among the most common crops grown around the world. Child exploitation is evident in every stage of cotton production (ibid). (p.12)

Children are a key part of the coffee industry’s cheap labour supply. Children brought by their parents to coffee plantations are technically not employed by the owner, and do not receive any labour protections (ibid). (p.12)

Child labour is a major issue in the artisanal mines of the DRC, where coltan, copper and cobalt are mined. In 2013, it was reported that children make up 40% of the two million people working in these mines (Baptist World Aid Australia, Electronics Industry Trends). (p.18)

Since 2000, the participation of child soldiers has been reported in most armed conflicts and in almost every region of the world. Although there are no exact figures, and numbers continually change, tens of thousands of children under the age of 18 continue to serve in government forces or armed opposition groups. Some of those involved in armed conflict are under 10 years old (Child Soldiers International UK, Who Are Child Soldiers?). (p.21)

Worldwide estimates suggest that girls may account for between 10-30% of children in fighting forces (Child Soldiers International UK, FAQs). (p.22).

Many child labourers do not attend school at all. Others combine school and work but often to the detriment of their education. Lacking adequate education and skills, as adults former child labourers are more likely to end up in poorly paid, insecure work or to be unemployed (ILO, World Day Against Child Labour). (p.28)

In 2013, more than half of Australia’s imported goods came from the Asia-Pacific region, which has the largest absolute number of child labourers: 78 million (Boersma, M, Global supply chains link us all to shame of child and forced labour). (p.34)

Child labourers in cotton fields breathe toxic pesticides that are sprayed on the crops. This can cause tremors and in some cases paralysis, as the pesticides are designed to impede the nervous systems of pests (World Vision, Unlucky for some: 13 myths about child labour). (p.37)

While there is more media coverage of child labour in sweatshops, the industrial sector, which includes sweatshops, factories, construction sites and mines, accounts for only 7.2% of child labourers (ibid). (p.38)

The ILO Minimum Age Convention is the only 1 of 8 fundamental labour standards that Australia has not adopted. We are 1 of just 20 countries that have not ratified this convention (Phillips, M, A global scandal: 215 million boys and girls in child labour). (p.47)

Across Australia, children in state capital cities were less likely to have worked than children in rural areas. Some 10% said they worked more than 10 hours a week during school term, and the percentage doubled during school holidays (Zuccaro, L, Crikey Clarifier: how soon can you send your kids to work?). (p.49)
Child labour

The employment of children in any work that deprives children of their childhood, interferes with their ability to attend regular school, and that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful. This practice is considered exploitative by many international organisations. Legislation across the world prohibits child labour.

Child marriage

Marriage involving children under 18 years of age remains a culturally accepted practice in many parts of the globe. Child marriage can operate as a shield behind which slavery and slavery-like practices occur with apparent impunity. Although many marriages involving children will not amount to slavery, many married children do experience levels of suffering, coercion and control that meet international legal definitions of slavery and slavery-like practices.

Child prostitution

When children are sexually abused in exchange for money, food, clothes, shelter or protection. Adults can trick, pressure, threaten or force children into prostitution.

Child slavery

Despite the fact that many people believe slavery no longer exists, it is estimated that there are some 5.5 million children in slavery or practices similar to slavery. This group of children includes: children who are used by others who profit from them – often through violence, abuse and threats, in prostitution or pornography, illicit activities, such as forced begging, petty theft, and the drug trade; forced child labour; children who are forced to take part in armed conflict; and child domestic workers, many of whom are forced to work long hours, in hazardous and often abusive environments, for little or no pay, and often far from home.

Child soldiers

Children under the age of 18 who are unlawfully recruited through force, fraud, or coercion, as combatants or for labour or sexual exploitation by armed forces. Some child soldiers are used for fighting, others are used as cooks, porters, messengers, informants, spies or anything they are told to do. Child soldiers are sometimes sexually abused. Child soldiers can be both boys and girls.

Child trafficking

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of children under the age of 18 for the purpose of exploitation. It is a violation of their rights, wellbeing and denies them the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Child work

Not all children who work are in a child labour situation. Many types of work make a useful, positive contribution to a child’s development. Work can help children learn and develop particular skills that will benefit them and the rest of society. Often, work is a vital source of income that enables children to help sustain their families.

Convention on the Rights of the Child

On 20 November 1989 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, also known as the CRC. It recognises the human rights of all children – every boy and girl, everywhere in the world. According to the CRC, any person under the age of 18 is considered a child. The CRC is the most universally accepted human rights convention in history.

Corporate responsibility

A term that recognises the duty of companies to stop child labour. When operating abroad, they must do so responsibly, with due care for people, raw materials, the environment, and their surroundings.

Forced labour

When a person is forced or threatened into providing labour or services and is not free to stop.

Minimum Age Convention, 1973

International Labour Organisation convention which sets the minimum ages for various types of work.

Sale of children

This is when a child is given or sold for money or for some other form of profit (like goods, gifts or some form of assistance). It can include the sale of children for many different purposes, including forced work, dangerous work, illegal work, to become a child soldier, arranged or temporary marriage, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and illegal adoption.

Trafficking

Also regarded as forced labour. Human trafficking is putting or keeping someone in an exploitative situation for profit. It can happen to men, women, and children. It is a serious crime that can take place anywhere, and can occur in every country of the world. It is driven by the demand for cheap goods, services and labour, and the supply of vulnerable people.

Worst forms of child labour

Also known as ‘hazardous work’. This is work that irreversibly threatens children’s health and development, through, for example, exposure to dangerous machinery or toxic substances, and may even endanger their lives. The worst forms of child labour also include the 5.5 million children in slavery and slavery-like practices, who are also subject to exploitation by others.

Worst forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999

This International Labour Organisation convention defines certain types of child labour as among the ‘worst forms’, which should be abolished as a matter of priority. It is the most rapidly ratified ILO Convention. Adhering countries accept human rights convention in history.

Corporate responsibility

A term that recognises the duty of companies to stop child labour. When operating abroad, they must do so responsibly, with due care for people, raw materials, the environment, and their surroundings.

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This International Labour Organisation convention defines certain types of child labour as among the ‘worst forms’, which should be abolished as a matter of priority. It is the most rapidly ratified ILO Convention. Adhering countries develop ‘hazardous work lists’ that identify activities that should not be carried out by anyone under 18.
Websites with further information on the topic

Anti-Slavery Australia  www.antislavery.org.au
Anti-Slavery International  www.antislavery.org
Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans  http://acrath.au
Child Labor Free  www.childlaborfree.com
Child Soldiers International  www.child-soldiers.org
Coalition Against Trafficking in Women  www.catwinternational.org
Cotton Campaign  www.cottoncampaign.org
Free The Slaves  www.freetheslaves.net
Global March Against Child Labour  www.globalmarch.org
International Labour Organization  www.ilo.org
UNICEF  www.unicef.org
World Vision  www.worldvision.com.au

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THANK YOU

› World Vision
› Child Soldiers International
› Baptist World Aid Australia
› International Labour Organization.

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