



## Global Policies on the Issues of Child Labour: Some Musings

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**Abstract:** *The paper aims to comprehend the global policies adopted for the eradication of child labour and to know the present status of the child labour issues worldwide. For this study, information has been collected from secondary sources. The study indicates that Industrialization and urbanization have been the trending cause for the increasing concern of child labour problems across the globe. Children of school going age have become the victim of child labour at various workplaces for numerous unwanted reasons, for example poor implementation of child welfare scheme, want of basic necessities of livelihood etc. Functions and role of different global bodies has been analysed. ILO and UNICEF in its new report articulate that the 2020 global child labour estimates substantiate that at present globally 160 million children are there working as a child labour. Regrettably, pandemic has worsened the situation. Global reports of 2020 relating to child labour warn that prevailing slow pace of progress to end child labour has never been observed in the last 20 years. An additional 8.9 million children in child labour has been predicted by various international by the end of 2022 because of the consequences of the prevailing pandemic situation. These are the reasons because of which, under SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth, target is to end child labour in all its forms by 2025.*

**Key Words:** *Child Labour, ILO, UNICEF, UNCRC, WCL.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION:

Child labour is a complex social, political as well as economy issue with a long run embryonic history. This phenomenon keeps on changing from dimensions to dimensions over the last couple of centuries. Economic hardship involving child labour across the globe has damaged the future of millions of families. Various reports say most of them belong to hazardous work directly effecting their health and mental development. This paper deals with the scale and salient characteristics of child labour across the globe. There might be countless reason that forces children to get themselves engaged in different work. Due to financial problems and prevailing pathetic condition in the family, children are forced to work prematurely which ultimately lead to slavery and economic and even sexual exploitation. Consequently, innocent children are deprived of education and health facilities and other numerous fundamental rights. It is not only their future at stake but the future of upcoming generations as well. An increase in the child labour up to 160 million worldwide, with the prediction of further 9 million additional to this number as the consequent of COVID-19, has compelled the international community to take effective measures well in advance..

As per ILO Global estimate, 2020, around 160 million children were indulged in child labour activities across the globe globally, estimating almost 1 in 10 of all children in the world. Larger portion of child labour is found in the agricultural sector accounts for by far the largest share of child labour. The report of the 2016 Global Estimates of Modern Slavery says that about 4.3 million children under the 18 years are in forced labour i.e. 18 % of the 24.8 million totals forced labour victims globally. These hard facts clearly indicates that problems and challenges of child labour across the globe is getting worse, hence, imperative to have this agenda on the table of all the international community. In this backdrop, this paper seeks to study the policy efforts to cop up with the prevailing challenges regarding child labour at the globe level.

### 2. MEANING OF CHILD LABOUR:

Child labour is not such activities of which develop in them the need based skill as per requirement of their age development. Rather. It helps them in making responsible with the growing age.



Child labour refers to all those activities all work which, by its nature or the conditions, harms, abuses and exploits the child, or deprives the child of their fundamental rights.

**2.2. OBJECTIVE OF THE PAPER:** The paper aims is to study the policy efforts made at globe level regarding child labour problems and understand how such efforts are helpful to combat the problems related to child labour.

**2.3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:** The paper is descriptive and analytical in nature. For this study, secondary sources have been used for collection of data e.g. journals, research articles, newspapers and other websites.

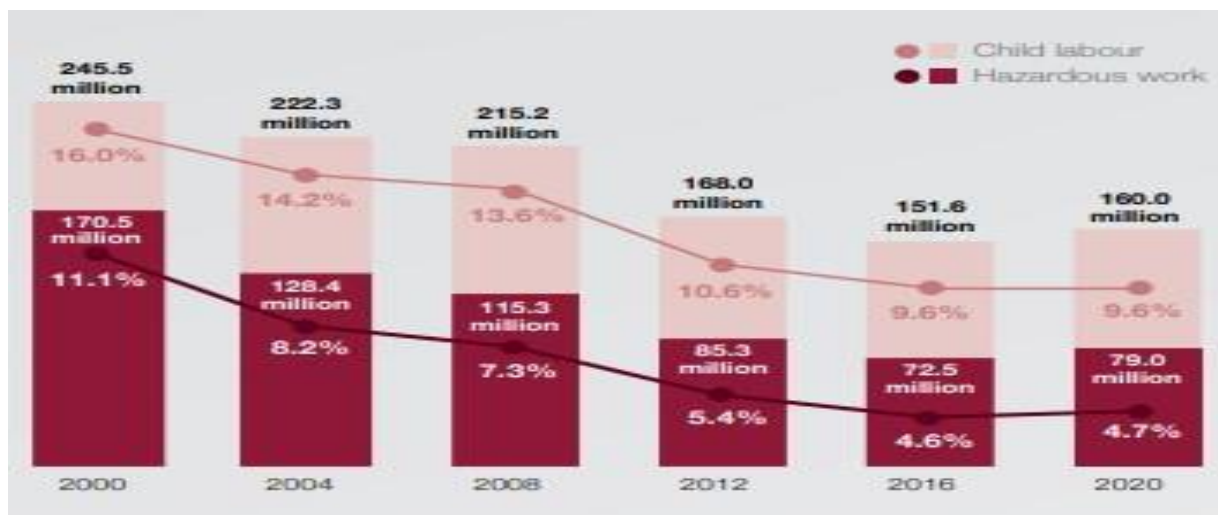
### 3. CHILD LABOUR PROBLEM AT GLOBE LEVEL:

Child labour problems have drawn the attention of international community on their policy agenda. With the passage of time, Industrialization and urbanization have caused more damages as far as the increasing graph of child labour is concerned. At the school going age, children are found at workplaces for a number of unnecessary reasons, for example poor implementation of child welfare scheme. After the establishment of ILO in the year 1919, it adopted child labour as its one of most vital core issue. Out of the many conventions organised by this international body, the following two principal ILO conventions are remarkable in connection with the child labour issue:

- **ILO Convention No. 138, Minimum Age for Employment, 1973, and**
- **ILO Convention No. 182, Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999.**

In 1992, the ILO launched International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) to curb the problems of child labour. IPEC helps the government, employers and other organisation in framing national policies to do away with child labour. Standard setting, advocacy and technical cooperation in this regard forms the base of IPEC. The Bureau for Employers' Activities, ACT/EMP, along with several social institutions has contributed in promoting employers' awareness and action on child labour. In spite of such efforts across the globe, increasing graph of child labour, especially in industrialized countries, has become an alarming issue. Such increase has also been observed in Central and Eastern European countries. Even in some developed countries like the United part time job and flexible work place has been the key factors for child labour. The recent global estimates shows that 63 million girls and 97 million boys i.e. a total of 160 million children are indulged in child labour across the globe, implying, about 1 in 10 of all children in the world is a child labour. (Figure -1 The 2020 ILO-UNICEF global Estimates). Their health, safely and moral development are at stake. ILO has also given the following estimates with regard to developing countries alone:

- 250 million child labourer between the ages of 5 and 14
- Approximately 190 million child labourer are between the ages of 10 and 14.
- In Latin America, about 20% of the total children population in the region are working children.
- In Africa, 40% of the continent's children are child labourers.
- Asia has about 60% of the world's child labourers.



Source: The ILO-UNICEF global estimates , 2020

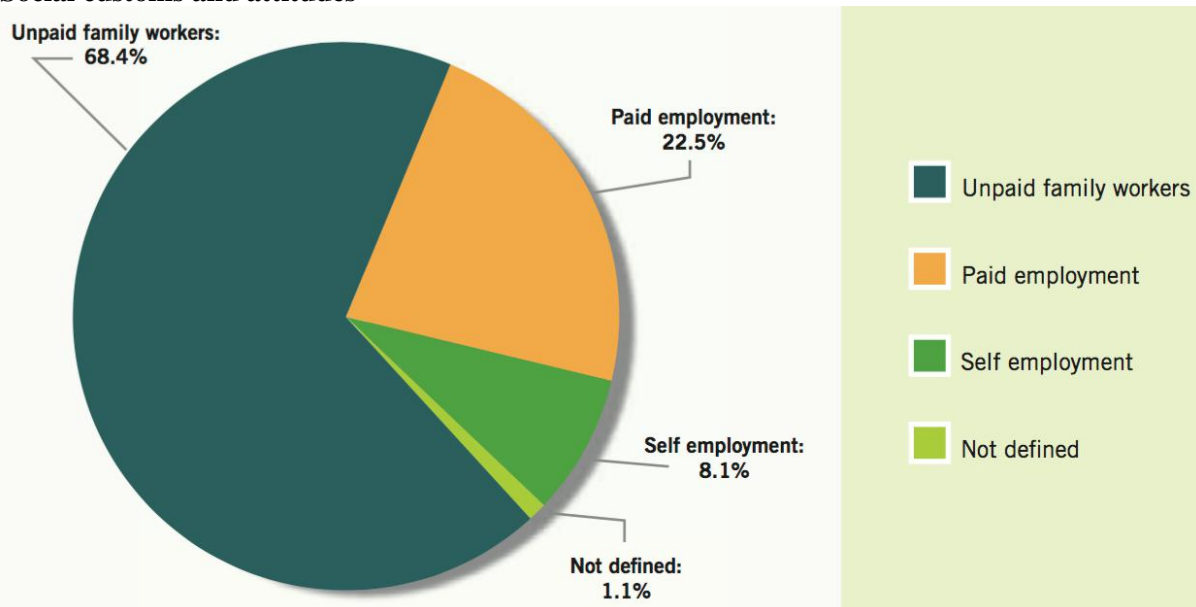
Figure -1



### 3.1.GLOBAL CAUSES OF CHILD LABOUR:

There exists countless reasons of child labour in the world which further may differ from region to region and from industry to industry. Even the nature of their problem will differ from each other.. However, the following have been presented as the common ones across the globe.

- A. Poverty
- B. Failure of the education system
- C. Informal economy
- D. Low cost of child labour
- E. Absence of workers' organizations
- F. Lack of social protection
- G. Social customs and attitudes



Source: ILO website

### 3.2.INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES TO CURB CHILD LABOUR:

1. **The UN Convention** on the rights of the child, 1989, expresses the idea of not considering the children as just a object belonging to their parents, rather, to be treated as human beings with their individuals rights
2. **ILO convention 138(1973)**: Inform about the minimum age for employment
3. **ILO convention 182(1999)**: On worst forms of child labour.

After examination of all reports and statistics related to child labour published by different organisation and NGO of the world, we can find out some common results:

- I. Child labour still is a constant problem across the globe..
- II. Globally, progress with regard to child labour has been very slow since 2016.
- III. Child labour is much more common in rural areas.
- IV. Most child labour for boys and girls alike that continues to occur in agriculture.
- V. Children dropped from school are generally get associated with child labour problem.
- VI. The number of boys is higher than the girls of all ages as far as child labour problem is concerned.
- VII. Continued progress was seen against child labour in Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

### 3.3. UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN’S FUND (UNICEF) & ITS FUNCTIONS:

UNICEF has 150 country offices worldwide.

- Its focus is on the development of community-level services for children’s welfare and development.
- There remains an Executive Director as head.



- UNICEF's Executive Board represents its governing body.
- It consists of 36 member countries. The tenure remains three-year for each member.

It comprises of more than 30 'National Committees' working on achievements of its noble mission by the virtue of different programmes in relation with the host country's government. UNICEF is funded by both government and private funding. The following countries are home to UNICEF Regional Offices.

- a. West and Central Africa Regional Office, Dakar, Senegal
- b. The Americas and Caribbean Regional Office, Panama City, Panama
- c. Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office, Nairobi, Kenya
- d. Europe and Central Asia Regional Office, Geneva, Switzerland
- e. East Asia and the Pacific Regional Office, Bangkok, Thailand
- f. The Middle East and North Africa Regional Office, Amman, Jordan
- g. South Asia Regional Office, Kathmandu, Nepal

### **Scope of UNICEF's work**

The work of the UNICEF includes:

- a. Child Development and Nutrition;
- b. Child Protection;
- c. Education;
- d. Child Environment;
- e. Polio Eradication;
- f. Reproductive and Child Health;
- g. Children and AIDS;
- h. Social Policy, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation;
- i. Advocacy and Partnership;
- j. Behaviour Change Communication;
- k. Emergency Preparedness and Response.

### **Strategic Plan of UNICEF 2018–2021**

The plan will help realize and protect the rights of all children through five goal areas, they are:

- a. every child survives and thrives;
- b. every child learns;
- c. every child is protected from violence and exploitation;
- d. every child lives in a safe and clean environment; and
- e. every child has an equitable chance in life.

### **3.4. UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (UNCRC):**

The UNCRC is considered as a human rights treaty which frames the political, civil, economic, social, health and cultural rights of children. The CRC was adopted by the United Nations in 1989 All members are legally bound to follow it. It contains the resources regarding the rights of children and the initiatives required to be taken by various governments to enable children to enjoy their all rights. It is considered the most extensively ratified human rights treaty in the world.

#### **Rights of the Child**

Every child below the age of 18 is identified as a human being by the Convention. The CRC asserts that every child should be provided the fundamental rights, such as:

- a. Right to life, survival and development.
- b. Right to education that facilitates them to reach their full potential.
- c. Right to protection from abuse, violence or neglect.
- d. Right to express opinions and be heard.
- e. Right to be raised by or have a relationship with their parents.



What are the 4 core principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child?

- a. Non-discrimination
- b. Right to life, survival and development
- c. Best interests of the child
- d. Respect for the child's views

### **3.5. INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION (ILO) & ITS OBJECTIVE**

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is a United Nations agency concerned with labour issues. The following are its objectives

- To develop and effectuate standards, fundamental principles, and fundamental rights at work.
- To ensure equal access to men and women to decent work and provide same opportunities
- To focus on social protection for everyone
- To strengthen Tripartism and social dialogue.

International Labour Organization (ILO) – Structure

The basis of the ILO is the tripartite principle. The ILO comprises the International Labour Conference, the Governing Body, and the International Labour Office.

International Labour Organization (ILO) Functions

The ILO plays a significant role in the development of policies related to labour issues. The ILO also has other functions, such as:

- Adoption of international labour standards and the implementation of its conventions.
- Helping the member states in tackling their social and labour problems.
- Protection of Human rights.
- Research and publication relating to social and labour issues.

### **4. WORLD CONFEDERATION OF LABOUR (WCL):**

World Confederation of Labour (WCL) was established in 1920 and known as International Federation of Christian Trade Unions (IFCTU). IFCTU was renamed as World Confederation of Labour (WCL) in 1948. The WCL worked a lot in support of the Global March Against Child Labour and advocated for ILO Convention 182.

#### **4.1. Objectives of World Confederation of Labour:**

World Confederation of Labour works for the development of trade unions and supports the freedoms of the trade union. Some of the main objectives of WCL are:

- a. To ensure moral support to its member countries maintaining the permanent collaboration.
- b. To promote and safeguard the workers' dignity and improve their living standard.
- c. To promote effective solidarity between the member countries and the affiliated organizations.
- d. To work for implementation of international law, especially as codified by the ILO with regard to Human Rights and International Labour Standards
- e. To ensure representation from all section of workforce at the global level and also provide need based dynamic trainings to them.
- f. Promoting cross-country worker unity and to provide emergency assistance.

#### **4.2. TRADE UNION ACTION TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOUR:**

It is now universally recognized and agreed that child labour must stop. But child labour will never be eliminated without the involvement of trade unions. Trade unions are human rights organizations because workers' rights are human rights. They have fought for the rights of workers since their foundation. Trade unions, where they organize in the workplace and exercise political influence, are capable of bringing drastical changes in the society. Where there is a trade union in the workplace:

- workers have rights and cannot be dismissed at the whim of the employer;
- that workplace is safer;
- there is more chance of equal pay between women and men workers;
- there is less child labour.





There are a number of forms of action against child labour which only trade unions can undertake because of their specific and unique role. Trade unions should not begin work on child labour in an ad hoc manner, but develop first a policy, and build a plan based on the policy. This can include action unions can take on their own, action where they might cooperate with the other social partners (governments and employers), or action where they will work with other partners. The importance of developing policies and plans is that the trade union's work against child labour will be organized and systematic as this work must be sustained over the long term to bring results.

#### **Areas of trade union action to combat child labour:**

##### **Fact-finding, investigation and information**

Trade Unions enjoying the capability to investigate the various issues related to child labour problem and its increasing graph. This will help in formulating the strategies and taking corrective measures based on the scenario of the specific problems.

##### **Awareness-raising, mobilization and campaigning**

Public awareness at the ground level is must for the elimination of child labour problem from the society. Almost all global institutions working for the cause of exploited children of the society have used awareness as an effective tool for the prevention of child labour such as ILO, UNICEF. Child labour must become unacceptable to public opinion at all levels in society. Publicity and other material are available from the ILO, and may also be available from your national centre, or international organization (ITS).

##### **Collective bargaining**

Trade unions are capable enough to bind the employer for taking effective measures for the elimination of child labour, for support for rehabilitation by the virtue of several agreements.

##### **Using international labour standards**

The new ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour is a weapon for unions in the fight against child labour. Trade unions should promote and use existing tripartite committees to consult on and advocate that governments should ratify both the Conventions No.138 and No.182.

##### **Using the tripartite structure for improvement of legislation and enforcement**

Implementation of regulation related to child labour at ground level is a challenging task. Law enforcement needs to be reinforced through the training of law enforcement personnel, including labour inspectors. In absence of legislations, trade unions can play a vital role in passing new laws by pressurising government. Trade unions should also press for tripartite supervision of labour inspectorates.

##### **Action against child labour through education**

In order to abolish various forms of child labour, bring education within reach of every child is the strongest weapon. Trade unions can work with teachers' organizations to promote quality, free basic education as a means of preventing child labour.

##### **Rehabilitation through the provision of support services**

Some trade unions play the important role of providing direct support and services such as shelter, health services and nutrition, vocational training, and intensive counselling. Trade unions should campaign for adequate resources to be devoted to this type of activity by governments.

#### **5. CONCLUSION & SUGGESTION:**

On the basis of a new report by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNICEF, the 2020 global child labour estimates confirm that the number of children in child labour has risen to 160 million worldwide. Unfortunately, COVID-19 has risked the lives of millions of children. "Child Labour: Global estimates 2020, trends, and the road forward" warns that prevailing slow pace of progress to end child labour has never been observed in the last 20 years. The agriculture sector shares 70% of children in child labour (112 million), followed by 20% in services (31.4 million) and 10% in the industry (16.5 million). The number of boys is higher than the girls of all ages as far as child labour problem is concerned.



Effective measures to fight with the child labour problems must address the basic issues such as shelter, health services and nutrition, vocational training, and intensive counselling of the children victimised of child labour. Global reports of 2020 relating to child labour warn that prevailing slow pace of progress to end child labour has never been observed in the last 20 years. An additional 8.9 million children in child labour has been predicted by various international by the end of 2022 because of the consequences of the prevailing pandemic situation. These are the reasons because of which, under SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth, target is to end child labour in all its forms by 2025. India has also adopted numerous policies to uproot the child labour problem from its root, yet long way to go to completely eradicate child labour.

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