



Role of Parliamentarians to End Child Labour, Slavery, Trafficking & Promote Education

Introduction

Child Labour is rooted in poverty and in the low value accorded to a child's right to be safe, healthy and educated, and is exacerbated by poverty, insecurity, conflicts, natural disasters and insensitivity. Child Labour denies children of their rights and undermines numerous development priorities. Ending child labour will require long term, sustainable action across many different sectors. A robust legal and policy framework for preventing child labour, slavery, trafficking and supporting their education should be the cornerstone of government efforts to address the practice.

Parliamentarians are uniquely positioned to shape, advance and implement such a framework, within their countries and beyond. They can lead the development of relevant legislation and policies, set the political agenda as opinion leaders on ending child labour, slavery and trafficking and promote education for all, pass budgets, monitor implementation, and ensure accountability for both national and international commitments, including government accountability to Goal 4 and Targets 8.7 & 16.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals to promote inclusive and quality education for all; end forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking, and worst forms of child labour including recruitment of child soldiers; and end violence against children by 2030.

They can guarantee the voices of citizens are heard, particularly the voice of the girl child, in order to mobilise political will and commitment to end all forms of violence against children. Yet, Parliamentarians are often overlooked as a group who can make positive change happen.

This note aims to provide concrete examples and recommendations on how interested Parliamentarians can take action; promote collaboration with vibrant civil society organisations working on the issue, along with establishing partnerships with committed Parliamentarians to promote and secure rights of all children, especially of the girl child.

Causes: Why Does Child Labour Continue To Be Practiced?

Poverty is undoubtedly a dominant factor in the use of child labour; families on or below the poverty line force their children into work to supplement their household's meagre income. Eradicating poverty, however, is only the first step on the road to eliminating child labour.

There are many other factors that conspire to drive children into employment, none of which is unique to any one country or any one family's circumstances. Only when we fully understand these reasons can we begin to address the problems associated with child labour:

- Cuts in social spending - particularly education and the health services - have a direct impact on poverty. With little or no access to schooling, children are forced into employment at an early age in order to survive
- Child labour may not even be recognised when children work as part of the family unit. This is particularly common in agriculture, where an entire family may have to work to meet a particular quota or target and cannot afford to employ outside help
- Children may also be expected to act as unpaid domestic servants in their own home, taking care of the family's needs while both parents work
- Parents may effectively "sell" their children in order to repay debts or secure a loan
- The prevalence of AIDS throughout many developing countries has resulted in an enormous number of orphans who are forced to become their own breadwinners
- The demand for cheap labour by contractors means that children are often offered work in place of their parents. With such narrow margins, contractors such as produce-growers and loom-owners know that children can be exploited and forced to work for much less than the minimum wage
- Children may also be sent into hazardous jobs in favour of parents, who can less afford the time or money to become ill or injured
- Child soldiers are forcibly enlisted into military service and operations
- Employers often justify the use of children by claiming that a child's small, nimble hands are vital to the production of certain products such as hand-knotted carpets and delicate glassware -although evidence for this is limited
- The international sex trade places great value on child prostitutes. Girls -and to a lesser extent boys- are kidnapped from their homes (or sold) to networks of child traffickers supplying overseas markets; poverty and sexual and racial discrimination also drive children into the tourist sex trade
- Young workers are unaware of their rights and less likely to complain or revolt. In many countries, the legislation is simply not effective enough to support these workers

Consequences: What Are The Consequences of Child Labour?

Child labour does more than depriving children of their education and mental and physical development - their childhood is stolen.

Working long hours, child labourers are often denied a basic school education, normal social interaction, personal development and emotional support from their family. Beside these problems, children face a number of health and mental problems, disrupting their holistic development, leading to perpetual poverty in adulthood.

Child Labour also has socio-economic impact resulting in slow social development of society and low economic development of a country such as:

- Lower human capital accumulation
- Worse health conditions
- Slower investment and technical change
- Income inequality
- Poor Standard of Living
- Perpetual Poverty
- Illiteracy and undermining of progress towards education goals
- Greater Unemployment
- Increase in gender inequality and gender based violence
- Greater risks of physical and sexual exploitation especially amongst girls
- Violation of human rights

For more details, please refer the link here: http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---inst/documents/publication/wcms_193680.pdf

IMPACT ON ECONOMY



What Can Parliamentarians Do to End Child Labour, Slavery and Trafficking?

Most national Parliaments are responsible for legislation, policy oversight and budget approval, and thus crucial in ensuring an enabling legal and policy environment that is conducive to ending child labour. In this way, Parliamentarians have a major role to play by placing child labour, slavery, trafficking, violence against children and promotion of education, on top of the political agenda and calling on their government to adopt multi-sectoral approach to accelerate change and end the harmful practice.

Some of the ways Parliamentarians can act to end child labour include:

1. Advocate for the adoption, strengthening and implementation of laws and policies on child labour, slavery, trafficking, violence against children and promotion of education.

Parliamentarians are uniquely positioned to exercise a leadership role in establishing and implementing a robust legal and policy framework for preventing child labour, slavery, trafficking and supporting exploited children in labour, and ensuring it is effectively enforced by relevant actors and institutions.

Parliamentarians can work to:

- ***Advocate for a high-level review of national laws relating to child labour, slavery and trafficking and its relation to education law***, to identify gaps, inconsistencies, and inadequate penalties that expose children to the risks of child labour, trafficking, slavery and its consequences, and to identify contradictions and/or inconsistencies between national laws and customary, traditional laws, in line with international and regional human rights standards.
- ***Strengthen and enforce national laws that prevent and prohibit child labour, trafficking and slavery*** in line with international and regional human rights standards, including by establishing a consistent legal minimum age of employment to 14-16 years of age (depending on the economy and educational facilities in a country) and 18 years for hazardous work, for girls and boys, with no exceptions (including judicial consent, parental consent, or otherwise).
- ***Advocate for the amendment of existing laws to remove legal obstacles*** faced by children, civil societies and other stakeholders who seek enforcement of national child labour, trafficking, slavery legislation and legislation for education and other legal remedies.
- ***Ensure that legislation related to child labour, slavery, trafficking are accompanied by proper training*** of the judiciary, police, civil registration and child protection officials, and any other actors responsible for the implementation and enforcement of the law, to ensure that complaints filed by any individual, civil society or a child who is at risk of child labour, or risk of

being trafficked and put into slavery, or have been exploited into labour or commercial sexual exploitation underage, are taken seriously by local officials and that necessary legal action is taken.

- **Advocate for the strengthening of civil registration systems** for birth, national identity number/card and marriage, throughout the country and resources (technical and financial) and infrastructure to support this.
- **Advocate for a national plan of action to address child labour, slavery and trafficking**, whether that is by developing a new targeted strategy, or by integrating child labour & trafficking prevention and response measures across different sectors of government.

2. Support implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals including Target 8.7 to end child labour, slavery, trafficking; Target 16.2 to end violence against children and Goal 4, to promote inclusive and quality education.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – the successor of the Millennium Development Goals – will determine national and international development priorities until 2030. With 17 goals and 169 targets across social, economic and environmental areas of sustainable development, the 2030 Agenda is an important political consensus document whose goals and targets will shape international development priorities for the next 15 years.

Target 8.7 of the SDGs commits governments to *“Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms”*;

Target 16.2 of the SDGs commits governments to *“End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture against children”*; and **Goal 4** of the SDGs commits governments to *“Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.”*

At the UN General Assembly on 25 September 2015, all UN Member States pledged their public support towards achieving Targets 8.7, 16.2 and Goal 4 to end child labour, slavery, trafficking and violence against children, and promote education for all as part of the wider SDGs.

Target 8.7, 16.2 and Goal 4 are a powerful advocacy tool for Parliamentarians to call for increased action and resources within a clearly defined timeframe and ensure government accountability. The Targets provide an entry point for dialogue at the national level on how to strengthen existing initiatives to tackle child labour and related exploitation and promote education and accelerate progress to end the practice by 2030.

Due to the multi-faceted nature of child labour, Target 8.7, 16.2 and Goal 4 not only provide Parliamentarians with the means by which to monitor progress on reducing

child labour, but will also assist them in catalysing efforts towards achieving a number of other related SDGs on poverty, nutrition, economic growth and reduction of inequalities, particularly gender based violence and labour exploitation.

By engaging with the implementation of the SDGs, Parliamentarians can both serve their constituents' interests and bring about wider social and economic change. Parliamentarians can work to practically implement the SDGs through a number of actions including by:

- **Encouraging your government to support implementation of the SDGs**, by developing a clear strategy and implementation plan, with clear milestones and timelines to report progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda.
- Knowing that social change takes time, **building consensus on common indicators of progress**, assess current data and indicators, and advocate for government to reach out to its national statistics office to plan how to measure progress against Target 8.7 16.2 and Goal 4 and the 2030 Agenda, and ensure that sub-national and national monitoring mechanisms are in place to do so.
- **Participating in the development of national development plans to implement the SDGs**, particularly for achieving Target 8.7 on child labour, slavery and trafficking and Goal 4 on education.
- **Asking parliamentary questions to relevant government ministries** to clarify their involvement in and priorities for implementation of Target 8.7, 16.2 and Goal 4 of the SDGs in their respective sectors.
- **Organising an event or public meeting on child labour, slavery, trafficking and education in Parliament** and inviting relevant UN experts, civil society representatives, youth & child representatives, donor government representatives, private foundations, researchers, academics, journalists, etc. to attend.

3. Budget for ending child labour, slavery, trafficking and promote education

Parliamentarians have a critical role to play in ensuring there is adequate budget allocated each financial year towards laws and policies for preventing and mitigating the effects of child labour, slavery and trafficking. Parliamentarians can work to finance anti-child labour & trafficking initiatives by:

- **Advocating to your country's lead ministry on child labour and trafficking to engage with other ministries** (Health, Education, Women & Child Development, Justice, Employment, Transport, Agriculture, etc.) to take action on child labour & trafficking within their own sectors.
- **Meeting the Ministry of Finance to educate them on the economic costs of inaction** to ensure they are aware of the importance of financing anti-child labour and trafficking initiatives in the government budget each financial year.

- **Ensuring government initiatives to tackle child labour and trafficking (e.g. national action plans or strategies) are costed and budgeted for**, and domestic resources (both technical and financial) are mobilised (e.g. a percentage of the budgets of the lead Ministry, and related line Ministries such as Health, Education, Justice, etc., are allocated to initiatives which seek to end child labour and trafficking).
- **Advocating, collecting evidence and monitoring progress** towards ending child labour, slavery and trafficking and promote education, so as to make the case to bilateral and multilateral donors for predictable, consistent and long-term funding to address the issue.
- **Working within your constituency to ensure funding for child labour and trafficking and education, reaches sub-national and local levels**, and that your constituents and/ or local government officials know how to access local funding for addressing the issue.

4. Be accountable and demand accountability

Parliamentarians have a critical role to play in demanding accountability to existing national, regional and international commitments made by government towards addressing child labour and trafficking. Parliamentarians can work to promote government accountability on child labour and trafficking by:

- **Identifying accountability mechanisms** that can be used to review the progress of national initiatives to end child labour and trafficking and promotion of education or efforts to integrate child labour/trafficking interventions across sectors, such as through parliamentary committees on child labour, national human rights institutions or similar.
- **Staying connected with civil society** and involving them in parliamentary discussions to hear their views on progress and gaps. For example, you might offer to organise a briefing, roundtable event, dialogue, etc. on child labour and trafficking, to get their views on how effective government efforts to address child labour are.
- **Calling for regular, transparent and publicly available reporting** on progress to end child labour, including through international human rights instruments like the CRC, ILO Conventions 182, 138, and 189, Universal Periodic Reviews and of the SDGs, for example by ensuring that:
 - Periodic reports include information on child labour, slavery, trafficking and education trends and progress
 - Parliament is involved in the preparation of the reports by providing information on child labour, slavery, trafficking and education, or by remaining informed about its contents
 - The concluding observations of each Committee are presented to and debated by Parliament
- **Supporting the biannual UN General Assembly and Human Rights Council Resolutions** on child labour and trafficking, by encouraging your government to co-sponsor and work for strong and comprehensive resolutions

- ***Pro-actively identifying global and regional opportunities for accountability*** by governments.
- ***Calling for implementation of regional and international commitments*** to address child labour, slavery, trafficking and violence against children.

5. Collaborate with others and become opinion leaders

Child labour is a complex issue; effective strategies to address it require commitment and action by many stakeholders and partnership between them to maximise impact. Through your networks nationally, regionally and internationally and relationships within your constituencies, Parliamentarians can play a key role in collaborating with others by:

- ***Working with relevant ministries and encouraging multi-sectoral collaboration*** on child labour, including at the sub-national, national, regional and international levels.
- ***Participating actively in parliamentary organisations and networks***, such as the Parliamentarians Without Borders For Children’s Rights, Inter- Parliamentary Union and Parliamentarians for Global Action among others, throughout your region and globally, to exchange best practices to address child labour, slavery, trafficking and violence against children and to foster political will.
- ***Sharing lessons learned from your country with other parliamentarians regionally and globally***, and, if appropriate, promoting your country as an international champion on child labour, trafficking and violence against children.
- ***Supporting and acting as an opinion leader*** for local, national, regional and global campaigns to end child labour, slavery, trafficking and violence against children and promoting education for all by, for example, attending events, delivering speeches, giving media interviews, hosting roundtables on child labour, etc.
- ***Inviting child labour experts such Nobel Peace Laureate, Kailash Satyarthi*** and others, and civil society representatives to be guest speakers at parliamentary hearings.
- ***Joining civil society organisations in field visits*** to see examples of “what works” to address child labour, trafficking and violence against children at the community level
- ***Using relevant international days to generate awareness*** about child labour, trafficking, education (i.e. World Day Against Child Labour, – 12 June, Day Against Use of Child Soldiers- 12 February, International Day of the Girl Child – 11 October, World Day Against Trafficking in Persons- 30 July, International Literacy Day- 8 September, Universal Children’s day-20 November, International Day for the Abolition of Slavery- 2 December)
- ***Working within local constituencies with key stakeholders*** – girls, boys, parents, teachers, employers, workers, trade unions, civil societies, traditional and religious leaders, service providers and other community stakeholders – to raise awareness about the negative impacts of child labour and trafficking, existing legislation on child labour and gender equality, and government plans and policies for addressing the practice.
- ***Working with the media*** on debating and raising awareness on child labour issues and promoting ethical reporting on child labour.