



5th Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labour
15th - 20th May | Durban, South Africa
Engagement of Global March Against Child Labour at the Conference : Short Report

1. Introduction : The 5th Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labour (VGCCL) - the last one before the 2025 deadline of SDG target 8.7 and taking place against the backdrop of increasing child labour before the start of the global pandemic, was crucial for our joint fight and movement against child labour. Hence, advocacy efforts and preparations started from last year with 2 key objectives, viz., i) to influence the agenda and outcome document of the VGCCL and ii) to have stronger engagement of CSOs, particularly from the global south.

Pre-Conference key efforts included:

- a) **Mobilisation campaign via the Africa Virtual March Against Child Labour** - CSOs including Global March members from Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Malawi, Rwanda, Uganda, and Zambia implemented national campaigns, to mobilise support for CSO advocacy ask on children to be in school and ending child labour via engagement with communities, children, local authorities, government and others (For detailed Concept Note, see [here](#), For key highlights of country campaigns, see the posts on our LinkedIn page [here](#))
- b) **Development of Joint CSO Position Paper on Child Labour** on urgent priorities on the issues of child labour in Africa, to serve as input for the 5th Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labour in South Africa ([English version](#) and [French version](#))
- c) Regular meetings and **discussions with South African government, ILO and CSOs**, and
- d) **Preparations towards sessions/events** at the Conference.

The six-day conference was attended by 1,000 delegates in person and an estimated 7,000 online, according to organisers, featured 12 thematic sessions and 24 side events, and included 3 meetings every other day by separate groups of employers, workers, and governments.

Detailed VGCCL agenda, access [here](#) | For video recording of the Conference proceedings, see [here](#)

The Conference concluded with the adoption of the Durban Call to Action on the Elimination of Child Labour on May 20th, which calls for upscaling action in 6 areas covering decent work, child labour in agriculture, education, social protection, international financing and cooperation. Specific focus on these areas is appreciated. Child labour in agriculture is a thematic priority for Global March and for the first time finds special focus in outcome document of Global Conferences. Accelerating efforts for good quality public education was the key ask of the Africa Virtual March whereas the need to ensure social protection for children and their families was highlighted in the Position Paper, along with other aspects. Having said this, *it is to be seen how this Durban Call to Action will be implemented to speed up progress in the fight against child labour.*

Durban Call to Action : In [English](#) | In [French](#) | In [Spanish](#)

This report presents highlights from Global March’s in-person engagement and participation at the Conference itself.

2. Physical Presence of Global March Network at the VGCCL : The following persons from the network attended the Conference. This is categorised as trade union (TU) and civil society organisation (CSO) representatives

Anjali Kochar	KSCF-US	United States	CSO
Andrews Tagoe	General Agricultural Workers Union/GAWU	Ghana	TU
Deepika Mittal	Secretariat, Global March Against Child Labour	India	CSO
Dominique Marlet	Education International	Belgium	TU
Marco Dubbelt	Secretariat, Global March Against Child Labour	Netherlands	CSO
Maria Gloria Barreiro	Desarrollo y Autogestión/DyA	Peru	CSO
Owain James	100 million	United Kingdom	CSO
Purva Gupta	Secretariat, Global March Against Child Labour	India	CSO
Reid Maki	Child Labor Coalition/CLC	United States	CSO

Shimelis Tsegaye Tesemma	Africa Child Policy Forum	Ethiopia	CSO
Thabisile Msezane	Sithabile Child & Youth Care Center	South Africa	CSO
Viviana Doval	Confederación de Trabajadores de la Educación de la República Argentina/CTERA	Argentina	TU
Winnie Nyandiga	100 million	Kenya	CSO

This list is indicative of the fact that there was very limited participation of CSOs at this Conference, especially from the global south.

Kailash Satyarthi, Global March Founder and Nobel Peace Laureate was invited as a high level speaker for plenary sessions on Day 1 and Day 2 of VGCCL. This covered :

a) Opening ceremony held on 15th May, Sunday

Details of the opening ceremony can be accessed [here](#) | Video recording can be found [here](#)

b) High level panel 1: Setting Global Priorities on 16th May, Monday

Details of the high level plenary can be accessed [here](#) | Video recording can be found [here](#)

c) Plenary session with Laureates and Leaders on 15th May, Sunday, facilitated by KSCF-US

Details of this plenary session can be accessed [here](#) | Video recording can be found [here](#)

3. Convening and facilitating CSO Forum : As Global March represents the CSOs working on child labour in the Global Coordinating Group of Alliance 8.7, it was asked by the organisers to convene the CSO Forum at VGCCL. The Forum took place on 18th May as a thematic session, and aimed at learning from CSOs working on other topics/different SDGs and build alliances with them to strengthen the fight against child labour.

The idea of the Forum was to expand horizons and partnerships of anti-child labour CSOs by engaging with and learning from other organisations working on varied themes not only limited to the areas of expertise of the panelists speaking at the Forum, but beyond. To learn how their work and/or working methods/ ideas can be useful for also tackling child labour and its root causes and vice-a-versa.

Organised in a hybrid format, panelists joined from 4 organisations working on different topics sharing how linkages could be made with the work they are doing and the issue of child labour. A short overview is below :

- Willy Buloso, Regional Coordinator for Africa, ECPAT (in person) - explored how learning's from ECPAT's work on addressing sexual exploitation of children in travel/tourism sector could be useful to address child labour in other sectors such as smallscale mining and domestic work
- Isa Miralles, Living wage and income lead, Fairfood (virtually) - shared experiences/lessons from the living wage efforts of Fairfood that could help CSOs working on child labour to address the economic root causes of child labour
- Agustina Perez, Child Rights Senior Associate, Bank Information Centre (in person) - discussed how CSOs can influence the International Financial Institutions/IFIs (such as World Bank) in terms of the possible impacts that projects financed by them have on the issue of child labour, and the ways in which their advocacy with the IFIs can create the desired impact
- Emmerance Tuyishime, Acting CEO/ Programs Officer, Pan-African Farmers' Organization (virtually) - brought farmers's perspective on the issue of child labour, which can be relevant to CSOs working in rural areas and/or addressing child labour in supply chains.

The Forum with its novel idea to bring together anti-child labour CSOs and other CSOs towards strengthening efforts on child labour, was received well. The panelists in their remarks welcomed the idea of collaboration between their organisations and anti-child labour CSOs to continue such exchanges. In the Q/A session, CSO participants (in person and online) posed several questions to the panelists around the specific work of the 4 organisations and its intersection with child labour efforts. The Secretariat will explore how to take this initiative forward.

Details of this side event session can be accessed [here](#) | Video recording can be found [here](#)

Note : Do watch the video recording. Towards the end of CSO Forum, participants in attendance joined in dancing together for children to be in school and not at work. They danced to a [compilation of dance videos](#) that was received from around the world towards the VGCCCL under the Africa Virtual March Against Child Labour.

4. Thematic Session on Child Labour in Supply Chains 19th May, Thursday - This thematic session was organised, with the goal to discuss how governments, businesses, trade unions, and civil society can take concrete actions and scale up approaches to address persisting and emerging root causes of child labour in supply chains.

Global March member, from Desarrollo y Autogestión (DyA), Peru represented by Maria Gloria Barreiro participated in session and brought civil society perspective to the discussion, particularly towards addressing child labour in agro supply chains.

Other panelists included Thea Lee (US, Department of Labor), Lilian Tschan (Germany, Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs), Claudine Nduzi M'Kembe (Democratic Republic of Congo, Ministry of Labour), Annette Mpundu Chipeleme (Zambia Congress of Trade Unions), Douglas Opio (Federation of Uganda Employers), and Laurent Freixe (Nestle).

Based on her experience, Maria highlighted key points to tackle child labour in supply chains, viz., need to include smallholder farmers and also indigenous organisations in discussions and interventions; an intersectoral approach where different Ministries work together; special emphasis on girls as they have to undertake household chores while their parents work on farms, and the need to ensure that smallholder farmers and their families do not bear the major burden of due diligence towards tackling child labour.

Details of this session can be accessed [here](#) | Video recording can be found [here](#)

5. Side Events : Global March participated in 4 side events at the Conference. Details below:

i) Child Labour Free Supply Chains: Tackling Root Causes from Maker to Market, organised by Global March with GoodWeave International on May 16th, Monday, with the aim to host an engaging dialogue with key stakeholders to elevate critical strategies and actionable steps to reduce child labour up and down supply chains.

Speakers representing survivor voice (Hem Bahadur Moktan, Nepal), government (Thea Lee, USDOL), private sector from sourcing country (Julie Sutton, VF Corporation, US), private sector from producer country (Rohil Mehrotra, Champo Carpets, India), and civil society (Maria Gloria Barreiro, DyA, Peru) shared their perspectives and also practical solutions for tackling child labour in supply chains.

Key messages covered :

- need to address root causes of child labour and importance of education and improving income/livelihoods for families
- importance of import bans on goods made with child labour such as in trade agreements to make it economically unattractive to use child labour by jeopardising access to the market
- extension of traceability efforts to all tiers of the supply chain (from Tier 1-2-3-4 where possible Tier 5, i.e., for the raw materials)
- growing demand for child labour free goods as customers are becoming more aware
- need to look for alternatives other than commercial certifications which have a cost that small-scale organisations (small holder farmers) cannot afford, such as the SELTI model in Peru (child labour free seal) developed by civil society (DyA) together with the government (Ministry of Labour). This is an example of a grassroots model that goes all the way up to public policy.

Details of this side event session can be accessed [here](#) | Video recording can be found [here](#).

ii) Youth, student and survivor-led action to end child labour by 2025, organised on May 16th, Monday, by KSCF-US, 100 million, All Africa Students Union (AASU) and Global March. The session discussed how young people, student leaders, and survivor advocates have been on the frontlines of the effort to eliminate child labour in Africa and globally, uniting across communities and countries to defend every child's right to freedom, safety, and education. Sighting the efforts undertaken by AASU with GAWU (Global March member in Ghana) under the recent Africa Virtual March Against Child Labour, Samuel Sasu Adonteng (from AASU) highlighted the importance of partnerships between student groups/organisations and civil society in fighting child labour.

Details of this side event session can be accessed [here](#) | Video recording can be found [here](#).

iii) Integrated Area-based Approach: to Tackle Child Labour at the Root and Ensure the Right to Education, organised by Global March with Education International and Work: No Child's Business¹ (WNCB) on May 17th, Tuesday, with the aim to share experiences/best practices from implementing area-based approaches to address child labour in countries.

Pilirani Kamaliza from Teachers' Union of Malawi (representing Education International) shared how teachers unions are addressing child labour through their work with teachers and school administration. Andrew Tagoe from General Agricultural Workers Union (representing Global March) presented the example from Ghana of how area-based approaches is being used to tackle child labour in informal economy such as agriculture sector, that has involved working with farmers along with others. Juliet Wajega, Uganda (representing WNCB) explained how her work in communities is changing deep rooted norms around child labour and education.

The discussion was moderated by Purva Gupta from Global March.

Key and common points from the presentations highlighted the principles of area-based approaches that make them effective, viz., engaging with all stakeholders at grassroots level especially community, focus on addressing all root causes of child labour and that school is the best place for children to be in.

Details of this side event session can be accessed [here](#) | Video recording can be found [here](#).

iv) European Union's actions to end child labour and support sustainable value chains, organised by European Union on May 18th with the aim to share knowledge and exchange best practices on how to eliminate child labour in key-value chain sectors exposed to increasingly global challenges.

Marco Dubbelt from Global March participated in the side event as a speaker, highlighting that from civil society perspective, addressing child labour in supply and value chains needs to also have a bottom-up approach which is often weak or missing.

Other speakers were Cécile Billaux (European Commission), Kunera Moore (Rainforest Alliance), Ali Badara Diallo (Union Nationale des Sociétés Coopératives de Producteurs de Coton du Burkina), Jeff Morgan (Sucden Cocoa), Virginie Mahin (Mondelēz International), Wilm Geurts (Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment of the Netherlands) and Hernan Manson (International Trade Centre). The discussion was moderated by Maria Rosa De Paolis (European Commission)

Details of this side event session can be accessed [here](#)

6. Conclusion

¹ Work: No Child's Business is an Alliance consisting of UNICEF Netherlands, Save the Children Netherlands and the Stop Child Labour coalition

Global March's engagement at the Conference continued to give visibility to the network in international spaces, recognising the key role Global March plays in the fight against child labour. There are also opportunities to build on partnerships and ideas developed during the VGCCL such as the CSO Forum. However, key among all things would be :

- 1) To see how to have effective participation and voices of more CSOs, especially from the global south, in such Conferences and ILO related events/structures on child labour at global, regional and national levels
- 2) How as CSOs, we can play a key role as independent voices in holding the government and other stakeholders accountable. This could include among other things, monitoring the implementation of the Durban Call to Action on the Elimination of Child Labour.

7. Glimpses through photos



CSO Forum facilitated by Global March. Seen are panelists from 4 different organisations and the moderator, Heinrich Böhmke - a former trade unionist and researcher



Maria Gloria Barreiro from DyA, Peru speaking at thematic session on child labour in supply chains



Marco Dubbelt sharing CSO perspective in EU side event on child labour in value chains



Raising our hands for kids with Dominique Marlet, Andrews Tagoe and colleagues from WNCB



With Thabisile Msezane, Global March Member from South Africa. She had participated in the physical march of 1998