

The South Asia and Southeast Asia Regional Symposium on Promoting Area-Based Approach to eliminate child labour



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CALL TO ACTION DOCUMENT

19th December 2023, Kathmandu, Nepal

GLOBAL MARCH AGAINST CHILD LABOUR

The Global March Against Child Labour (Global March) is a worldwide network committed to eradicating the root causes of child labour. We harness the collective strength, resources, and experiences of our network to tackle systemic inequalities, reduce socio-economic barriers, and mitigate vulnerabilities that perpetuate children's exploitation. Our collective efforts are strategically aligned with the UN global vision of eradicating child labour through Target 8.7.

Know more more about the organisation: <https://globalmarch.org/>

SWATANTRATA ABHIYAN NEPAL

Swatantrata Abhiyan Nepal (SAN) is a Nepalese non-government organisation that works for the justice and end of impunity; for the end of deprivation through developmental activities together with government; and run campaigns against all forms of discrimination and slavery like practices. The organisation is non-political, non-partisan, secular and mandated to work all over Nepal.

Know more about the organisation: <https://swatantrataabhiyan.org/>

WORK: NO CHILD'S BUSINESS

The Work: No Child's Business Alliance is run by the Save the Children Netherlands, UNICEF Netherlands and the Stop Child Labour Coalition (coordinated by Hivos). The three Alliance partners have jointly developed "Work: No Child's Business" with the aim to make a strong and lasting contribution to the elimination of child labour. This aim is closely aligned with the commitment of the Dutch government and parliament to invest in combating child labour

Know more about the organisation: <https://wncb.org/>

BACKGROUND

Child labour remains a pressing issue in South Asian and Southeast Asian countries. According to the ILO's report of 2020,¹ out of the 160 million of children (5–17-year-old) engaged in child labour worldwide, 24.3 million (6.2%) are in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, while 26.3 million (5.5%) are in Central and Southern Asia. In both regions, child labour is highly concentrated in rural areas (75.2%) compared to urban areas (24.8%) and the agricultural sector accounts for the largest share of child labour (56-59%) compared to the services (23-28%) and the industrial (16-18%) sectors. Most children in child labour in these regions work within their own family unit (60-62%), followed by being employed (24-30%) and being own account workers (9-16%). Across all regions, the highest account of children out of school is found in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia (37.2%) and Central and Southern Asia (35.3%) keeping children engaged in child labour or at high risk of entering child labour.

Despite notable reductions in child labour across Asia and the Pacific in recent decades, several factors hinder further progress, including the increasing informality of trade and industries, internal displacement and migration, educational exclusion, the lingering impact of COVID-19, and inadequate social security coverage. While many countries have implemented laws and policies to prohibit child labour, addressing this issue effectively requires a comprehensive approach that addresses underlying factors such as inequality, economic poverty, and education. Revisions to current labour laws are necessary to incorporate local perspectives particularly from the informal sector which is often overlooked. Strengthening social protection mechanisms, expanding coverage, and improving the quality of public education are some of the vital steps to safeguard vulnerable populations and reduce the likelihood of children entering the labour force.

Accelerating progress towards Target 8.7 demands innovative approaches and collaboration to develop, adopt, and implement improved legislation, national action plans, or policies on child labour. Public commitments from various global conferences, including the 5th Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labour in Durban (2022), the 2021 International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour, and conferences in Oslo (1997), The Hague (2010), Brasilia (2013), and Buenos Aires (2017), should be translated into concrete actions to eliminate child labour effectively. Finally, collaborative multi-stakeholder initiatives, regional strategies, and tailored interventions based on specific areas need to be prioritised.

¹ *[ILO Report](#)*

SOUTH ASIA AND SOUTHEAST ASIA SYMPOSIUM

Considering the above, the South Asia and Southeast Asia Regional Symposium on Promoting Area-Based Approach (ABA)² to eliminate child labour was held in Kathmandu, Nepal on 19th December 2023 attended by participants representing civil society, trade unions, business communities, government authorities and youths from Nepal, India, Bangladesh, Vietnam and Indonesia. From the rigorous discussion among the participants, it has been concluded that the ABA should be expanded in practice with focus on four thematic areas of interventions in a coordinated way. The four key themes include Education, Income/Decent Work for Adults, Policy Accountability and Social Protection, to be implemented together using a tailored ABA. The participants in the symposium have collectively endorsed the adoption of the Call-to-Action document that has a list of practical and policy recommendations to end child labour for different stakeholders: Government, Private sector, Global Community, CSOs, and Trade unions to efficiently combat child labour by promoting ABA.

CALL TO ACTION

On the **19th of December of 2023, in Kathmandu, Nepal**, we, CSOs and Trade Unions from South Asia and Southeast Asia, adopt the call to action to:

STRENGTHEN PUBLIC EDUCATION

- 1) Advocate for increasing government funding for strengthening public education system
- 2) Integrating child protection and child labour monitoring systems (CLMS) into the public education infrastructure
- 3) Support and advocate for an ABA which aims to have zero tolerance to all forms of child labour and have all children enrolled in school
- 4) Advocate for increasing government funding towards vocational skills for transition from child labour to education and decent work
- 5) Work with and advocate for flexible schooling for children rescued from child labour, bridging learning gaps and being gender responsive

² *The Area-based Approach (ABA) - introduced by ILO, aims to eliminate child labour, targeting specific geographic locations or communities where child labour is prevalent and implementing community-centric sustainable solutions. It recognizes that child labour is often deeply rooted in the social and economic context of communities and that effective solutions require a context-specific approach addressing concerns to eliminate it. It lays the foundation for creating a child-labour-free zones (CLFZs) by tackling the root causes of child labor and by addressing the interlinked systemic issues that perpetuate all forms of child labour in an area.*

IMPROVE INCOME AND DECENT WORK FOR ADULTS

- 1) Promote the ABA with a focus on income enhancing solutions in interventions to address child labour
- 2) Collaborate among CSOs that work on livelihoods, living income and child rights
- 3) Assert our role more strongly to work towards organising workers, getting them fair wages, piece rate prices and freedom of collective bargaining, particularly in the informal sector
- 4) Advocate for effective implementation of ILO conventions
- 5) Integrate child labour as a crosscutting agenda within the income and decent work interventions of UN organisations, donors, CSOs, companies and trade unions

PROMOTE POLICY ACCOUNTABILITY

- 1) Provide technical input and advocate for translating area-based good practices such as CLMS into policies with government supported budgetary allocation
- 2) Advocate for and integrate in our work, democratic participation of communities in decision-making spaces with attention to gender and representation of marginalised children and youth
- 3) Promote human rights due diligence for improving transparency in supply chains, reducing the risk of child labour and improving market access for producers
- 4) Strengthen coordination, learning, sharing and solidarity among CSOs and Trade Unions for policy monitoring, evaluation and awareness to integrate child labour issues in decent work agenda
- 5) Advocate for developing and implementing a shared compliance monitoring and mutual accountability mechanism for businesses with input of trade unions, government and CSOs

ENHANCE SOCIAL PROTECTION

- 1) Promote the inclusion of social protection schemes and policies in ABA-related interventions
- 2) Support target groups (children, women, youth) for accessing social and economic protection schemes
- 3) Advocate with the National government to give more autonomy to the local governments to implement social protection schemes
- 4) Include intersecting issues such as gender, disability and healthcare while implementing social security interventions



CSO group discussion at SE& SEA Regional Symposium, Nepal '23



IN GENERAL,

WE CALL ON THE GOVERNMENTS OF SA & SEA COUNTRIES TO:

- 1) Increase budget allocation for education to government-funded schools and infrastructures for instance, free textbooks, midday meals and adequate number of teachers
- 2) Make education more inclusive, accessible, and meaningful for all - relevant for survivors and marginalized communities
- 3) Play a proactive role in implementing decent work fundamental conventions with a focus on improving the income of the informal worker and farmer
- 4) Promote a uniform understanding and implementation of decent work meaning and implementation with a focus on how it addresses child labour, making workplaces more child and family-friendly
- 5) Build their knowledge on good practices such as the ABA to address child labour and translate those into policies
- 6) Expand social protection programmes and schemes to the local levels, and make sure that they are easily accessible to the right holders
- 7) Provide more autonomy to the local government and not concentrating all efforts at the national/central government level
- 8) Intersect issues such as gender, disability and healthcare while implementing social security interventions

WE CALL ON THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO:

- 1) Recognise child labour free zones (CLFZs) as an integrated part of their supply chain and pay a higher price for products produced in those areas

2) Take responsibility for paying at least a minimum wage, set up minimum farmgate prices, and gender-empowering livelihood opportunities

3) Increase their supply chain transparency and integrate a robust due diligence system within their policies

WE CALL ON THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY (UN agencies, ILO, Global North Donors) TO:

1) Increase official development assistance for strengthening access to education; increasing decent work opportunities and strengthening the civil society to end child labour

2) Increase financing for implementation of commitments from Durban Call to Action and achieving SDG 8.7

4) Integrate child labour in their decent work agenda and interventions

WE CALL ON COLLABORATION OF STAKEHOLDERS TO:

1) Facilitate action amongst the government, private sector and trade unions to agree on labour rights in the informal sector, including minimum wage. At the same time, the formal sector must regularise and improve working conditions and compensation to address, among other, overtime, workplace safety, childcare facilities, grievance mechanisms and collective bargaining

2) Promote and strengthen child and youth participation and action, including their voices in decision making that impacts them especially for budget allocation, and prioritising issues and facilities for them as well as child and youth led monitoring of child labour at the community level

3) Improve stakeholder coordination with different departments, ministries and specialists to address all the root causes of child labour within an area

SYMPOSIUM GALLERY



ENDORSEMENT

This Call to Action has been endorsed by the representatives of the organisations below during the South Asia and Southeast Asia Regional Symposium held in Kathmandu, Nepal on 19th December 2023.

- 1) Global March Against Child Labour (GMACL)
- 2) Work: No Child's Business
- 3) Swatantrata Abhiyan Nepal (SAN)
- 4) Mamidipudi Venkatarangaiya Foundation (MV Foundation)
- 5) Kailash Satyarthi Children's Foundation (KSCF)
- 6) Bangladesh Labour Foundation (BLF)
- 7) Cordaid Bangladesh
- 8) Aasaman Nepal
- 9) Children-Women in Social Service and Human Rights (CWISH)
- 10) Loo Niva Child Concern Society
- 11) Child Welfare Society
- 12) Domestic Workers Forum
- 13) Youth Along Voice (YAV) Nepal
- 14) Concern Society Nepal (CSN)
- 15) Tharu Women Upliftment Center (TWUC)
- 16) Youth Club Narayangadh
- 17) Human Rights Awareness Center (HURAC)
- 18) The Forum for Awareness and Youth Activity (FAYA)
- 19) Dalit Human Right Watch Committee (DHRWC)
- 20) GoodWeave Foundation Nepal
- 21) General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions (GEFONT)
- 22) Nepal Trade Union Congress (NTUC)
- 23) All Nepal Federation of Trade Unions (ANTUF)
- 24) Rural Society Upliftment Forum-Nepal (RUSUF-Nepal)



Aasaman Nepal

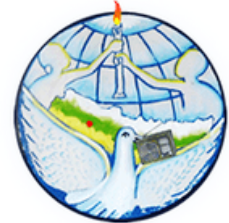


Bangladesh Labour Foundation



CWISH (Children-Women in Social Service and Human Rights)

ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE



Global March Against Child Labour
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