

## Life's no child's play for many kids

November 7, 2017 While their peers are in the classroom, they are working ...

While their peers are playing in the schoolyard, they are working ...

They are working even when they should be with their mothers and fathers...

Some are trying to repair a car, some crafting furniture, others trying to make sales. There are those who labor in the field with hoes in their hands and some are even forced to work in mines.

The International Labor Organization (ILO) reports that there are 168 million child workers, 85 million of which are working at dangerous jobs. Asia-Pacific borderlands and Sub-Saharan Africa are the regions with highest number of child laborers. The sector children work the most is agriculture.

Child labor is not just a problem of underdeveloped countries as most people assume. There are child laborers even in the US and Europe. However, these children are usually responsible for trivial tasks in family businesses helping their parents for a temporary period. They mostly work in simple jobs to earn a little pocket money during holidays. Experts think that such jobs contribute positively to the development of children and provide them with various skills and experiences.

However, this is not the case for children working in sweatshops, in the fields, or in mines to earn a living for themselves and their family. On the contrary, such environments prevent children from living the life they deserve; require them to comply with conditions wholly unsuitable to them, and prevent them from enjoying their childhood and going to school. These living conditions, according to experts, undermine children's potential and harm their physical and mental development. These children grow up lacking affection since they are often away from their parents for long periods of time; moreover, their social development is incomplete because they do not receive the basic education that would make life easier for them in the future.

Research indicates that the main reason why children work is to contribute to the family income. However, the number of children working to repay family debt is also quite high. There are even cases where children are sold by their families into modern-day indentured servitude. These children usually have to work for a very small amount of money – if any at all – under very difficult conditions.

The biggest danger for children is prostitution and drugs. In the East Asia and India, children are either sold directly into prostitution or used in the production of pornographic publications. Again in the East Asia, Latin America and some parts of Africa, children are employed as workers in the production of illicit drugs or as couriers in its distribution.

Another area of activity that shouldn't be associated with children is war and military service. Approximately 250,000 girls and boys around the world are given weapons and sent into combat. In the middle of a war zone, these children are often subjected to sexual harassment and rape, or lose their lives in combat. Children are forced to use weapons both in rebel groups and in government forces. According to a report by the United Nations, many of the world's armed groups are making children fight. According to the report, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, South Sudan, Central African Republic, Nigeria, Mali and the Democratic Republic of the Congo are the countries where child soldiers are employed the most. The report mentions other countries too; Libya, Palestine, Colombia, the Philippines and Myanmar. The most interesting name found in the report is Germany. Germany is included in the report because they recruited 1,515 seventeen years old children for military service in 2015. What is interesting is that Germany argues that children under 18 should not be recruited for military services in Myanmar and Colombia.

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## **Harun Yahya**

Even though the ILO reports a significant reduction in the overall number of child workers worldwide, hundreds of millions of children continue to be forced into jobs that are unsuitable for their physical and mental development.

Indeed, the reason why child labor is in demand is not the lack of manpower. The wages of children are very low and they are very unlikely to have social insurance, file complaints or seek their right of redress against difficult working conditions. Children are exposed to all manner of coercion and abuse due to their vulnerability.

Considering all these problems, how then can we prevent children from being forced into jobs that ultimately harm them?

The first thing to do is to get as many countries as possible to sign the UN International Labor Organization's agreement for avoiding child labor. At the same time, the UN would track the violations regarding this issue in the concerned countries.

Families can be provided with the necessary financial support so that the children won't be expected to work and contribute to the family economy. Social support mechanisms for housing, health and nutrition can be established in places where children work as seasonal agricultural laborers. In addition, schools and teachers may take more responsibility for detecting children who work. The communication between teachers and institutions in charge of preventing child labor can be improved.

However, considering that the child labor problem is generally widespread in poor countries or countries involved in a civil war, it would likely be difficult to completely prevent this problem, even if sufficient resources are provided and all the necessary measures are taken. More responsibility falls on international organizations such as UNESCO and the ILO for the solution to this problem.

Another way is to make special regulations for the prevention of child labor in the related legislation and to make sanctions more severe for violators.

It is very important to take all possible actions to make the world a place where children are not forced to work. In a world where wars rage on and the system of exploitation continues, children will always be the most exploited group. In order to prevent this, it is imperative to first understand the ideological origins of wars and exploitation, and then to undertake a serious ideological effort to eliminate these ideologies. Then people can see that love and peace are possible, and the world can become a home sufficient for everyone. Until then, every country, every institution and every person is responsible for taking the necessary measures to stop this exploitation.

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Harun Yahya has authored more than 300 books translated in 73 languages on politics, religion and science.

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