

## World Day Against Child Labour

### 12 June 2018

The [International Labour Organization](#) (ILO) launched the World Day Against Child Labour in 2002, and takes place every year on 12 June, to focus attention on the global extent of child labour, and the action and efforts needed to eliminate it.<sup>1</sup> Marking the day in 2017, Guy Ryder, the Director-General of the ILO, highlighted the impact conflict and disaster has on the breakdown of family and social protection systems and thus elevating the risk of trafficking and child labour.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, he argued that:

All children have the right to be protected from child labour. Yet, around the world, there are still 168 million children in child labour. Eighty-five million of them are engaged in hazardous work. [...] So wherever you are in the world, join us in marking World Day Against Child Labour. There is no time to lose. Now is the time to intensify our action to accelerate progress towards ending all forms of child labour.<sup>3</sup>

For 2018, the day will focus on the need to end child labour, and to improve the safety and health of young workers as part of a joint global campaign with the [World Day for Safety and Health at Work](#), described together as ‘Generation Safety and Health’.<sup>4</sup> The campaign calls for a number of coordinated actions, including to: promote universal ratification and application of key ILO legal instruments on child labour and occupational health and safety; promote integrated strategies to end ‘hazardous’ child labour and address health and safety risks faced by young workers; integrate occupational health and safety into education and vocational training programmes; and address the vulnerabilities of the youngest children and prevent their entry into child labour. It also seeks to contribute to the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) by accelerating action towards Goal 8. This goal includes aims to “protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers” by 2030; and take measures to “eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and [...] the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms”.<sup>5</sup>

### What is Child Labour?

According to the ILO, children engaging in activities that contribute to their development, the welfare of their families, and the provision of skills and experience is “generally regarded as being something positive”.<sup>6</sup> Such work includes, for example, “helping parents around the home, assisting in a family business or earning pocket money outside school hours and during school holidays”.<sup>7</sup> However, child labour refers to work that is “mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children”; and interferes with their schooling by “depriving them of the opportunity to attend school, obliging them to leave school prematurely or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work”.<sup>8</sup> The type of labour undertaken by children varies country to country, but it may include work in agriculture (hunting, forestry or fishing), industry (mining, manufacturing or construction) and services (retail trade, restaurants and hotels, and transport).<sup>9</sup> In extreme forms, it involves children being enslaved and separated from their families and exposed to serious hazards.<sup>10</sup>

International instruments aimed at eradicating child labour for ratifying countries (which includes the United Kingdom) are contained within two principal ILO conventions on child labour. These are ILO Convention No 138 which provides that the minimum age for admission to employment shall not be less than the age of completion of compulsory schooling; and ILO Convention No 182 which provides a consolidated global consensus on elimination of the ‘worst forms’ of child labour.<sup>11</sup> Child labour that is proscribed under international law falls into three categories:

- The unconditional worst forms of child labour, which are internationally defined as slavery, trafficking, debt bondage and other forms of forced labour, forced recruitment of children for use in armed conflict, prostitution and pornography, and illicit activities.
- Labour performed by a child who is under the minimum age specified for that kind of work (as defined by national legislation, in accordance with accepted international standards), and that is thus likely to impede the child’s education and full development.
- Labour that jeopardizes the physical, mental or moral well-being of a child, either because of its nature or because of the conditions in which it is carried out, known as ‘hazardous work’.<sup>12</sup>

### Statistics on Child Labour

According to the UN, 218 million children worldwide between 5 to 17 years old are in employment and among them, 152 million are victims of child labour.<sup>13</sup> Of this 152 million:

- almost half are aged between 5 to 11 years old; 42 million (28 percent) are aged between 12 to 14 years old; and 37 million (24 percent) are aged between 15 to 17 years old;
- 73 million work in ‘hazardous’ child labour. This is most prevalent amongst 15 to 17 year olds. Up to a quarter of all hazardous child labour is done by children aged less than 12 years old;
- 64 million are girls and 88 million are boys; and
- 62 percent of all children in ‘hazardous’ work are boys who “appear to face a greater risk of child labour than girls, but this may also be a reflection of an under-reporting of girls’ work, particularly in domestic child labour”.<sup>14</sup>

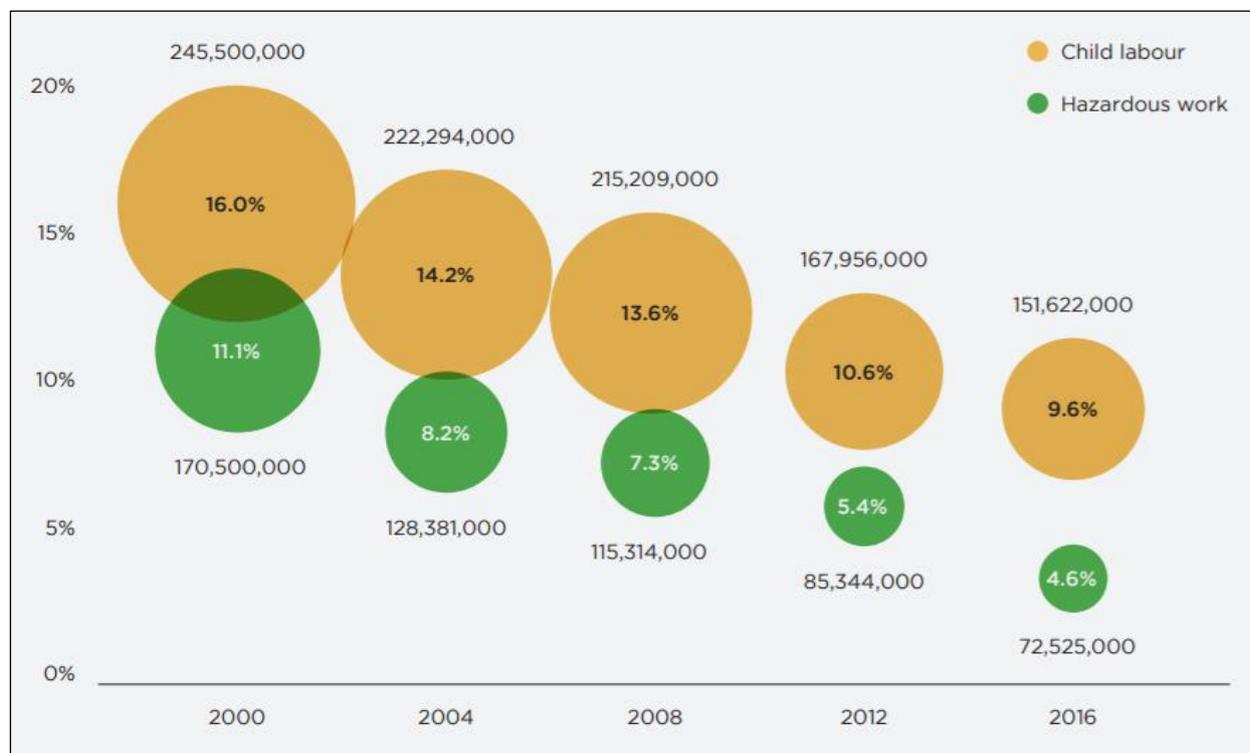
The global prevalence of child labour suggests 19.6 percent in Africa (1 in 5 children) are in child labour, whilst prevalence in other regions is between 3 and 7 percent. For example, prevalence is 2.9 percent in the Arab States (1 in 35 children); 4.1 percent in Europe and Central Asia (1 in 25); 5.3 percent in the Americas (1 in 19) and 7.4 percent in Asia and the Pacific region (1 in 14).<sup>15</sup>

In relation to the type of work they may undertake, the UN states that child labour is “concentrated primarily” in agriculture (71 percent), which includes fishing, forestry, livestock herding and aquaculture, and comprises both subsistence and commercial farming; 17 percent in services; and 12 percent in the industrial sector, including mining.<sup>16</sup> According to the ILO, young workers (those aged between 15 and 24) “sustain up to 40 percent more non-fatal occupational injuries than do adult workers (workers older than 24) and workplace hazards can even pose a threat to their lives”.<sup>17</sup>

In terms of progress over the years, Chart 1 indicates the ILO’s global estimates of children’s involvement in child labour and ‘hazardous’ work between the years 2000 and 2016.

### Chart I: Children’s Involvement in Child Labour and Hazardous Work, 2000–16

Percentage and absolute number of children in child labour and hazardous work, 5 to 17 years age range, 2000 to 2016 (bubbles are proportionate to the absolute number of children in child labour and hazardous work).



(Source: International Labour Organization, [Global Estimates of Child Labour: Results and Trends, 2012–2016](#), figure 2, p 24)

### UK Response to Child Labour

On 19 September 2017, during the 72nd Meeting of the UN General Assembly, 37 member states and observer states, including the United Kingdom, endorsed a Call to Action to end forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking.<sup>18</sup> Amongst the commitments, the member states agreed to ratify and implement relevant international conventions, protocols and frameworks as well as develop and accelerate implementation of domestic legislation to ensure that forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking and the ‘worst forms’ of child labour are never tolerated in their societies.<sup>19</sup> Further, they agreed to develop regulatory or policy frameworks and to work with business to eliminate such practices from global supply chains; whilst addressing government procurement practices, and building a culture of consumer awareness which supports such action and promotes decent work.<sup>20</sup>

Ahead of the [4th Global Conference on the Sustained Eradication of Child Labour](#) in Buenos Aires, held in November 2017, Alistair Burt, Minister of State at the Department for International Development, stated that the Government welcomed the forthcoming conference as a “key opportunity to drive international efforts towards ending modern slavery and the worst forms of child labour and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals”.<sup>21</sup> Further, by “building on the success of the Call to Action to End Forced Labour, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking launched by the Prime Minister [during 2017’s] UN General Assembly”, the UK intended to use the conference “to push for increased international cooperation on this issue”.<sup>22</sup> The Government also “aim[ed] to demonstrate UK leadership, and to work with partners to identify practical solutions ahead of key international events next year, including

the [End Violence Against Children Solutions Summit](#) [in February 2018], and the G7 and G20 leaders' meetings".<sup>23</sup> At the summit in February 2018, Penny Mordaunt, Secretary of State for International Development, said that "we must strive to ensure that no child, no one, is harmed by the people who are supposed to be there to help" and announced her support by contributing £5 million to the End Violence Against Children partnership, which sees the UK "teaming up with the biggest group of stakeholders [...] to keep children safe".<sup>24</sup>

In the UK, the youngest age a child can work part-time is 13, except children involved in areas like, television, theatre and modelling, in which case they require a performance licence.<sup>25</sup> Children can only start full-time work once they have reached the minimum school leaving age (in England, a young person must be in part-time education or training until they are 18), at which point they can work up to a maximum of 40 hours a week, and upon reaching 18 adult employment rights and rules then apply.<sup>26</sup>

There are several restrictions on when and where children are allowed to work. For example, they are not permitted to work: without an employment permit issued by the education department of the local council, if this is required by local bylaws; in places like a factory or industrial site; during school hours; before 7am or after 7pm; for more than one hour before school (unless local bylaws allow it); for more than four hours without taking a break of at least one hour; in most jobs in pubs and betting shops and those prohibited in local bylaws; in any work that may be harmful to their health, well-being or education; and without having a two week break from any work during the school holidays in each calendar year.<sup>27</sup> There are also rules that only apply during term times and school holidays, and local bylaws governing children's work.<sup>28</sup>

Commenting on the working rights of children in England and Wales, Nuno Ferreira, Professor of Law at Sussex University, suggests that about a third of young people aged 16 to 17 are active in the labour market. In Professor Ferreira's view, "many of these young people, and others even younger, work illegally" for a range of reasons, including: number of hours worked, their age, the type of work carried out, the time of day worked, or because they lack a work permit.<sup>29</sup> He argues that the current legal framework on child work in England and Wales is constituted by a "fairly outdated and fragmented range of norms" and "lays down the bare minimum rules to comply with the EU Young Workers Directive, which was not an ambitious instrument to start with".<sup>30</sup> With enforcement falling on local authorities, he argues it is "urgent to either effectively equip local authorities to deal with the enforcement of child work regulations (ideally allowing them to engage more with public campaigning, spot-checks and collaboration with schools)" or to "radically overhaul the enforcement of these regulations".<sup>31</sup>

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- <sup>1</sup> United Nations, '[World Day Against Child Labour](#)', accessed 6 June 2018.
- <sup>2</sup> International Labour Organization, '[World Day Against Child Labour 2017](#)', 12 June 2017.
- <sup>3</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>4</sup> International Labour Organization, '[Generation Safety and Health](#)', 10 April 2018.
- <sup>5</sup> United Nations, '[Goal 8: Promote Inclusive and Sustainable Economic Growth, Employment and Decent Work for All](#)', accessed 6 June 2018.
- <sup>6</sup> International Labour Organization, '[What is Child Labour](#)', accessed 6 June 2018.
- <sup>7</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>8</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>9</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>10</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>11</sup> United Nations, '[World Day Against Child Labour: Background](#)', accessed 6 June 2018. See also International Labour Organisation Conventions, '[C138—Minimum Age Convention, 1973 \(No 138\)](#)'; and '[C182—Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 \(No 182\)](#)', accessed 6 June 2018.
- <sup>12</sup> United Nations, '[World Day Against Child Labour: Background](#)', accessed 6 June 2018.
- <sup>13</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>14</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>15</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>16</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>17</sup> International Labour Organization, '[Generation Safety and Health](#)', 10 April 2018.
- <sup>18</sup> Department for International Development, '[A Call to Action to End Forced Labour, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking](#)', 20 September 2017.
- <sup>19</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>20</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>21</sup> House of Commons, '[Written Question: Global Conference on the Sustained Eradication of Child Labour](#)', 3 November 2017, 110493.
- <sup>22</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>23</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>24</sup> Department for International Development, '[Speech: Penny Mordaunt Speech at the End Violence Solutions Summit](#)', 14 February 2018.
- <sup>25</sup> Gov.uk, '[Child Employment: Minimum Ages Children Can Work](#)', accessed 7 July 2018.
- <sup>26</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>27</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>28</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>29</sup> Professor Nuno Ferreira, '[Working Children in England and Wales: Does Anyone Care About Their Rights?](#)', LSE Politics and Policy Blog, 24 January 2018.
- <sup>30</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>31</sup> *ibid.*

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