

Child Labor in South and Southeast Asia (UNICEF)  
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## **The Prevalence of Child Labor in South and Southeast Asia as well as Around the World**

According to the UN, over 150 million children worldwide are estimated to be in child labor. That's almost one in ten children. An estimated 12% of children aged 5-14 are estimated to be involved in child labor in South Asia. That's over 40 million children. While there has been a decline in child labor since 2000, the progress made has been too slow. Southasian children are at risk of labor exploitation, and even sexual exploitation.

Although it is nowhere near as prevalent in most nations as it once was child labor and exploitation is still an ever present danger to children around the globe. According to the UN, over 150 million children worldwide are estimated to be in child labor.<sup>1</sup> Since the ILO has began tracking child labor in 2000, "the number of children exploited fell by 94 million" according to World Vision.<sup>2</sup> In more recent years, however, the decline in child labor has decreased dramatically, even showing an increase in areas such as Sub Saharan Africa.

## **What Are Some of the Biggest Reasons for the Occurrence of Child Labor Around the World?**

Perhaps the biggest cause of child labor is poverty. While there are still problems of child labor in more developed countries, it is the worst in countries with high levels of poverty. Unfortunately, child labor prevents children from getting the education they need in order to break the cycle of poverty furthering the problems. According to the ILO, over 67% of child labor is involved in family agriculture while others spend their hours laboring in factories, domestic work, as child soldiers, or even in the sex trade. Many children and their families resort to child labor in order to just gain bare necessities of living, something that should be attainable for everyone.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/rosa/what-we-do/child-protection/child-labour-and-exploitation>

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<https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.worldvision.org/child-protection-news-stories/child-labor-facts&sa=D&ust=1612050282932000&usg=AOvVaw3BG3aH9h8l3EIPhf-mMUwf>

## **What Makes Child Labor so Bad?**

Child labor has been a continuing threat to the happiness and prosperity of children across the globe for centuries. During the industrial revolution the usage of child labor was wide spread, however in today's world child labor is much less prominent (at least in the more developed parts of the world). As a result of child labor, millions of children around the world are deprived of a chance to be educated and are forced to work in potentially unsafe and harsh environments.

## **How Has Child Labor Been Combated Throughout the World and Throughout History?**

Organizations such as The Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB) in the US, the Global March Against Child Labor, Love 146, and the Stop Child Labor Coalition among many others are some organizations that have committed to combating child labor. The ILAB specifically collects data on child labor and child trafficking as well as develops new methods of surveying, new qualitative and quantitative studies, and new statistical approaches to understand child labor. These organizations have served as major forces in combating and stopping child labor as well as human trafficking.

Globally, these organizations have been working to reduce child labor. Since 1995, these organizations have reduced the number of child laborers by 94 million, but there are still many more children around the world that need help. As of 2017, there were still 152 million child laborers.

In the United States, a series of reforms beginning in the early 1900's played a huge role in the reduction of child labor. Many child labor committees pushed for reform within state legislatures, advocating for laws restricting child labor as part of the Progressive Era in the United States. In addition, many people lobbied for an increase in education for children as well as requirements to educate children to a certain level. However, there was a lot of opposition to such laws in the southern states. As a result, child labor was not largely reduced until the Great Depression decades later. As a result of the Great Depression, there was a large push to give out-of-work adults jobs, and a national minimum wage was set. The combination of these factors played a large role in reducing child labor.

New technology and infrastructure has also played a large part in reducing child labor world-wide. As new machines have been developed that can replace certain jobs, the need for children to perform work has been removed in many areas of the world. Unfortunately, the technology and infrastructure has not spread to all parts of the world.

### **What Makes Child Labor Remain so Prevalent in South and Southeast Asia?**

In South and Southeast Asia, however, the different countries are not unified like the American States under a federal government, and there is a lack of newer technology and infrastructure. There can be no overarching minimum wage for all the South and Southeastern Asian countries, and there is little automation to replace the need for child laborers. As a result of the lack of new technology as well as a lack of major action from their governments, child labor remains largely prevalent in many parts of South and Southeast Asia, despite the situation improving in many other parts of the world.

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