

UNICEF

Establishing measures to eliminate the number of minors working in
mines



Ekansh Talwar

Positions: Deputy
chair

Date:



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Introducing Your Chairs

Welcome, delegates and distinguished guests.

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the FAMUN Conference. I am honored to serve as your chair for this event, and I am committed to ensuring that it is a successful and enriching experience for all participants.

As the chair, I play a crucial role in organizing and overseeing the entire conference. I work closely with the organizing committee to select delegates, prepare debate topics, and ensure that all aspects of the conference run smoothly. My goal is to create a neutral and fair environment where delegates can engage in meaningful debate and foster a spirit of cooperation and diplomacy.

I am confident that this conference will be a valuable learning experience for all delegates. Through rigorous debate and interaction with peers from around the world, participants will develop their critical thinking and communication skills, enhance their understanding of global issues, and gain a deeper appreciation for the importance of international cooperation.

I expect all delegates to participate actively in the conference, conduct themselves with professionalism and respect, and uphold the principles of MUN. I am confident that with your dedication and commitment, we can make this conference a resounding success.

An Introduction To The Topic

The exploitation of children in the mining industry is a serious and widespread human rights violation. According to UNICEF, an estimated 168 million children are engaged in child labor worldwide, of whom 85 million are employed in hazardous work. Mining is one of the most hazardous forms of child labor, with children being exposed to dangerous machinery, toxic chemicals, and physical injuries. They also miss out on education and other essential opportunities, trapping them in a cycle of poverty and deprivation.

Child labour in mines can be traced back to the annals of ancient civilizations, where young individuals were often employed in the extraction of minerals and other resources. This practice endured through the Middle Ages and into the early modern period, fuelled by the interplay of poverty, a lack of educational opportunities, and the need for low-cost labour.

The Industrial Revolution ushered in a surge of child Labor in mines, as technological advancements and increased demand for minerals rendered young workers an attractive and profitable workforce. Children were viewed as an expendable and cost-effective labour pool, subjected to arduous working hours, hazardous conditions, and physical abuse.

Historically, The exploitation of minors in the mining industry casts a long shadow over human history, a persistent and detrimental practice that violates fundamental child rights and impedes their growth and development. From ancient civilizations to the Industrial Revolution, child labour in mines has existed, driven by a confluence of factors, including economic hardship, limited education, and the demand for cheap labour.

Definition of Key Terms

Child labor: Forms of work that deprive children of their childhood, hinder their development, and endanger their health and safety.

Forced or compulsory labor: Work undertaken under coercion or the threat of punishment, leaving the child with no genuine alternative but to work.

Slavery or practices similar to slavery: Work characterized by the exploitation and control over a person's freedom, where they are treated as property.

Child trafficking: The illegal movement of children for the purpose of exploitation.

Child prostitution: The use of children in sexual activities for financial or other gain.

Child pornography: The production, distribution, or possession of material depicting children engaged in sexually explicit activities.

Using, procuring, or offering children for illicit activities: The use of children in any activity that is illegal or harmful to society.

Hazardous work: Work that presents a significant risk of harm to a child's health, safety, or morals. This includes work that is done in dangerous conditions, such as mining or agriculture, or work that is physically or psychologically demanding.

Trafficking: Child trafficking is the illegal movement of children for the purpose of exploitation. It often involves the abduction, deception, or coercion of children, who are then forced into various forms of exploitation, including sexual abuse, forced labor, or other unlawful activities.

International conventions on child labor: The International Labour Organization (ILO) has adopted several conventions addressing child labor, including Convention 138 on Minimum Age for Admission to Employment and Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour. These conventions provide a framework for preventing and eliminating child labor globally.

A General Overview of the Issue

The Impact of Child Labor

Child labor has a devastating impact on children's physical, mental, and social development. Children working in hazardous jobs are at risk of accidents, injuries, and illnesses. They may also suffer from malnutrition, stunted growth, and delayed cognitive development. Child labor can also lead to psychological trauma, including anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

The Underlying Causes of Child Labor

Child labor is a complex issue with multiple causes, including poverty, lack of education, and limited access to employment opportunities. In many developing countries, families often send their children to work to supplement their income. In some communities, child labor is deeply ingrained in cultural norms, and children are seen as contributing members of the household from an early age.

International Efforts to Address Child Labor

The international community has made significant progress in addressing child labor over the past few decades. The ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labor has been ratified by 187 countries. The ILO also has a number of other conventions on child labor, such as the Minimum Age Convention and the Abolition of Child Labor Convention.

National Efforts to Address Child Labor

Many countries have also taken steps to address child labor through national laws and policies. For example, many countries have established minimum ages for employment and have banned the use of children in hazardous work.

The Role of Businesses

Businesses also have a role to play in addressing child labor. The ILO has developed the Business and Child Labor Principles (BCLP), which provide guidance for businesses on how to prevent child labor in their supply chains.

The Way Forward

Eliminating child labor will require a concerted effort from governments, businesses, and communities. We need to address the root causes of child labor, such as poverty and lack of education. We also need to provide children with access to quality education and vocational training so that they have better opportunities for employment.

Historical Background

The Enduring Presence of Child Labor in Ancient Times

In the bustling agricultural fields of ancient Mesopotamia, children as young as five were engaged in weaving, pottery making, and other labor-intensive tasks. Their small stature and nimble hands made them adept at these endeavors, even as they faced the harsh realities of long hours, limited education, and restricted opportunities for personal growth.

Ancient Rome further exemplified the prevalence of child labor, with children employed in a diverse array of occupations, from gladiatorial training to domestic servitude and apprenticeships in skilled trades. While some gained valuable skills and social standing through their work, many endured exploitation and abuse, their childhoods robbed of the innocence and freedom they deserved.

The Industrial Revolution: A Catalyst for Escalation

The Industrial Revolution, with its rapid industrialization and insatiable demand for labor, marked a stark escalation in child labor exploitation. The insatiable hunger for cheap and compliant workers, fueled by the expansion of factories and mines, thrust children into the heart of industrial labor.

The Grueling Reality of Factories and Mines

Factories, with their long, grueling hours, cramped spaces, and dangerous machinery, became a breeding ground for child labor exploitation. Young children, sometimes as young as four or five, were subjected to backbreaking labor, operating machinery, transporting heavy loads, and cleaning hazardous areas. Their small stature made them particularly vulnerable to accidents and injuries, and their health often suffered due to exposure to toxic substances and inadequate sanitation.

The depths of coal mines presented another horrific reality for child laborers. Young boys, often as young as seven, were sent deep underground to extract coal, their small frames maneuvering through narrow tunnels and dangerous machinery. The darkness, dampness, and constant exposure to dust and toxic gases took a heavy toll on their health, and the risk of accidents and injuries was ever-present.

Addressing the Root Causes: A Multifaceted Approach

Despite significant strides, child labor remains a persistent challenge in various parts of the world. Economic hardship, lack of education, and cultural norms often drive families to send their children to work. Addressing these root causes requires a multifaceted approach that encompasses education, economic development, and social change.

Major Parties Involved

Ethiopia: Ethiopia is a country with a long history of child labor. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), an estimated 4.5 million children in Ethiopia are involved in child labor, with 1.9 million children aged 5-17 involved in hazardous work. The factors that contribute to child labor in Ethiopia include poverty, lack of education, and cultural norms. Poverty is a major driver of child labor, as families often send their children to work to supplement their income. Lack of education also contributes to child labor, as children who do not attend school are more likely to work. Cultural norms also play a role, as some families believe that children should start working at an early age to learn valuable skills.

Burkina Faso: Burkina Faso is a country with a high prevalence of child labor. According to the ILO, an estimated 2.2 million children in Burkina Faso are involved in child labor, with 0.9 million children aged 5-17 involved in hazardous work. The factors that contribute to child labor in Burkina Faso include poverty, lack of education, and lack of access to alternative livelihoods. Poverty is a major driver of child labor, as families often send their children to work to supplement their income. Lack of education also contributes to child labor, as children who do not attend school are more likely to work. Lack of access to alternative livelihoods means that families often have no choice but to send their children to work in hazardous conditions.

Nepal: Nepal is a country with a history of child labor. According to the ILO, an estimated 1.8 million children in Nepal are involved in child labor, with 0.6 million children aged 5-17 involved in hazardous work. The factors that contribute to child labor in Nepal include poverty, lack of education, and cultural norms. Poverty is a major driver of child labor, as families often send their children to work to supplement their income. Lack of education also contributes to child labor, as children who do not attend school are more likely to work. Cultural norms also play a role, as some families believe that children should start working at an early age to learn valuable skills.

India: The Indian government has taken a number of steps to address child labor, including ratifying the ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour and developing a national action plan. The government has also strengthened law enforcement and provided funding for education and skills training. However, more needs to be done to address the root causes of child labor, such as poverty and lack of access to education.

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

Governments, international organizations, and civil society groups have implemented a range of measures to address child labor, including the ratification of international treaties and the development of national action plans. Such as the:

- The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1989) serves as a cornerstone of international efforts to combat child labor. This landmark human rights treaty recognizes the right of every child to be protected from economic exploitation and hazardous work. Ratified by 196 countries, the CRC provides a framework for governments to address child labor through legislative, policy, and program interventions.
- The International Labor Organization (ILO) has played a crucial role in combating child labor through the development and adoption of various conventions. The ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labor (CFCL) (1999) identifies and prohibits the worst forms of child labor, including slavery, trafficking, prostitution, and hazardous work. Ratified by 187 countries, the CFCB mandates governments to take immediate and effective measures to eliminate these forms of child labor.
- The Minimum Age Convention (No. 138) (1973), another ILO Convention, establishes 15 as the minimum age for employment and prohibits the employment of children under the age of 18 in hazardous work. Ratified by 187 countries, the Minimum Age Convention provides a basis for governments to establish and enforce minimum age laws.
- Convention on the Rights of the Child resolution was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989, the Convention on the Rights of the Child is an international treaty that sets out the civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights of all children. Article 32 of the Convention prohibits the economic exploitation of children, including the use of children in forced or hazardous labor.

Possible Solutions For The Issue

Child labor in mines, a persistent and deeply concerning global issue, demands a coordinated and multifaceted response. This comprehensive approach encompasses a range of strategies, from strengthening regulatory frameworks to empowering communities and fostering economic opportunities.

1. Upholding Legal Frameworks with Rigor

Establishing and rigorously enforcing minimum age limits for employment in mining activities is of paramount importance. International treaties, such as the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Conventions No. 138 and 182, provide guiding principles. Nations should ratify and adhere to these conventions, enacting robust laws that prohibit the employment of children in hazardous work environments like mines.

2. Prohibiting Child Exploitation and Ensuring Well-being

The use of children in mines carries significant risks to their physical and psychological well-being. Exposure to hazardous machinery, toxic substances, and extreme underground conditions poses substantial dangers. Further, the psychological trauma of working in such harsh environments can profoundly impact their development and future prospects.

3. Nurturing Education and Skills Development for Sustainable Alternatives

Providing quality education and vocational training is crucial to equip children with the skills and knowledge necessary to pursue alternative, non-hazardous livelihoods. This not only reduces the demand for child labor in mines but also empowers them to become productive members of society, contributing to their own well-being and the overall development of their communities.

4. Addressing Socioeconomic Determinants and Supporting Families

Addressing the underlying socioeconomic factors that drive families to rely on child labor requires comprehensive support measures. Social safety nets, such as cash transfers or targeted subsidies, can alleviate immediate financial burdens, enabling families to afford education and other essential services for their children. This can break the cycle of poverty and provide children with the opportunity to pursue their education and develop their skills.

5. Enforcing Existing Regulations with Vigilance

Effective enforcement of existing child labor laws is essential to deter exploitative practices. Governments must invest in strengthening their enforcement mechanisms, providing adequate resources to labor inspectors, and undertaking regular inspections of mining operations to identify and address instances of child labor. This strict enforcement sends a clear message that child labor will not be tolerated.

Timeline Of Key Events

1883: New York Bans Child Labor in Tenement Factories

New York unions, driven by the plight of child laborers, successfully lobbied for a state law prohibiting the employment of children under 14 in tenement cigar factories. This victory demonstrated the power of collective action to challenge exploitative practices.

1892: The Democratic Party Calls for Federal Intervention

The Democratic Party, recognizing the pervasiveness of child labor, incorporated a platform plank advocating for federal legislation to ban the employment of children under 15 in factories. This political endorsement reflected growing societal concern.

1904: The National Child Labor Committee Emerges

In response to the persistent prevalence of child labor, the National Child Labor Committee (NCLC) was established, dedicated to advocating for federal child labor laws. The NCLC's efforts played a crucial role in raising awareness and mobilizing public support.

1938: The Fair Labor Standards Act: A Turning Point

The enactment of the Fair Labor Standards Act in 1938 represented a major turning point. This landmark legislation established a federal minimum wage and prohibited the employment of children in certain hazardous occupations. It provided a legal framework for protecting children from exploitation.

1973: The ILO Conventions: International Recognition of Child Labor

The International Labour Organization (ILO) adopted Convention 138 on Minimum Age for Admission to Employment in 1973, setting a minimum age of 15 for employment and 18 for hazardous work. This international agreement reaffirmed the global commitment to safeguarding children from labor exploitation.

2000: The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: A Global Commitment

The adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by the United Nations in 2000 further solidified the international consensus against child labor. This comprehensive treaty enshrined the rights of children, including the protection from economic exploitation.

2022: The ILO Global Report: A Persistent Challenge

The 2022 International Labour Organization Global Report on Child Labour revealed that 168 million children worldwide were engaged in child labor, with 73 million children involved in hazardous work. The report underscored the need for increased investments in education and social protection to address the underlying causes of child labor and empower children with opportunities for a brighter future.

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