



Issue: Developing effective actions towards the total elimination of child slavery

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Position: President Chair

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Introduction

The concept of slavery has been around for millennia. Many civilizations were built upon the backs of slaves; men, women and children alike. The practices of owning and trading humans are so important to some that the topic is said to have been the preliminary cause a number of conflicts in the past, most significantly the civil war in the United States. 19th century most of the prominent countries of the world at the time began working towards a global consensus to abolish slavery. Since then much progress has been made. In 2007 with Mauritania becoming the last country to agree to officially abolish slavery, the global community had supposedly succeeded in eradicating this practice on paper. Of course, this did not in any way mean that slavery could not continue illegally. According to the findings of the modern slavery index in 2016 there are still an estimated 40.3 million people in the world subject to some kind of modern slavery. An estimated 10 million out of the 40 are made up of child slaves who are subject to a number of forms of inhumane treatment. Slavery continues to pose a threat and harm people all around the globe. It is not an issue just in countries in the Global South, but even in Western-Europe child slavery exists.

Definition of Key Terms

Slave

A slave is a person who is considered the property of another and is forcefully coerced into obeying them.

Child labour

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) defines child labour as work which 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, obligating them to leave school prematurely or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work.

Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is considered the illegal trade of humans. Child trafficking includes recruiting and or transporting children with the purpose of subjecting them to involuntary acts, such as sexual exploitation or forced labour.

Forced labour

Forced labour is any work or services which people are forced to do against their will under the threat of some form of punishment.

Debt bondage or bonded labour

The world's most widespread form of slavery, debt bondage is when people borrow money they cannot repay and are required to work to pay off the debt, then losing control over the conditions of both their employment and the debt.

Descent-based slavery

Where people are born into slavery because their ancestors were captured and enslaved; they remain in slavery by descent. This phenomenon is called descent-based slavery.

Child slavery

Many people often confuse child slavery with child labour, but the former is much worse. Child labour is harmful for children and negatively affects their education and development, but it is in many cases (to some extent) voluntarily. Child slavery occurs when a child is exploited for someone else's gain and that can take many forms. It can include child trafficking, child soldiers, child marriage and child domestic slavery. Child labour can also be a form of child slavery, if the child is forcibly doing labour.

General Overview

Modern slavery is a multi-pronged issue as it comes in many forms. Slavery in many instances begins with human trafficking. Especially in countries with underdeveloped infrastructure and insufficient security the recruitment and or transport of people for the purpose of exploitation becomes a possibility. Children in these areas are significantly more vulnerable to human traffickers because it is easier to trick or force them into coercion. These children will often end up in domestic slavery or in prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation. In for example Thailand, over a third of all prostitutes is thought to be under 18, and most of them were trafficked into the country. The UN has estimated that over a million children in Asia have been the victim of the sex or pornographic industry.

Criminal organisations benefit extensively from human trafficking, and they are believed to make a combined total of 7 to 10 billion US dollars a year with it. It is the third most lucrative activity for such criminal organisations, after the trafficking of arms and drugs. And that is a clear example of one of the biggest challenges for

solving this issue of child slavery; they simply form an important part of the global economical system. It is not only trafficking, which only affects a relatively small amount of people, but it is especially (forced) child labour that everyone indirectly benefits from. Everyone, that is everyone in the Global North. Western countries and all other actors driven by capitalist principles always try to make as much money as they can. Around the time of the Industrial Revolution, raw materials from the Global South (provided mostly by slaves or forced labour) were brought to – mainly – Western-European countries, where they were manufactured into goods in factories, only to be shipped to that same Global South and traded for even more raw materials. This resulted in an accumulation of wealth in the Global North, without any benefits for people that forcibly bought the European manufactured goods and provided them raw materials. Before that, raw materials were provided by Europeans, but as living standards improved, they shifted to a more lucrative business (which was manufacturing). Since then, manufacturing has also shifted away from the Global North, to developing countries, leaving developed countries in charge of trading and overseeing the processes of manufacturing. This had become the most lucrative part of business. It however also means that improving living standards in developing countries will result in people there refusing to do the work that has made the Global North so much money. If there are no children forcibly making clothing that people in developed countries buy for fairly cheap prizes, no one will, and therefore big companies continue to use child labour.

This makes fighting child labour problematic; the general public tends to ignore the issue. It is far away from them as persons, and in addition they will have to sacrifice some of their own privileges – buying suspiciously cheap clothing. As a consequence, (forced) child labour is deeply rooted in society, and addressing the issue requires far-reaching actions. Far beyond where the problem appears to be. Former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said the following about this:

“The trafficking of persons, particularly women and children, for forced and exploitative labor, including sexual exploitation, is one of the most egregious violations of human rights which the United Nations now confronts. It is widespread and growing. It is rooted in social and economic conditions in the countries from which the victims come, facilitated by practices which discriminate against women, and driven by cruel indifference to human suffering on the part of those who exploit the services that the victims are forced to provide”

Since then, the issue only worsened. And to make matters even more complicated, there is one last, less obvious form of child slavery: child marriage and domestic slavery. Whereas the former is very much accepted in many cultures and despised by others, the latter is still common all around the globe. There is not a single country that doesn't deal with the issue.

Taking all this into account, one of the most important things when attempting to solve this issue is clearly separating different forms of child slavery, and focus on the divided aspects individually. As the problem is so widespread and broad, attempts to fight multiple aspects at once will lead to inefficiency and a lack of results.

Major Parties Involved

Anti-slavery

Anti-slavery is a British-based NGO that was founded in 1839 by abolitionist activists that wanted slavery to be forbidden worldwide. Since then, they have kept fighting exclusively to eradicate all forms of slavery by working at different levels, both at the internationally and domestically. However, they don't specifically focus just on children.

UNICEF

The UN's children's rights organisation, UNICEF fights child slavery as part of its mandate to protect children's rights. It extensively cooperates with NGO's and governments to reach as many children as possible.

ILO

The International Labour Organisation is a UN organisation that involves employers, employees and governments to determine working conditions for all workers. They advocate for the total abolition of child labour around the world.

OHCHR

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights is the UN body that tries to ensure that no person's human rights are violated. This includes fighting slavery worldwide, but like Anti-slavery, they don't focus on children in particular.

Timeline of Key Events

Slavery abolition act of Britain	1833
Slavery Convention	1926
Minimum Age Convention	1973
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child	1989
Worst forms of child labour convention	1999
Last country to abolish slavery Mauritania	2007
As of 2016 there are an estimated 10 million children working as modern slaves	2016

As of today there are still a critical number of child slaves around the world	2019
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Previous attempts to resolve the issue

So far, only three attempts have been made to specifically fight child slavery. Both of them are ILO conventions. In addition, there are two UN treaties that explicitly mention children and their rights regarding slavery.

Minimum Age Convention

In 1973, the ILO adopted Convention 138, also known as the Minimum Age Convention. It is a legal binding convention for the ratifying parties that sets the minimum age from which people can start working at 15 years old. Dangerous work can only be performed by adults, people of 18 years or older. However, under some circumstances, this can also be 16, like countries that do not have a developed economy can set the general standard at 14. Light work can always be performed by children that are 13 years old. In addition, some countries that see a lot of child labour, like India, have not ratified the treaty and therefore do not have to follow these guidelines.

Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention

The other ILO convention about child labour was the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (Convention 182), signed in 1999. It complements Convention 138 and urges signatories to prioritise fighting the worst forms of child labour, which they identify as child slavery, child prostitution, the use of children for illicit activities and dangerous work.

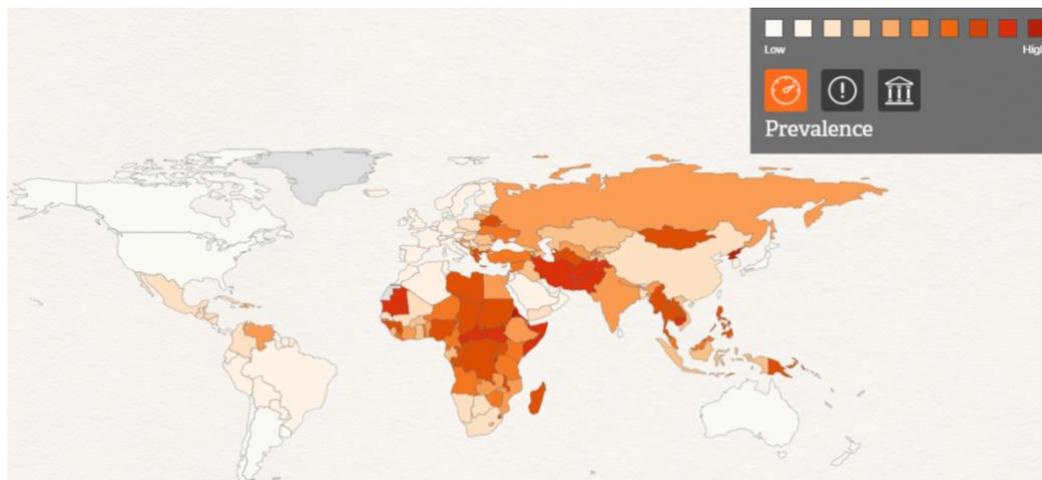
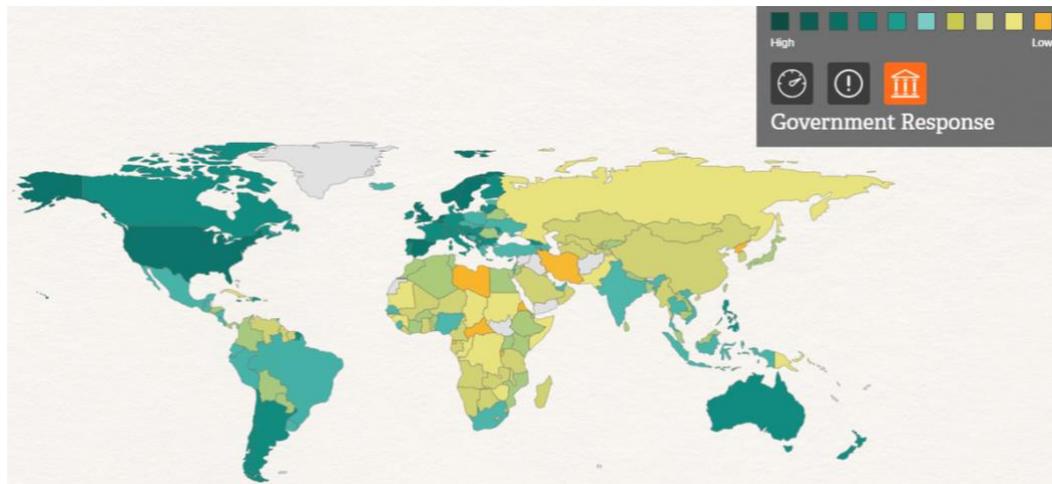
Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery

In 1956, the UN signed a treaty that focusses partly on child slavery, in an addition to the 1926 Convention on the Abolition of Slavery. It however only mentions children in the context of child marriage and child servitude, criminalising both.

Possible Solutions

As mentioned earlier on in this report, any possible attempt to fight child slavery will have to clearly separate different forms of child slavery and address these forms with separate measures. This will require all delegations to extensively research all forms of child slavery in-depth and analyse them as if they were completely different issues – which in fact, they are. Since child soldiers will be discussed as an entirely different subject, focus should lie on forced child labour, child trafficking and domestic slavery (of which child marriage is also a part).

A fairly large part of the solution will consist of regulations and legally binding agreements. As shown by these two maps, government action is an important aspect of fighting slavery in general.



However, especially given that some member states will not like to do so, most attention should focus on bringing about the cultural changes that are required for people to accept the changes that are to be made. In addition, economic measures should be taken, both to encourage companies and member states to give up child labour for instance, but also to prevent them from suffering critical economical losses. Making child slavery illegal will not just make it go away. Active encouragement and enforcement are necessary to give any means just a remote chance of having a significant impact.

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