

Theme 7.2.1 What challenges face social development in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia? (child labour and girls education)

Challenges of child labour

The ILO (International Labour Organisation) estimates that there are 168 million child labourers in the world. This has decreased from 246 million in the year 2000.

For a country's economy to grow, it is important for children to receive an education.

Causes of child labour:

- poverty
- school is unaffordable so children work instead
- family expectation that children earn money to support the family.

What do child labourers do?

Most jobs that children do are either:

- farm work
- factory work
- informal jobs – litter picking, street vending or cleaning shoes
- hazardous jobs such as mining, manual work, operating heavy machinery and as child soldiers.

These jobs are unregulated (not monitored by law) and therefore many children work long hours in dangerous conditions.

Tackling child labour

Child labour poses a major issue on a vast scale; figures are not exact so there may be many more than the 168 million child labourers that the ILO estimates.

Globally, child labour numbers are falling and are predicted to continue as countries become more developed and children gain access to education.

Child labour cannot be made illegal unless national governments choose to make it illegal.

To reduce the number of children working, the ILO advises governments to:

- invest in education for all
- improve social security to provide families in poverty with government support
- promote equality between boys' and girls' education.

Supporting the education of girls

One of the aims of the Millennium Development Goals (2000–2015) was to reduce the number of children missing education by 50%.

Significant progress was made towards the goal, however, the majority of children missing education were girls.

Why does girls' education matter?

In countries such as India where more women are uneducated than men, there can be consequences and limitations for social development:

- children of an uneducated mother are twice as likely to die, due to lack of parental awareness of healthcare, sanitation and poverty
- educated women marry later and have fewer children, reducing the risk of poverty which would make the family unable to look after their children
- education empowers women, by giving them improved status in life and greater opportunities.

The Sustainable Development Goals 2015–2030 have quality education (goal 4) and gender equality (goal 5) as high priorities, to ensure improved social development.