

Committee: Human Rights

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Child labour, labour conditions & modern slavery

Introductory context

Child labour and modern slavery, despite intervention and legislation, continue to be a problem in many areas around the world. In addition, despite the majority of occurrences being in poorer countries, it is not restricted to them. Child labour and modern slavery are present in developed and developing countries, and steps must be taken over the coming years to mitigate its occurrences.

Key definitions

Debt Bondage is when a person borrows over what they can repay, and is required to work off their debt, in the process losing control over their employment conditions and the debt they accumulated.

Descent-based slavery is when a person is born into slavery as result of the enslavement of their ancestors.

Hazardous work (in the context of child labour) is defined as labour that according to the ILO “jeopardises the physical, mental or moral-well being of a child.”

Child labour is defined as “work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development”.

Modern slavery is when someone is either forced to work for, is owned or controlled by an employer, treated as a commodity and dehumanised or physically constrained or has restrictions imposed on their freedom of movement.

Overview

There is widespread legislation against child labour; however, it is still widely present in many countries. The ILO estimates that there are 152 million victims of child labour, half of which (73 million) are involved in hazardous work: 71% of all child labour is agricultural work, 17% in services and 12% working in the industrial sector. The majority are employed by parents and not commercial operations. It is generally agreed that the primary cause for

child labour is because of a family's socioeconomic situation, as child generated income can account for 25% to 40% of a family's income.

Child labour deprives children of their childhood, interferes with their ability to attend school regularly and, especially in the case of the 72 million in hazardous work, can cause mental, physical and social harm.

Modern slavery is also strongly prevalent, with an estimated 40.3 million people involved in it around the world. Modern slavery can take six primary forms: forced labour, debt bondage, human trafficking, descent-based slavery, child slavery and forced/early marriage.

Timeline

The practice of child labour was very common in the 19th and early 20th century with poorer children; however, with the increase in overall household income this has shifted, and incidence rates have dropped as a result.

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Equitable access to safe drinking water as a human right

Introductory context

Particularly after UN recognition of safe drinking water as a human right in 2010, there has been a great push to ensure all encompassing access to clean water. Access to clean water can reduce disease transmission, as 842,000 are estimated to die each year from diarrhoea alone as a result of unsafe water supplies.

Key definitions

Safe drinking water is defined by the WHO as water that “does not represent any significant risk to health over a lifetime of consumption, including different sensitivities that may occur between life stages”.

Overview

As of 2015, 71% of the world's population had access to an on premises safe water source, and 89% had access to safe water within a 30 minute round trip. However, globally, 844

million people still lack access to clean water, with 159 million of those still dependent on surface water. Albeit to a lesser extent, a lack of access to safe water can be observed in developed countries, for example the Flint water crisis in the USA.

Access to safe water is incredibly important for a multitude of reasons. Primarily, it improves the likelihood of a healthy life and increases productivity. Unsafe drinking water, much like the effects of child labour, can deprive children of a normal childhood and the opportunity of regular attendance at school.

There are criteria for a water supply to be considered adequate. This includes 50 to 100 litres per person per day of water, water free from contamination, physical accessibility within 1,000 metres of the home and also affordability, costing less than 3% of the household income.

There are additional challenges to the global supply of safe water, the most important being climate change, population growth and urbanisation and this can be mitigated with the re-use of waste water, either for drinking or for use in agriculture.

Timeline

At the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, the increase in water pollution meant that there was a need for water filtration in order to provide the means for safe drinking water. In addition, the link between cholera outbreaks and unsafe drinking water was highlighted, and so around the world water filtration systems have been developed.

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Human Rights of Unaccompanied Migrant Children and Adolescents

Introductory context

There has been little attention to the situation of migrant children and the factors that have lead to an increase in unaccompanied migrant children and adolescents. Migrant children and adolescents migrate for many reasons: work, to improve their personal situations or even due to displacement within or from conflict zones. This has evidently led to an increased risk of exploitation or abuse.

Key definitions

Unaccompanied migrants are children who have been separated from their parents and other relatives and are not being cared for by an adult who by law or custom is responsible for doing so.

Migrant Children are people aged 3-18 moving within or across political borders without a parent or legal guardian.

Overview

High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, has made promoting and protecting the human rights of all migrants a priority of OHCHR (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights), especially with regard to migrant children. A recent case is in the United States of America where the UN High Commission on Refugees has reported more than 200 children being taken into custody by the US federal government and separated from their parents after illegally crossing the border. The number of unaccompanied children travelling has increased fivefold since 2010, UNICEF has recorded.

Unaccompanied migrant children have been forced to join gangs, forced into trafficking and abuse, with one estimate being that a migrant child travelling is exploited by traffickers or gangs every 30 minutes. Countries such as the UK have started a system that supports unaccompanied children through asylum applications or through the EU's Dublin process, in order to enter the UK and be united with UK families.

Timeline

There is still an increase in unaccompanied migrant children due to conflicts around the world such as the war in Syria, migration of children in North Africa for better lives or due to children wanting to be reunited with families in Europe; and also the separation of migrant children from their parents at the US-Mexico border.

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The Human Rights Situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Introductory Text

There has been conflict between Israel and Palestine for over 50 years now. This has led to blockades via air, sea and land of the Gaza Strip, restricting the movement of people and goods, punishing the Gaza population. Israel's blockades have triggered a humanitarian crisis due to the mistreatment of the Palestinians and diminishing health services access. Also, the

Israeli settlements in the West Bank have limited the rights of Palestinians, due to an array of military checkpoints, bypass roads, and military and firing zones, which restricts Palestinians' freedom of movement.

Key Definitions

Israeli- a citizen or inhabitant of Israel, or a person of Israeli descent.

Palestinian- a member of the indigenous Arab population of the historic region of Palestine.

(OPT) Occupied Palestinian Territories consists of land in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem; and also the Gaza Strip.

Post-Traumatic Disorder (PTSD)- anxiety disorder caused by very stressful, frightening or distressing events.

Overview

There are approximately 2 million Palestinians who have been subjected to punishment, harassment and restriction of freedom due to actions by the Israeli government and military. Israeli forces have unlawfully killed and detained thousands of Palestinian civilians including children from the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT). Many of them are detained without a charge or trial. Israel continues to demolish Palestinian homes in the West Bank and Palestinian villages in Israel.

These factors have caused displacement of thousands of Palestinian, low employment rates in Gaza where three out of seven people are unemployed, which has increased the rate of poverty. Half of the population in Gaza are children who have experienced the conflict for a large part of their life and are now battling trauma such as PTSD and emotional distress, such as nightmares and bed wetting.

Palestinians hardly have basic human rights or necessities such as water, electricity, health, sanitation and education. They have suffered from unlawful demolitions, arbitrary arrests and some have inadequate access to legal representation.

Timeline

The conflict began in the mid-20th century and has erupted into full scale civil war at times. This has led to the ongoing failed peace talks between the UN and Israel and continuation of conflict between Israel and Palestine. This has recently been escalated by President Trump's policy of moving the American Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

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