



A CALL TO STOP STEALING CHILDREN'S LIVES

The NGO Committee on Migration and the undersigned endorsers call on world leaders to accelerate their efforts to end child labor by 2025, as the pace of reducing child labor has slowed worldwide. In 2020, 160 million children were engaged in child labor, or 1 in 10 children worldwide. The COVID-19 pandemic, natural disasters and conflicts, including the invasion of Ukraine have dramatically exacerbated global inequalities in the labor market, and gaps between those who have and those who are left behind. Addressing child labor is essential to attain social justice and solve other socio-economic issues.

Child labor thrives where families are poor and excluded, women and girls are discriminated against, institutions are weak or corrupted, children have no access to fundamental services, such as health, nutrition, child protection and social protection, education, including Early Childhood Education and Care, and where child labor is considered as solution for development. Child labor is not only a rights issue, it is also an economic issue; putting children to work delays economic development; and without economic development, more children find themselves put to work. This creates a self-perpetuating cycle of poverty.

Particularly at risk are child migrants, vulnerable to exploitation, discrimination, and violence. Migrant and refugee children in mixed migration situations are amongst the most vulnerable, because of the dangers they face crossing borders, being separated from family members, exposed to trafficking, exploitation and harm, in addition to having to cope in a foreign country with issues of language, documentation, access to justice, etc.

It is imperative to increase safe, orderly and regular channels of migration and admission for refugees and other forced migrants. When families migrate together and are allowed to stay together in the immigration/asylum process, risk for children is reduced.

International human and labor rights normative standards set legal boundaries for child labor and provide grounds for national and international actions to end it. But we know that most governments have failed to develop effective policy responses to assist and protect child laborers.

Without accelerated action, the international community's commitment to eradicate child labor by 2025 is practically out of reach, limiting progress on many other SDGs.

The time to act is now, with special attention to prevention-based approaches.