



International  
Labour  
Organization

# ► Regional Consultation for Asia and the Pacific in preparation of the 5th Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labour (Durban, 2022)

13–14 December 2021

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## ► Background

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In preparation for the 5th Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labour, which will be held in Durban, South Africa in May 2022, the ILO Governing Body has requested that "Five tripartite regional consultations (in Africa, Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, and Latin America), such consultations will be held to further discuss the thematic focus of the 5th Global Conference and to shape its agenda." The ILO organised the Asia and Pacific Regional Consultation on 13-14 December 2021 as part of the preparatory process.

### Profile of participants

The Regional Consultation brought together representatives of governments, employers, workers, CSOs, academia, UN agencies and other stakeholders from all countries in the Asia-Pacific region as well as a representative from the government of South Africa. A full overview of participants can be found in the annex.

### Format

The Regional Consultation was conducted virtually. In both plenary sessions as well as smaller breakout groups, the focus was directed to achievements, good practises and challenges since the IV Global Conference as well as priorities on the way towards the 5th Global Conference. Ahead of the Regional Consultation, questionnaires were sent out to participants asking them to share actions, achievements and challenges in their path to eliminating child labour since the IV Global Conference, as well as suggest agenda items for the forthcoming 5th Global Conference. These questions also structured the format of the Regional Consultation and served as the basis for panel events and breakout discussions. Together, the responses and points raised during the panel discussions and breakout events will contribute to shaping the agenda of the 5th Global Conference as well as inform desired outcomes of the conference.

### Resources

Relevant resources for the regional consultation are available on the following link: [Asia and Pacific - International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour \(endchildlabour2021.org\)](https://endchildlabour2021.org)

## ► Executive Summary

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The Asia-Pacific Regional Technical Consultations were held virtually on 13 and 14 December 2021, bringing together government, workers' and employers' representatives and representatives of regional NGOs to share experiences, progress and challenges towards the elimination of child labour in Asia and the Pacific and to identify key issues, recommended for the agenda of the forthcoming 5th Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labour to take place in South Africa in 2022.

The starting point of the meeting was a review of a regional analysis of datasets from Asia and Pacific in the global estimates on child labour, providing context and a regional-level overview of the progress on the elimination of child labour. It is quite clear from the data that Asia and the Pacific has made significant progress towards eliminating child labour in the region and the average prevalence in the region is below the world average. However, there are significant differences between sub-regions and countries in terms of prevalence rates and despite prevalence rates below world average, 25.1 million children in East and South-East Asia and the Pacific and 23.6 million children in Southern Asia are still trapped in child labour. Hence, it is quite clear that much more still needs to be done to eliminate child labour in Asia and the Pacific.

Throughout the consultations, participants expressed strong commitment to continued action against child labour and shared experiences on initiatives that have generated impact over the latest decade approximately. Effective strategies to address child labour include, for example, ensuring access to good quality, compulsory basic education for all children including those from vulnerable and marginalised communities; adopting and implementing coherent national roadmaps/action plans that bring together multiple actors to work collaboratively towards a common goal; and strengthening legislation and building capacity for compliance and enforcement. The main challenge at this point in time was identified to be the urgent need to ensure that relevant conventions, notably ILO Convention No. 138 and No. 182, are not only ratified by member states but that they are translated into national laws, policies, systems and practices and implemented.

Participants identified issues that they would like to explore further in the 5th Global Conference:

Firstly, some forms of child labour are of concern in Asia and the Pacific and discussion on these in the 5th Global Conference were recommended. Child labour in agriculture (including forestry and fishery) was identified repeatedly as a key concern and this does tally with the regional statistical data, indicating that most child labour takes place in this sector. In addition, child domestic labour, child labour in industry, in construction and in tourism (especially in the informal sector), child begging and the worst forms of child labour were identified as key concerns.

Issues of specific interest identified included child labour in the contexts of safe migration, the COVID-19 pandemic, social protection, education policies, employment policies, livelihoods approaches, and the right to organise and collective bargaining. While these issues may seem diverse, they have in common a focus on addressing key underlying drivers and root causes of child labour in the region, such as poverty and vulnerability and unsafe migration.

Therefore, these issues are not only priority issues for the 5th Global Conference, but also for the regional research agenda and for collaboration and sharing of lessons, knowledge and experiences within the region (e.g., under the umbrella of the ASEAN Roadmap on child labour, and the SAIEVAC Regional Action Plan on Child Labour).

Also identified as priority issues for the 5th Global Conference, and for regional initiatives, were strategies to address the underlying causes. In addition to thematic strategies (e.g., education policies) the conversation revolved around two key issues: The need to put in place up-to-date legislation and ensure capacity for enforcement and awareness raising towards compliance; and the need to strengthen inter-agency communication and collaboration, not just at national level, but also at local and program implementation levels (e.g., in national referral systems). Hence, it would be useful for the Asia-Pacific region if the 5th Global Conference could focus not only on the "what works" but also on the "how to make it work" questions.

In broad terms, the challenge in Asia and the Pacific is not generating commitment to elimination of child labour, it is identifying and implementing effective strategies, within an environment of finite resources. Hence, helpful outcome documents of the 5th Global Conference would focus on concrete actionable plans/roadmaps with measurable milestones, rather than general declarations of commitment and intent.

For the 5th Global Conference to become an effective vehicle for sharing knowledge and lessons and for identifying implementable strategies and action points, broad participation is required. This includes, not least ensuring full participation of youth representatives from the regions.

Virtual participation in combination with the physical presence conference may be a way to increase representation at the 5th Global Conference. If so, it is critically important that the event is designed and organised in such a way that virtual participation is meaningful and at par with physical presence. This would include ensuring that key sessions are open to people in different time zones and that virtual participants are not just spectators to the physical meeting, for example through organising virtual side event and times that fit in Asia and the Pacific (and in the Americas).

## ► The Regional Consultation

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### Pre-consultation questionnaires

Ahead of the consultation, ILO sent out questionnaires to participants in order to gauge interests and priorities for the consultation. The questionnaires consisted of quantitative and qualitative questions, the latter focusing in particular on achievements since the last Global Conference on Child Labour held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 2017, as well as on suggested agenda items for the upcoming conference, challenges in implementing measures against child labour, as well as best practices and knowledge-sharing.

Overall, responses to the questionnaires were largely in keeping with themes that emerged during the consultation. What stood out in particular was that good practice sharing and cooperation are very high on the agenda, and that there is a strong desire and willingness to work together on these issues to develop more comprehensive approaches. Interestingly, Covid-19 did not feature heavily in and of itself, but responses instead indicated that the pandemic had accelerated and highlighted underlying issues, most visibly when it comes to social protection and poverty alleviation. These, together with creating access to education as well as making sure children can stay in schools, were described as key priorities in the questionnaire responses. Going forward, many responses indicated that they would like concrete, tangible outcomes from the 5th Global Conference, such as a commitment to international cooperation and knowledge sharing, as well as implementing monitoring mechanisms across regions.

The response rate was rather mixed, with many CSOs replying ahead of the separate CSO consultation, but much fewer employer organisations or government agencies responding. In part, timing may explain this uneven distribution - towards the end of the year, organisations may have competing priorities and thus limited resources to spare. On the other hand, CSOs are perhaps also better suited to this type of task as the questions were phrased in a way that is perhaps closer to their daily work and communication.

### Opening remarks

Ms. Chihoko Asada-Miyakawa, ILO Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, opened the regional consultation and set the scene for the consultation. As we are reaching the end of 2021 - the international year to end child labour - she commended participants for their hard work despite the pandemic and its consequences, but also reminded participants that much remains to be done. For the first time in 20 years, the world had seen an increase in child labour, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. It is therefore particularly welcomed that South Africa is showing leadership in hosting the 5th Global Conference. The Asia and Pacific region has shown most progress globally, so it will be important to share good practices and shape the agenda of the 5th Global Conference in order to address child labour in its wider context. Ms. Asada-Miyakawa ended her opening remarks by urging every participant to contribute frankly and actively in the consultation.

Mr. Sipho Ndebele, Chief Director, International Relations, Department of Labour, South Africa, introduced the proposed format and themes of the 5th Global Conference. The conference will take place in Durban, South Africa, on 17-19 May 2022. Because of ongoing uncertainty and restrictions due to Covid-19, the conference will be a hybrid event with both physical as well as virtual participation of around 2000 delegates. Mr. Ndebele also addressed the stagnation in the fight against child labour, and added that as the rise in child labour was worst on the African continent, the 5th Global Conference will be held under challenging circumstances where failure is not an option.

The government of South Africa proposes a clear and visible change in the mindset of actors, in which victims become victors under a new social contract. This can be achieved by implementing a global monitoring mechanism and by building on existing, holistic measures and accelerating efforts under the theme "Upscale! Upskill! Integrate!". Mr. Ndebele closed with an emphatic call to action: "let's drive the change. It's upon us, and this change will be driven by upscaling, upskilling and integration!"

## Presentation of regional data on child labour<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Lorenzo Guarcello, Researcher, ILO Fundamental Principles & Rights at Work Branch, presented the latest Global Estimates for Eastern and South-Eastern Asia and the Pacific Islands as well as Southern Asia. In 2020, these estimates were for the first time developed in partnership with UNICEF.

Currently, there are 160 million children in child labour globally, of which 79 million are in hazardous work, and progress against child labour overall has stalled since 2016, even as the Asia and Pacific region saw a continued decline.

The patterns in both subregions are very similar:

- both regions are well below global averages for both child labour as well as children in hazardous work
- In both subregions child labour is more common among boys than girls, but this gender gap narrows once household chores are taken into consideration - involvement in household chores of course also impacts health and school attendance
- Child labour is much more common in rural areas, and agriculture accounts for the largest share of children in child labour
- Involvement in agriculture decreases as age increases, as children tend to be more involved in industry and services
- Younger children work predominantly within the family unit, whereas older children (15-17) work increasingly outside the family
- A significant share of child labour is hazardous work
- Child labour has an impact on school attendance - children in hazardous work are especially disadvantaged. School attendance on the other hand is one of the main ways out of child labour

While data and statistics relate to the pre-Covid period, modelling and simulations exercises can provide trends: if poverty increases, 8.9 million more children will likely be in child labour by the end of 2022. If additional austerity measures were to be taken that reduce social protection, up to 200 million children would likely be in child labour by the end of 2022. On the other hand, if social protection measures were to be extended, we would actually see a decrease in numbers, to 144 million in the same period.

Dr. Andika Wahab, ILO Consultant, then went on to present the development of new regional briefs on child labour that are currently in the inception phase. This study has been commissioned by the ILO and comprises three main sections: challenges in addressing child labour, policy analysis and policy priorities. The study will take into account regional challenges such as poverty, education, social protection, as well as cross-cutting challenges such as the Covid-19 pandemic, the gender dimension, conflicts and crises etc. Based on the policy analysis, policy priorities can then be identified and developed.

## Status on pledges and actions since the IV Global Conference

In a panel discussion, Mr. Dang Hoa Nam, Director General of the Department for Child Affairs MOLISA, Viet Nam, Dr. Hidayat Greenfield, Regional Secretary, IUF Asia and Pacific, Mr. Fasihul Karim Siddiqi, Senior Advisor of Employers Federation of Pakistan (EFPTBD), Ms. Mega Irena, Assistant Director, Head of Labour and Civil Service Division, ASEAN Secretariat, Ms. Francesca Romana Pastorelli, Child Labour Expert at FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific shared examples of achievements made since the IV Global Conference.

Mr Nam shared actions from Viet Nam. Since the IV Global Conference, the government has taken measures in

- Legislation: labour codes have been revised to meet international standards and to extend to the informal sector
- Data gathering/monitoring: the national child labour survey of 2018 showed that number of children in child labour are lower than the regional as well as global averages. This has inspired the country to participate in initiatives such as Alliance 8.7 and led to the conclusion of a free trade agreement between Viet Nam and the European Union

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<sup>1</sup> Presentations are available under the following link: [Asia and Pacific - International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour \(endchildlabour2021.org\)](https://endchildlabour2021.org)

- Protection and monitoring: the country is preparing a national target programme to fight child labour, with the ambition to support every child currently in child labour. Together with international partners, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is currently developing tools for monitoring and reviewing child labour

However, some challenges remain - in particular, Covid-19 has had an impact, and the government is working to mitigate the immediate effects as well as develop a large-scale economic recovery plan. In order to meet their commitment to SDG 8.7, Viet Nam has three priorities:

- Link child labour prevention with support systems that protect children at the national and local level
- Coordinated government response to the pandemic, by conducting inspection and audits or by providing support to orphaned children
- Improve monitoring of supply chains
- Workers' organisations need to support families, particularly where migration from cities to rural areas during the pandemic will likely reverse

Dr. Hidayat Greenfield shared priorities in the fight against child labour in agriculture from a workers' organisation's perspective by outlining three specific drivers:

- Piece rate wages, quotas and targets in plantations and farms: workers are still often paid in piece rate wages and face targets that are very difficult to achieve to earn a livelihood. The pressure to meet quotas is forcing farm workers to mobilise their own families as labourers for additional work. It is necessary to pay a living wage to create a buffer which eliminates the pressure to involve children in agricultural work
- Unfair crop prices for smaller farmers: the inability to get fair prices makes it difficult for small farmers to employ adults as labourers. They thus frequently turn to their own family as a source of labour, and to children in particular. Government support mechanisms are necessary, as well as ensuring fair crop prices by shortening the supply chain
- Household debt: the intersection between social protection and increase or decrease of child labour is clear: when a household is unable to meet their living needs, they are likely to engage child labour

Furthermore, he believes that the data presented with regards to agriculture underestimates the number of children exposed to hazardous work because of the use of pesticides. This shows both the complexity of the issue as well as the need to use holistic, integrated, and coordinated approaches in eliminating child labour and hazardous work. A priority for the region is therefore the ratification of ILO convention 184 on health and safety in agriculture, which might in turn lead to safe apprenticeships instead of child labour.

Ms. Mega Irena presented the current ASEAN roadmap on elimination of the worst forms of child labour by 2025, which was adopted in 2020 as a renewal of the previous roadmap and includes three important new aspects:

- All member states have now ratified ILO Convention 182, are party to CRC and committed to implementing SDG goals. The new roadmap therefore emphasises regional cooperation to support national and international efforts
- The drafting process, implementation and monitoring involves multiple sectors which emphasise holistic approaches to ending child labour. Different ASEAN bodies cover areas of labour, law enforcement, social welfare, education, rural development, human rights and statistics. As CL is predominantly occurring in agriculture, the agricultural sector will also be included in the implementation going forward
- Commitments in the roadmap cannot be separated from other ASEAN commitments, which means that measures specified in the roadmap will not start from zero, but build on existing initiatives.

ASEAN identified existing initiatives in three focus areas: Prohibition, prevention and protection, and adopted a monitoring framework in 2021. Data collection for 14 priority indicators is currently ongoing.

Ms. Francesca Romana Pastorelli from FAO reminded participants that child labour in agriculture is a complex problem that requires action from many sectors: addressing child labour is a prerequisite of sustainable agricultural development. FAO works with a wide range of stakeholders to address the root causes of child labour, and their practices have a high potential for replication and upscaling.

- Cambodia: the ministry of agriculture has proactively integrated child labour concerns into existing legal frameworks and policies. An action plan to eliminate hazardous work has also been put into place

- Philippines: multiple stakeholders work together to create policy coherence aimed at decreasing rural poverty and increasing resilience by addressing education and food security for example
- Viet Nam: national agricultural stakeholders are working on raising awareness on child labour in informal and family farming areas. FAO supported a study in the Mekong river delta to analyse the prevalence, cause and effect of children working in family agriculture
- FAO is also working on a study on the nexus on child labour and migration in the agricultural sector. The study covers Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines
- In Pakistan, safer agricultural practices are being promoted and implemented, e.g. by protecting children from pesticides. Furthermore, income generating opportunities in cotton growing areas were trialled in order to raise living standards

Mr. Siddiqui spoke to efforts made in Pakistan from the perspective of an employers' organisation since the year 2000, when child labour in the sporting goods industry was a major challenge. Through a concerted effort with various national and international partners, Pakistan was able to eliminate child labour from this sector. He described the main actions and achievements:

- Conducting a child labour survey in order to get latest data on child labour and to make the issue more visible
- Awareness raising on multiple levels: Pakistan is observing a child labour day in June, which has helped to engage industries in different sectors that are known to use child labour. Furthermore, a platform to coordinate actions against child labour has been established in Peshawar in 2020, and has since organised workshops to make stakeholders aware of the issue and the need for change. On a community level, Pakistan is planning to use (social) media to raise awareness locally and help children into vocational training instead of work
- Working with the government to achieve legislative changes: in Pakistan, a minimum working age has been introduced
- Remaining challenges: especially on working with the government to introduce compulsory universal education

Ms. Fei Wang, ILO Bangkok, then presented summaries of the questionnaires that were sent out prior to the consultation. This report looks in more detail at the questionnaires in a separate section above. However, the responses given in the questionnaire were largely in keeping with the themes that emerged from this panel session. Overall, achievements described in this panel resulted from integrated, holistic actions which were taken in cooperation with multiple stakeholders, and sometimes in cooperation across borders. It is important to note that successful measures target child labour in its context as well as its root causes . e.g. by expanding social protection, improving access to education or working on providing alternative livelihood options. Awareness-raising has also frequently been an important part of the fight against child labour.

Observations by Dr. Rinchin Chopel, Director General of SAIEVAC (the South Asian Initiative to End Violence Against Children (SAIEVAC))

Dr. Rinchin Chopel provided observations of the panel as a constituent representative. As the opening remarks similarly made clear, the panel discussion and other contributions show that much has been achieved since the IV Global Conference, but that equally, much remains to be done. He argued that only having a dialogue is no longer sufficient, and that stronger accountability has to be promoted, similarly to what the ASEAN roadmap offers. The contributions had made it clear that child labour requires a unified and coordinated response, and that clear responsibilities and action plans need to be established.

This is all the more important in the face of new challenges. Calling the Covid-19 pandemic "one of the biggest tragedies of the last 5 years", Dr. Rinchin warned of achievements being offset by new crises. These make especially clear that holistic approaches are required, for as long as the overall conditions will not improve (or regress in the face of crisis), livelihoods will continue to depend on using child labour. What is required is a larger macroeconomic policy on a global level.

In particular in connection to climate change, coordinated action will be required, and he urged the ILO representatives to work closely with partners.

Additionally, Dr. Rinchin identified three critical issues:

- Child marriage as a form of modern slavery rarely comes into the discourse around child labour, although it is a challenge and needs to be addressed

- While child labour is predominant in the agricultural sector, the tourism and entertainment industries must not be neglected
- Forced migration and the impact of both man-made and natural disasters will need to be discussed at the 5th Global Conference

In closing, he urged the organisers to make a special effort to involve children and youth participants in the global conference and make sure that their voices will be heard.

## Good practices in Asia and the Pacific

In a panel, Amna Shabir, Deputy Sec for MOPHRD Pakistan, Mr. Laxman Basnet, General Secretary, South Asian Regional Trade Union Council (SARTUC), Mr. Kameli Batiweti, CEO of Fiji Commerce & Employers Federation (FCEF) and Ms. Amanda Bissex, Regional Advisor Child Protection, UNICEF, Regional Office for South Asia shared selected good practices from the region.

Laxman Basnet shared good practices from Nepal, where his trade union worked with other stakeholders such as government and employers, as well as international organisations such as UNICEF and the ILO. Main achievements include:

- Prohibition of debt bondage and creation of a union for domestic workers
- Education and vocational training. The trade union is running 9 schools in the country, and about 6000 children have gone through this education
- Community initiatives provide training programs so that children do not go back into child labour
- Awareness-raising by developing guidelines on child labour based on national legislation

Taken together, these measures have contributed to largely eliminating child labour, for example, the brick kiln industry is estimated to be 90% free of child labour.

Amna Shabir outlined practices from three areas:

- The constitutional/institutional framework: the constitution provides full guarantees and protections against child labour. Similarly, the country has ratified the main conventions against child labour. Institutionally, ministries and local authorities work hand in hand across all provinces. Furthermore, the government has established a helpline to report actions that contravene children's rights.
- Tangible actions and results: Pakistan is working on "intensive social mobilisation", working on convincing parents to take their children out of work and bring them into schools. To assist with this, the government is offering a stipend to parents in order to encourage children to remain in school. Through concerted efforts with partners in the private sectors, child labour could be eliminated from the soccer ball, cotton and carpet industries. This is furthered by strict vigilance and inspections - in 2021 alone, 6000 inspections of factories were conducted and culprits arrested.
- Child labour survey: gathering data is a fundamental aspect of attacking the root causes of child labour. Together with UNICEF, Pakistan is currently conducting the first survey since 1996, in order to formulate national action plans.

Amna Shabir described the "overall mindset" as the major barrier to any social change. Through the measures she outlined in her presentation, Pakistan was able to change the mindset and stopped normalising child labour. The result that institutions and authorities work hand in hand and eliminating child labour is at the heart of many programs and new legislative initiatives. She emphasises the fact that the government alone could not eliminate child labour, but that it is through concerted efforts that progress could be made.

Kameli Batiweti shared progress that his organisation made in cooperation with other partners in Fiji.

Fiji is a pathfinder country, and as such the government has ratified ILO Conventions 138 and 182. The government passed laws accordingly, and is reporting on a regular basis to the ILO. Furthermore, they conduct tripartite consultations involving government, employer and workers' representatives, who together formulate standards and policies. The Fiji Commerce and Employers' Federation made a pledge to work towards eliminating child labour in the country through promoting responsible business conduct through training and raising awareness in both the formal and informal sectors.

With the assistance of the ILO office in Fiji, the Federation was also able to reach out publicly through newspaper articles and television appearances.

The Commerce and Employers' Federation will continue to conduct workshops and trainings together with government ministries and local ILO office and has an agreement with workers' organisations to work collaboratively. He concluded by thanking the ILO office in Suva, the government and colleagues in workers' organizations for their support.

Amanda Bissex reported on progress from the perspective of UNICEF in the region. She stressed that interventions against child labour are most effective when the issue is addressed holistically, and illustrated her point with several examples:

- In Afghanistan, UNICEF and several partners are working to provide holistic support to families. This includes identifying children in labour and working with their families to provide cash transfers as well as case workers who together with the families can address the underlying causes of child labour. This could include referring the family to services to help disabled family members or to refer them to vocational education or training opportunities in order to gain employment later on and thus develop a long-term solution.
- In terms of prevention, UNICEF has worked with partners in India to provide family-based care to children whose parents are migrating for work. The family is then giving support through case management or livelihood provision so that the child can stay in school
- Frequent advocacy and continued engagement with government partners is also crucial in order to keep child labour on the agenda of governments and partners, and to help with the allocation of resources: while UNICEF and others can provide seed funding, government contributions are essential to successful initiatives
- Monitoring and follow-up is also crucial: making sure that children do not fall back into child labour. UNICEF is working with municipalities to ensure that underlying issues are continuously addressed and services can be provided before a child is vulnerable to labour again
- Importance of multi-sectoral partnerships: a lot of success has been seen in cooperation on local, municipal levels and building resilient communities, but also in trans-national initiatives. Working with the private sector is also crucial in developing alternative livelihood opportunities to families, as well as opportunities for youth who finish school and can transition into safe work.

Ms. Bissex closed by emphasising the importance of cooperation, good practice sharing and continuous data-gathering. While UNICEF has worked with tens of thousands of children, this cannot be achieved by one organisation alone, but requires strong partnerships. Finally, listening to the voice of children in child labour themselves is critical to understand how they can best be supported is crucial, as is working with communities to make sure that they are resilient to the threat of child labour.

Ms. Fei Wang gave an overview of questionnaire responses that were submitted ahead of the consultation. This report looked in more detail at the questionnaires in a separate section above. However, the responses given in the questionnaire were largely in keeping with the themes that emerged from this panel session. While Asia and the Pacific region are seeing continued progress, there are still some important challenges: namely poverty, weak labour inspection services and lack of funding. Covid-19 is not explicitly mentioned as an issue in and of itself, but its impact is felt everywhere, especially in areas of education, poverty and a general lack of social protection. In this sense, Covid-19 emphasised the intersectionality of these challenges.

Many good practices have been achieved however, and the questionnaire responses focused on areas such as education, social protection and good governance.

Observations by Bidur Karki, Vice-President of GEFONT (General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions)

Mr. Bidur Karki concluded the session by sharing his observations of the panel contributions: while child labour is decreasing across the region, but continued action is required. Panellists highlighted cooperation, especially with international actors, that are crucial to increasing awareness raising and implementing policies on a national level. Mr. Laxman Basnet focused especially on the need to ensure freedom of association and the right to organise to assist the eradication of child labour. Pakistan has made much progress, and it should be noted that some sectors are already free of child labour.

One important observation from all contributions is the need to address the root causes of child labour, especially the socio-economic conditions of parents. Outreach strategies should therefore focus on providing better livelihoods, on a national as well as on a regional level.

On domestic or informal work, he added that GEFONT has conducted a survey of the plantation sector in 2018 which highlighted these issues. As a consequence, the plantation sector is now child labour free.

He concluded by emphasising the need for increased advocacy and cooperation.

## Good practices in Asia and the Pacific - report from the CSO pre-consultation

The Civil Society Organisations in the region had a consultation on December 8, prior to the regional consultation. As the original presenters of this report, Cherian Thomas and Ponpandian Thangam, co-chairs of SACG, experienced a power outage in their office, Philip Seidl presented the report instead.

Civil Society Organisations play a key role in the fight against child labour across the region. The South Asia Coordinating Group Against Violence Against Children (SACG) brings together UN agencies and regional NGOs working at various levels for child rights and protection in South Asia. Their long term objective is to see the end of all forms of violence against children in the region and for this reason provides an organising and knowledge-sharing platform. The report presented at the regional consultation drew from both the questionnaires that had been sent out to participants of the CSO consultation, as well as on responses and contributions made during the event.

The SACG received 43 responses before the event, and the consultation itself brought together around 80 participants from 17 countries. Among the participants were also children and young people - including survivors of child labour or young people who are currently in child labour. The consultation included a plenary event in which the results from the questionnaires were shared, as well as a breakout event which was structured along the same questions:

- What are the major achievements and good practices to eliminate child labour since the IV Global Conference?
- What are the major challenges faced since then?
- What are your key priorities in eliminating child labour between now and 2025?
- What are the three most important agenda items for the 5th Global Conference?

Most achievements towards the elimination of child labour have been made in the areas of protection and prevention - the core mandates of CSOs. However, a sizable share of responses indicated that achievements had also been made in terms of policy, which most notably led to the ratification of international conventions, introduction of new laws or where CSOs could help governments - through direct support or awareness-raising - to design new policies and plans. The main achievements however were made where initiatives were integrated and focused holistically on the issue, whether through awareness-raising, education, social protection and assistance, healthcare or monitoring.

Challenges are multifaceted and complex, and point to the intersectionality of child labour. Notably, while Covid-19 did of course have an impact across the board, it was rarely mentioned as a stand-alone issue, but rather in the context of the underlying issues the pandemic accelerated and accentuated, such as poverty, education, adult unemployment etc. Labour migration was frequently brought up, not in the sense of being an issue in and of itself, but rather referring to child trafficking or the unclear legal status of migrants which are therefore excluded from government services or live in illegality. Adult unemployment is both related to labour migration, but also to poverty - two issues that were also discussed at the consultation.

Agenda items to be included in the 5th Global Conference are varied and interrelated (for an in-depth overview, please see the annex). As with the challenges mentioned in the consultation, Covid-19 in and of itself is not so much seen as an issue, but refers to the need for cooperation and coordination on multiple levels, and to a wish to see increased work in addressing the root causes of child labour, such as education. Education is an important issue in the sense of getting children (back) into education, providing new educational opportunities that create new livelihoods later on and in terms of educating children so that they themselves become agents of change.

Perhaps most strikingly, there was little to no demand for policy innovation - rather, CSOs consider it important that existing policies are enforced and strengthened.

## Word Cloud exercise on good practices in Asia and the Pacific

Using Mentimeter, participants were asked to share topics and intervention areas where they would like to learn from other parts of the world. Mentions referred to elements that had been shared throughout the consultation - comprehensive, integrated and practical solutions, and addressing child labour in context. Areas that were most frequently mentioned were:

- Documentation of children and monitoring
- Access to education and social protection
- Resource mobilisation and resource allocation to ensure that these services are open to children
- Explore underlying drivers, such as climate change
- Occupational safety and health
- Inspection

Annexes 3 and 4 provides more details on the Word Cloud exercise.

## Observations by Matthias Thorns, Deputy Secretary General of the IOE (International Organisation of Employers)

The IOE represents more than 50 million companies, many of which are based in the Asia and Pacific region. Employer federations are key players in the fight against child labour, as they are trusted by their members and engage in policy-making. They are also social partners, and engage on national, local and sector levels with their trade union counterparts.

The IOE launched the child labour leadership initiative which brings together CEOs and Secretary Generals of federations around the world to make sure that child labour is a central topic for leadership organisations.

In the Asia and Pacific region, members of the IOE are very active in addressing the root causes of child labour, and engage in initiatives for fair recruitment or training, protection of workers in the garment industry and many more, such as working towards creating better social protection, especially in the face of crises such as Covid-19.

The Child Labour Platform, hosted by the ILO as the secretariat, brings together companies, trade unions, NGOs and federations, and is planning a project in India. This reflects the need for coordinated action.

Mr. Thorns concluded, much in refrain with preceding speakers, by emphasising the progress that has been made across the region, and by reminding participants that nevertheless, much remains to be done.

## Identification of topics and preferred outcome document for the 5th Global Conference

Before starting with the breakout groups, Fei Wang gave an overview of survey responses on the agenda items to be included in the 5th Global Conference. Most mentioned responses included knowledge, practices and data accessibility, as well as policy, regulation and good governance.

The breakout groups were divided by governments, workers' representatives, employer organisations, and other organisations (UN and CSO representatives). In 55 minutes, groups were asked to identify possible agenda topics for the 5th Global Conference using Mentimeter as a polling tool. Groups 1-3 worked on the following questions:

1. Which forms of child labour are of greatest concern to you?
2. Which emerging issues do you see as critically important to elimination of child labour?
3. Which type of outcome from the 5th Global Conference would be most useful to you?

Time permitting, participants in breakout groups 1-3 were also invited to discuss which strategic components of child labour elimination they would prioritise in their research and good practice sharing.

Group 1 included government representatives from the Philippines, Thailand, Cambodia, Viet Nam, Nepal, Cambodia, Fiji and Malaysia. Group 2 included representatives from workers' organisations, Group 3 brought together representatives of employer organisations from Fiji, Palau, Myanmar, Thailand and Iran and Group 4 consisted of ILO colleagues, international organisations and CSOs.

On question 1, child labour in informal sectors and hazardous work, for example in agriculture has been discussed as an especially concerning form of child labour. As one of the worst forms of child labour, child sexual exploitation has been discussed in several groups: more awareness is needed on this issue, as well as on the links of sexual exploitation and children working in hospitality or children sent away for education but who instead engage in prostitution.

Child trafficking further complicates the situation, as children are trafficked either into sex work or into other types of hazardous work. Similarly, children of illegal migrant workers are not able to attend school, and can therefore turn to begging, door-to-door selling or other forms of child labour.

In summary, the main topics mentioned were:

- Agricultural sectors
- Child trafficking
- Hazardous work in construction, hospitality, domestic and informal sectors, as well as child sexual exploitation

Question 2 highlighted some differences across countries - for example, the situation in Afghanistan is very particular in that the rise of the Taliban has led to the suspension of many child labour policies and erosion of social protection - but also showed many common themes. The impact of the pandemic featured in some ways, both in the practical sense that it made labour inspections more challenging, as well as in the wider sense that it has made children's access to education more difficult, and had also had an impact on migration.

Migration, in turn, is seen as critically important, as it causes families to live in illegality and therefore has an impact on children's rights. The effects of climate change on displacing children should be especially highlighted in this context.

The root cause of child labour, and as such a critically important issue however is poverty. Poverty drives children into work, especially in informal sectors such as street selling, where children as young as 5 years old are involved. The lack of social protection is also related to what has been discussed as insufficient enforcement of existing rules, or where additional legislation to protect especially vulnerable groups, such as other-abled children, are required. The private sector could raise awareness of some of these issues through their marketing avenues, but there was an overall sense that a stronger, more unified response is required in order to properly address these emerging issues.

If responses to the previous question had been rather diverse, the discussions around the type of outcome (question 3) were strikingly similar. Overall, the most useful outcome would be concrete plans rather than more abstract declarations, a focus on frameworks for cooperation and collaboration, as well as strengthening existing instruments as well as implementing already agreed upon policies and practices. There was also a clear call from several groups to clearly set responsibilities in order to make policies more coherent, and to establish an integrated international monitoring system, both to raise awareness and to follow up on and evaluate measures.

Finally, girl's access to education needs to be addressed in any outcome document, and it should also contain a clear message on child labour.

These qualitative discussions were supplemented by a Mentimeter poll (question 4), which highlighted the following themes (a detailed overview is attached in the annex):

#### Group 1

- Child labour in agriculture
- Child labour in the aftermath of the pandemic
- Education policies and child labour: how can we make online education accessible to vulnerable families as well as migrant children
- Eliminating child labour to livelihood approach employment policies

#### Group 2

- Safe migration and child labour
- Education policies and child labour
- Eliminating child labour through investment in social protection
- Worst forms of child labour
- Child labour and freedom of association, the right of collective bargaining

- Child labour in humanitarian crises

#### Group 3

- Social protection, livelihood approaches, employment policies and decent work
- Young workers, vocational training and youth employment strategies
- Covid-19 and the impact on child labour issues

Reporting from Group 4 (ILO colleagues, international organisations and CSOs), the following was identified:

On question 1, participants were most concerned about invisible forms of child labour, in the informal sectors, in agriculture, in the family and in domestic labour: this could be summed up as the “lower tiers” of the supply chain. Children in these areas are the most vulnerable and most deficits can be found here.

Aside from agriculture, what can be considered as informal economy is scavenging and garbage picking, domestic work, as well as child soldiers and emerging forms of online sexual exploitation of children.

Another emerging issue, and related to the previous point, is the need to make laws and legislation responsive to informal economy as well. For example, labour inspectors should be able to reach the informal economy, which is a challenge.

On question 2, calls for holistic approaches were strong. The interconnectedness of different issues is evident - for example, climate change triggers migration, which in turn can make children vulnerable to child labour. There is also a need for further research - for example, on the impact of piece rate wages in the agricultural sector or how migration and cultural factors impact child labour.

An emphatic call was also made to make sure that policies and laws are enforced, as even the best ideas are futile without implementation. Finally, in all these efforts, children’s voices should be central and the participation of young people will be crucial.

As to outcomes, the group discussion made clear that they did not desire a pledge that lists items, but a concrete action plan with clear timelines - including a review of the pledges made in the IV Global Conference and in the International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour.

## Closing remarks by Francesco d'Ovidio, ILO, and outcomes of the consultation

This part of the report is both a summary of Mr. d'Ovidio's remarks as well as observations from the rapporteur to the regional consultation.

The overall sentiment, as had also been mentioned in the opening remarks, is that Asia and the Pacific region is on the right track, but that more work needs to be done to accelerate progress if the 2025 target is to be met. Whereas other regional consultations focused on innovation, this regional consultation showed that there are already a lot of good practices and achievements to learn from - the challenge going forward is to strengthen and improve cooperation and knowledge-sharing, as well as more powerfully enforce existing policies.

The main topics of concern that should be included in the agenda for the 5th Global Conference all show that child labour is a complex, intersectional issue and that cooperation and multi-stakeholder approaches are vital in contributing to a sustainable elimination of child labour. Areas such as social protection, education and vocational training, monitoring, the informal sectors and "invisible" child labour, especially in the agricultural sector, and the need to improve and share knowledge as well as work across borders and institutions featured strongly throughout both days. Decent work for adults, as well as the gender dimension of child labour featured here, but have also been important topics under discussion at other consultations.

Turning to the modalities of the 5th Global Conference, Mr. d'Ovidio once again stressed the importance of creating a wider participant audience through collaborative approaches, and especially the importance of giving children and young participants a voice at the 5th Global Conference. The hybrid format of the conference will hopefully render this possible, while also respecting procedure.

Overall, the message from this consultation is clear - child labour needs to be mainstreamed into high level agendas; from climate change to Covid-19 responses. It cannot be treated in isolation.

Finally, the expected outcomes elaborated during this and other regional consultation underline this latter point and inject a strong sense of urgency. The 5th Global Conference is not the place for another declaration, but for practical, tangible and actionable solutions. We already have commitments in place - so let us not reinvent the wheel but strengthen existing pledges and actions.

## ► Lessons learnt and suggestions for the 5th Global Conference

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### Profile of participants

Overall, participants were well balanced in terms of regions and backgrounds, and complemented each other well. Gender balance could be addressed, but as participants were nominated by partners, this was outside of the organisers' control.

Youth participation was lacking, although it was identified as an important point for the global conference. However, it was always going to be difficult to include youth participants due to the likely language barrier as well as technical obstacles - in the 5th Global Conference, the virtual setting could be beneficial, as this will allow to share pre-recorded messages from young people.

### Tools and discussion formats

While the tools used in this consultation (Mentimeter word clouds and polls) are useful in providing a quick overview of wider group sentiment and opinions, they may have hampered interaction and engagement in the breakout groups. Had those groups been larger, they would have been more useful. As it is, the groups were quite small, and with the tools requiring specific actions, they did not encourage more open discussion among participants.

Furthermore, some limitations became apparent as the tools require some level of tech-savvy, as well as raise language barriers as they can be intimidating for participants whose level of English may be less advanced. If similar tools will be used at the global conference, advice and guidance on how to use them should be sent out well ahead of time, as preparing a large number of participants to use the tools during the conference can take up a lot of space.

Alternatively, virtual sessions could be conducted in a format closer to an e-learning programme, in that pre-recorded messages could be shared that are then used as an entry point to a more open-ended discussion.

### Format of the 5th Global Conference

While the hybrid format has the advantage of including more participants and especially making it easier for young participants to attend, there is also a real risk of making virtual participants feeling left out. It will take skilled moderators to make sure that both physical and virtual attendees feel like they are working together. However, as the consultation repeatedly stressed the need for increased cooperation and knowledge-sharing, it will be vital to create a sense of cohesion and collaboration among participants.

Secondly, the virtual format risks putting certain time zones at a disadvantage, i.e. that constituents and other stakeholders in the Asia and Pacific region will need to log on either very early in the morning or very late at night, which will have a negative impact on participation.

## ► Annexes

### Annex 1: Agenda

Day 1, 13 December 2021

11:00 – 13:40 (Bangkok time, GMT+7)

Day 1. Status	
<b>Session 1</b> 11:00 – 11:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check-in</li> </ul> <b>Opening</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome remarks by <b>Ms Chihoko Asada-Miyakawa</b>, ILO Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific</li> <li>• Message from <b>Mr Sipho Ndebele</b>, Chief Director, International Relations, Department of Labour, South Africa</li> <li>• Group photo (screen shots)</li> <li>• MC: <b>Insaf Nizam</b>, Specialist, Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, ILO New Delhi</li> </ul>
<b>Session 2</b> 11:30 – 12:20	<b>Presentation of regional data on child labour</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation by <b>Mr Lorenzo Guarcello</b>, Researcher, ILO Fundamental Principles &amp; Rights at Work Branch</li> <li>• Presentation by <b>Dr Andika Wahab</b>, ILO Consultant, on regional briefs under development</li> <li>• Q&amp;A</li> <li>• Facilitation: <b>Ms Birgitte Krogh-Poulsen</b>, ILO Consultant</li> </ul>
12:20 - 12:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Break</li> </ul>
<b>Session 3</b> 12:30 – 13:40	<b>Status on pledges and action since the IV Global Conference</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summary presentation based on questionnaire results: Action and achievements in Asia and the Pacific since the IV Global Conference by <b>Fei Weng</b>, ILO Bangkok,</li> </ul> <b>Panel on action and achievement since the IV Global Conference</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mr Dang Hoa Nam</b>, Director General of the Department for Child Affairs MOLISA, Viet Nam</li> <li>• <b>Dr Hidayat Greenfield</b>, Regional Secretary, IUF Asia and Pacific</li> <li>• <b>Mr Fasihul Karim Siddiqi</b>, Senior Advisor of Employers Federation of Pakistan (EFPTBD)</li> <li>• <b>Ms Mega Irena</b>, Assistant Director, Head of Labour and Civil Service Division, ASEAN Secretariat</li> <li>• <b>Ms Francesca Romana Pastorelli</b>, Child Labour Expert at FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific</li> <li>• Observations by constituent representative: <b>Dr Rinchin Chopel</b>, Director General, SAIEVAC</li> <li>• <i>Facilitation: Ms Birgitte Krogh-Poulsen</i>, ILO Consultant</li> </ul>

## Day 2, 14 December 2021

11:00 – 13:40 (Bangkok time, GMT+7)

Day 2. Way forward	
<b>Session 4</b> 11:00 – 11:10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check-in</li> <li>• Recap: <b>Mr Philip Seidl</b>, ILO Consultant</li> </ul>
<b>Session 5</b> 11:10 – 12:20	<p><b>Good practices in Asia and the Pacific</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summary presentation of good practices based on questionnaire by <b>Fei Weng</b>, ILO Bangkok</li> </ul> <p><b>Panel on selected good practices</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ms Amna Shabbir</b>, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource development (MOPHRD)</li> <li>• <b>Mr Laxman Basnet</b>, General Secretary, South Asian Regional Trade Union Council (SARTUC)</li> <li>• <b>Mr Kameli Batiweti</b>, CEO of Fiji Commerce &amp; Employers Federation (FCEF)</li> <li>• <b>Ms Amanda Bissex</b>, Regional Advisor Child Protection, UNICEF, Regional Office for South Asia</li> <li>• Discussion/Q&amp;A (plenary)</li> <li>• Observations by <b>Mr Bidur Karki</b>, Vice-President, GEFONT</li> <li>• <i>Facilitation</i>: <b>Ms Birgitte Krogh-Poulsen</b>, ILO Consultant</li> </ul>
12:20 – 12:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Break</li> </ul>
<b>Session 5 (cont.)</b> 12:30 – 13:00	<p><b>Good practices in Asia and the Pacific</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report from the CSO pre-consultations, by <b>Cherian Thomas</b> (World Vision International) and Ponpandian Thangam (TDH Netherlands), Co-chairs of SACG</li> <li>• Identification of areas where participants would like to learn from good practices identified in other regions - <b>Word Cloud</b> exercise</li> <li>• Observations by <b>Mr. Matthias Thorns</b>, Deputy Secretary General, International Organization of Employers (IOE)</li> <li>• <i>Facilitation</i>: <b>Ms Birgitte Krogh-Poulsen</b>, ILO Consultant</li> </ul>
13:00 – 13:10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Break</li> </ul>
<b>Session 6</b> 13:10 – 14:40	<p><b>Identification of topics and preferred outcome document for the 5th Global Conference</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation of questionnaire results by <b>Fei Weng</b>, ILO Bangkok</li> <li>• Break out groups for constituents to select key topics and suggest outcome document options for agenda (<i>facilitation</i>: ILO)</li> <li>• Side session for other participants: Word cloud exercise to select recommended topics (<i>facilitation</i> ILO)</li> <li>• Report back</li> <li>• <i>Facilitation</i>: <b>Ms Birgitte Krogh-Poulsen</b>, ILO Consultant</li> </ul>

**Session 7**

(Closing)

14:40 – 14:50

**Way forward and closing**

- **Mr Francesco d'Ovidio**, Head, Solutions and Innovation Unit, ILO Branch on Fundamental Principles & Rights at Work

## Annex 2: List of Participants

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[illegible]

## Annex 4: Identification of topics and preferred outcome of the 5th Global Conference: Mentimeter results by group

### Group 1: Government representatives

On a scale from 1 to 3 where 1 is “not important” and 3 is “very important”, please rate the following proposed agenda items for the VGC

Mentimeter



6

On a scale from 1 to 3 where 1 is “not important” and 3 is “very important”, please rate the following proposed agenda items for the VGC

Mentimeter

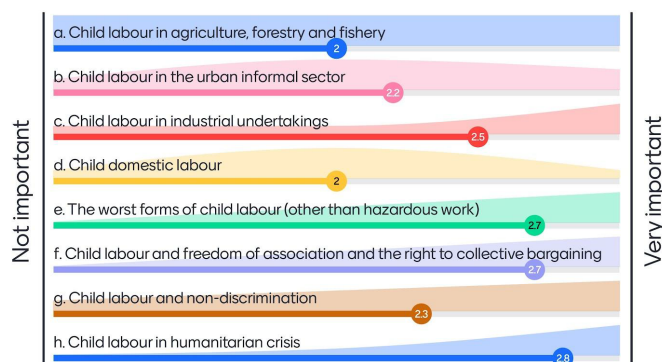


6

## Group 2: Workers' organizations representatives

On a scale from 1 to 3 where 1 is "not important" and 3 is "very important", please rate the following proposed agenda items for the VGC

Mentimeter



6

On a scale from 1 to 3 where 1 is "not important" and 3 is "very important", please rate the following proposed agenda items for the VGC

Mentimeter



6

### Group 3: Employers' organizations representatives

On a scale from 1 to 3 where 1 is "not important" and 3 is "very important", please rate the following proposed agenda items for the VGC

Mentimeter



4

On a scale from 1 to 3 where 1 is "not important" and 3 is "very important", please rate the following proposed agenda items for the VGC

Mentimeter



6

## Group 4: CSO, international organizations and ILO representatives

Words that come to mind when I say child labour in agriculture

Mentimeter

laws are not well defined  
cyclical oppression  
deprivation in practice  
domestic supply chain  
poverty  
small scale  
hazardous  
hidden  
rural education  
family farms  
rural  
plantation  
modern slavery  
systemic violation of hr  
unregulated  
vulnerable  
predominant  
complex  
private

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Words that come to mind when I say child labour and the informal sector

Mentimeter

social protection  
invisible  
lack of social protection  
hidden  
rural urban phenomena  
more exploitative  
vulnerable  
difficult to monitor

8

## Words that come to mind when I say child domestic labour

Mentimeter

vulnerable  
power imbalance  
invisible  
often normalised  
modern slavery  
neglected sector from get  
hidden  
debt bondage  
hazardous  
girls  
violence



## Words that come to mind when I say WFCL

Mentimeter

strong inspection system  
mental health of children  
data protection  
strong enforcement  
immediate ban  
human rights base app  
zero tolerance  
state funds support  
shock responsive insurance  
case management  
online sexual exploitation  
poor governance  
grave forms of cl  
revision - hazardous list  
child trafficking  
child soldier  
priority  
policy to actions  
violation  
hazardous



## Words that come to mind when I say child labour and humanitarian crisis

Mentimeter

need new solutions  
drop out  
equal focus on education  
child soldiers **trafficking** migration  
child centric response  
sex exploitation  
increase in child labour greater vulnerability

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## Words that come to mind when I say child labour and migration

Mentimeter

child marriage  
beyond border cooperation  
education disruption  
poverty **vulnerable** migration vs trafficking  
weak laws informality families  
grtr nat n intl colab  
sexual exploitation

10

Words that come to mind when I say child labour and climate change

Mentimeter

deforestation  
out of box solutions  
fuels migration  
exacerbate  
greater vulnerability



Words that come to mind when I say child labour and the right policy mix

Mentimeter

national budgeting  
skills development  
engage learner to leader involve children  
financial commitments social protection social justice  
vocational training enforcement inclusive process  
education decent work for adults equity  
free quality education gender inclusive  
still looking laborer to learner participatory  
monitoring and evaluation



## Words that come to mind when I say effective prevention strategies against child labour

Mentimeter



15

## Words that come to mind when I say protection of young workers

Mentimeter



12

## Words that come to mind when I say child labour monitoring and remediation systems

Mentimeter

data validated  
 policies and strategies  
 implementation raising their voices  
 non retaliation co ownership data  
 community based judicial and non  
 research community participation  
 involve grassroots csos systematic sampling  
 database  
 information sharing infrastructure  
 more duty bearers



