

# JejuMUN XI

## BACKGROUND GUIDE

### Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee (SOCHUM)

*1 | Devising Methods to Combat the Global Child Labor and  
Exploitation Problem*

SDG: 1. No Poverty | 4. Quality Education | 9. Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure

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# Committee Introduction

SOCHUM, the Social and Humanitarian Council has long been one of the most important branches of the United Nations. SOCHUM is the branch of the UN that is mainly responsible for the upkeep of human rights around the world by dealing with social, cultural, and humanitarian problems. SOCHUM's resolutions rarely result in violence or any military force of any kind. Instead, SOCHUM focuses on the de-escalation of issues without military intervention.

SOCHUM was formed in 1945 to facilitate discussions on a cultural and social scale. SOCHUM is the third of the UN's six main branches, and it meets annually in early October and attempts to wrap up their activities by November. SOCHUM has been an important part of the UN body for almost 80 years.

Some of the major issues that SOCHUM has solved include discrimination against the LGBTQIA+ community, humanitarian aid in countries with conflicts, and countries facing human rights violations. Specifically, SOCHUM has passed resolutions on organ trafficking around the world and to enhance prisoner protection rights. SOCHUM has passed numerous resolutions taking preemptive measures to prevent the worsening of human rights in underdeveloped regions of the world. Since its creation, SOCHUM has been one of the most effective committees in the United Nations.

The delegates in SOCHUM should strive to uphold the values of this committee by attempting to find a peaceful solution that benefits all parties involved.

# Agenda Introduction

With approximately 160 million children engaged in labor worldwide, the issue of child labor and exploitation continues to be one of the most pressing issues SOCHUM has to deal with. This pressing issue is especially notable in regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East, impacting not only the children engaged in the labor themselves but also the society, economy, and political situations of such regions. Child labor limits the education opportunities of children, creates a cycle of poverty and corrupt political structure, and directly leads to human rights violations all around the globe. It is urgent for the SOCHUM committee to devise comprehensive and effective solutions to this problem.

Historically, most cases of child labor have been driven by various factors including poverty, insufficient legal frameworks, and inefficient economic structures. Despite continuous efforts made by multiple international organizations such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) through Conventions No. 138 and 182, efficient and effective enforcement of these measures remain inconsistent in the areas in need. Hence, it remains a responsibility of the global society to adopt multi-faceted approaches that address the root causes of this issue to seek sustainable and realistic solutions.

Various methods have been implemented not only by the United Nations but also by local authorities. For instance, in India, the Child Labour Act of 1986 was implemented to eliminate child labor by legally banning it in certain sectors. However, because the ban failed to address many of the underlying socioeconomic causes of the issue, it pushed many children into more dangerous and harsh forms of labor. To avoid repeating the same mistakes, governments now aim to develop comprehensive support systems that include improving basic facilities such as the education system, access to medical services, and socioeconomic support. It is crucial to monitor the enforcement of these measures to create a more effective and humane approach to ending child labor.

# Letter from the Chairs

Dear Esteemed Delegates,

We would like to formally, and warmly welcome you to the tenth rendition of JejuMUN. We are Hyun Woo (Harry) Shin, Noah King, and SuAha Moon, serving as your head, deputy, and associate chairs respectively, all currently attending St. Johnsbury Academy Jeju. It is our utmost pleasure to serve as your chairs for SOCHUM this conference. Throughout this conference, we will be aiding in any way possible to help support the flow of debate on our agenda of *Devising Methods to Combat the Global Child Labor and Exploitation Problem*.

To ensure a positive experience at JEJUMUN X, the chairs of this committee request that all of the delegates familiarize themselves with the background guide and have a general understanding of their countries' positions and the agenda under discussion. In addition, the chairs highly suggest that delegates also come prepared with further research for the best possible experience. The committee background guide is a tool for the delegates to aid in their research, and we hope it proves beneficial to the best of its capabilities.

Participating in MUN has been instrumental in improving our debating, public speaking, and writing skills. Moreover, MUN has provided us with opportunities to forge lasting relationships and create indelible memories. Above all, JejuMUN is a place to have fun—if you're a new delegate, observe and participate; if you're more experienced, assume a leadership role. Our aspiration is for you to learn, have fun, and make memories that you will endure, and that this committee serves you well in the experiences that we have cherished ourselves.

We will try our best to serve and support you in all the ways possible, and effectively moderate debate. Please feel free to contact any of us during your preparation for the conference, and we look forward to seeing all of you soon.

Sincerely,

Harry Shin | Head Chair | [s17013826@sjajeju.kr](mailto:s17013826@sjajeju.kr)

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# Key Terms

## **Child abuse**

The mistreatment of a child by a parent or guardian, or external forces including, yet not limited to neglect, beating, and sexual molestation.

## **Child labor**

The forceful employment of children below an age determined by law, often for low or nonexistent wages.

## **Commercial Sexual Exploitation**

Trafficking crimes wherein the primary form of forced labour is in sexual services.

## **Domestic work**

Working in private households, often in exploitative conditions.

## **Exploitation**

The action or fact of treating someone unfairly in order to benefit from their work or services.

## **Factory work**

The employment of people in large, industrialized facilities, often with the use of machinery.

## **Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)**

An act started to ensure that when young people work, the work is safe and does not jeopardize their health, well-being or educational opportunities.

## **Forced labor**

The act of people being compelled against their will to provide work or service through the use of force, fraud, or coercion.

## **Hazardous work**

Jobs that pose significant risks to the health and safety of children or workers.

## **the International Labour Organization Minimum Age Convention**

This fundamental convention sets the general minimum age for admission to employment or work at 15 years (13 for light work) and the minimum age for hazardous work at 18 (16 under certain strict conditions).

# Historical Background

**1802:** A Law is enacted in Great Britain to control the apprenticeship of certain professions, yet it is largely ineffective due to a multitude of factors. This is the first noted instance of governments attempting to prevent child labour.

**1833:** The Factory Act enacted in Great Britain becomes the first largely successful law in preventing child labour, particularly minors working in textile factories. Furthermore, it provided a system for the government to conduct factory inspections for safety and sanitation purposes.

**1890:** The first iteration of the International Labour Conference is held in March of 1890 in Berlin. It is one of the first International Organizations formed to help solve the child labor crisis.

**1919:** The International Labour Organization is formed at the end of World War 2. The ILO remains a crucial part of the United Nations to this day. The ILO continues to do great work in improving workers rights around the world.

**1973:** The International Labour Organization holds one of its most important conferences in its history, the "ILO Minimum Wage Convention". This conference was extremely important due to the collaboration of nations to instate a standard minimum wage. The minimum wage benefited children as it helped those in labour get paid an acceptable wage.

**1999:** The International Labour Organization holds its most important conference in its history, the "Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention". This convention helped define the deeper problems with Child Labour.

**1999-2021:** The United Nations continues their extensive work in eradicating all forms of child labor globally. These include both passed and failed resolutions from the General Assembly Third Committee among others. Despite the dedication of the UN, these attempts have been mostly lackluster.

**2021:** In 2021 the United Nations General Assembly declared that 2021 would be the year of eradicating all forms of child labor. While this effort was unsuccessful as child labor remains a key issue after 2021, as this resolution was adopted unanimously it showed the importance of global unity in solving the issue of child labor.

**2024 (Present Day):** Child labour rights have been improved significantly, yet continues to be a sizable issue in many underdeveloped regions of the world.

## Current State of Affairs

As of today, the child labor and exploitation problem still remains one of the biggest concerns faced by the SOCHUM committee with over 160 million children currently engaged in diverse forms of child labor. Efforts have been made by various NGOs, governments, and the UN, but most of them have been insufficient. Multiple factors perpetuate this issue, which include chronic poverty, weak legal enforcement from uncooperative governments, and inadequate economic infrastructures. Different efforts made by different UN body organizations such as the CRC, ILO, and SOCHUM also faced the obstacles mentioned above, only highlighting the need for a multi-faceted approach that targets the hidden socio-economic drivers of child labor systems.

However, recent initiatives at both international and local levels bring some hope to this matter. For example, in Bangladesh, the government cooperated with various NGOs to launch comprehensive programs that aim at reducing child labor in local areas by providing financial incentives to families who send their children to school. The government hoped that this plan would both contribute to decreasing child labor and increasing the quality and quantity of education in Bangladesh. These programs are showing promise, and might also help other regions if implemented correctly. Additionally, in Brazil, the Bolsa Familia program provides financial assistance to low-income families on the condition that their children attend primary school. This program successfully reduced child labor rates and also brought side benefits such as a wider and high-quality labor pool.

Child labor in modern days is becoming a more and more serious issue as children are increasingly being exploited in hazardous conditions and illicit activities, also associated with armed conflicts in certain regions and sex trafficking. This calls for a more dynamic and adaptive response from the global society. Future strategies should incorporate systemized monitoring and enforcement mechanisms, and cooperation between local governments, NGOs, and international organizations is necessary. The urgency of the situation calls for coordinated international action to develop sustainable solutions that protect children all around the world and uphold their rights.



# Stances of Parties

## Bangladesh

Bangladesh remains a nation wherein child labour remains a very serious issue. Particularly, more than almost any other nation, children in Bangladesh are exposed to sexual exploitation, often of the commercial variety. Despite attempts, the situation in Bangladesh has not, and continues to not improve by any significant metric. Due to the widespread sexual exploitation of children in Bangladesh, Bangladesh should strive to find a solution that is multi-faceted in tackling domestic labor as well as sexual exploitation.

## Burkina Faso

Out of 193 nations officially recognized by the United Nations, Burkina Faso is widely recognized as the nation with the highest percentage of children in labor. Despite being a relatively small nation with a population of just over 22 million citizens, over 50% of children under the age of 18 are working. Many of the children working in Burkina Faso are often exposed to commercial sexual exploitation against their will. Despite this, Burkina Faso *has* made efforts in recent times to try to improve the lives of children. Burkina Faso should focus on a resolution centered around restructuring laws to support children forced into labor.

## Cambodia

Child labour in Cambodia is largely split into 3 major sections; firstly, sexual exploitation, secondly domestic labor, and finally brickmaking. While all three of these significantly contribute to the poor life quality of Cambodian children, commercial sexual exploitation remains the biggest issue. Particularly with new inventions such as the internet, Online Sexual Exploitation has become extraordinarily common in many regions of Cambodia. Despite this, Cambodia has not made any significant efforts to prevent the escalation of the child labor crisis. Cambodia should strive to find a solution that prevents the escalation of child labor, particularly through lowering the legal age for which people can work.

## Cameroon

Cameroon continues to have issues in controlling child labor. With action being taken specifically to eliminate situations wherein children are working in hazardous environments, the Cameroonian government has had some success with these endeavours. Despite these efforts, Cameroon is still severely lacking in many departments, therefore leading to a slowly worsening situation. Cameroon should strive to find a solution that further alleviates the tension of children working in hazardous conditions.

## **China**

Despite regulations that restrict children under the age of 16 from working, many studies show that up to 7% of children aged 7~10 are working in China. China has passed a considerable amount of legislation regarding child labor, including strict regulations on children working in hazardous environments. Despite this, child labor continues at a very high rate in China. China should strive to find a solution that will benefit nations in the surrounding areas, as it will further benefit the Chinese people.

## **Colombia**

Colombia has had much improvement in their child labor restriction policies, as most of their laws regarding child labor, particularly those working in hazardous environments, are up to international standards. Columbia should focus on a solution that will help other nations, as well as Columbia prevent children from working in hazardous conditions.

## **Democratic Republic of the Congo**

The Democratic Republic of the Congo remains a nation wherein child labor runs rampant. Despite efforts by the Congo to limit human trafficking, other forms of child labor are still very common in Congo. The Democratic Republic of the Congo should strive to find a solution that can further limit the trafficking of children.

## **Ethiopia**

Ethiopia continues to have some progress in circumstances wherein children are working in hazardous conditions. Despite this, Ethiopia continues to struggle in eliminating child labor entirely. There are an estimated 15 million children working in Ethiopia, mainly in the agricultural industry. Ethiopia is open to a solution regarding limiting and setting ages for how old children must be to work.

## **France**

France continues to be a crucial part of many resolutions passed by SOCHUM and other United Nations bodies in regards to child labor exploitation. Currently, France limits minors under the age of 14 from any work, only permits small amounts of work for minors aged 14 to 16, and prohibits working during night hours for minors from the age of 16 to 18. France should focus on a solution that benefits nations that are currently in a considerably worse situation than France.

## **Ghana**

About 21% of children in Ghana aged 5 to 17 are involved in child labor and 14% are engaged in hazardous works such as fishing and cocoa production. As chocolate industries in Ghana have grown over the years, those industries are hiring more child laborers to keep their price competitive. The government has established the Ghana Accelerated Action Plan Against Child Labor (GAAPACL) based on National Plans of Actions (NPA). Nevertheless, child labor still remains a problem in Ghana.

## **India**

According to UNICEF, around 10 million ( 3.9% of total child population) are working in dangerous conditions, particularly in sectors such as garment production, stone quarrying, and brickmaking. The government has implemented policies and regulations related to child labor and established committees to Combat child labor in India. Despite efforts made by the government, enforcement of regulations still remains a challenge and child labor continues to be a significant problem in India.

## **Indonesia**

Despite an estimated 4 million children currently in labour in Indonesia, this number is a considerable improvement from 2021. Indonesia continues to improve their child labour regulations. Child labor continues to be a serious issue in Indonesia, particularly due to cultural expectations that remain in Indonesia. Due to the extreme surplus of palm trees in Indonesia, much of Indonesia's child labor is centered around the harvesting and use of palm trees and the associated resources. As part of a region wherein child labour runs rampant, Indonesia has been a part of many resolutions in furthering the rights of child workers. Indonesia continues to be eager to work with any nations to form a solution.

## **Laos**

Child labour continues to be one of Laos' biggest issues. Of Laos' considerable junior population, over 26% are estimated to be working. As effective efforts have not been made in Laos until recent years, the condition has not improved by any significant measure. For these reasons, Laos remains one of the nations most affected by child labor. Particularly, much of the forced child labor in Laos is directed towards sexual exploitation and hard labor. While Laos has not taken much action in the past, it is important that they attempt to work with cooperative nations to attempt to find a solution.

## **Malaysia**

The Malaysian government has taken noticeable action in recent times to alleviate the tensions on students to work. Perhaps most prominently, Malaysia has instituted regulations to limit the working ages of children. These have been effective, leading many surrounding nations to consider, and in many cases implement similar measures in their countries. For this, Malaysia remains one of the only South-East Asian countries to have made a significant dent in this issue. Therefore, Malaysia hopes to continue their efforts to further improve their neighbours' situations.

## **Mexico**

According to studies from late 2023, over 13% of Mexico's current population from the ages of 5~17 are working. However, the more concerning statistic is that over 15% of these children are in situations considered hazardous or dangerous. Mexico has been a key contributor to nearly all global resolutions regarding the limiting of child labor, yet it remains an issue. Mexico has established regulations on what ages children are allowed to work. Mexico should strive to find a solution that improves the child labor situation without encroaching too much on their long-standing cultural norms.

## **Myanmar**

Due to the extremely poor economic situation, paired with the poor economic stability of many families in Myanmar, many children are forced into labor. While statistics show that over a million children across Myanmar are working, many experts estimate that this number may be considerably higher, particularly when factoring in domestic labor. Particularly with the moderately recent military coup, many children have been forced to work. Child labor in Myanmar ranges from sexual exploitation to domestic labor. Myanmar should strive to achieve a solution that benefits children without leaving underprivileged families at a serious disadvantage.

## **Philippines**

Child labour remains a pivotal issue in the Philippines, with an estimated over 2.1 million of the child population in labor. However, the statistic that separates the issue in the Philippines from other nations is that over 95% of the Philippines employed children are working in potentially dangerous or hazardous conditions. It is important for the Philippine government to work on lowering this number, and they should strive for collaboration with more developed nations.

## **Russia**

Following Russia (formerly the Soviet Union)'s ban on child labor in the early 20th century, child labor slowly became less common in the Soviet Union. Following a spike during war times, Russia has successfully been able to bring child labor to an absolute minimum in their nation. However, in rural, relatively underpopulated regions, child labor remains common; particularly due to cultural standards and norms, and Russia should strive to solve these issues.

## **Somalia**

Child labor is one of the biggest problems in Somalia. The widespread child labor taking place in Somalia is considered the worst form of child labor, with many children forced into armed conflict. The Somalian government infrequently interjects in child trafficking affairs, often putting children in danger. A lot of children are forced to work in agriculture, domestic work, herding livestock, crushing stones, or construction industries. Children in Somalia can also easily be a target of sexual and gender-based violence. Somalia should strive to eliminate domestic issues before moving onto issues on an international stage.

## **Sudan**

Due to the considerable military combat in the Sudanese region, Sudan has a considerable amount of children enlisted in the military, many of whom are actually taking part in armed combat. Children are often forced into combat, many being used as suicide bombers and other extremely dangerous and suicidal roles in the military. Due to this situation in Sudan, it has been labelled one of the worst nations in the world for child labor rights, with no significant improvements seeming to be coming any time soon. Apart from military violence which children are forced to experience, many are subject to sexual violence, labour in hazardous circumstances, and domestic labor. Sudan must consider their noticeable issues within their own nations, focusing on a solution that limits further military escalation with child soldiers.

## **Thailand**

Over 1.7 million children in Thailand are involved in child labor including commercial sexual exploitation and hazardous work such as manufacturing, fishing, and agriculture. While the government has implemented a substantial amount of funding and promoted supporting programs to prevent and eliminate child labor in Thailand, child labor in Thailand still remains a significant issue. Thailand should strive to work with nations within ASEAN to find a solution that is beneficial to the region.

## **United Kingdom**

The United Kingdom is among one of the world's premier nations in preventing child labor. Children are only allowed to work in the United Kingdom after turning 16, wherein they are still only permitted to work a maximum of 40 hours per week. This, among many other mandates, has led the United Kingdom to preventing child labor almost entirely. For this committee, the United Kingdom should focus on what they can do to help other nations develop their programs.

## **United States of America**

The United States of America has put in considerable effort towards preventing hazardous working conditions for minors. These have been successful to some measure, particularly in the more densely populated regions of the United States of America. However, in rural areas of the United States, child labor regulations are often not followed closely. Most child labor in the United States is centered around agriculture and the agricultural industry. The United States should focus on finding a solution that significantly reduces child labor in regions of significant conflict, particularly in Middle and South-East Asia.

## **Vietnam**

Over 30% of Vietnam's population below the age of 17 are currently working. This number is considerably higher than every developed nation in the world. Vietnam has not had very many successful efforts to limit child labor, leading to a quickly worsening situation. Almost all of Vietnam's child labor is centered around domestic labor. Vietnam should strive to find a solution that alleviates tensions in regards to domestic labor within the nation.

## **Zimbabwe**

About 40.4% of children aged 5-14 years olds in Zimbabwe partake in child labor, forms including mining, tobacco production, child trafficking, and labor in agriculture. Because of Zimbabwe's economy, droughts, and poverty forced children in Zimbabwe to work in dangerous conditions like mining. Despite the effort made by the government trying to establish more policies and regulations related to child labor, policy gaps still exist. Zimbabwe should strive for a solution of unity among nations; in working together to achieve the best possible outcome.

# Possible Solutions

## **Changing the Cultural Expectations and Societal Norms Surrounding Child Labor**

Particularly in South-East Asian countries, cultural expectations play a large role in child labor. Specifically, domestic labor is almost entirely the product of cultural expectations. Changing the societal expectations in relation to child labor is important in limiting worsening child labor conditions. Despite this, changing cultural expectations may not be efficient, due to how long a solution like this is likely to take. Furthermore there are some possible setbacks that may lead nations to look for other solutions. For example, simply changing, or attempting to change societal norms may be wholly unsuccessful, as well as not all child labor being linked to cultural norms, it is unlikely to affect all present issues.

## **Implementing Stricter Policies and Legal Policies Regarding Child Labor**

Implementing stricter policies and legal policies has been a successful solution in many nations that have considerably improved their child labour issues. Implementing stricter policies can lead to the number of children in forced labor decreasing considerably. This solution may be more efficient than other solutions as it is more likely to take hold quicker than other possible solutions. However, potential drawbacks to this solution are that on a large scale, this solution may be unsuccessful.

## **Strengthening Law Enforcement Forces to Prevent Dangerous Forms of Child Labor**

Law enforcement strategies can be implemented to prevent dangerous forms of child labor from taking place in the world. This would be a good strategy for nations considerably suffering from child labor to implement. It may be an efficient first step for nations striving to improve their situation.

## Questions to Consider

1. What is the best way to find a balance between preventing child labor and not disadvantaging low-income families from losing a possible source of income?
2. What are the differences in procedure and culture in nations wherein child labor is a serious issue as opposed to nations wherein the issue is under control?
3. What role does cultural expectations and societal norms play in child labor?
4. What specifically can more economically developed nations do to aid lesser economically developed nations in strengthening child labor regulations?
5. How should delegates strive to uphold the values of their nations and the values of the Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee?



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