

World Day against Child Labour
East Asia and Pacific Regional and South Asia Regional UNGEI Joint Statement
Human rights and social justice...Let's end child labour!

This year's World Day against Child Labour serves to re-affirm our commitment to work towards a world free from child labour. Commemorated under the theme of 'Human rights and social justice...Let's end child labour,' it is a reminder that all boys and girls should be in school to acquire the education and skills that prepare them for decent work as adults. By entering the labour market prematurely, they are deprived of this critical education and training that can help lift them, their families, and communities out of a cycle of poverty, exploitation and discrimination. Education for girls and boys is a fundamental human right that can help put an end to child labour.

The [UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights \(1948\)](#) states that, "Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory." The [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child \(1989\)](#) indicates that, "children have the right to be protected from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development." These standards add to the [ILO Conventions No. 138 \(1973\)](#) on the Minimum Age for Admission into Employment or Work and the [ILO Convention No. 182 \(1999\)](#) on the Prohibition and Immediate Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour. Furthermore, the protection and enforcement of parents' human rights, such as the "right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment", as stated in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and in the [ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization \(2008\)](#), contributes to enhancing children's right to education by reducing households' vulnerability and enabling children to go to school instead of working.

Despite this however, there remain a large number of boys and girls around the world who should be in school but instead are forced to work - denying them of their fundamental rights and stunting their mental and physical development. The International Labour Organization estimates that globally, 127 million boys and 88 million girls are involved in child labour with 74 million boys and 41 million girls in the worst forms. Asia-Pacific is the region with the most child labourers aged 5-17 (113.6 million); with more than 48 million of them in hazardous work.¹

Although these statistics indicate a higher number of boys engaged in child labour, particularly between the ages of 15-17, many girls face a double burden, going to work as well as bearing the bulk of household chores. Girls' work is often hidden from public view, putting them at extreme risk. Their work – in the form of household chores, domestic servitude, and home-based work – can leave girls vulnerable to abuse and exploitation and is hidden from statistical data. Other clandestine work, such as trafficking for labour and commercial sexual exploitation, are also not sufficiently captured by available statistics, despite being frequently reported through personal narratives and anecdotal evidence.

Some of the barriers to education are the same for girls as boys: the costs of education; poor quality schooling; and families' reliance on child work to support family subsistence. However, girls can face particular problems: the physical distance to school may raise security issues; schools may lack necessary sanitary facilities; and traditional thinking may not place any value on girls' education. When faced with limited resources and financial demands, parents often opt to invest in the education of their sons and not to lose their daughters' vital contribution to household income.

Efforts to end child labour must go hand in hand with efforts to increase girls' education and improve their educational outcomes to secure decent work as adults. Girls' education is one of the best investments a country can make; resulting in both higher economic and social returns. Educated girls are more likely to have better income as adults, marry later, have fewer and healthier children, have stronger decision-making powers within the household, and have more self-esteem. They are also more likely to ensure their own children are educated thus avoiding future child labour. Eradicating child labour among girls and promoting their right to education is therefore an essential element of broader strategies to promote human rights and socially just development.

EAP/SA UNGEI's call to action on World Day against Child Labour:

In order to combat child labour and accelerate progress towards gender parity and equality in both primary and secondary education by 2015, the East Asia and Pacific and South Asia UNGEI call on countries to:

- **Educate all girls and boys at least to the minimum age of employment.** Establish free and compulsory education to ensure girls and boys have equal access and attend school, at least until the minimum age of employment, without facing the multiple burdens of child labour and household chores.
- **Address child labour among both girls and boys through a multi-sectoral approach, including education and other relevant sectors.** Reduce family poverty by providing social safety nets for poor families, enforce laws on child labour and education, and provide adults with opportunities for decent work and income.
- **Make provisions for increased and better quality data analysis on the gender dimension of child labour.** Collect and disseminate accurate sex-disaggregated data on child labour and education, which leads to more effective programme planning and implementation.

In so doing, UNGEI recognizes that the rights of all children are inseparable and interconnected and all efforts to end child labour should promote a child's right to survival, development, protection and participation. The East Asia and Pacific Regional and South Asia Regional United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (EAP/SA UNGEI) take the opportunity of this year's World Day against Child Labour to press upon the continued commitment to uphold education as an inalienable human right. Countries are urged to ensure the provision of quality education for all, including gender-responsive, high quality early childhood care and development, regardless of their sex, ethnicity, caste, income level, disability or any other factor which might impede them from enjoying their right to quality education. This statement is a call to all countries to take action to ensure that every girl and boys' human right to education is respected, protected and fulfilled, and prevent, combat and end child labour.

The United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) is the Education For All flagship for girls' education and the principal movement to narrow the gender gap in primary and secondary education, and to ensure that by 2015, all children everywhere will be able to complete primary schooling, and that by then, girls and boys will have equal access to all levels of education. UNGEI works through partnerships with organizations committed to these goals at global, regional, and country levels. To learn more about UNGEI, visit www.ungei.org.

The Asia and Pacific Regional UNGEI partners are: Aide et Action, Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE), Baha'i International Community, BRAC, Commonwealth Secretariat, CARE, CISCO, Education Development Center (EDC), E-Net Philippines, Girl Guides (Girl Scouts) Association of Thailand, Idara-e-Taleem-o-Agahi (ITA), International Labour Organization (ILO) Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, International Organization for Migration (IOM), Oxfam Great Britain, Plan International Asia, Right To Play, Room to Read, Save the Children, Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) Secretariat, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) Regional Support Team, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) East Asia and Pacific Regional Office and Regional Office for South Asia, UNWomen South-East Asia Regional Office, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), VSO International, World Vision Foundation of Thailand, ZOA Refugee Care, and independent members.