



# Child labour and forced labour in Sub-Saharan Africa

Preparation of the IV Global Conference on the Sustained Eradication of Child Labour and Consultation on Alliance 8.7

22-23 June 2017, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

## BACKGROUND

In Africa as elsewhere, the global integration of economies has created new opportunities for economic growth and employment. However, there are still millions of women, men and children trapped in poverty, creating desperate situations which increases their vulnerability to abuse and exploitation. Adults with little to no access to work with decent wages as a path out of poverty face significant risks of falling into abusive situations such as debt bondage, forced labour, human trafficking and slave-like conditions that trap their children into child labour thereby creating a cycle of intergenerational poverty.

The ILO estimates that globally there are 21 million men, women and children suffering as victims of forced labour and human trafficking for labour exploitation. Africa has the second largest number of victims, 3.7 million (18 per cent of the total), after Asia and the Pacific. The ILO further estimates there are 168 million girls and boys working in situations of child labour. This estimate includes 73.1 million children in the 5-11 years age group, who are simply too young to be working as well as 85 million girls and boys between the ages of 5-17 years old working in hazardous work. Sub-Saharan Africa is the region with the highest incidence of child labour with 59 million (21.4 per cent) children aged 5- 17 years in child labour.

The agriculture sector, which consists primarily of smallholder family farms, accounts for 59 per cent of all those in child labour. Agriculture requires special attention since it is one of the three most dangerous sectors in terms of work-related fatalities, non-fatal accidents and occupational diseases. Sixty-eight percent of children in child labour are working as unpaid family workers.

Poor households are less likely to invest in their children's education and are more likely to resort to child labour in order to meet their immediate needs. For children themselves, doing hazardous work in

childhood and adolescence creates huge barriers – educationally, physically, psychologically, socially – that will prevent them from engaging productively in society and reduce their opportunities for decent jobs later in life.

The total illicit profits generated by the use of forced labour worldwide amounts to \$150 billion per year, according to ILO estimates. These profits garnered by unscrupulous employers and criminals are direct income losses for workers and their families putting them at greater risk of living in abject poverty without access to remedies for these rights violations. These illicit profits also bypass national tax collection systems, leaving governments and societies with fewer resources to pursue economic growth strategies and jeopardizing poverty eradication measures. Thus, poverty is both a cause and a result of forced labour, child labour, modern slavery and trafficking in persons.

In addition to poverty, there are a wide range of contributing factors that make people and their families vulnerable to child labour, forced labour, slavery and human trafficking. Vulnerability is increased by a lack of access to education, the absence of social protection, lack of recognition of, and respect for, workers' rights, reduced decent work employment opportunities, multiple forms of discrimination, and businesses operating in the informal economy where there is weak enforcement of existing laws.

In a number of countries across the continent, the impact of these education and poverty factors has been compounded by conflicts and natural disasters sometimes involving large population displacements, disruptions of livelihoods and schooling, high levels of insecurity, forced migration of children in ways that expose them to worst forms of child labour, and forced recruitment of children for use in war and associated activities.

Finally, migration is an important risk factor. Migrants, particularly undocumented migrants, are especially vulnerable to human trafficking and other forms of exploitation, as well as to situations of debt bondage – for instance when money is borrowed to pay recruitment and travel fees. On irregular migration routes around the globe, migrants, including many children, are also subjected to kidnapping and ransom demands, extortion, physical violence, sexual abuse, and trafficking.

African countries, in collaboration with employers' and workers' organizations, have taken measures to eliminate child labour and forced labour, by strengthened their legislation, formulating national action plans on child labour and human trafficking and setting up coordination mechanisms. However, the actual implementation of measures and enforcement of laws vary and are largely inadequate,

The AU's African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child regularly meets twice a year to discuss child rights and child protection issues. The Committee reviews and comments on periodic reports submitted by States Parties to the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child regarding the application of the Charter, which includes provisions on child labour.

Regional economic communities are also key stakeholder. ECOWAS for instance has adopted several sub-regional policy documents and guidelines on trafficking and child labour, with sets of actions for enhancing how member countries address these problems.

Inter-governmental organizations, such as FAO, ILO, IOM, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNODC, as well as international and local non-governmental organizations, have played a major role in many of the country responses to child labour and forced labour on the continent. The private sector also has considerable interest in addressing labour exploitation in several sectors of the African economy and has put in place interesting initiatives.

Despite recent achievements in the development and implementation of measures against child labour and forced labour, progress is slow compared to the magnitude of the problem. In Africa, where the decline of child labour over the four-year period was around 10 percent, a greater increase is needed in

the pace of decline. Efforts need to be accelerated even further for forced labour. There is a need to learn from and build on the experience of the last two decades, and to redouble efforts.

## **Sustainable Development Goals and Alliance 8.7**

In September 2015, world leaders adopted the 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) and 169 associated targets of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. Goal 8, which stands at the heart of the 2030 Agenda, seeks to “Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all”. Among the substantive targets set under goal 8, target 8.7 seeks to “Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.”

This call to action presents a unique opportunity to bring about a world free of forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking and child labour. It is a call to work together in innovative new ways. Alliance 8.7, a Global Alliance to eradicate forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking and child labour, was created to bring all concerned parties together to join forces in achieving target 8.7. The goals of Alliance 8.7 are to: (i) accelerate action, (ii) conduct research and share knowledge, (iii) drive innovation and (iv) increase and leverage resources.

Alliance 8.7 was officially launched in New York on 21 September 2016. This followed a series of regional consultations (including the consultation for Western and Northern Africa held in Abidjan on 8-9 September 2017) to inform the Vision Document which set out the rationale for the Alliance and possible areas of focus to reach the ambitious Target.

## **IV Global Conference on the Sustained Eradication of Child Labour (and forced labour)**

Since 1997, countries around the world have shared good practices and policies and committed to the elimination of child labour in the series of Global Conferences on Child Labour: held in Norway (1997), the Netherlands (2010) and Brazil (2013).

On 14-16 November 2017, Argentina will host the IV Global Conference on the Sustained Eradication of Child Labour. The main objective of the IV Global Conference is to contribute – through the exchange of experience and lessons learned from successful and innovative policies, programmes, practices and intervention models, and in high-level technical thematic discussions – to further consolidating global efforts to accelerate the pace of elimination of child labour, in order to secure its end by 2025 as required in target 8.7. The Conference will also encompass the forced labour of adults, in addition to all forms of child labour and, within this context, also include a discussion on quality youth employment. The IV Global Conference will link with the efforts of Alliance 8.7 to lay the foundation for further concerted action related to SDG target 8.7.

The final outcome of the conference will be a declaration (“the Buenos Aires Declaration”) to be adopted by the Conference. Conference participants will also be invited to make unilateral voluntary pledges to carry out actions to implement the final declaration adopted by the Conference (e.g. on ratification of relevant international instruments or launch of national, sub-regional, regional or global initiatives).

Consultations are being organized in all Regions to share information about the Global Conference, to discuss progress towards the elimination of child labour and forced labour in the region concerned, in coordination with United Nations partner agencies, and to help delegations from Africa prepare their participation to the Global Conference.

## OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the consultation is to contribute – through the exchange of experience and lessons learned from successful and innovative policies, programmes, practices and intervention models – to further consolidating regional commitment to accelerate the pace of elimination of child labour and forced labour in Africa, in order to secure its end by 2025 and 2030 respectively as required in Target 8.7 of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development. More specifically, the consultation will:

- identify common challenges, priorities and good practices in eliminating child labour and forced labour in sub Saharan Africa in preparation for the IV Global Conference on the Sustained Eradication of Child Labour (and forced labour) in Argentina in November 2017;
- provide a forum to discuss operationalization of Alliance 8.7 in Africa and to provide concrete recommendations on the way forward.

## FORMAT

This regional consultation will consist of a mix of large plenary sessions with expert panels and smaller multi-stakeholder breakout groups.

The meeting will start with interventions from regional leaders who will lay out a practical vision for accelerating the pace of the elimination of child labour and forced labour in sub Saharan Africa. Subsequent discussions will examine plans for the IV Global Conference on the sustained eradication of child labour (and forced labour) and on Alliance 8.7.

The following sessions will focus on the themes of child labour and forced labour in rural economy, in a context of migration, in crisis and fragile situations, in global supply chains as well as youth employment. The plenary sessions will begin with a panel discussion and then open up to a facilitated dialogue. Each panel will focus on lessons learnt, good practices and innovative intervention models with a view to how they can further consolidate global efforts to accelerate the pace of the elimination of child labour and forced labour.

Parallel group discussions will then take place to discuss operationalization of Alliance 8.7 in Africa and provide concrete recommendations on the way forward.

Finally participants will be provided with practical information on how to prepare their contribution to the IV Global Conference in Argentina, in particular the pledges that delegations will be invited to make.

## EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The key expected outcomes of the consultation include the following:

- Clear identification of issues, good practices and commitments to take forward to the IV Global Conference on Child Labour (and forced labour) in Argentina in November 2017;
- Concrete recommendations for taking forward Alliance 8.7 in Africa;
- A contribution to strengthening the capacity of participants, by fostering exchanges of experience between countries.

## PARTICIPANTS AND RESOURCE PERSONS

More than 80 participants from Sub-Saharan Africa are expected to participate:

- Governments' delegates and representatives from trade unions and employers' organizations from Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Malawi, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe;
- Representatives from the Africa Union Institutions and from regional economic commissions;
- Representatives from UN agencies and other international organizations, civil society, the private sector, youth and academia.

## BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE RESOURCES INFORMING THE CONSULTATION

- Alliance 8.7: For a world without forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking and child labour: [Vision document](#)
- Website of the [IV Global Conference on the Sustained Eradication of Child Labour](#) (where the concept note, the agenda and other related information will be uploaded)

**For further information, please contact:**

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