

# Beginner Committee SOCHUM



## SJMUNC XXXVII

Saint John's Model United Nations Conference

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## Letter From the Chairs

Dear Delegates,

We are thrilled to welcome you to the Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee at this year's SJMUNUC XXXVII. As Chairs, we hope all delegates have an engaging and productive experience throughout the conference. As a beginner committee, we will offer a unique topic that allows newcomers to enjoy their time and introduce them to the exciting world of Model UN.

A little bit of information outside of Model UN. My name is Rishik Paluri, and I am currently a junior at Saint John's. I like to play volleyball, listen to music, and hang out with friends. I am a very social person, so don't be afraid to ask any questions throughout the committee.

My name is Kyle Rajapakse, and I am a senior at Saint John's. I love to swim, play video games, and sketch. Like my good friend Rishik, I will gladly answer any questions, big or small, from you all. I look forward to seeing you all on the committee and meeting you.

We understand that not all delegates will have the same level of experience; for some, it might be their first-ever conference, so we have a few pieces of advice for everyone. We encourage all delegates to actively engage in research, ask questions, and familiarize themselves with the topic. Although this committee is considered a beginner committee, we will require all delegates to submit a position paper. This will allow all delegates to research the topic at hand, leading to a much more spirited discussion and a better experience for everyone involved.

It's important to note that while the topic will evolve over time, we are committed to maintaining a respectful atmosphere and that there are no signs of discomfort or disrespect. We encourage friendly debates and hope that all voices are heard and respected. Additionally, we want to emphasize that our committee promises valuable learning experiences and an enjoyable and enriching journey. For those well-versed in Model UN, this committee will provide the platform to demonstrate leadership, mentorship, and exemplary diplomacy.

Overall, we are excited to help you begin or continue your Model UN journey with SJMUNC XXXVII. We believe the welcoming atmosphere will make this committee both educational and enjoyable. If you have any questions before the conference, please do not hesitate to reach out to us. We look forward to meeting all of you!

See you soon in the committee room!

Rishik Paluri and Kyle Rajapakse

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## Statement of the problem

Around 160 million children worldwide (which is about ten percent) are caught in the act of child labor. This is a significant number that highlights a global crisis. Many of these children work in hazardous conditions across various regions, such as agriculture, mining, and domestic work.<sup>1</sup> On tobacco farms, children undergo lengthy hours in extreme heat without adequate rest or hydration. Children are exposed to harmful chemicals like nicotine and pesticides, which can cause long-term health issues like cancer and respiratory problems.

In regions of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, the situation is equally severe for child laborers as they work in small-scale mines, factories, and farms. These children who work underground in unstable mines that can easily collapse constantly risk their safety for pennies on the dollar. They also use toxic mercury to process gold, which can cause severe neurological damage, including brain damage, along with other severe health conditions.

The initiative from many global outlets is to eradicate the worst forms of child labor and to ensure that all children are protected from unsafe working conditions. Many are committed to creating a world where every child can learn and grow in a hospitable environment free from exploitation and dangers. This involves direct intervention from the global community, advocating for stronger legal

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). "Child Labour." Accessed July 28, 2024.  
<https://www.unicef.org/protection/child-labour>.

regulations, raising public awareness, and supporting communities to develop sustainable economic opportunities that do not rely on child labor.

## History of the Problem

Child labor has been around since ancient times. In many early agricultural societies, children labored with their families in fields, contributing to their household's survival.<sup>2</sup> While these tasks were part of family labor dynamics, they were also essential for economic maintenance.

During the medieval period, children labored in urban and rural settings, making child labor a common practice among villages. In towns, children were often apprentices of blacksmiths and learned about the trade to provide for their families. These apprenticeships were a form of education and economic necessity but also involved arduous working conditions.

### **The Industrial Revolution**

The Industrial Revolution, beginning in the late 18th century, marked a significant shift in child labor dynamics, especially in Europe and North America. Mass production and factories' rise fostered a high demand for cheap and plentiful labor; unfortunately, children fit that criterion perfectly. In Britain, young children worked in textile factories, coal mines, and other industrial facilities. They often worked full-day shifts in dangerous and toxic conditions. The exploitation of child laborers during this period led to significant social reform movements, especially in the U.S. and

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<sup>2</sup> National Child Labor Committee. "History." Accessed July 28, 2024. <https://www.nationalchildlabor.org/history>.

Britain. By the mid-1850s, countries like Britain and the U.S. began implementing regulations restricting child labor and improving working conditions.

### **Child Labor in the 20th Century**

Child labor persisted into the 20th century despite early reforms, particularly in third-world countries. In the U.S., the NCLC (National Child Labor Committee) was founded to enforce and put forward stronger child labor laws.<sup>3</sup> The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 set a maximum working hours and minimum age requirement for children, drastically reducing the amount of recorded child labor in the U.S.

Both world wars in Europe disrupted economies and labor markets, leading to fluctuations in the amount of child labor being employed. Post-war reconstruction, particularly in Western Europe, saw a steady decline in child labor as mandatory education and social welfare programs expanded.

### **Child Labor in Developing Countries**

As of now, child labor remains a significant problem in developing countries. Economic necessity remains one of the primary reasons for the continued use of child laborers. In many parts of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, children work on farms, factories, and mines for little pay to help their families make ends meet.

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<sup>3</sup> Charles, Kerwin Kofi. "The Industrial Revolution and Child Labor." In *A Companion to Early Modern Europe, 1453-1763*, edited by Chris R. Kyle, 412-429. Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015.



For example, children work in various industries in India, including textiles, carpets, and fireworks. Although many nations have regulations restricting and outlawing child labor, many families are forced to send their children off to work primarily as a result of poverty. In Africa, children work in agriculture, usually on cocoa plantations in countries like Senegal and Ghana. They also work in mining, where they face dangerous conditions extracting minerals such as gold and cobalt. These mines send the rare earth metals mined from the earth to factories that manufacture bright items like cellphones, computers, and cars.

### **Modern Efforts and Challenges**

In recent years, global awareness and efforts to combat child labor have increased significantly. International organizations like the International Labour Organization(ILO) have set up conventions and programs to eliminate the most severe and dangerous forms of child labor. The ILO's Convention No. 182 calls for immediate action to eliminate the worst forms of child labor, including slavery, prostitution, and hazardous work.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have also played a crucial role in raising awareness and advocating for change. Campaigns like "Stop Child Labour" work to eliminate child labor in specific industries and promote safe and reasonable trade practices.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Satyarthi, Kailash. "The Global Fight Against Child Labour." *Journal of International Labor Review* 158, no. 3 (2019): 367-388.



Ultimately, despite efforts from figures, activists, and leaders around the world, child labor remains today. Enforcement of child labor laws can be inconsistent and ineffective, and many countries lack the resources to monitor and eliminate instances of child labor effectively. The COVID-19 pandemic only exacerbated this situation, as economic hardships forced more children into labor to cover for the significant financial losses that millions of communities experienced.

## **Conclusion**

Child labor has a long and intricate history, deeply intertwined with economic and social structures. While significant progress has been made in reducing child labor around the globe, particularly in third-world countries, it remains a captivating issue to this day. Continued efforts are essential to protect children from exploitation and to ensure they have access to education and a better future. Addressing the root causes of child labor, such as poverty and lack of education and enforcement, is crucial in the global fight against this persistent problem.

## Possible Solutions

While the issue surrounding child labor is a broad and complex topic, there have been some steps that countries have previously taken to limit the need for forced labor on children. For example, Nigeria's Ministry of Labour and Employment has issued a Child Labour Monitoring and Remediation System in supply chains and a cash-transfer program for vulnerable families <sup>5</sup>. This would, therefore, "prevent an increase in child labor in supply chains, including in granite quarrying, rice farming, artisanal gold mining, and cocoa farming." In Asia, Sri Lanka has addressed this issue by raising the legal working age to 16 and expanding its list of hazardous occupations. They plan on reducing the risk of forced labor by widely increasing awareness among the general public.

Note that these solutions are not the final solution for illegal child labor but rather small steps in the right direction that have already happened. To resolve the issue, delegates must use problem-solving skills to develop a solution.

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<sup>5</sup>

*International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour* (blog). Accessed August 3, 2024. <https://endchildlabour2021.org/these-4-countries-are-taking-action-against-child-labour/>.

## Bloc Positions

**Bloc 1:** Countries that have legalized Child Labor but have strict restrictions(Norway, Sweden, Germany, Canada, United States, UK, Australia, Japan, South Korea, France)

**Bloc 2:** Countries that have the economic means to end child labor but haven't taken significant initiative to stop it ( India, China, Brazil, Mexico, Turkey, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, Russia, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Philippines, Egypt)

**Bloc 3:** Countries that are firmly against Child Labor but are unable to enforce it due to economic needs or lack of local enforcement (North Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Somalia, South Sudan, Chad, Venezuela, Columbia, Niger)

While these are just blocs made to categorize each country into a particular area, it is essential to note that they are cultivated and don't contain enough information to survive SJMUNC. However, they are good starting points for your research, so we highly recommend delegates take advantage of them to have the best experience possible. We look forward to hearing more from your countries at the conference!

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