



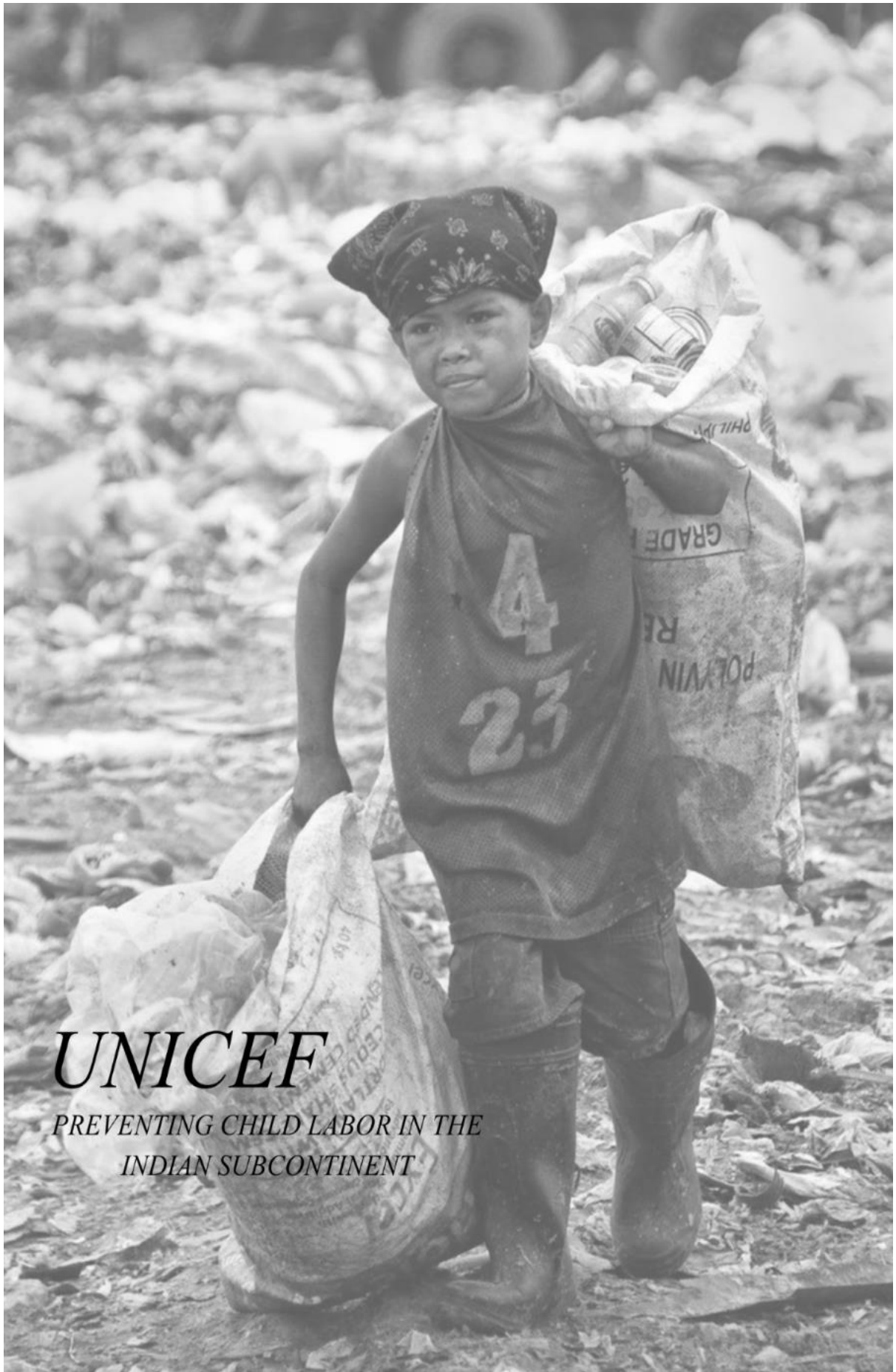
UNICEF

Agenda Item:

**Preventing child labor in the Indian
subcontinent**

BOARD MEMBERS

BADE ALTUNDAL YÜSRA ARYA KÜÇÜKSARI



UNICEF

*PREVENTING CHILD LABOR IN THE
INDIAN SUBCONTINENT*

LETTER FROM THE BOARD MEMBERS

Dear Delegates,

We would very much like to welcome you all to the United Nations Children's Fund and we are especially excited to meet each and every one of you.

Our goal is to simulate a debate in the diplomatic atmosphere of the United Nations. Hence, we are expected to abide by the rules of procedure and diplomatic etiquette. It is advised for each delegate to comprehensively study the rules of procedure.

As the representatives of your nations at the UNICEF Committee, you are expected to study and understand the following sections of this guide and conduct further elaborate research on the position and interests that might be relevant to the nations you represent for engaging in an abundant debate.

We are thrilled to see your contributions and insights during the sessions and hope you enjoy this committee and conference.

Best Regards,
Bade Altundal
Yüstra Küçüksarı

***Introduction to the Committee: United Nations International Children's
Emergency Fund (UNICEF)***

*UNICEF, whose mandate has not changed since 1946, operates
as the world's largest humanitarian aid chain. The United
Nations International Children's Emergency Fund was*

established in 1946, in the aftermath of World War II. Their mandate has always been clear: to help children and young people whose lives and futures were at risk — no matter what role their country had played in the war. Their ideology is completely impartial, non-political and neutral.

UNICEF was born on December 11, 1946, following a resolution passed by the United

Nations General Assembly. Maurice Pate, who served as Executive Director for 18 years,

reinforced the consensus that children's needs and well-being were paramount to politics. His

statement, "There are no enemy children," demonstrates how he managed to prove this point

to others.

Between 1956 and 1957, more than 13,000 maternal and child welfare centres received

UNICEF supplies and technical training in 102 countries and in 1961 UNICEF expanded its

focus to include children's education.

In 1989, 159 United Nations Member States adopted the Convention on the Rights of the

Child, the most universally approved human rights treaty for the protection of children.

Afterwards, in 1990, The World Summit for Children brought together unprecedented

number of heads of state to rally around the cause of children and adopt the Declaration on

the Survival, Protection and Development of Children.

6The Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action (CCCs) were first established

in 1998 and subsequently revised in 2010, then again 2020 due to the fact that the global

humanitarian context has significantly changed with time. A rising neglect for international

humanitarian and human rights law, as well as humanitarian principles, defines conflicts, with

children and women being disproportionately affected. The CCCs have been revised to

enable UNICEF and its partners to provide principled, timely, quality, and child-focused

humanitarian responses and advocacy in any crisis that results in humanitarian consequences.

CCCs are mandatory for all UNICEF staff and set organisational, programmatic, and

operational commitments and benchmarks, ensuring accountability in terms of coverage,

quality, and equity in humanitarian action and advocacy.

Between 2005 and 2010, UNICEF accelerated emergency relief efforts due to many natural

disasters such as the Indian Ocean tsunami and the Haiti earthquake.

The 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, published by the United Nations in 2015, stated

that children are at the core of global development and hence, pointed out that they began to

expand their support for children, especially with Goals 3 and 4.

As of now, UNICEF operates in 190 countries, boasting a team of more than 17,000 staff

members. It remains dedicated to instilling hope in children, thanks to a remarkable logistics

network and the completely voluntary support from its donors.

INTRODUCTION TO AGENDA ITEM

Child labor is a severe and long-standing issue within the Indian Subcontinent, characterised by its multidimensional impacts. In countries such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nepal, millions of children are compelled to work in diverse sectors, including agriculture, textiles, mining, and the service industry. This phenomenon primarily stems from structural causes such as poverty, inequalities in access to education, rapid population growth, and the prevalence of the informal economy.

Child labor constitutes a direct violation of children's fundamental rights. Specifically, the obstruction of the right to education perpetuates the cycle of poverty by confining children to low-income and precarious employment in the long term. Furthermore, children employed in strenuous and hazardous work face grave health risks, which adversely affect their physical and psychological development. Deprived of a secure living environment, these children also become more vulnerable to risks of abuse and exploitation.

The ramifications of this issue extend beyond the individual level, negatively impacting social and economic development. A decline in educational attainment leads to a reduction in the skilled workforce and limits the long-term economic growth potential of nations. Consequently, child labor is regarded not only as a human rights violation but also as a significant barrier to sustainable development.

In conclusion, the issue of child labor has emerged as a matter that must be addressed at both regional and global levels. International organisations, such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and UNICEF, develop various policies and programs to resolve this issue; however, a lasting solution

necessitates robust and coordinated cooperation among governments, the private sector, and the international community.

KEY TERMS

* **Child Labour:** *Work that deprives children of their potential and dignity, while remaining detrimental to their physical and mental development.*

* **Worst Forms:** *Includes slavery, forced labor, illicit drug trafficking, and prostitution, as defined by ILO Convention No. 182.*

* **Bonded Labour:** *A prevalent practice in the region involving the "slave-like" employment of a child to discharge a family debt.*

* **Hazardous Work:** *Labor that poses a direct threat to the health, safety, and moral well-being of a child.*

* **ILO (International Labour Organization):** *Established in 1919, this specialised agency sets international labor standards. It aims to protect workers' rights—including the eradication of child labor—and ensures member states adhere to these established norms.*

* **Poverty:** *The socio-economic necessity for families to generate supplementary income.*

* **Lack of Education:** *The prohibitive cost or total unavailability of accessible educational institutions.*

** **Weak Law Enforcement:** The existence of regulatory frameworks that are not consistently or effectively implemented.*

** **Economic Factors:** The persistent market demand for low-cost, inexpensive labor.*

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND CURRENT SITUATION AND UN ACTIONS

The future state of child labor in the Indian Subcontinent is intimately linked to the region's demographic structure, economic development processes, and social transformations. In countries such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nepal, population growth, shifts in labor force composition, and urbanization processes continue to be decisive factors in how child labor will evolve.

From a social perspective, the persistence of child labor is expected to have long-term repercussions on educational systems. An increase in the number of individuals leaving education at an early age may affect the overall educational attainment of societies. This situation may lead to the continuation of inequality of opportunity, particularly among low-income groups. Limited participation in the education system can make it difficult for individuals to acquire vocational skills, which in turn impacts the general human capital of society.

Furthermore, child labor may contribute to the perpetuation of specific patterns within the social structure. A significant portion of working children comes from similar socioeconomic backgrounds, which can lead to limited social mobility. The continuation of the intergenerational cycle of poverty may cause social stratification to become more pronounced. Simultaneously, the social relationships, life experiences, and individual development processes of individuals who enter the workforce during childhood may also diverge significantly.

When evaluated culturally, the continued existence of child labor as a traditional and accepted practice in some regions maintains the influence of this phenomenon on social perceptions. Especially in rural areas, children contributing to the family economy can be regarded as a cultural norm. This indicates that child labor possesses a cultural dimension in addition to its economic one.

However, factors such as globalization, digitalization, and the influence of the media can lead to shifts in societal perspectives on child labor. Increased access to information and the proliferation of international awareness campaigns can create transformations in how societies perceive this issue. In particular, the rising awareness of the youth population is considered a factor that could contribute to the reshaping of cultural norms in the long term.

Economically, child labor is directly related to the structure of the labor market in the region. While child labor is viewed as a low-cost workforce in the short term, it stands out as a significant factor affecting the quality of the labor force in the long run. The participation of individuals with limited education levels in the workforce can be a determining factor in productivity, efficiency, and economic growth.

Additionally, the prevalence of the informal economy makes it difficult to comprehend the economic magnitude of child labor. In these areas where official data is limited, it becomes challenging to accurately determine the true dimensions of child labor. This situation directly affects the scope of economic analyses and assessments.

Global supply chains also play a significant role in this context. The dispersion of production processes across different countries can lead to a concentration in regions where labor costs are low. This can contribute to the indirect persistence of child labor in certain sectors. At the same time, international

trade dynamics continue to influence the transformation of the labor structure in the region.

Urbanization and internal migration movements are also among the key factors affecting the structure of child labor. Economic difficulties faced by families migrating from rural areas to urban centers can lead to children joining the workforce in different sectors. This results in the emergence of new forms of labor, especially in major cities.

Moreover, technological advancements and the expansion of the digital economy are leading to new transformations in the labor market. While this transformation may cause a decline in some traditional forms of child labor, it can also lead to the emergence of different and less visible forms of work. Therefore, the future structure of child labor will not be limited to traditional sectors but will evolve in parallel with changing economic conditions.

At the international level, the work of organizations such as the United Nations, UNICEF, and the International Labour Organization (ILO) remains vital for the monitoring and analysis of child labor. The reports and data published by these organizations contribute to the understanding of trends in the region.

Overall, the future of child labor in the Indian Subcontinent continues to be shaped within the framework of changes in social structure, cultural norms, economic developments, and global dynamics. This multidimensional structure demonstrates that the issue cannot be addressed from a single perspective and that various factors must be evaluated collectively.

Understanding Child Labor

Child labor refers to forms of work that adversely affect children's physical, mental, and emotional development while obstructing their educational

processes. According to definitions established by the International Labour Organization (ILO), activities performed under hazardous conditions, long working hours, and tasks that cause children to remain alienated from education are evaluated within the scope of child labor.

This concept does not encompass every form of work performed by children. In certain instances, children assisting their families or engaging in light work is not considered harmful. However, the prevalent situation in the Indian Subcontinent involves children being employed in strenuous and risky labor at an early age.

These children often work for low wages, during extended hours, and under precarious conditions. Children operating within informal sectors remain largely removed from legal protection mechanisms. This circumstance renders them significantly susceptible to exploitation.

Child labor also generates social and psychological impacts. Working children lead lives distinct from those of their peers and are often deprived of education and social development. This situation substantially affects their future prospects and their integration into society.

Impacts of Child Labor

The impacts of child labor are felt at both individual and societal levels. Working children generally cannot complete their education, which restricts their future employment opportunities.

Simultaneously, these children face severe health risks due to their involvement in physically demanding and dangerous tasks. Prolonged working hours, inadequate nutrition, and unsafe working environments exacerbate these risks.

Psychologically, child labor produces significant consequences. Children are forced to assume responsibilities at an early age, which can alter their emotional development.

This subject is also evaluated within the context of fundamental human rights. Children's rights to protection, education, and a secure life are among the internationally recognized rights. UNICEF and the United Nations conduct extensive work aimed at protecting these rights.

Current Efforts and Approaches

Various initiatives regarding child labor are conducted at both national and international levels. In the countries of the Indian Subcontinent, different legal frameworks have been established to regulate children's working conditions. These frameworks typically define the minimum age at which children can work and impose restrictions on their employment in specific sectors.

Nonetheless, the scope and implementation of legal regulations vary from country to country. While some nations possess more comprehensive laws, implementation and oversight processes can remain limited in certain regions. This situation leads to the persistence of child labor, particularly in rural areas and informal sectors.

Education policies also hold a vital position in this context. Countries in the region have implemented various regulations to improve their educational systems and increase enrollment rates. Although an increase in schooling rates has been observed over time, regional inequalities and socio-economic factors continue to influence this process.

International organizations play a crucial role in the monitoring and analysis of child labor. Agencies such as the International Labour Organization and

UNICEF are actively involved in data collection, reporting, and raising global awareness. The reports published by these organizations reveal the dimensions and trends of child labor.

Furthermore, the issue of child labor is addressed within the framework of international conventions and agreements. Many countries have become parties to international treaties concerning children's rights and labor standards. These conventions provide a general framework for the protection of children.

Additionally, child labor is linked to the global economic system. In particular, international trade and supply chains reveal different dimensions of this problem. The dispersion of production processes across various countries in certain sectors necessitates that child labor be evaluated not only as a local issue but also as a global one.

For this reason, child labor is treated not merely as a social problem, but as a multidimensional subject analyzed within economic, legal, and international relations contexts.

UNICEF's Perspective on Child Labor

UNICEF addresses child labor as a violation of children's rights. According to the organization, child labor is a condition that obstructs children's right to education and negatively impacts their physical and mental development.

UNICEF emphasizes that child labor is particularly linked to poverty, lack of access to education, and social inequalities. Furthermore, it is stated that children working in hazardous labor are at a higher risk.

The organization evaluates this issue within the United Nations framework and under the scope of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In this context, children's rights to protection, education, and development are taken as a basis.

Overall, UNICEF's approach is based on a perspective that defines child labor as a multidimensional problem and focuses on the fundamental rights of children.

ARC,(Addressing Root Causes of Child Labour) Programme

The ARC Project is a regional program aimed at resolving the issue of child labor in countries where it is most prevalent India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Afghanistan not through prohibitions alone, but through a holistic and systemic transformation. Supported by the United Kingdom's development funds (UK Aid), this project simultaneously addresses both structural causes and field applications to eradicate child labor. The ARC approach is not limited to merely withdrawing children from work; it seeks to eliminate the conditions that drive them back into the labor force.

The project is built upon four main strategic pillars. First, within the scope of knowledge and data production, data collection and analysis processes are strengthened in regions where reliable statistics on child labor are lacking; because effective policy production is impossible without accurate data. Second, in the field of legislation and policy, efforts are made to align national laws with international standards, such as Conventions No. 138 and 182 established by the International Labour Organization. The third pillar, social protection and services, aims to prevent children from being viewed as a "source of income" by providing cash support, healthcare, and child protection mechanisms to impoverished families. Finally, in the dimension of the private

sector and supply chain, it aims to prevent child labor by establishing monitoring mechanisms over factories and agricultural enterprises.

In the field, the ARC project carries out highly concrete applications. By creating "Child Labour Free Zones," all children in specific neighborhoods or villages are systematically monitored, and social services are rapidly deployed for children who do not attend school. In addition to large enterprises, informal and small-scale workshops which are often overlooked are registered through local governments and included in the scope of inspection. In the field of education, flexible school hours are arranged to increase children's access to school, and incentives such as scholarships are provided to children returning to their education.

One of the most important aspects of ARC is its role as a regional cooperation model. This is because child labor is not a problem that a single country can solve. For example, the closure of a textile workshop in India does not mean that child labor has been completely eliminated; children may shift to other countries, such as Pakistan or Bangladesh. ARC ensures that countries in the region develop common standards and policies to prevent such "displacement" effects. In this regard, the project offers a sustainable solution model not only on a local scale but also on a global one.

Achievements and Successful Operations

UNICEF has made significant progress in various fields within the scope of combating child labor. The organization conducts global efforts particularly aimed at data collection, raising awareness, and the protection of children's rights.

As a result of UNICEF's work, an increase in schooling rates and partial reductions in child labor have been observed in certain regions. The development of educational programs and child protection systems are among the notable advancements in this process.

Furthermore, in collaboration with the International Labour Organization, UNICEF publishes global reports and reveals the dimensions of child labor. These efforts have contributed to making the issue more visible at the international level.

Within the framework of activities carried out under the United Nations, child labor has been linked with global development goals and has gained a prominent place on the international agenda.

Overall, UNICEF's work plays a vital role in the identification, monitoring, and addressing of child labor at a global level.

Criticism and Limitations of Child Labor Efforts

Efforts aimed at combating child labor are subject to various criticisms and limitations. These criticisms are generally related to implementation, oversight, and structural issues.

Firstly, although legal regulations exist in many countries, difficulties are experienced in the implementation of these laws. The inadequacy of inspection mechanisms causes child labor to persist, especially in informal sectors.

Another limitation is related to economic conditions. Since poverty is one of the root causes of child labor, legal regulations alone are not sufficient to completely eradicate the problem. This situation is considered a factor that limits the impact of existing efforts.

At the international level, while the work of organizations such as the United Nations, UNICEF, and the International Labour Organization is significant, the fact that these organizations have limited direct enforcement power is another subject of criticism.

Additionally, there can be deficiencies in data collection and reporting processes. In regions where the informal economy is prevalent, it becomes difficult to determine the true dimensions of child labor.

Overall, the criticisms and limitations encountered in the fight against child labor reflect a multidimensional situation emerging from the combination of economic, institutional, and structural factors.

QTBA (Questions to be Addressed)

**How can the "gaps" between the "Minimum Working Age" and the "Compulsory Education Age" in regional countries be legally synchronized?*

**How do the caste system and gender roles in countries like India and Nepal affect children's access to education and their push toward labor? How can UNICEF involve local religious and community leaders in this struggle?*

**How can the gaps in the monitoring mechanisms of multinational corporations regarding their subcontractors be addressed? Is it possible to monitor "informal" labor in local workshops through digital tracking systems?*

**If a child's labor is a family's sole source of income, how can UNICEF and local governments fill this economic gap without pushing the family into deeper poverty?*

**What role should governments vs. international organizations play?*

**Which social factors besides poverty (migration, family structure, culture) affect child labor?*

**Should multinational corporations or local businesses carry more responsibility?*

**Can the models of countries that have been successful be applied to other nations?*

FURTHER READING

<https://knowledge.unicef.org/resource/child-labour-global-estimates-2020-trends-and-road-forward>

<https://www.google.com/search?q=https://data.unicef.org/resources/child-labour-data-brief/>

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/minimum-age-convention-1973-no-138>

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<https://www.unicef.org/documents/action-against-child-labour>

<https://www.google.com/search?q=https://labour.gov.in/schemes/national-child-labour-project-nclp-scheme>

<https://www.pencil.gov.in>

<https://www.hrw.org/topic/childrens-rights/child-labor>

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