
Negative Impact of Child Labour on Future Development

Childhood is said to be the most beautiful of the stages of life. But how could this be when children are working in risky conditions just so they can survive? Adulthood cannot recapture the innocence and beauty of childhood. Child labour is an illegal act which has been ruining both the present and future for young children to a great extent.

Sir John Betjeman said, "Childhood is measured out by sounds and smiles and sights before the dark hours of reasons grow." However, this is not the case for millions of children around the world. Children are being exploited to mentally and physically dangerous work. Child labour interferes with schooling and long-term development. The worst forms include sexual exploitation, trafficking, slavery and hazardous work that put children at risk. Ima, a young girl spends her days working in a shrimp depot. She tries to keep her fingers warm from the ice by using strips of cloth and wrapping her fingers in them. She is scared of her bosses as they will beat her if she makes a mistake as she has witnessed other girls being beaten. There are parts of a fish that are sharp as a knife where she regularly cuts her fingers. Ima has been deprived of a childhood, instead she has been plunged in the adult world and her childhood has been snatched away from her. This is only one example of the 218 million children working in the world, with more than 115 million children working in dangerous conditions. What kind of society allows their youngest and most vulnerable to be stripped of their innocence, degraded, used and abused?

Child labour is not only restricted to risky work but also includes any form of work completed by children under the minimum age. According to UNICEF, 1.2 million children are trafficked yearly. At least 20,000 Nepali girls as young as 9 are trafficked. They are often sent to brothels in India to work as prostitutes. Imagine if she was your sister? Some girls are sent to the Middle East to work as domestic servants at the tender age of 9. How can we truly accept children to be manipulated and exploited in such atrocious ways? Children as young as 8 years, are involved in "The Drug Ring" which is also known as drug trafficking. They are "recruited" to deal and smuggle drugs for gangs where they will "torture as it means a certain authority." It is so shameful that the most vulnerable are threatened with violence. No child deserves to suffer life like this, or to be treated as less than human; irrespective of their colour, creed or religion. Engaging children in drug trafficking and prostitution is a recipe for disaster, a recipe of a corrupt future. Child trafficking is a despicable act. Are we humans or animals?

In 2016, UNICEF reported that 115 million children engaged in hazardous work such as working long hours in an unsafe environment and the use of dangerous tools, they are deprived of a quality future. The difficulty of tasks and harsh working conditions can lead to premature aging, depression and drug use. Their childhood is snatched away from them. Vulnerable children are thrown into the adult world of intense labour before they are physically or mentally prepared. Yasmeen, 14-years old, is one amongst thousands of Syrian children in Lebanon has to pay for her own rent and food, "Wake up at 4am and work for 10 hours" Earning US \$6.60 a day. How can we allow innocent children to be stripped of their rights to an education? Article 26 of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights expresses "everyone has the right to education." Education is key to success, living in a world where education is emphasised and qualifications are utmost upright. Without the proper education, it can lead to a vicious cycle of poverty where

children are deprived of their education which can equip them with essential skills to get employment that are well paid. The impact on child labour can emotionally, physically and morally have a lasting impact on their lives. What future do these children have to be plunged into child labour? We are throwing the key away and locking children in a world, they will never escape.

Nelson Mandela once said, "There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children." As a universal family, we need to emphasise with these children, child labour is despicable. Fairness does not mean everyone gets the same. Fairness means every gets what they need. Children are our assets; they are our future. If we allow them to engage to such injustices what will the fabric of society of tomorrow will be?

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