

ENDING CHILD LABOUR IN INDIA & BANGLADESH THROUGH EDUCATION



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Office of Research-Innocenti



Reshmi Prabhu (12) in a cotton field in Karnataka, India. © UNICEF/UNI88064/Crouch

Over the last 20 years, substantial progress has been made to reduce the number of children involved in child labour from 256 million in 2000 to 152 million in 2016. However, the rate of decline has significantly slowed from 3% (2008-2012) to 1% (2012-2016). Assuming the current rate of decline persists, there will still be about 121 million child labourers in 2025 (ILO, 2017). Therefore, urgent action is needed to achieve SDG 8.7.

How can the education sector contribute to reducing child labour?

A new four-year research programme implemented by UNICEF Office of Research—Innocenti and funded with UK aid from the UK government will explore the interlinkages between child labour and education. The aim is to identify effective and scalable educational strategies to address child labour in India and Bangladesh. We will engage and collaborate with researchers, practitioners, as well as education policymakers and influencers in the region to inform and support educational policies and interventions. The research forms part of a larger programme addressing child labour in six countries in South Asia, in partnership with the International Labour Organisation (ILO), Institute for Development Studies (IDS), and UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia, and Country Offices.

KEY MESSAGES

Despite progress, much more needs to be done to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 8.7 on ending child labour by 2025

Even at current rates of decline, there will still be 121 million child labourers in 2025

A new research project by UNICEF Innocenti will identify effective & scalable educational strategies to address child labour in India & Bangladesh

Through a Challenge Fund, the project will leverage national research capacity & expertise, with the aim of influencing policy through its findings

What will we do?

1. Consolidate & generate evidence on the prevalence of child labour & the interlinkages with education

With a focus on India and Bangladesh, we will assess patterns and trends in child labour and education. To the extent possible, these will be disaggregated by geographical area, gender, age, and social group. We will explore risk factors, like early marriage and migration, and provide an overview of macro-economic developments and education policies that may explain the observed patterns. While mostly based on secondary data, findings will be enriched through primary qualitative research. We will map education interventions with a bearing on child labour.



2. Generate evidence on the effectiveness of educational strategies in reducing child labour

A Challenge Fund, starting in year two of the project, will generate new evidence assessing the effectiveness of promising educational strategies and interventions in addressing child labour. The research will target both children currently engaged in child labour and those who are not working but are at high risk of dropping out of school or engaging in child labour. By collaborating with national experts, the Challenge Fund will capitalize on quality research capacity and local expertise in both countries.

3. Promote research and knowledge uptake

We will disseminate findings and facilitate research and learning by partners, policymakers and practitioners. Collaborating with in-country researchers and partners helps to ensure that the evidence is shared with key stakeholders who inform and steer policy and programme efforts. Our communications, and monitoring and evaluation strategy will strengthen uptake of findings in both countries.

CHILD LABOUR IN SOUTH ASIA

The prevalence of child labour is especially high in Asia, with over **62 million child labourers**, of which 28.5 million are engaged in hazardous forms of labour.

In South Asia, India and Bangladesh account for 10.8 million of the 16.7 million child labourers in the region. UNESCO and UNICEF (2014) estimate that about 65% of the 27 million school-aged children who are out of school in the region are from India and Bangladesh.

GOALS ADDRESSED

SDG 4 Ensure inclusive & equitable quality education

SDG 8.7 End child labour

SDG 16.2 End abuse, exploitation, trafficking & all forms of violence & torture against children

UNICEF Goal Area 2 Every child has the right to an education & quality learning opportunities

UNICEF Goal Area 3 Every child is protected from violence & exploitation

FIND OUT MORE

UNICEF Innocenti conducts research to inform strategic policies & programmes of UNICEF and its partners, shape debates on child rights & development, & inform the global research & policy agenda for all children.

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