



## Regional Symposia on Promoting Area-based Approach to Eliminate Child Labour

**COMBINED CALL TO ACTION DOCUMENT**

**East Africa | South Asia and Southeast Asia | West Africa**

# Introduction

Child labour remains a deeply entrenched issue in multiple regions globally, shaped by intersecting factors such as poverty, economic exclusion, weak legal frameworks, and the pervasive vulnerabilities of informal economies. Despite significant international commitments, from the Durban Call to Action to the ambitious SDG Target 8.7, progress is uneven. The Area-Based Approach (ABA) has emerged as a promising model to accelerate the eradication of child labour, focusing on creating sustainable solutions rooted in local contexts through Child Labour-Free Zones (CLFZs).

In 2023 and 2024, a series of regional symposia were held in West Africa, East Africa (Uganda), and South and Southeast Asia to address the urgent issue of child labour through the Area-Based Approach (ABA). These symposia, organised by Global March Against Child Labour in consultation with regional civil society organisations (CSOs), trade unions, governments, and international partners, and with active engagement and support of the Work: No Child's Business Alliance, brought together stakeholders to reflect on local challenges, share knowledge, and develop coordinated strategies to eliminate child labour in their regions. The symposia provided a crucial platform for dialogue and action, particularly in advancing the concept of Child Labour-Free Zones (CLFZs). Participants from across multiple sectors acknowledged that eliminating child labour requires tailored, community-driven approaches that address the social, economic, and legal factors sustaining it. The forums served as a springboard for enhancing inter-regional learning, fostering multi-stakeholder collaboration, and aligning national policies with international commitments such as SDG Target 8.7 and the Durban Call to Action.

Each region—West Africa, East Africa (Uganda), and South and Southeast Asia—brought forward unique perspectives shaped by their local contexts, yet all shared the conviction that the ABA is essential for transforming public commitments into sustainable, on-the-ground actions. The resulting Call to Action outlines a shared vision for how governments, civil society, the private sector, and international bodies can work together to address child labour's root causes and promote lasting change through the ABA. This document synthesises these critical insights, focusing on how regional themes and cross-cutting strategies can be leveraged to create child labour-free communities worldwide.

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# Context and Regional Themes

Each region contributes to the broader understanding of child labour, but they are distinguished by specific socio-economic, political, and cultural dynamics.

## West Africa: Structural Vulnerabilities in Agriculture and Informality

West Africa's challenges are deeply intertwined with its dependence on agriculture and the informal economy. Child labour is concentrated in rural areas, particularly in the cocoa sector coffee sector and small-scale farming. Structural issues such as low wages, lack of access to education, and systemic poverty drive children into hazardous work. Despite regional action plans like the ECOWAS policy on child labour, enforcement gaps persist. **The call to action from this region underscores the need for investment in public education, decent work for adults, and livelihood enhancement programs to prevent child labour at its root.**

## Uganda and East Africa: Complexities of Fragility and Marginalisation

In Uganda and East Africa, child labour intersects with broader vulnerabilities like artisanal mining, migration, and conflict-affected communities. The focus in this region has been on enhancing inter-pathfinder learning and improving multi-stakeholder coordination to address child labour across sectors such as agriculture and informal mining. **This region also highlights the importance of social protection mechanisms, access to decent work and free, quality, public education which remain weak and inaccessible to many rural families.** The emphasis on cross-border collaboration underscores a critical understanding that child labour often transcends national boundaries and thus requires coordinated regional responses.

## South Asia & Southeast Asia: Systemic Exclusion and Educational Gaps

Child labour in South Asia and Southeast Asia is driven by factors such as educational exclusion, internal displacement, and weak enforcement of labour standards. In this region, the informal sector, particularly family-owned businesses and agriculture, perpetuates child labour. **The call to action from this symposium emphasises the integration of child labour monitoring systems into education and social protection infrastructures, stressing the need for flexible schooling and gender-responsive education systems to reintegrate child labour survivors.**

# Cross-Cutting Themes

## 1. The Role of Economic Vulnerability in Sustaining Child Labour

Poverty and economic vulnerability are central to sustaining child labour across all regions. While poverty is the common denominator, the drivers of economic vulnerability vary from fragile agricultural economies in West Africa to the under-regulated artisanal mining sector in Uganda, and the expanding informal sector in South Asia. Addressing these vulnerabilities requires context-specific solutions, including:

- Investing in resilient livelihoods and income-generating opportunities for families
- Ensuring decent work and living wages for adults, which can eliminate the economic necessity for child labour

## 2. Education: The Fundamental Catalyst for Change

Education stands out as the single most critical factor in preventing and reducing child labour. However, access to quality education is marred by financial, geographic, and systemic barriers across regions. All three regions have emphasised the need for inclusive, flexible, and gender-responsive education systems, tailored to the needs of child labour survivors. This includes:

- Bridging learning gaps for out-of-school children and child labour survivors
- Integrating child labour monitoring into educational infrastructures to prevent dropout and re-entry into labour

## 3. Weak Governance and Policy Enforcement

Despite international commitments, governance gaps remain a major hindrance to child labour eradication efforts. In many countries, policy implementation and enforcement are inconsistent, and national action plans are often underfunded. The emphasis across regions is on:

- Strengthening national legal frameworks and ensuring that governments not only enact but enforce labour laws
- Engaging in regional and international collaboration, such as through Alliance 8.7, to align efforts and ensure accountability

## 4. The Importance of Multi Stakeholder Collaboration

No single entity can eradicate child labour in isolation. The ABA's strength lies in its focus on multi-stakeholder collaboration, bringing together governments, CSOs, trade unions, the private sector, and local communities. Each region emphasized the need for:

- Collaborative capacity-building among stakeholders to ensure the effective implementation of area-based models
- Promoting human rights due diligence in supply chains and ensuring private sector accountability

# Root Causes

Across regions, several root causes consistently emerge:

- **Poverty:** Economic hardship compels families to rely on child labour as a survival strategy.
- **Weak social protection:** Lack of social safety nets leaves families vulnerable to economic shocks, driving children into work
- **Education exclusion:** Limited access to quality, affordable education is a major driver of child labour, particularly in rural and marginalized communities
- **Informal economies:** In all regions, the informal economy is a hotspot for child labour due to its lack of regulation and oversight

# Call to action

## For Governments:

- **Scale up funding for public education:** Allocate a greater share of GDP towards quality education, focusing on rural and marginalized areas, with flexible schooling options for child labour survivors
- **Strengthen labour laws:** Enforce minimum wage laws, eliminate hazardous child labour, and enhance institutional capacities for labour monitoring
- **Expand social protection:** Develop context-sensitive social protection schemes that reduce the economic vulnerability of families, particularly in agriculture and informal sectors

## For the Private Sector:

- **Integrate ABA into supply chains:** Recognize CLFZs and child labour-free products as part of responsible sourcing strategies, and pay fair prices to producers from these zones
- **Enhance transparency:** Implement rigorous due diligence processes that prioritize human rights, focusing on vulnerable sectors like agriculture

## For Civil Society and Trade Unions:

- **Amplify grassroots advocacy:** Strengthen local advocacy efforts and build the capacity of communities to implement and monitor ABA models
- **Collaborate on policy monitoring:** Work with governments and the private sector to ensure that policies are not only adopted but effectively enforced

## For International Bodies:

- **Support regional ABA pilots:** Provide technical and financial assistance to scale up ABA across regions, focusing on sectors with the highest child labour risks
- **Facilitate learning exchanges:** Promote inter-regional learning platforms where countries can share best practices and adapt ABA models

# Conclusion

The eradication of child labour demands more than isolated interventions; it requires a comprehensive, multi-stakeholder approach rooted in the Area-Based Approach (ABA). Governments, CSOs, trade unions, and the private sector must collaborate to create sustainable solutions that address the root causes of child labour. Global March Against Child Labour will continue to lead these efforts by offering technical support, fostering inter-regional collaboration, and mobilising resources to implement ABA and CLFZs globally.

This call to action not only serves as a roadmap for governments and civil society but as a strategic blueprint for stakeholders to scale up their efforts in creating child labour-free communities. By aligning international commitments with local realities, we can achieve meaningful progress in the global fight against child labour.

# Endorsements

The representatives from the organisations listed below participated in various Symposia and endorsed the Call to Action.

## South Asia and Southeast Asia Regional Symposium, Kathmandu, Nepal

- 1) Global March Against Child Labour (GMACL)
- 2) Work: No Child's Business
- 3) Swatantrata Abhiyan Nepal (SAN)
- 4) Mamidipudi Venkatarangaiya Foundation (MV Foundation)
- 5) Kailash Satyarthi Children's Foundation (KSCF)
- 6) Bangladesh Labour Foundation (BLF)
- 7) Cordaid Bangladesh
- 8) Aasaman Nepal
- 9) Children-Women in Social Service and Human Rights (CWISH)
- 10) Loo Niva Child Concern Society
- 11) Child Welfare Society
- 12) Domestic Workers Forum
- 13) Youth Along Voice (YAV) Nepal
- 14) Concern Society Nepal (CSN)
- 15) Tharu Women Upliftment Center (TWUC)
- 16) Youth Club Narayangadh
- 17) Human Rights Awareness Center (HURAC)
- 18) The Forum for Awareness and Youth Activity (FAYA)
- 19) Dalit Human Right Watch Committee (DHRWC)
- 20) GoodWeave Foundation Nepal
- 21) General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions (GEFONT)
- 22) Nepal Trade Union Congress (NTUC)
- 23) All Nepal Federation of Trade Unions (ANTUF)
- 24) Rural Society Upliftment Forum-Nepal (RUSUF-Nepal)



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## West Africa Regional Symposium, Accra, Ghana

- 1) General Agricultural Workers Union (GAWU), Ghana
- 2) Work: No Child's Business, Mali
- 3) Save the Children, Ivory Coast
- 4) Save the Children, Mali
- 5) Child & Youth Protection Foundation (CYPF), Nigeria
- 6) Kids & Teens, Nigeria
- 7) Christian Rural and Urban Development Association of Nigeria (CRUDAN)
- 8) Fairtrade Africa, Ghana
- 9) 100 Weeks, Ghana
- 10) Free the Slaves, Ghana
- 11) Child Rights International, Ghana
- 12) Verite, Ghana
- 13) The Herald, Ghana
- 14) Multikids Africa, Ghana
- 15) Ghana Broadcasting Corporation
- 16) Fako Agricultural Workers Union (FAWU), Cameroon
- 17) Education International, Accra
- 18) IC-NET, Ghana
- 19) Curious Minds, Ghana
- 20) International Youth Foundation, Africa
- 21) Ghana National Association of teachers (GNAT)
- 22) Teachers and Educational Workers Union, Ghana (TEWU)
- 23) Trade Union Congress (TUC), Ghana
- 24) Ghana Civil Society Cocoa Platform
- 25) CSOs Platform on SDGs, Ghana



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## East Africa Regional Symposium, Kampala, Uganda.

- 1) Partners for community transformation (PACT), Uganda
- 2) Federation of Uganda Employers Children (FUE), Uganda
- 3) Uganda National Teachers' Union (UNATU)
- 4) PACT DRC (Democratic Republic of Congo)
- 5) Teachers' Union Malawi
- 6) Wabe Children's Aid and Training (WCAT), Ethiopia
- 7) Community initiative for prosperity and advancement (CIPA), Uganda
- 8) HiVOS Uganda
- 9) Rakai Counselor's Association (RACA), Uganda
- 10) SOMERO Uganda
- 11) Elimination of Child Labour in Agriculture (CLA), Uganda
- 12) The AfriChild Center Makerere UPB Uganda,
- 13) Rural Development Media Communications, (RUDMEC) Uganda
- 14) Nascent Research and Development Organization Uganda
- 15) Uganda child rights NGO network (UCRNN)
- 16) Health Child Uganda
- 17) Child Aid Uganda
- 18) Hope for Justice Uganda
- 19) Child Rights Support Initiative Uganda
- 20) African Agency for Integrated Development Uganda
- 21) Dwelling Places Uganda
- 22) Abaana Ministries Uganda
- 23) Every Child Matters
- 24) Uganda Platform for Labour Action Uganda
- 25) New Vision Uganda
- 26) NBS Television Uganda
- 27) Daily Monitor Uganda



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