



**Save the Children**  
UK

# The Small Hands of Slavery

## Modern day child slavery: a report by Save the Children UK

Two hundred years ago the British government outlawed slave trading throughout the British Empire. The passing of the Slave Trade Act on 25 March 1807 led to the eventual abolition of transatlantic slavery. The Act has been hailed as an international victory for humanity.

Yet while the world celebrates its anniversary, there are still millions of children currently held as slaves, forced to work long hours for no or little pay and left vulnerable to extreme harm, violence and rape.

Across the world, 218 million children aged 5–17 are working as child labourers; of those children, 126 million are involved in hazardous work. Around 8.4 million of them<sup>1</sup> – more than the population of London – are trapped in the very worst forms of illegal, degrading and dangerous work. These children are working in conditions of slave labour.

Save the Children is calling for immediate and decisive action to combat the enslaving of all children.

**A boy working in a quarry near Bukavu town in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where he earns US\$0.50 a day breaking rocks. Up to 500 children work in this quarry under very dangerous working conditions.**



PHOTO: RACHEL PALMER



In this report, Save the Children reveals the eight most prevalent forms of child slavery that shockingly are still destroying the childhoods of children across the world.

- child trafficking
- commercial sexual exploitation
- bonded child labour
- forced work in mines
- forced agricultural labour
- child soldiers/combatants
- forced child marriage
- domestic slavery.

As young slaves, children survive in appalling conditions. Through a combination of threats, physical and sexual violence, family debt and chronic poverty, they are forced to work long hours for little or nothing in return, often for years on end. Many are coerced into commercial sexual exploitation, while others are forced to work in extremely hazardous conditions in agriculture, mining, construction or as household domestic workers. Two million children are being abused through prostitution and pornography. More than a million are trafficked every year, either within their own country or across borders. Every child confined in slavery is treated as an object to be humiliated or abused, and can be lent or sold to another owner without warning.

Much of the international media attention on modern-day slaves has focused on the plight of women and girls trafficked into sex work across Europe. As an international children's rights organisation, Save the Children works to challenge this appalling practice but also addresses the many other violations of human rights represented by child slavery.

*The Small Hands of Slavery* presents an overview of the scale of child slave labour across the world, focusing on the eight most prevalent forms of slavery-like conditions in which children are forced to work. There are stark facts about where and how children are forced to work, details of the conditions they endure, and the direct impact this

has on their lives. This report presents two case studies, updates on our current work, information on our local and regional partner organisations, and strategies to end child slavery in all its guises. As the majority of our projects are in Asia and Africa, most of the information is from these regions. This does not imply child slavery is not common in other regions and countries. But we are focusing on the areas we know best, and the slave trades we have investigated most rigorously.

## Child trafficking

Every year, 1.2 million children are trafficked,<sup>2</sup> and this number is increasing. Poverty, globalisation and the subsequent demand for cheap goods and labour have spawned an unprecedented demand for compliant child workers. The emergence of cheap global travel and increased international migration have made transporting children across borders easier, and highly organised crime networks have taken full advantage of this.

Children are abducted by traffickers, but also sold or lent to potential employers by their parents. Sometimes they are persuaded by adult 'friends' or acquaintances to leave home for a supposed better life, or are driven to take desperate risks in order to survive war or poverty.

Save the Children works with children who have been trafficked both within and outside their own region or country. These children are frightened, isolated and extremely vulnerable. Their parents may have consented to them leaving with an adult, genuinely believing their child was en route to a better future. But trafficked children suffer devastating physical and psychological damage.

Children and babies are trafficked for many reasons. They are trafficked into domestic work, hazardous child labour, begging and other illegal activities such as stealing, or for adoption or early marriage. Trafficked children are also sold into sexual exploitation to adults who repeatedly rape and abuse them or rent them out to paedophiles for



further abuse. They may be beaten or have their bones broken and are at risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections, including HIV and AIDS. They are deprived of education and parental love. Often, they don't even know which country they are being held in. Even when returned to their home countries, a child may still be at risk. Re-trafficking rates are extremely high in some countries, trapping children in a vicious cycle of abuse. This totally distorts their view of life and relationships, especially with adults.

For the last five years, Save the Children has been working in the six countries of south-east Asia's Mekong River basin.<sup>3</sup> Alongside our local partners,<sup>4</sup> we help trafficked children return to normal life in their communities. We also work alongside trafficked children to raise awareness of the dangers of trafficking in schools and through community events.

### Stark facts

- Human trafficking is a 'low risk, high profit' crime, with profits of \$32 billion annually.
- In the Americas and the Caribbean, children are increasingly being trafficked for international sex tourism.
- Up to 800,000 people are trafficked within west Africa every year, many of them children.
- In Côte d'Ivoire, 12,000 children have been found working on cocoa plantations. They are not relatives of the plantation owner, and many are suspected to have been trafficked into the country.

### Combating child trafficking

- Save the Children urges governments to prioritise the framing and enforcement of legislation that provides protection for children who are at risk of child trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation.
- In addition to being immediately removed from exploitative situations, all trafficked children should be assessed for their individual needs, informed about their choices and offered full support. At all times, these children must be treated as victims and not illegal immigrants.

- Trafficked children must participate in all decisions that directly affect them.
- The demand for trafficked children needs to be tackled and stopped, as well as the ways in which children are supplied to employers, criminals and others.
- Governments must prioritise regional and international co-operation to enforce legal and practical measures that prevent children being illegally removed from their communities.

## Commercial sexual exploitation

At any one time, an estimated 1.8 million children are being sexually exploited for profit across the world. They are forced by adults into prostitution, the pornography industries and sex tourism. Children are made to take part in sexually explicit films, where their abuse is recorded for entertainment and widely circulated among paedophile networks. In sex tourism, abusers deliberately pick holiday destinations where they know they can pay to have access to children for sexual intercourse – child rape – and force them to be photographed in sexually humiliating poses.

Chronic poverty is one of the major reasons why children are at risk of exploitation. However, a myriad of complex social, political and economic factors have led to the unprecedented growth in the commercial sexual exploitation of children. Some sell sex as a survival mechanism when they've exhausted all other means of making money. During wars and natural disasters, rates of sexual exploitation also intensify, as children and their parents resort to desperate measures to survive.

Virulent forms of sexual exploitation are also often linked to traditional cultural practices. In India and Ghana, for example, girls are ritually sexually exploited through the religious *devadasi* and *trokosi* traditions. Offered to priests, they are confined and controlled within the temple.



Sexual exploitation has a devastating impact on any child. Children who are commercially sexually exploited are under the complete control of their abusers. They are used as commodities, raped, beaten and sometimes tortured. They are also at high risk of severe long-term physical and mental health problems, including HIV. Children who have been trafficked into sexual abuse are rarely paid, only fed and given somewhere to sleep in order for them to continue working. Even those who do return home face tremendous stigma, especially if they have not earned any money or are known to have been involved in prostitution.

## Stark facts

- In India, 30 per cent of sex workers are children. This is between 270,000 and 400,000 child prostitutes.
- In Brazil, up to half a million boys and girls are being commercially sexually exploited.
- On the borders between Brazil, Paraguay and Argentina, 3,500 children are confined in brothels and clubs for commercial sexual exploitation.
- In the UK, it is estimated that there are up to 5,000 child prostitutes; 75 per cent of them are girls.
- Police in South Africa estimate that 28,000 children are coerced into the sex industry. In Cape Town, 25 per cent of sex workers are children.
- In south and east Asia, one-third of sex workers are children.

## Combating commercial sexual exploitation

- Save the Children is outraged that combating the commercial sexual exploitation of children is not a top priority for every government. Children need to be removed from abusive situations and their protection must be a national priority.
- Governments must address and confront the demand for children for abuse as well as the supply of children for abuse.
- Save the Children acknowledges it is hard to gain access to children abused in commercial sex work. However, wherever possible, these

children must have their views heard and must participate in all decisions that affect them.

- Multi-agency co-operation on this issue is paramount to combat the sexual exploitation of children on the internet and within local communities.

## Bonded child labour

Bonded labour means that a child is indebted to their employer and unable to stop working until the debts have been cleared. Throughout the world, people work in order to repay their debts, but in some countries debt enslaves entire families for life.

In India, an estimated 15 million children could be working to pay off someone else's debt. Their parents take out a loan to pay for their home, medicine or maybe just food. They are then obliged to work for the money-lender in lieu of the money. The whole family, including children, must work until they have effectively paid back the money. This can take years for even the smallest amount. These bonded workers have no power to negotiate the repayment rate or the interest added to the original sum. Unable to earn money of their own, parents are often forced to take out further loans, increasing the amount they owe.

Bonded child labourers are slaves. The vast majority live in India, Nepal, Pakistan and Bangladesh, and most are from low-caste families. They live in extreme poverty, often on the money-lender's land, and have absolutely no control over their own lives. Illiterate, bonded child labourers rarely have any understanding of how much they owe and how long it should take to pay off their debt.

Save the Children is working to prevent bonded labour, as well as to improve the conditions and life-chances of those affected.

Bonded labour is common in factories, agriculture, mining, brick-making, carpet-weaving, firework production, rice mills and gem cutting. These child



workers are especially vulnerable to abuse by ruthless money-lenders and landlords. They receive lower wages than adult workers, but often work longer hours. Parents sometimes accept money in return for their children working, and these children can be forced to live with the money-lender in their workplace until the debt is completely repaid. These children, some as young as five, are slaves. They are frequently beaten, sometimes sexually abused, and can be 'gifted' from one employer to another at the sheer whim of a landlord or money-lender.

## Roshni's story

Roshni is a ten-year-old girl living in a village in the Thar region of Pakistan. After facing financial trouble, her father had to ask for a loan from a contractor and put Roshni and her brother and sister to work at the contractor's carpet loom.

*"I eagerly wanted to get education and become a doctor. Unfortunately, it didn't happen. We work hard at the loom, from dawn to dusk. Initially, it was very difficult for me to sit at the loom so long, but now I am used to it. After working at the loom for eight months, my salary for a day's work is just 40 rupees [under 50p]. I also do a bit of embroidery work at night-time. All my earnings go to cover the expenses of the nine members of my family. I always try my best to save some of my earnings so that I can help one of my younger brothers in his studies. But I haven't succeeded so far in saving anything for my brother. However, I will try to do something for him if I can."*

## Stark facts

- In Nepal, there are approximately 200,000 bonded labourers, many of them children.
- In Pakistan's Sindh province, almost seven million bonded labourers, including children, work for their landlords without pay.
- Around 250,000 children live and work in Pakistani brick kilns in complete social isolation.

## Combating bonded child labour

- Save the Children believes bonded labour is one of the worst forms of child labour in the world and its abolition must be made a priority at national and international level.
- All forms of exploitation based on enforcing debt repayment by other family members need to be outlawed. Comprehensive national strategies are needed to implement laws with the active participation of all affected groups.
- Governments must provide resources for the release and rehabilitation of bonded child workers, and rigorously prosecute those who employ children for debt repayment.
- Governments should have national policies that enable the poor to access non-exploitative forms of credit, thus empowering them to avoid money-lenders.
- There is a clear need for comprehensive, independent national surveys to identify the total number of bonded workers in affected countries.

## Forced work in mines

A million children are working in mines and quarries in more than 50 African, Asian and South American countries. Working in a mine or quarry is one of the most dangerous occupations for any child.

Chronic poverty drives children underground into mines. They work so that they and their families can survive. The number of children in small-scale mines and quarries is increasing. These small sites are labour intensive, and are often in remote locations where child miners are effectively invisible. Furthermore, many businesses are mobile: when one deposit is exhausted, miners and their families move straight on to the next.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) around 40,000 children work in mining. Some have been forced at gunpoint by government troops or rebels to carry loads of extracted minerals. Child slaves have also been reported working in mines in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia.



Children as young as five are forced down narrow, hand-built mine shafts without any safety equipment. Confined underground for long hours, they breathe toxic fumes while digging, breaking rocks and carrying heavy loads. Their shifts last up to 24 hours, and sometimes they are given drugs to overcome fear and maintain their stamina. Children also work unprotected in mineral extraction, wielding tools designed for adults. They crush ore using toxins like mercury, and risk fatal contamination. In quarries, children break and sort rocks for long hours without rest. In most cases, they are not even paid for their work because they are not seen as workers in their own right, but merely as appendages to their parents.

Mining work has extreme impacts on children. Their water supplies are often contaminated, and mining settlements squalid. A sick or injured child rarely receives medical attention. They face underground explosions, respiratory problems and sheer exhaustion. Mining often shortens their lives through chronic ill health. They are literally worked into the ground.

### Stark facts

- In the Sahel region of west Africa, 200,000 children work in small-scale gold and mineral mines and quarries. They make up more than a third of the entire workforce.
- Almost 18,000 children are working in gold, silver and copper mines in the Philippines.
- In Tanzania, 70 per cent of children in three separate mining sites said they had been forced to leave school and work in mines to support their families.
- A recent study in a Peruvian gold mine revealed that mine workers have an average mercury contamination almost eight times over the national maximum safety limit.
- In India, children make up 20 per cent of the workforce in sandstone quarries.

### Combating children's mining work

- Governments must address the urgent protection needs of children who cannot be removed immediately from working in or around mines through improved inspection and the enforcement of minimum safety standards.
- International donors and agencies should encourage and support governments and employers to remove children from mines, quarries and accommodation sites and to prosecute employers and owners using child miners.

### Forced agricultural labour

Agricultural work is a daily reality for around 132 million children under the age of 15 around the world. Almost 70 per cent of all child labourers work on farms and plantations, a significant minority in harsh and hazardous slavery-like conditions.

Some children start working on large commercial farms or family farms growing export crops when they are as young as five years old. They are immediately exposed to pesticides, heavy machinery, machetes and axes. Because the agricultural sector is usually less regulated than other sectors, child agricultural labourers lack adequate legal protection, and face abuse, injury and harsh exploitation. Other children are sent away to work on farms belonging to members of their extended family, separated from their immediate family and socially isolated. They endure a stressful and highly insecure life of work and little else. Other children are used in seasonal agricultural work, especially at harvest time. In Kazakhstan, for example, children work in cotton and tobacco fields and factories for up to 12 hours a day, seven days a week, during the harvest period.

On large commercial farms children are often not even recognised as workers. Only adult males are formally registered, although in many cases families would never meet the high daily work quotas demanded by the farm owners without their children labouring, and would then face eviction



and destitution. In other cases, children are hired through subcontractors, enabling farm owners to turn a blind eye to children's ages and the terms under which they work. Conditions of work are usually insecure and subcontractors may exploit children by over-charging for food, transport and accommodation, and holding back wages.

Such subcontractors may also be involved in trafficking children and forcing them to labour under dangerous conditions. They are beaten if they don't comply with the farmers' demands, which include carrying loads so heavy they cause open wounds. If children try to escape they face severe punishment.

## Stark facts

- On tobacco estates in Malawi, 78 per cent of children aged 10–14 work purely so their families can fulfil their daily work quota and keep their home.
- In Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, rural schools are closed during the cotton harvest. Children aged ten upwards pick cotton by hand. They earn less than £1 a day.
- Around 450,000 children, mostly girls, are working in cottonseed fields in India. They work long hours to repay family debts and are exposed to toxic chemicals and deprived of schooling.

## Combating forced agricultural labour

- Save the Children urges governments and international agencies to promote economic development aimed specifically at removing children from hazardous agricultural labour.
- We also urge governments and agencies to draw up programmes that comprehensively address health and safety among children in agricultural labour.
- Corporate responsibility and accountability among companies further down the supply chain (eg. in marketing and processing) should be actively promoted to bring about their involvement in removing children from hazardous agricultural work.

## Child soldiers/combatants

Worldwide, it is illegal to recruit and use children under the age of 15 as combatants or in other roles in conflicts, for example, as messengers, 'wives' or cooks. Yet adults frequently exploit children to fight their wars. Children have been used during recent wars in Angola, Afghanistan, Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka. Today, 300,000 children under the age of 15 are associated with fighting forces. Some are just seven years old.

Children are easy recruitment targets for adults because they are easy to control and manipulate, and they learn quickly. They are used to kill, lay hazardous mines, and act as spies and porters. Girl soldiers are sexually abused for 'troop morale'. They are also given as 'wives' for adult soldiers, and endure horrific violence at the hands of men brutalised by war. Early pregnancy is a major health risk.

Whether enticed to volunteer or recruited by force, these children's rights to life, development and survival are brutally denied as soon as they are involved in war.

Save the Children is currently working in Southern Sudan, where the 20-year war ravaged communities and coerced children into battle. Education is almost non-existent in Southern Sudan, leaving children with no sense of an alternative to war.

Many child soldiers are abducted by adults, but they also volunteer to fight – for many reasons, including desire for revenge or power, loyalty to a cause, or desperate need for protection.

The reality is horrific. Forcibly separated from their families, child soldiers live on the streets or on the move. They are killed, maimed, taken prisoner and sometimes tortured. They are forced to watch or take part in murders, even those of their own neighbours or families. Children are sometimes drugged into incoherence before battle, and then goaded to kill. Even after being demobilised,



PHOTO: FELICIA WEBB

**David holds his school books during an outdoor lesson at his school in Northern Bahr el Ghazal state, Southern Sudan. Save the Children UK's education project here is benefiting a total of 30,062 children.**

children used to 'living by the gun' are often easily re-recruited into fighting forces.

Save the Children is working to negotiate the release of children associated with fighting forces. We are also helping to improve ex-child soldiers' life chances through education and by working to reduce the poverty and insecurity that leaves children vulnerable to recruitment.

### **David's story\***

David is a teenage boy from North Bahr al Ghazal, in Southern Sudan. He is now 16 years old.

*"When I was young, none of us went to school. We worked instead. When the war broke out between the government Mujahideen and the SPLA,<sup>5</sup> the Mujahideen often attacked our area, and would carry children away on horseback. Two of my brothers were abducted and killed. I thought the only thing left for me was to join the SPLA. I volunteered when I was 11.*

*"They gave me military training: how to march and shoot, and fight and defend myself. I didn't have any schooling and was beaten if I made a mistake. I fought on the front line three times, and even though I saw other children being killed I was never afraid. But I was exhausted and we were fighting a war for nothing. After two years I had to escape, though I knew if I was caught they would punish me severely or even kill me.*

*"I wanted to go to school. Three of us escaped. We walked for weeks through forest until we reached home.*

*"At home I persuaded my parents to let me go to school, but at first the other students rejected me. They were scared of me because I'd been a soldier. School is not always good: we have nothing to eat and often go back home hungry. But it taught me it's not good to get weapons and go to fight. School has changed my life."*

\*David is not his real name.





## Stark facts

- More than 20,000 former child soldiers in west Africa are involved in Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR) programmes, or waiting to be demobilised.
- Of girls who passed through interim care centres in Liberia, 75 per cent reported being sexually abused during the war.
- In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) 11,000 children have been conscripted into militias.
- In a landmark case, Thomas Lubango Dyilo, a militia leader in the DRC is scheduled to be tried in the International Criminal Court for conscripting and enlisting child soldiers.

## Combating the use of child soldiers

- Save the Children believes an integrated approach is needed to prevent recruitment, based on community support, clear knowledge of the risks to children in conflict areas, and the widespread promotion of positive alternatives.
- Donors and national governments must ensure that children are demobilised immediately from armed groups and forces, and must allocate appropriate resources for their permanent reintegration back into their communities.
- Reintegration programmes should support all children affected by armed conflict, not just child soldiers.
- Preventing the use of girls by adult troops during conflict needs to be a priority, with community-based support, reintegration and resources for girls and their dependants.

## Forced child marriage

Despite the known health and other risks of early marriage, 100 million girls will marry before their 18th birthday over the next decade.<sup>6</sup> Many of these girls will be forced into marriage by their parents or extended family members.

Forced marriage occurs when at least one partner does not give consent and is coerced into marrying,

and includes 'mail order' and internet child brides. The forced marriage of children takes place in many different cultural, political and economic situations, and involves boys as well as girls. However, girls are undoubtedly the most affected and suffer the most severe consequences. They are frequently intimidated, but also abducted, raped and sometimes murdered. A girl or woman who is forced to marry is usually a slave, forced to live and sleep with her husband, and often physically confined indoors.

Forced marriage is most common in India, Nepal, Bangladesh and sub-Saharan Africa, including Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Uganda.

In Asia, the skewed sex male-to-female ratio has led to increased trafficking of girls for forced marriage. In Afghanistan, marriage is used to settle debt, and Afghan girls are also given as compensation for the death of a man from another family.

Forced marriage is concealed from public scrutiny. An ancient tradition in many countries and regions, parents may consent to their daughter's forced marriage for money or because they believe it will protect her from sexual assault and pregnancy outside marriage. However, the marriage itself becomes the abuse. Married girls are usually denied education or the chance to work outside their home, and are deliberately made totally dependent on their husbands.

In industrialised countries like Britain, daughters as young as 13 are sometimes sent to south Asia and forced to marry local men. In north Africa and the Middle East, marriage can be a guise to coerce young girls into sexual abuse and forced labour. The groom becomes the owner of the young bride, who may be raped by her husband and his male relatives.

## Stark facts

- Approximately 14 million adolescent girls give birth each year. Girls under 15 are five times more likely to die during pregnancy and childbirth than women over 20.



- Children from Nepal and Bangladesh are regularly trafficked to India as brides for 'bachelor villages'.
- In the Middle East and north Africa, girls are 'married' for just a few hours under the siqeh system. This is a pseudo-legal method men use to have sex with underage girls.
- The British Foreign and Commonwealth Office reports between 250 and 300 cases a year of girls and young women being sent to Asia and forced to marry local men.
- In Niger, 77 per cent of girls are married before they are 18 years old.

## Combating forced child marriage

- In addition to laws criminalising the demand for forced marriage, Save the Children calls for effective preventive measures in all affected countries and regions.
- A specific offence of 'forced marriage' needs to be included in national criminal codes.
- The nullification of forced marriage must be simplified, and survivors of forced marriage entitled to sue perpetrators.
- The right of girls to education must be enforced through mandatory measures, in addition to wide-ranging scholarship and tuition programmes.

## Domestic slavery

*"I would like to study. Always washing clothes and utensils cannot be life. I want to go to school."*

These are the words of Koli, 16, from Sundarban in West Bengal, India. Koli works as a domestic servant. She's never been to school.

Koli's desire for education highlights one of the difficulties that child domestic workers face. Boys are involved in domestic work, but it is usually girls who clean other people's houses instead of having an education. Some are well looked after, the majority have to work extremely hard, and some children are brutally exploited as domestic slaves.

There is growing urban demand for young domestic workers, who are recruited from poor rural areas in particular. Children often work in order to repay family debt, which places them under the control of their employers. In other cases, parents are unaware of the risks involved and may offer to send their daughter to a wealthy household, believing she will be sheltered and educated, and that the work itself will be a good marriage preparation. In many places, domestic work is the only available opportunity. This leads to girls leaving home at a very early age so the employer can 'groom' them for work. Some child domestics are six years old.

These children work extremely long hours and are often very isolated. They earn a pittance at most, and regularly describe extreme forms of physical and psychological punishment from their employers.



PHOTO: TOM PIETRASKI

**This eight year-old child domestic worker works in the home of a Kolkata family in India and has been employed since the age of five. She attends the Right Track drop-in centre run by Save the Children and is now attending school.**



These include beatings, starvation, verbal abuse and threats. In many cases, children's personal freedom is restricted or totally denied. Many are banned from attending school, or have so much work they cannot attend classes. These are undoubtedly conditions of domestic slavery.

Save the Children interviewed 500 child domestics in West Bengal, India. The vast majority worked 15 hours a day, with very few breaks. Half the children had not been allowed to see their family for a year, and almost 70 per cent had been physically abused. A third had been sexually abused. A quarter of their parents admitted they knew their child was being abused, but felt powerless to intervene. Since 2002, Save the Children has been working in Calcutta and the surrounding area with a local partner, Loreto School.<sup>7</sup> To date, more than 600 children have been reunited with their families, and 18 villages have declared themselves 'child domestic worker free communities'.

### Stark facts

- Child domestic workers describe extreme punishments, including beatings with hot irons, whippings and scalding water being thrown over them.
- There are 200,000 child domestic workers in Kenya, 550,000 in Brazil, 264,00 in Pakistan, 100,000 in Sri Lanka and 150,000 in the Peruvian capital, Lima.<sup>8</sup>
- In Nepal, 53 per cent of child domestic workers are unpaid, 45 per cent work extremely long hours and 80 per cent work at night.

### Combating domestic slavery

- Save the Children calls urgently on all governments to ban child slavery. Until this point, they must include rigorous child protection requirements for child domestic workers in national legislation that significantly improve children's working conditions.
- All child domestic workers must be registered by law, identifying where they are working and for whom.

- There need to be extended education opportunities for child domestics in all affected regions and countries.
- No child under the minimum age should be employed as a domestic worker.
- Penalties for employing under-age children must be effectively administered if they are to work as a deterrent.

## Recommendations for action to combat child slavery

The bicentenary of the 1807 Slave Trade Act offers each of us an opportunity to reflect on the inhumanity of slavery.

From 1500 until the mid-1800s, up to 13 million men, women and children were transported from Africa as slaves. Many of those who survived the journey to the plantations of the Americas and the Caribbean were literally worked to death. This was a crime against humanity. It is, however, vital to remember that the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade was the result of dogged human rights campaigns by activists across Africa, Britain and the Americas. These men and women confronted slavery and racism, and exposed the extent of goods produced through slave labour.

Although the transatlantic trade was eventually abolished, slavery remains widespread in the world today – and child slaves are among the most vulnerable slaves anywhere. Governments around the world must take decisive action now to combat child slavery. By addressing the demand for slave-like child labour and the goods produced by child slaves, we can start to make an immediate difference. By providing education to children in areas of chronic poverty and conflict, we can promote sustainable alternatives to commercial sexual abuse and to children fighting as soldiers or risking their lives working in mines and quarries. Our ongoing work with our local partners is proof that child slavery is not a tragic inevitability.



Save the Children urges governments across the world to use the bicentenary of the Slave Trade Act to ensure that:

- they address child slavery in their own policies on global poverty reduction
- existing national and international legislation on trafficked children is put into practice
- more money and resources are invested to protect children working in slavery-like conditions
- legislation and public education campaigns are used to stamp out the demand for the commercial sexual exploitation of children
- recovery and rehabilitation programmes are provided to offer emergency and long-term support for all children who have been trafficked and/or subjected to commercial sexual abuse
- education is offered in ways that support the removal of children involved in the worst forms of child labour, eg, that it is accessible, flexible and affordable
- there is wide-ranging access to local credit schemes targeting families from poorer countries whose children are at risk of entering bonded labour
- national and international anti-poverty strategies, including those implemented by institutions like the World Bank, include financing mechanisms and anti-poverty strategies that clearly address child slavery at every stage
- the forced marriage of children is outlawed, with stringent penalties for perpetrators

- national re-integration programmes support all children affected by armed conflict and are funded for long enough to prevent re-recruitment
- exploited children are informed and involved in all decisions that directly affect them and their welfare.

Save the Children is calling on the public to:

- lobby their MPs to make the elimination of child slavery a priority
- support fair trade initiatives that protect the rights of child labourers.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> International Labour Organization, *Every Child Counts: new global estimates on child labour*, Geneva 2002

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*

<sup>3</sup> These countries are China, Laos PDR, Thailand, Cambodia, Myanmar (Burma) and Vietnam.

<sup>4</sup> These include the Mekong Children's Forum and the Thai Bureau of Anti-trafficking in Women and Children.

<sup>5</sup> SPLA: Sudanese People's Liberation Army, a rebel group formed in 1983 by John Garang de Mabior.

<sup>6</sup> Bruce, J., Clark, S. 2004. *The implications of early marriage for HIV/AIDS policy*, brief based on background paper prepared for the WHO/UNFPA/Population Council Technical Consultation on Married Adolescents. New York: Population Council.

<sup>7</sup> Loreto School, Sealdah, Calcutta

<sup>8</sup> *Helping Hands or Shackled Lives? Understanding child domestic labour and responses to it*, International Labour Office, 2004,

For further information on any of the issues covered, please contact Save the Children  
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