

World Day Against Child Labour
Joint Statement of the Commonwealth 8.7 Network and the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI)

12 June 2024

For Immediate Release

The Commonwealth 8.7 Network and the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) Calls for Urgent Action to End Child Labour in all of its forms, in line with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 8.7.

London - 12 June 2024: Today, on World Day Against Child Labour, the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative and the Commonwealth 8.7 Network joins the global community to call for immediate and decisive action to eradicate child labour in all its forms.

The 2025 target for eradicating child labour is rooted in the global commitment to achieve Sustainable Development Goal Target 8.7 which calls for “immediate and effective measures to end child labour in all its forms by 2025”. This target was established in 2015 as part of the [United Nations’ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#). However, progress to achieve this target has been slow, and er than desired. Despite global efforts, millions of children are still forced into labour, predominantly in Africa and Asia.

According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), over 160 million children were in child labour in 2020. This accounts for nearly 1 in 10 children worldwide with almost half (73 million) engaged in hazardous work that directly endangers their health and development. These children are deprived of their childhoods, opportunities for education, and prospects for a brighter future.

The [COVID-19](#) pandemic significantly impacted child labour, pushing more children into exploitative situations and threatening the progress made in recent years. Across the Commonwealth, lockdowns and restrictions on economic activity led to job losses and income decline. This pushed many families deeper into poverty, making them more reliant on child labour for survival. Today, millions of children still toil in hazardous conditions, their childhoods stolen. Poverty, lack of education, and weak enforcement leave them vulnerable.

[Climate change](#) is another driver of child labour, with children in communities that are more susceptible to climate change impacts disproportionately affected. These communities experience a vicious cycle where child labour both exacerbates their vulnerability and is a symptom of their struggles. [Climate change](#) disrupts agricultural productivity, triggers extreme weather events, fosters climate-driven migration and conflict, and compromises health and essential infrastructure. These challenges drive households into increased poverty. Furthermore, climate induced displacement often leads to loss of income and assets, increasing the likelihood of child labour as families attempt to augment family income and rebuild their lives in new locations.

This year’s [World Day Against Child Labour](#) on the theme ‘**Let’s act on our commitments: End Child Labour!**’ is a clear indication that words are not enough, and that urgent action is needed to eradicate this global issue. This day also marks the 25th anniversary of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No.182). The Commonwealth 8.7 Network and CHRI believe that every child has the right to a safe, healthy, and nurturing environment. We are committed to supporting initiatives that provide quality education, strengthen legal frameworks, and promote sustainable economic opportunities for families to break the cycle of poverty and child labour.

On this day, we call on Governments to:

1. Ensure that national laws align with international standards, such as the ILO Conventions No. 138 on Minimum Age and No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, and that these laws are effectively enforced.
2. Enhance access to quality education for all children, as education is a powerful tool to prevent child labour and break the cycle of poverty.
3. Implement social protection measures to support families economically, reducing their reliance on child labour as a means of survival.
4. Support the development of alternative income sources for families in rural areas, particularly those vulnerable to climate change impacts.
5. Provide rehabilitation and support services for children who have been involved in child labour to help them reintegrate into society and access education and other opportunities.

We call on Businesses to:

6. Adopt ethical sourcing practices and ensure their supply chains are free from child labour.
7. Regularly assess suppliers' practices through independent audits to identify and address child labour issues.
8. Establish a clear code of conduct that prohibits child labour and outlines expectations for ethical sourcing practices throughout supply chains.

In June 2022 at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Rwanda, Commonwealth leaders unanimously adopted the Kigali Declaration on Child Care and Protection Reform, which is a historic agreement focusing on ensuring and restoring the rights of children following the COVID-19 pandemic. This declaration includes commitments to phase out orphanages in the Commonwealth, tackle the underlying causes of parental separation, and establish sustainable and effective safeguarding systems to eliminate child labour, forced labour, trafficking, and sexual exploitation.

CHOGM presents a powerful platform for collective Commonwealth action. The 2024 CHOGM taking place in Samoa in October presents a critical opportunity for member states to reignite the fight against child labour. Commonwealth leaders must commit to strengthening legal frameworks, prioritising education access, and investing in social safety nets that keep families afloat. Collaborative efforts can improve supply chain transparency, hold businesses accountable, and empower communities to reject child labour practices.

Let CHOGM be a turning point!

By working together, the Commonwealth can create a future where every child is free to learn, play, and contribute to a brighter shared future.

The Commonwealth 8.7 Network is an international member-driven network of 107 local civil society organisations that share a common vision to eradicate modern slavery, forced labour including child labour, and human trafficking as set out in Target 8.7 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

The Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) is an independent non-governmental organisation working for the practical realisation of human rights, focusing on access to justice and access to information, as well as freedom of expression and contemporary forms of slavery.

<End>

Contact:

Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI)
Secretariat to the Commonwealth 8.7 Network
Email: 8.7network@humanrightsinitiative.org
Website: <https://www.commonwealth-87.org>