

## Child slavery

Despite the fact that many people believe that slavery no longer exists, the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimated that there are some 5.5 million children in slavery across the world.

Child slavery is often confused with child labour, but is much worse. Whilst child labour is harmful for children and hinders their education and development, child slavery occurs when a child's labour is exploited for someone's else gain.



Photo: Child bonded labourer in India's brick kiln  
Credit: Bharat Patel

This group of children includes:

- Children who are used by others to profit from them, often through violence, abuse and threats, in prostitution or pornography, illicit activities, such as forced begging, petty theft, and the drug trade;
- Forced child labour, for example in agriculture, factories, construction, brick kilns, mines, bars, the tourist industry or domestic work;

*"We had to get up early to work and came back to the house late. Once I cut myself with a machete but I didn't receive any care."*

**Boromo, 15, trafficked into a cocoa farm in Ivory Coast**



### Said (13) and Yarg (16)

The brothers were born into slavery in a wealthy family in Mauritania. They worked all day from a very early age whilst their master's children went to school and played football.

"We weren't allowed to eat the same food as the rest of the family, or sleep in the same rooms, or wear the same clothes. They would beat us for any reason at all."

The boys managed to escape five years ago. With our help, their master became the first slave-owner ever prosecuted for slavery. However, he was released on bail until the appeal, which still hasn't taken place.

But the boys are free. "Now our lives have changed: we have friends, and we can refuse to do anything we don't want to do."

- Children who are forced to take part in armed conflict.
- Children forced to marry, when they have not consented to marriage, are exploited within it or/and are not able to leave the marriage.

### Why do children work?

Most children work because their families are poor and their labour is necessary for their survival.

Children are often employed because, compared to adults, they are more easily controlled and are unlikely to demand higher wages or better working conditions.

For many children, school is not an option. Education can be expensive, or schools are physically inaccessible.

As well as being a result of poverty, child labour also perpetuates poverty. Many working children do not have the opportunity to go to school and often grow up to be unskilled adults trapped in poorly paid jobs.

*I had to work seventeen hours a day and they gave me no time off. My employer never showed me kindness, she kept insulting me. After three years, as her children grew older, she just threw me out.*

**Minjiza Daniel, former child domestic worker in Tanzania**

**Although the number of children in child labour has fallen by a third in recent years, the number of children in slavery hasn't significantly changed since 2005. This means that most vulnerable children haven't been reached by international development programmes. This is why Anti-Slavery campaigned to include eradication of slavery in the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals.**

## Facts about child slavery

**5.5 million** children are in slavery, trafficking, debt bondage and other forms of forced labour, forced recruitment for armed conflict, prostitution, pornography and other illicit activities (ILO)

**168 million** are estimated to be in child labour (ILO)

**120 million** child labourers are below the age of 14 (ILO)

**85 million** children are in hazardous work that directly endangers their health, safety and moral development (ILO)

**70 million** women aged between 20-24 had been married before the age of 18

**300,000** children are estimated to serve as child soldiers, some even younger than 10 years old (UNICEF)

**15.5 million** children are in domestic work worldwide – overwhelming majority of them girls (ILO)

**981** children were referred to authorities in the UK as potential victims of trafficking in 2015

*“If you try to run they shoot you and you die. If you stop working, they beat you. It was just like the slave trade”*

**Twins Aimamo and Ibrahim, 16, from Gambia, subjected to forced labour on a farm in Morocco, during their attempt to get to Europe.**

## Child work, child labour, child slavery?

### Child work

Some types of work make useful, positive contributions to a child's development, helping them learn useful skills. Often, work is a vital source of income for their families.

### Child labour

Child labour is not slavery, but nevertheless hinders children's education and development. Child labour tends to be undertaken when the child is in the care of their parents.

### Worst forms of child labour

“Hazardous work,” otherwise known as the worst forms of child labour, is work that irreversibly threatens children's health and development, through, for example, exposure to dangerous machinery or toxic substances, and may even endanger their lives.

### Child slavery

Child slavery is the enforced exploitation of a child for their labour for someone else's gain.

### Child Trafficking

Trafficking involves transporting, recruiting or harbouring people for the purpose of exploitation, using violence, threats or coercion. When children are trafficked, no violence, deception or coercion needs to be involved, trafficking is merely the act of transporting or harbouring them for exploitative work. Away from their families, they are at the mercy of their employers.

### Child marriage

Many marriages involving children will not amount to slavery, particularly between couples aged 16 to 18 years. But when a child didn't give their consent to a marriage, is exploited within it, or is not able to leave one, that child is in slavery.



Photo: Child domestic worker in Peru

### Children in armed conflicts

Children forced to take part in armed conflicts don't only include child soldiers but also porters or girls taken as “wives” for soldiers and militia members. Children involved in conflict are severely affected by their experiences and can suffer from long-term trauma.

### Our work to end child slavery

- We work to support, protect and empower child domestic workers in Peru and Tanzania
- We work with local communities and lobby the government to stop children being forced to beg in Qu'ranic schools in Senegal
- We established six schools to provide education to children in communities affected by slavery in Niger
- We work to protect and provide education to children of bonded labourers in India's brick kilns
- We advocate for protection of unaccompanied refugee children across Europe
- We press for implementation of Child Guardianship schemes to protect trafficked children in the UK