

MUN Without Borders 2026 Chair Report

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International Labour Organization

Committee Overview

Combating Child Labor in Sub-Saharan Africa through Education and Labor Protections

Strengthening Labor Protections for Migrant Workers in the Gulf States

COMMITTEE DESCRIPTION:

This committee will follow THIMUN procedure, meaning that resolutions must be drafted prior to the start of the conference. Delegates are expected to come prepared with well-researched draft resolutions, working papers, and an understanding of relevant operative and preambulatory clauses. Submissions must follow THIMUN formatting standards (single-spaced, Times New Roman, etc). Additionally, it is highly suggested that every delegate conduct relevant research on the agenda, their country's stance, and past actions.

All delegates are expected to come to the first day of the conference with a working knowledge of all or most of the topics, as well as the policies of the countries that they represent. As the International Labour Organization, it is imperative that delegates keep in mind that their purpose is to protect and promote universal human rights and fundamental freedoms without infringing upon national sovereignty. Above all, remember that Model UN is not a competition, so get to researching and try to have fun!

ABOUT US:

Ruha Lee

Hello, delegates!

My name is Ruha Lee, and this is my second year in Model UN. I'm thrilled to be chairing ILO this year. My background in mock trials, public speaking, and obviously mock united nations has taught me the importance of rigorous argumentation and poise strategies. These skills are essential when tackling labor rights across diverse contexts. The issues before us demand serious deliberation. Child labor and migrant worker exploitation affect millions each day. I expect delegates to come prepared with genuine understanding of their country's labor policies. Your solutions should be ambitious yet implementable, grounded in both human rights and economic realities. I'm committed to fostering substantive debate where every voice matters. Please reach out anytime with questions or concerns.

Good luck, delegates!

Email: ruhakimlee@gmail.com

Agenda 1: Combating Child Labor in Sub-Saharan Africa through Education and Labor Protections

The issue of child labor continues to pose a significant threat to fundamental human rights concerns in Sub-Saharan Africa, where about 72 million children undertake tasks that deny them their right to education. Child labor refers to tasks that violate children's rights and interfere with their schooling, affecting their physical and mental growth negatively. This issue cuts across sectors like agriculture, mining, manufacturing, domestic work, and increasingly, digital forms of exploitation.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the percentage of child laborers represents about 40% of the global total and the highest concentration is found in western and central Africa. According to the ILO, 28% of all children aged between 5 and 17 years are involved in child labor across the region, compared to global figures of 10%. For nations like Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, the rate exceeds 40%. Agriculture is the leading sector, which employs over 80% of the laborers in the rural areas enduing them to work under toxic pesticides, heavy machinery and hazardous working conditions. Moreover, there are at least 15 million children currently suffering from child domestic service, the majority of who are girls working under exploitative conditions without any protections in force.

The root causes include poverty, limited access to quality education, weak governance and armed conflict. Economic instability forces families to rely on childrens income for survival. At the time inadequate educational infrastructure—crumbling schools, teacher shortages, high fees—makes education hard to reach. Corruption among officials allows traffickers and employers to act without punishment. In countries like South Sudan, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of Congo armed conflicts use child labor as a weapon forcing children into service or exploitation.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the ILO Conventions 138 and 182 create binding frameworks. The UN Sustainable Development Goal 8.7 promises to end child labor by 2030. Important efforts include the ILO's IPEC (International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour) which works in than 90 countries and UNICEF's child protection programs. Still implementation is inconsistent. Governments, in SubSaharan Africa often lack the funding and political will. Non-governmental organizations help fill the gaps. They cannot grow fast enough to meet the need.

Education is recognized as both prevention and remedy. Studies show that every year of education reduces child labor likelihood by 5-10%. Yet 57 million children in Sub-Saharan Africa remain out of school. Solutions require simultaneous investment in accessible,

quality education and enforceable labor standards—a dual approach few nations have sustained.

How can the UN support Sub-Saharan nations in expanding free, quality primary and secondary education as a barrier to child labor without creating dependency on external funding?

What enforcement mechanisms can the ILO establish to hold governments and multinational corporations accountable for supply chain exploitation, particularly in agricultural exports?

How can solutions balance cultural contexts (where family work is traditional) with universal child protection standards?

What role should survivor-centered approaches play in policy design, and how can former child laborers be integrated into solution-building?

"Child Labour: Global estimates 2024, trends and the road forward"

<https://www.ilo.org/publications/major-publications/child-labour-global-estimates-2024-trends-and-road-forward>

"Methodology of the 2024 ILO-UNICEF Global Estimates of Child Labour"

<https://www.ilo.org/publications/methodology-2024-ilo-unicef-global-estimates-child-labour>

"Child Labor: Global Estimates 2024" (Full Report PDF)

<https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2025-06/2024%20Global%20Estimates%20of%20Child%20Labour%20Report.pdf>

"Despite progress, child labour still affects 138 million children globally – ILO, UNICEF" (Press Release)

<https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/despite-progress-child-labour-still-affects-138-million-children-globally-ilo-unicef>

"2024 Global Estimates of Child Labour in figures"

<https://www.ilo.org/resource/other/2024-global-estimates-child-labour-figures>

"2024 global estimates child labour frequently asked questions"

<https://www.ilo.org/resource/other/2024-global-estimates-child-labour-frequently-asked-questions>

"Child Labour Global Estimates 2024" (UNICEF Data)

<https://data.unicef.org/resources/child-labour-global-estimates-2024/>

Agenda 2: Strengthening Labor Protections for Migrant Workers in the Gulf States

Exploitation is rife among migrant workers in GCC countries even though they play a crucial role in the region's economy. It is said that there are 24 million migrant workers, who make up 76% -95% of the labor force in Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, and who remain locked in regimes that deprive them of labor rights and other basic protections and justice. Most of these workers come from South Asia (Bangladesh, Nepal, India, Sri Lanka), the Philippines, and East Africa, while contributing billions in remittances.

The kafala (sponsorship) system is one that underlies the vulnerability of migrant workers. The kafala system is a system that links migrant workers with employers, resulting in job immobility, suppression of wages, and abuses by employers that go unpunished. Migrant workers cannot change employers, leave the country without getting an exit visa, and get charged with breaking their contracts. Domestic workers—who are mostly women in the GCC region—are not covered by labor laws, putting about 2.5 million women in conditions similar to slavery. Moreover, exploitative recruitment processes perpetrate debt bondage via recruiting fees, withholding of identity documents, and contractual agreements that are false to promises made to workers.

Social protection failures fuel abuse. While GCC nationals receive health care, unemployment benefits, and pensions, migrant workers – who contribute to the social insurance schemes – do not have access or face restrictions in accessing such services. Migrant workers have wage protection systems in place, but there is inadequate enforcement – employers are not penalized when withholding salaries and manipulating payments. Migrant workers lack access to justice – they cannot file complaints out of fear of deportation, there are no independent labor tribunals in GCC countries, and trade unions are outlawed.

The legal environment recognizes international norms. All the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states have either ratified or worked with ILO Conventions, including ILO Convention No. 182 on Worst Forms of Child Labour and ILO Convention No. 29 on Forced Labour. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (UN SDG) No. 8.8 affirms the need for safeguarding the rights of migrant workers and providing them with

decent working conditions. Since 2009, GCC states have adopted the so-called "kafala-reform," which has led to the removal of employment restrictions, the establishment of wage protection mechanisms, and the introduction of labour dispute mechanisms. Qatar has set up the ILO office in 2017 and made high-level commitments to reform. Meanwhile, Oman started developing a social protection model for migrant workers. However, the gaps in implementation remain: in many cases, reforms apply only to national workers and skilled migrants but not underprivileged low-paid workers.

Unfortunately, the differences between what the law states it should be and what actually happens are pronounced. Laws may promise decent pay and mobility to the workers, but there are not enough mechanisms to enforce them, corruption leads to violations of the law, and the workers cannot report the abuses independently. Gender differences aggravate the situation—female migrant workers have to face sexual harassment, discrimination in their wages, and restriction to domestic jobs with no safeguards offered. Bilateral agreements between the states of origin and destination also remain underdeveloped, which means that workers lose their entitlements and have nowhere to go for help and support.

How can the UN establish binding accountability mechanisms requiring GCC member states to extend comprehensive social protection—healthcare, unemployment benefits, pensions—to all migrant workers, regardless of employment status or sector?

What enforcement structures and independent oversight bodies can ensure kafala reforms translate into practice, with transparent monitoring, worker testimony protection, and meaningful sanctions for violations?

How can origin countries (South Asia, Philippines, East Africa) and GCC states develop robust bilateral labor agreements that guarantee fair recruitment, wage portability, and recourse mechanisms across borders?

What strategies can amplify migrant worker voice and representation in policy design, particularly for women domestic workers and informal sector workers currently excluded from tripartite dialogue?

"STREAM - Extending Social Protection to Migrant Workers and their Families in the South Asia-Gulf Corridor" (ILO Project)

<https://www.ilo.org/projects-and-partnerships/projects/stream-extending-social-protection-migrant-workers-and-their-families-south>

"Social protection for migrant workers in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries: A regional mapping of provisions on paper and in practice"

<https://www.ilo.org/publications/social-protection-migrant-workers-gulf-cooperation-council-countries>

"New ILO programme set to advance social protection for migrant workers across the South Asia–Gulf corridor" (Press Release)

<https://www.ilo.org/resource/news/new-ilo-programme-set-advance-social-protection-migrant-workers-across>

"Review of National Social Protection Legislation and Legal Frameworks for Migrant Workers in the Gulf Countries"

<https://www.ilo.org/publications/review-national-social-protection-legislation-and-legal-frameworks-migrant>

"Advancing social protection for migrant workers in the GCC countries: New ambition emerges from discussion at the Global Forum for Migration and Development Summit"

<https://www.ilo.org/resource/news/advancing-social-protection-migrant-workers-gcc-countries-new-ambition>

"World leaders renew commitments to social protection for migrant workers across the Gulf, South Asia and Africa"

<https://www.ilo.org/resource/article/leaders-renew-commitments-social-protection-migrant-workers-across-gulf>

"Wage Protection Systems in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries: A regional analysis"

<https://www.ilo.org/regions-and-countries/arab-states/united-arab-emirates>

"ILO Launches Flagship Study on Extending Social Protection to Migrant Workers in the GCC"

<https://www.ilo.org/resource/news/ilo-launches-flagship-study-extending-social-protection-migrant-workers>

"Reforms without Rights: The GCC states' blinkered view of labour reforms" (Gulf Research Centre)

<https://gulfmigration.grc.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Kalush-Saraswathi-Reforms-without-Rights-Published-2024-09-09.pdf>

"Migrant Laborers in the Gulf" (Brookings Institution)

<https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Migrant-laborers-in-the-gulf-English.pdf>