**COVID-19 may push millions more children into child labour** – **ILO and UNICEF**

*Child labour down by 94 million since 2000, a gain now under threat*

**NEW YORK/GENEVA, 12 June 2020** – Millions more children risk being pushed into child labour as a result of the COVID-19 crisis, which could lead to the first rise in child labour after 20 years of progress, according to a new brief from the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNICEF.

According to *COVID-19 and child labour: A time of crisis, a time to act,* child labour decreased by 94 million since 2000, but that gain is now at risk.

Children already in child labour may be working longer hours or under worsening conditions, the report says. More of them may be forced into the worst forms of labour, which causes significant harm to their health and safety.

“As the pandemic wreaks havoc on family incomes, without support, many could resort to child labour,” said ILO Director-General, Guy Ryder. “Social protection is vital in times of crisis, as it provides assistance to those who are most vulnerable. Integrating child labour concerns across broader policies for education, social protection, justice, labour markets, and international human and labour rights makes a critical difference.”

According to the brief, COVID-19 could result in a rise in poverty and therefore to an increase in child labour as households use every available means to survive. Some studies show that a one percentage point rise in poverty leads to at least a 0.7 per cent increase in child labour in certain countries.

“In times of crisis, child labour becomes a coping mechanism for many families,” said UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore. “As poverty rises, schools close and the availability of social services decreases, more children are pushed into the workforce. As we reimagine the world post-COVID, we need to make sure that children and their families have the tools they need to weather similar storms in the future. Quality education, social protection services and better economic opportunities can be game changers.”

Vulnerable population groups – such as those working in the informal economy and migrant workers – will suffer most from economic downturn, increased informality and unemployment, the general fall in living standards, health shocks and insufficient social protection systems, among other pressures.

The brief proposes a number of measures to counter the threat of increased child labour, including more comprehensive social protection, easier access to credit for poor households, the promotion of decent work for adults, measures to get children back into school, including the elimination of school fees, and more resources for labour inspections and law enforcement.

ILO and UNICEF are developing a simulation model to look at the impact of COVID-19 on child labour globally. New global estimates on child labour will be released in 2021.

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