



THE ZURICH CONFERENCE

African Union

Study Guide for Zurich Model United Nations 2023

Written by Darya Shiryaeva , Emil Schätzle

April 27 – 30, 2023

Zurich, Switzerland

Chairs Contact: africanunion.zumun23@gmail.com



THE ZURICH CONFERENCE

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	1
Topic A: Ensuring universal access to primary education	1
Background Information	3
Causes	3
Role of Stakeholders	3
Best practices	4
Child Labour	6
Definition of Child Labour	7
Worst Forms of Child Labour	8
Prevalence of Child Labour in Africa	9
Causes of Child Labour	9
Overview of efforts to combat Child Labour	11

Visit us at zumun.ch or find us on [instagram.com/zumun_conference/](https://www.instagram.com/zumun_conference/)

ZuMUN, c/o VSETH, Universitätstrasse 6, 8092 Zurich

ZuMUN is a project of ETH MUN, commission of VSETH, in collaboration with MUN UZH



THE ZURICH CONFERENCE

Letter from the Chairs

Darya “Hi everyone! My name is Darya, I study English and Modern History. After an amazing experience as chair of the UNSC last year, I’m very excited to come back to ZuMUN for the third year in a row as your chair for the African Union. The AU is a committee that I always was very curious about, and I am excited to finally bring it to life with my co-chair Emil. Looking forward to meeting all of you! Toodaloo ✨”

Emil “Hi guys! My name is Emil Schätzle, I am a 21-year-old Computer Science student at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich. I have attended two MUN conferences as a delegate in the past, which were ZuMUN and TEIMUN held in The Hague. This will be my first time chairing a committee, and I am excited to share this experience with you. During my free time, I enjoy dancing, specifically in the standard and Latin styles, learning French on Duolingo (according to the owl, at least), and spending time with my friends.”

We look forward to seeing you all soon!

Diplomatic regards, Emil & Darya



THE ZURICH CONFERENCE

Topic A: Ensuring universal access to primary education

The issue of access to primary education in Africa is a significant challenge that affects millions of children on the continent. Despite efforts by various stakeholders to increase access to education, many children in Africa still do not have access to quality primary education, leading to limited opportunities and hindering their development.

The African Union committee will discuss this critical issue and develop solutions to increase access to primary education in Africa.

Background Information

According to UNESCO, Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest out-of-school rate globally, with 32 million children out of school. The primary school net enrollment rate in Africa is also low, with only 78% of children attending primary school. Additionally, dropout rates and low learning outcomes remain a significant challenge.

Causes

Several factors contribute to the limited access to primary education in Africa, including poverty, gender inequality, cultural barriers, inadequate infrastructure, and conflict.

Poverty: Poverty remains a significant barrier to education, with many families unable to afford school fees, uniforms, and textbooks.

Gender Inequality: Gender inequality remains a significant barrier to education, particularly for girls. Cultural beliefs and practices often limit the education of girls, leading to low enrollment rates and high dropout rates.

Cultural Barriers: Cultural practices, such as early marriage and female genital mutilation, also limit access to education for girls.

Inadequate Infrastructure: Many schools in Africa lack adequate infrastructure, such as classrooms, textbooks, and teaching materials.

Visit us at zumun.ch or find us on [instagram.com/zumun_conference/](https://www.instagram.com/zumun_conference/)

ZuMUN, c/o VSETH, Universitätstrasse 6, 8092 Zurich

ZuMUN is a project of ETH MUN, commission of VSETH, in collaboration with MUN UZH



THE **ZURICH** CONFERENCE

Conflict: Conflict in Africa also contributes to limited access to education, with many children unable to attend school due to safety concerns.

Role of Stakeholders

To address the issue of access to primary education in Africa, various stakeholders must work together. These include governments, civil society organisations, development partners, and communities.

Governments: Governments must prioritise education and invest in education infrastructure and teacher training to increase access to primary education.

Civil Society Organizations: Civil society organisations can play a crucial role in raising awareness about the importance of education and advocating for policies and programs to increase access to education.

Development Partners: Development partners can provide financial and technical support to governments and civil society organisations to implement education programs.

Communities: Communities can play a significant role in promoting education and creating a conducive learning environment for children.

Best practices

Several best practices and successful models have been implemented in different African countries to address the issue of access to primary education. These include:

- The Elimu Tuitakayo Program in Kenya, which provides scholarships and financial support to vulnerable children to ensure they can attend and complete primary school.
- The Ghana School Feeding Program, which provides school meals to children in deprived areas to encourage enrollment and attendance.
- The Rwanda Education Commons, which provides open educational resources and e-learning platforms to increase access to education.

Visit us at zumun.ch or find us on [instagram.com/zumun_conference/](https://www.instagram.com/zumun_conference/)

ZuMUN, c/o VSETH, Universitätstrasse 6, 8092 Zurich

ZuMUN is a project of ETH MUN, commission of VSETH, in collaboration with MUN UZH

The country blocks

The issue of access to primary education in Africa affects many countries on the continent. However, some countries have higher rates of out-of-school children and low primary school enrollment rates than others. According to UNESCO, the countries with the highest number of out-of-school children in Sub-Saharan Africa are:

- ★ Nigeria
- ★ Ethiopia
- ★ Democratic Republic of Congo
- ★ Tanzania
- ★ Côte d'Ivoire
- ★ Niger
- ★ Burkina Faso
- ★ Mali
- ★ Cameroon
- ★ Chad

These countries also have low primary school enrollment rates, with many children unable to attend school due to poverty, gender inequality, cultural barriers, inadequate infrastructure, and conflict. However, it is important to note that access to education is a complex issue, and the factors that contribute to limited access may vary from country to country.

Several African countries have made significant progress in addressing the issue of access to primary education. These countries have implemented policies and programs that have led to increased enrollment rates and improved learning outcomes. Some of the countries that are leaders in fighting this issue include:

- ★ **Mauritius:** Mauritius has achieved universal primary education, with a net enrollment rate of 99%. The country has invested in education infrastructure and teacher training and implemented policies to promote gender equality in education.
- ★ **South Africa:** South Africa has made progress in increasing access to education, with a primary school net enrollment rate of 97%. The country has implemented policies to address poverty and inequality and provided free education for the poorest families.
- ★ **Rwanda:** Rwanda has implemented several education reforms, including the introduction of competency-based learning and the use of technology to improve



access to education. The country has achieved high primary school enrollment rates, with a net enrollment rate of 97%.

- ★ Ghana: Ghana has made significant progress in increasing access to education, with a net enrollment rate of 87%. The country has implemented policies to address poverty and provide free education for children in deprived areas.
- ★ Tunisia: Tunisia has achieved universal primary education, with a net enrollment rate of 97%. The country has invested in education infrastructure and teacher training and implemented policies to promote gender equality in education.

These countries have demonstrated that with political will and investment in education, it is possible to increase access to primary education and provide children with the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Conclusion

The issue of access to primary education in Africa is a critical challenge that requires urgent attention from stakeholders. To increase access to education, governments, civil society organisations, development partners, and communities must work together to invest in education infrastructure, promote gender equality, and provide financial and technical support to education programs. By implementing best practices and successful models, it is possible to increase access to primary education in Africa and provide children with the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Child Labour

The issue of child labour is a complex, world-wide problem that forms a hotspot in Africa (especially in Sub-Saharan Africa). It is of such importance that it has become part of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (target 8.7). These call for "Immediate and effective measures to [...] secure the prohibition and elimination of the worse forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms¹". With less than three years remaining and the global community still not even being close to achieving this target, the African Union committee will debate the issue and try to come up with feasible solutions to address it.

What is Child Labour?

Definition of Child Labour

Gainful employment of underaged humans is not inherently considered to be child labour. In fact, there are some forms of employment that are considered to be beneficial to the development of children, such as earning some pocket money after school or working alongside their parents in a family business. **Child labour**, on the other hand, describes work, that has a negative impact on the life of children: by depriving them of their childhood, their potential and dignity or by being harmful to their physical or mental development.² It is important to point out that this especially includes negative interference with their schooling.

In general, all work done by individuals below the respective minimum age defined by the *Minimum Age Convention*³ of the *International Labour Organisation* is considered to be child labour.

Minimum Age for Labour

There are several different minimum ages for different types of work:

1. **General Employment:** All signatories are requested to specify a minimum age for admission to employment which "shall not be less than the age of completion of compulsory schooling and, in any case, shall not be less than 15 years". However, members whose economy and educational facilities are insufficiently developed may

¹ UN "[Sustainable Development Goals](#)"

² ILO "[What is child labour](#)"

³ ILO "[Minimum Age Convention](#)"

temporarily specify this as 14 instead, subject to certain conditions. An example for this category would be a cashier in a supermarket.

2. **Hazardous work:** The convention calls for an even higher minimum age of 18 years for hazardous work which “by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out is likely to jeopardise the health, safety or morals of young persons”. As an example, one can think of working in a mine or bleaching jeans (exposure to harmful chemicals or fumes provided).
3. **Light work:** Signatories may set a minimum age as low as 13 (temporarily 12 if the temporary exception for general employment applies) years on “light work which is
 - a. not likely to be harmful to their health or development; and
 - b. not such as to prejudice their attendance at school, their participation in vocational orientation or training programmes approved by the competent authority or their capacity to benefit from the instruction received.

“. Delivering newspapers to earn some pocket money or helping in the family business after school would fall into this category.

Forms of Child Labour

Child labour may appear in several forms. Some examples include:

1. **Agriculture:** Especially in the less developed parts of the world, there is still a high demand for workforce in the agricultural sector. Hence, this is the most prevalent form of child labour, accounting for about 71 percent ⁴ of child labour world wide. It includes children working in farming, herding livestock and fishing.
2. **Manufacturing:** For many manufactured products, there is high demand for more or less qualified workforce. In some countries, children are at a high risk to end up in one of these factories. A particularly important example is the fashion industry with a huge demand for tailors.
3. **Domestic work:** If parents have to work, families are large or resources are difficult to harvest, children are at risk to have to work in private households, cleaning, cooking or taking care of younger children; be it in their own or others homes. Note, that the border between “doing household chores” that does not negatively impact the development of the children and harmful child labour is vague.

⁴ ILO [“Global Estimates of Child Labour RESULTS AND TRENDS, 2012-2016”](#)

Worst Forms of Child Labour

While all forms of child labour are considered to be bad for children, some of them are especially so and are hence targeted for even sooner abolition by the 1999 *Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention* ⁵:

1. **Forced labour:** “all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict;” Note that the last part of this definition especially refers to child soldiers.
2. **Prostitution:** “the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances;”
3. **Illicit activities:** “the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties;”
4. **Hazardous work:** “work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.”

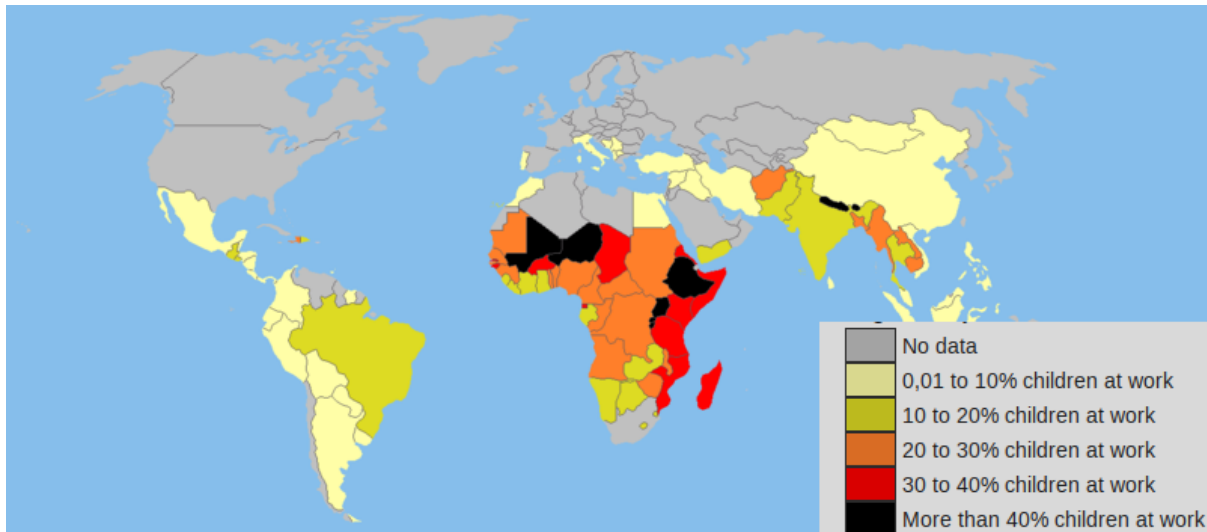
Prevalence of Child Labour in Africa

The African continent is a hotspot of child labour both by the absolute number of children employed as well as by their proportion relative to the number of children in total. Almost every fifth child on the continent is subject to forms of child labour [4]. However, the prevalence of child labour is not equally spread throughout all of the african states: while some countries such as South Africa (4%), Algeria (3%) and Tunisia (2%) show a comparatively low prevalence, child labour is fairly common in other countries such as Ethiopia (45%), Burkina Faso (42%) or Chad (39%) ⁶. In general, the issue is most wide-spread in sub-Saharan Africa. This map illustrates the prevalence of child labour world wide in 2005 ⁷:

⁵ ILO [“Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention”](#)

⁶ UNICEF [“Child labour”](#)

⁷ [Wikimedia Commons, data from World Bank World Development Indicators 2005](#)



Causes of Child Labour

The ILO lists several causes of child labour⁸. They include, but are not limited to:

1. **Poverty:** Without doubt, this is “the greatest single force driving children into the workplace.” Particularly, where income is low and families are large (among others because of missing access to contraception), parents simply do not have the means to support their families. Hence, the money earned or work done (in the case of family businesses) by the children is required to enable the family to prevail.
2. **No Education:** If access to education is not possible or affordable, working may be considered to be the best way of teaching children skills that enable them to support themselves later in life (and to keep them occupied). However, this keeps them from getting better-paying jobs as adults, perpetuating the cycle of poverty.
3. **Social and Cultural Reasons:** There are quite a few examples of social and cultural reasons leading to child labour:
 - a. In some more traditional communities in Africa, it is common for children to be involved in supporting the family (such as herding or farming) from a young age.
 - b. Some cultures do expect children to learn crafts and trades from their parents, which oftentimes demands a large amount of time (to an extent that qualifies as child labour).

⁸ ILO [“Causes \[of Child Labour\]”](#)

- c. Some communities may also consider working to be “good for the character-building and skill development of children”.
- d. In some cultures, family are expected to “indebt themselves for social occasions or religious events”. In order to pay back these debts later, they have to rely on money earned by their children. Note that this differs from the first reason (poverty), as the family would have had enough resources to support itself in the first place.

Overview of efforts to combat Child Labour

Efforts to eradicate all forms of child labour have been taken on three different levels with some success. However, there is still a lot to be done and while good frameworks exist, their enforcement is not rigid enough yet.

International Conventions and Programs

The ILO has passed three conventions to address the issue of child labour so far:

1. **Minimum Age Convention [3]:** Passed in 1973, the already aforementioned Minimum Age Convention of the ILO was the first international treaty to address the issue of child labour. The convention provides the definition of child labour given earlier and calls for the establishment of according minimum ages in national law. It has been ratified by 175 countries by April 2023⁹.
2. **Convention on the Rights of the Child¹⁰:** Passed in 1990, this convention of the United Nations recognises “the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child’s education, or to be harmful to the child’s health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development” (with children being individuals below eighteen years (or, if lower, the age at which majority is achieved)). While this formulation seems to be included by the Minimum Age Convention, almost all (195) countries have ratified it.
3. **Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention [5]:** This convention was passed in 1999 and specifically addresses the worst forms of child labour defined before. It has been ratified by a vast majority of countries (187)¹¹ by April 2023.

⁹ ILO [“Ratifications of C138”](#)

¹⁰ UNICEF [“Convention on the Rights of the Child text”](#)

¹¹ ILO [“Ratifications of C182”](#)

Additionally, there are also several noteworthy international programs addressing the issue. One example is:

1. **ILO-IPEC¹²**: The *International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour* established by the ILO in 1992 attempts to combat child labour by increasing national capabilities to address child labour problems and connecting organisations world wide to address the issue. While the program prioritises the worst forms of child labour, it also addresses all other forms. Overall, the program is focused on assisting countries with implementing effective law.

National Efforts

Many african countries take national approaches to combat child labour. To give an example:

1. **Ethiopia¹³**: The Ethiopian government has established a new *National Action Plan to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor* for the period from 2021 to 2025. The plan includes approaches like improving access to education, providing decent work for adults (to enable them to support their families) and strengthening law enforcement. These measures show some effect, but there is still much work to be done.

Non-governmental Organisations

Several NGOs launched projects to combat the issue of child labour. One example is:

1. **Pact: Children Out of Mining¹⁴**: The global NGO Pact conducted this project in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The measures taken can be grouped into two categories: raising awareness on the issue and “training caregivers on how to make informed decisions about children’s wellbeing”. The project managed to reduce the prevalence of child labour at the targeted mines by 90%.

¹² ILO [“International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour”](#)

¹³ US DOL [“Child Labor and Forced Labor Reports Ethiopia”](#)

¹⁴ Pact [“Children Out of Mining Final Report 2016”](#)



THE ZURICH CONFERENCE

Questions a Resolution Must Address

In order to steer debate into correct direction, we provide the following questions that we would expect to be addressed by a potential resolution:

1. What are the main causes keeping the member states from reaching target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals?
2. What progress have member states achieved in addressing these causes?
3. What measures can be taken on the level of the African Union to support their efforts?
4. What is a realistic outline to abolish child labour on the African continent? What are milestones on that path and when should they be reached?