

Justice for Africa's Children



We, the Laureates and Leaders for Children from across the world, have come together to demand that world leaders deliver justice for Africa's children. Freedom remains out of reach for millions of Africa's children, even when the world is wealthier than it has ever been. Humanity is losing its moral compass.

In June 2021, the ILO and UNICEF announced the first shocking increase in the number of child labourers worldwide in two decades, during the first four years of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (2016-2019). Even before the start of the pandemic when the world grew \$10 trillion richer, the number of child labourers in the world rose to an appalling 160 million children, over half of which (i.e. 86 million) are in Sub-Saharan Africa. This is the consequence of racial and systemic discrimination against Africa.

The historical and systemic exploitation of Africa is partly to blame but injustices and discrimination perpetrated by our generation are stealing the lives and the futures from millions more children. With the advent of COVID-19, these inequalities have taken on new dimensions and are increasing at a rapid pace, including through the blatant and shameful manifestation in the form of vaccine apartheid. The weight of these inequalities, unfortunately, is borne disproportionately by the poorest and most marginalised children. Moreover, underfunded, under-implemented or selectively enforced policies and programmes mean that already vulnerable groups such as ethnic and religious minorities, rural and agricultural communities, girls, and children on the move are much more likely to be in extreme poverty and child labour. All of this is compounded by corruption and conflict which has a devastating effect on children's rights.

The situation is aggravated by the fact that Africa has the lowest social protection coverage in the world, and functions that were the least covered include access to education, sickness benefits, benefits for children and family, unemployment protection, and pensions benefits.

African countries are among the most resource rich in the world, yet they don't receive the profits they are due because of a discriminatory global tax system. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the world had a common enemy like never before, but instead of uniting humanity with our response, we disproportionately helped businesses and people in richer countries and left the most vulnerable to fend for themselves. We know that only 0.13% of the \$12 trillion released as COVID relief globally was allocated to multilateral funding to low-income countries. The rest was largely used to bail out large corporations. The emergency IMF Special Drawing Rights gave \$2,000 per European child and \$60 per African child. The international community's continued and institutionalized subjugation of Africa is appalling and must end.

Africa is heading towards its first economic recession in 25 years, as a result of the pandemic. This, along with the lack of access to vaccines, means that adults lose employment and families are pushed into even more severe poverty, forcing children to fill in as exploited and enslaved workers. The immeasurable suffering of our children is set to magnify even further, and we can no longer afford to look the other way.

The good news is that there is a powerful and proven solution, direct social protection for children. We know it works as seen through the examples of Bolsa Familia in Brazil, mid-day meals in India, and cash transfers in Ghana and Uganda. Universal social protection systems, such as pension programmes in Kenya and Tanzania, and social protection floors can support and strengthen families. Emergency social protection measures to help the poorest families during the COVID-19 pandemic worked where they were put in place. Social protection eliminates extreme poverty and inequality which drives millions into child labour. It has been used for decades and in richer countries is the largest item of government expenditure. Just a tiny fraction, i.e. less than \$53 billion, spent in poorer countries annually would extend social protection to all children and pregnant women in low income countries and substantially reduce extreme poverty. The globalisation of social protection is a historic idea whose time has come.

Africa's children are our children. It is our individual and collective moral obligation to protect them. To end child labour in Africa, we call on the courage, compassion and humanity of all world leaders to:

1. Ensure direct child benefits to every child in Africa by prioritising domestic budgets and targeted programmes while the international community meets its aid responsibilities through child-focused funding of the UN Secretary General's Global Accelerator on jobs and social protection
2. Achieve just representation of African countries in global decision making, end discrimination in Special Drawing Rights, and establish fair tax and trade rules with African countries as equal partners
3. Cancel all debt for low and lower-middle income countries in Africa, hold corrupt leadership or businesses to account, and eliminate vaccine apartheid by temporary waivers of intellectual property rights and access to raw material to counter COVID-induced vulnerabilities in Africa and around the world

We also call on African leaders to empower young people to come forward and claim their voice. They are the most powerful voices for change and the architects of Africa's future. Together with a strong civil society and a supportive government, youth can be the masters of Africa's destiny.

Agenda 2030 is heading toward imminent failure if we do not end child labour in Africa. We are, yet again, breaking our promises to our children. As long as Africa's children are working in fields, mines, shops and homes, they are not in schools. They are forced to work in place of millions of adult jobs thus prolonging intergenerational cycles of poverty and inequality. Africa is a mirror to the world. The realisation of the rights of a girl in a Sub-Saharan African country, who is exploited and abused and denied her right to dream, will be the true assessment of our efforts to achieve the promise to leave no one behind. She is our child. Until every child in Africa is free, none of us are free.

We, Laureates and Leaders for Children, stand with the children, youth, citizens and leaders of Africa to fight for our shared vision and responsibility to give every child in Africa a free, safe, healthy and educated childhood. It is time for justice for all of Africa's children. It is time to stand with Africa.

Signatories (by alpha order)

Nobel Laureates or Nobel Prize winning organisations

Mr. Houcine Abassi
2015 Nobel Peace Laureate

Mr. Abdessattar Ben Moussa
2015 Nobel Peace Laureate

Dr. Peter Agre
2003 Nobel Laureate in Chemistry

Dr. Elizabeth Blackburn
2009 Nobel Laureate in Medicine

Dr. Harvey Alter
2020 Nobel Laureate in Medicine

Dr. Martin Chalfie
2008 Nobel Laureate in Chemistry

Prof. Hiroshi Amano
2014 Nobel Laureate in Physics

Mr. Michael Christ
International Physicians for the Prevention of
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1985 Nobel Peace Laureate

Amnesty International
1977 Nobel Peace Laureate

Prof. Aaron Ciechanover
2004 Nobel Laureate in Chemistry

HE Óscar Arias Sánchez
1987 Nobel Peace Laureate

Mdm. Lisa Clark and Philip Jennings
International Peace Bureau
1910 Nobel Peace Laureate

Dr. Barry Barish
2017 Nobel Laureate in Physics

Prof. Mario R. Capecchi
2007 Nobel Laureate in Medicine

His Holiness the Dalai Lama
1989 Nobel Peace Laureate

Dr. Johann Deisenhofer
1988 Nobel Laureate in Chemistry

Prof. Peter C. Doherty
1996 Nobel Laureate in Medicine

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2003 Nobel Peace Laureate

Dr. Mohamed ElBaradei
2005 Nobel Peace Laureate

Mdm. Beatrice Fihn
International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear
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2017 Nobel Peace Laureate

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2006 Nobel Laureate in Medicine

Prof. Joachim Frank
2017 Nobel Laureate in Chemistry

Prof. Jerome Friedman
1990 Nobel Laureate in Physics

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2011 Nobel Peace Laureate

Prof. Avrem Herskho
2004 Nobel Laureate in Chemistry

Prof. Roald Hoffmann
1981 Nobel Laureate in Chemistry

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1999 Nobel Laureate in Physics

Prof. Takaaki Kajita
2015 Nobel Laureate in Physics

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2011 Nobel Peace Laureate

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2004 Nobel Laureate in Economics

Mdm. Mairead Maguire
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Mr. Mohamed Fadhel Mahfoudh
2015 Nobel Peace Laureate

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2007 Nobel Laureate in Economics

Prof. Edvard Moser
2014 Nobel Laureate in Medicine

Prof. May-Britt Moser
2014 Nobel Laureate in Medicine

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2018 Nobel Peace Laureate

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2016 Nobel Laureate in Medicine

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2021 Nobel Laureate in Physics

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2006 Nobel Laureate in Economics

Dr. William Phillips
1997 Nobel Laureate in Physics

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2006 Nobel Peace Laureate

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1996 Nobel Peace Laureate

Sir Peter Ratcliffe
2019 Nobel Laureate in Medicine

Sir Richard J. Roberts
1993 Nobel Laureate in Medicine

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2014 Nobel Peace Laureate

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2016 Nobel Laureate in Chemistry

Prof. Susumu Tonegawa
1987 Nobel Laureate in Medicine

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2013 Nobel Laureate in Chemistry

Mdm. Jody Williams
1997 Nobel Peace Laureate

Leaders

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HRH Princess Rym Al Ali
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HE Mladen Ivanic
President of Bosnia and Herzegovina (2014-2018)

Mdm. Farida Allaghi
former Libyan Ambassador to the EU

HE Ivo Josipovic
President of Croatia (2010-2015)

HE Salim AlMalik
Director-General, Islamic World Educational,
Scientific and Cultural Organisation

Mdm. Kerry Kennedy
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Mr. Abdulaziz Altwaijri
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Mr. Peter Kodjie
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Mata Amritanandamayi
Spiritual Leader

HE Jadranka Kosor
Prime Minister of Croatia 2009-2011

Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon
United Nations (2007-2016)

HE Zlatko Lagumdzija
Prime Minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina (2001-
2002)
Deputy Prime Minister (2012-2015)

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Director-General, UNESCO (2009-2017)

HE Stefan Löfven
Prime Minister of Sweden (2014-2021)

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HE Moussa Mara
Prime Minister of Mali (2014-2015)

Mdm. Lorena Castillo Garcia
First Lady of Panama (2014-2019)

HE Rexhep Meidani
President of Albania (1997-2002)

Mr. Hikmet Cetin
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey (1991-1994)
Speaker of the Parliament (1997-1999)

Mr. Amre Moussa
Secretary-General, Arab League (2001-2011)

HE Emil Constantinescu
President of Romania (1996-2000)

Mr. Narayan Murthy
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Mr. Richard Curtis
UN SDG Advocate

HE Joseph Muscat
Prime Minister of Malta (2013-2018)

Mr. David Edwards
General Secretary, Education International

HE Rosen Plevneliev
President of Bulgaria (2012-2017)

HE Ameenah Gurib-Fakim
President of Mauritius (2015-2018)

Mr. Ismail Serageldin
Vice-President, World Bank (1992-2000)
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HE Manmohan Singh
Prime Minister of India (2004-2014)

HE Petar Stoyanov
President of Bulgaria (1997-2002)

HE Eka Tkeshelashvili
Deputy Prime Minister of Georgia (2010-2012)

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President of Latvia (1999-2007)
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