

Justice for Africa's Children

In June 2021, the ILO and UNICEF announced there had been a shocking increase in the number of child labourers worldwide during the first four years of the Sustainable Development Goals (2016-2019). Even before the start of the pandemic, in a world that had never been richer, 8 million more children¹ were working at the expense of their health, education and childhood.

However, these global aggregates masked an even bigger increase in sub-Saharan Africa where the number of child labourers increased by a staggering 16 million². This is the equivalent of over four hundred more African children becoming child labourers every hour³ since the world pledged to 'leave no-one behind'. Africa now has more child labourers than the rest of the world combined⁴.

Child labour is caused by many factors, some children are forced into child slavery, some are trafficked from their families and others are orphaned without access to a government support. However, by far the most common cause of child labour is extreme poverty. The children who are forced to work, are the same children who are missing an education, suffering from malnutrition and have the least access to healthcare and clean water. Families left so poor, in the 21st century, that their children work in order to have food to eat.

This extreme poverty is the result of ongoing national and international discrimination against the most marginalised children and their communities. The historical exploitation of sub-Saharan Africa is a major cause, but new and ongoing injustices still deny African children their share of the world's resources, with devastating results for millions of girls and boys across the continent.

Widening Inequality 2015-2019

Between 2015 and 2019, the world became \$12 trillion richer, around \$1,600 per person⁵. This should have been good news for all children, especially those living in low-income countries. However, this increase in wealth wasn't shared equally. While the Gross National Income (GNI) per capita increased by nearly \$5,000 in high income countries in these four years, in Sub-Saharan Africa it didn't increase at all⁶.

In fact, in 2016, high income countries increased their wealth per person more in a year than sub-Saharan African countries had in the previous 50 years⁷. The same was true in 2017. This ever-increasing inequality is shameful and morally indefensible.

It also outweighs progress elsewhere. Although ODA provided an important \$47 per person per year to sub-Saharan Africa from high income countries between 2015-2019⁸, it is dwarfed by wealth per person increasing by \$1,240 per year in rich countries whilst falling in low-income countries in the same period⁹.

Natural Resources & Government Expenditure per Child

Many African countries have more natural resources than countries with 50 or even 100 times their GDP per capita. The problem is that the profits from these resources are moved offshore. The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is in the top ten of countries with the most natural resources in the world¹⁰. The DRC supplies 70% of the world's cobalt¹¹ which has helped increase global growth by literally powering most of the world's electronic goods - tablets, mobile phones, laptops and now cars. Yet the DRC Government receives only a fraction of the money from these resources leaving it with insufficient funds to support children in DRC properly, resulting in widespread child labour including in the cobalt mines themselves.

It is the same story across the continent, Zambia is one of the world's top 10 copper producing countries¹², Mali is one of the world's top 20 gold producing countries¹³ and Tanzania is among the seven African nations in the world's top ten diamond producing countries.¹⁴ Yet they are all among the poorest countries in the world. If you calculate the tax revenue each country has to spend per person, the government of Zambia only has \$217 to spend per person per year, the government of Mali only \$127, the government of Tanzania \$122¹⁵. The Netherlands receives more tax revenue than all of East and Southern Africa put together¹⁶.

Corruption and unequal allocations within countries are also important factors, but the huge and increasing global inequality is the key reason millions of children are still working in child labour and dying from extreme poverty despite the world's wealth doubling in the last 20 years¹⁷. The reality is that even if the governments of low-income countries allocated all their tax revenue to support children, it would not be enough for basic services. In this situation, the French government would have \$55,965 to spend per child, the Madagascan government would have \$136 per child, more than 400 times less¹⁸.

Ongoing International Injustices (2020-21)

The unjust and unequal response to COVID 19

The world had a common enemy like never before in COVID-19, but instead of uniting humanity with our response, we left the most vulnerable to fend for themselves. The G7's 'global agenda for action' allocated \$12 trillion in response funding¹⁹ but just 0.13% went to multilateral funding to low-income countries²⁰. Single industries received more COVID-19 support funding than all the low-income countries in Africa put together²¹. We have seen record house prices and stock options driven by excessive stimulus in rich countries²² while tens of millions more children are now in extreme poverty in Africa²³.

The allocation of vaccines has also been tremendously unequal. African countries request for the information to make their own vaccines have been denied and they have had to watch rich countries stockpile more vaccines than they need²⁴. Vaccine Apartheid²⁵ means African countries still don't have enough vaccines to protect even their doctors and nurses²⁶. Italy has vaccinated more people than all of Sub-Saharan Africa put together²⁷. Scientists pooled knowledge and rushed against time to discover a vaccine and then world leaders denied poorer countries access to it so a few companies could make a big profit²⁸. The inequality in the response to COVID-19 has been immoral and inhumane.

Discriminatory Special Drawing Rights allocation

In August 2021, the IMF announced a historic development to address the global liquidity crisis due to COVID-19²⁹ which was particularly affecting poorer countries unable to do the quantitative easing undertaken by the US and EU central banks. The *Special Drawing Rights (SDR)* they issued should have been some rare, good news for children in low-income countries during the pandemic. However, instead of allocating this emergency global funding by each country's population or giving more to the poorer countries who couldn't do quantitative easing, it was decided to give most of it to rich countries.

When you compare the SDR allocations by the number of children in each continent, it means they were worth over \$2,000 per European child and just \$60 per African child³⁰. Even though the emergency use of SDRs was proposed as an initiative to help low-income countries, rich countries couldn't help using their disproportionate power to keep most of the funds for themselves. High income countries control 65% of the IMF's votes³¹ and all too often selectively enforce austerity on poorer countries. The UK and Belgium, despite having just 1% of the world's population³², control more IMF votes than all 54 countries in Africa put together³³ (as they have since the IMF was founded in colonial times)³⁴.

The new global tax deal excluding African demands

In April, US President Biden proposed a new initiative to introduce a fairer global tax system including moving 'toward an end to profit shifting and offshoring'³⁵. It was a possible step towards tax justice for the low-income countries that lose so much under current international tax rules.

However, as predicted³⁶, only a handful of low-income countries were included in the discussions and critical issues for developing countries were ignored. In the end, the world's major extractive companies were simply excluded³⁷ from the agreements. The OECD, who convenes and leads global tax negotiations, only has high and upper middle-income countries as members with no African members at all³⁸. Rich countries have again drawn up their own rules. Though Kenya and Nigeria and a majority of low-income countries haven't backed the deal³⁸, it moves ahead bringing a fairer tax system for some but not to those who needed it the most.

These three serious injustices are just a few of the most recent examples. They are part of a broader set of modern-day international exploitation and discrimination that perpetuates the extreme poverty and inequality that drives child labour. Others include:

- **Debt** - Even before the pandemic 30 African countries spent more on debt than healthcare⁴⁰ despite average child mortality rates in Sub-Saharan Africa being almost twice as high today as the United States 70 years ago⁴¹.
- **Trade** - Africa's share of global trade since 1970 has actually fallen from 4.4% to 2.7%⁴². Rich countries are preventing African countries from adopting the industrial policies they themselves used to broaden their exports and various import barriers in richer countries limit Africa's ability to move up value chains.
- **Broken ODA commitments** - The UN target for rich countries is to contribute just 0.7% of their wealth in ODA. In 50 years only six countries have achieved it⁴³.
- **Illicit Financial Flows** - Corrupt leaders that steal from their people are enabled to move their money into banks and houses in richer countries. In their report '*Illicit Financial Flows from Developing Countries*' the OECD acknowledge the "general consensus that illicit financial flows likely exceed aid flows and investment in volume"⁴⁴.

Injustices within Africa

The increase in inequality and child labour is also a result of discrimination, injustice, and lack of political goodwill in leadership within Africa. Pre-existing inequalities within countries, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated economic crisis, are playing a crucial role in driving more children into child labour. Discriminatory national budgets, policies, and their selective implementation mean that members of ethnic and religious minority groups, rural communities, and children on the move are much more likely to be in extreme poverty and child labour.

Inequality in education budgets

Government spending on essential services such as social protection and education rarely benefits the poorest children at the same level as their wealthier peers. Resources and overall budgets remain too low to deliver the rights of every child, let alone to ensure equity for children in the poorest communities whose needs are too often deprioritised in favour of their less-marginalised peers. For example, a UNICEF analysis of education spending in 2015 found that, on average, 10% of education funding in low-income countries goes to the poorest children, while 38% goes to the richest⁴⁵.

The disparity of outcomes this causes within a country can be astonishing. In Nigeria, which currently has 10.1 million out-of-school children, 90% of the richest children complete secondary school, compared with only 15% from the poorest households⁴⁶. Girls are more likely to drop out. Worldwide, only 50% of refugee children have access to primary education, and just 2% of humanitarian funding is allocated to education⁴⁷ even though refugee children are vulnerable to trafficking and child labour. When education financing discriminates against the poorest families, a critical route out of poverty and child labour is barricaded.

Government inaction on child labour

A number of countries, and the African Union, have a comprehensive action plan to eradicate child labour, forced labour, human trafficking, and modern slavery in Africa. The AU action plan requires that the Member States produce a report on Agenda 2063-SDG Target 8.7 every two years, providing information on the indicators. However, many countries place such a low priority on the needs of children trapped in child labour, that they have not yet produced a single report or implemented the measures in their own National Action Plans.

All too often this is compounded by a lack of effective welfare systems for poorer families and children. Without support, orphans and child headed households are forced to fend for themselves and their siblings, leading to child labour and child malnutrition.

Escalating armed conflict

In countries such as the Central African Republic, Nigeria, Cameroon, and Ethiopia, conflict is reversing hard-won gains in poverty reduction and child labour. While the majority of the world's weapons are made and exported by high income countries⁴⁸, leaders in Africa need to take responsibility for the failure to agree and implement peacebuilding initiatives. Despite continental efforts led by the AU to 'Silence the Guns' in Africa by 2020, this deadline passed with the majority of Member States failing to either honour their pledges or show the financial or political will to address drivers of conflict including extreme poverty.

From experiencing physical and mental harm, disruption to their education, fleeing their homes or being forced to participate in violence they had no part in creating, armed conflict too often impacts children the hardest. For example, there are an estimated 250,000 children forced into being child soldiers in Africa today, approximately the size of the armies of the UK and France put together⁴⁹.

Corruption and failed governance

Corruption, misspent or 'missing' government funds that benefit the elite is by no means unique to African countries, however, the impact of this systemic failure has far more devastating consequences when the majority of the population lives in poverty with no social-protection coverage. Every year, an estimated \$88.6 billion leaves the continent as illicit capital flight, this is almost half of the annual financing gap Africa faces to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals⁵⁰. Capital Flight, combined with the off shoring of national assets steals from the children of that country and is a criminal failure of leadership. This theft of funds for individual gain also erodes trust in the government and signals weak or 'buyable' leadership, undermining the belief in democracy and increasing instability.

Social Protection for Every Child

The indefensible scale of these injustices are clear and present. Inequality between Africa and the rest of the world is growing. The share of aid going to Africa is falling. The 10% of children in the world⁵¹ who are child labourers are more invisible than ever, mining the minerals for our screens but rarely on them.

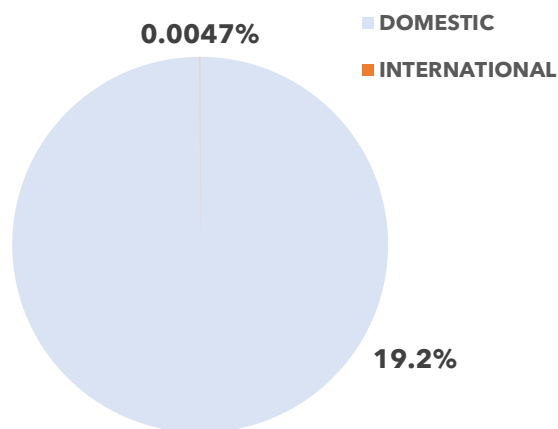
The results of this immorality are devastating. A recent report released by Laureates and Leaders for Children showed how more children have died from poverty since 1990 than all the military and civilian deaths in all the wars of the 20th century put together⁵². This is our generation's responsibility.

The world's wealth has more than doubled in the last 20 years. How rich do we have to be before we will act? The discrimination, injustices and indifference causing unnecessary child deaths, child labour and slavery, is happening now.

There is a powerful and proven solution - social protection. It eliminates extreme poverty and child labour. We know it works from countless examples such as Bolsa Familia in Brazil, mid-day meals in India and cash transfers in Ghana and Uganda⁵³.

It has been used for many decades in richer countries and is the largest item of government expenditure in high income countries. National social protection forms 40% of all government budgets in the EU (19.2% GNI) but support for social protection internationally is currently miniscule (0.0047% GNI)⁵⁴.

GNI EXPENDITURE ON SOCIAL PROTECTION BY EU COUNTRIES - DOMESTIC & INTERNATIONAL



The globalisation of social protection is a historic idea whose time has come. Technology and the relative costs mean that social protection for all children in low-income countries worldwide is now possible.

The financing gap to provide child and maternity benefits to every child and new mother in every low-income country is only \$52.9 billion⁵⁵ - the same as just two days of the COVID-19 pandemic support spending in G7 countries in 2020 or just 1.4% of the social protection expenditure in rich countries⁵⁶. The results would be transformative. It would be a chance to truly realise the rights of every child and the commitment to leave no-one behind.

Justice for Africa's Children - Key Demands

World Leaders must:

- 1. Extend Social Protection to every child and pregnant woman in low-income countries with an annual allocation of \$52.9 billion and support the UN Secretary General's global accelerator on social protection and retain emergency pandemic benefits until countries have fully recovered from COVID-19**
- 2. Ensure equitable distribution of government services and expenditures to poorer, rural and marginalised communities, support peacebuilding and hold corrupt leaders to account**
- 3. Ensure just representation of African countries in global decision making including making the African Union a full G20 member**
- 4. Establish just tax and trade rules with African countries as equal partners and establish legal framework for accountability against employment of children in global supply chains**
- 5. Meet the UN 0.7% ODA target and prioritise poorer countries, cancel debt for all low-income countries, and deliver equal allocations of SDR**
- 6. Urgently enact temporary waiver of vaccine intellectual property rights, raw material access & provide 70% vaccinations in Africa in 2022**

Reference Notes

¹ p.8, *Child Labour: Global estimates 2020, trends and the road forward*, ILO and UNICEF, 2021,

https://www.ilo.org/ipec/Informationresources/WCMS_797515/lang--en/index.htm

² p.74, *Ibid* & *Global Estimates of Child Labour*, ILO, 2016, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_575499.pdf

³ 16.6 million in four years averages 4.15million per year. This averages as 11,370 per day which averages as 474 every hour.

⁴ p.8 *Child Labour: Global estimates 2020, trends and the road forward*, ILO and UNICEF, 2021,

https://www.ilo.org/ipec/Informationresources/WCMS_797515/lang--en/index.htm

⁵ World Bank, dataset last accessed 2021, indicator NY.GDP.MKTP.CD shows Global GDP 75.027 trillion (2015) and 87.437 trillion (2019) <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD> & global population (2019) indicator SP.POP.TOTL 7.67 billion which means average GDP growth per person of \$1617.99 per person <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD>

⁶ World Bank, dataset last accessed Dec 2021, NY.GDP.PCAP.CD

GDP / capita \$40,444.07 in High Income Countries 2015 & GDP / capita \$45,406.63 in High Income Countries 2019 **increasing** by \$4,962.57 in 2015-2019

GDP / capita \$1,660.45 in Sub-Saharan Africa 2015 & GDP per capita \$1,600.88 in Sub-Saharan Africa 2019 **decreasing** by \$59.57

⁷ World Bank, dataset last accessed Dec 2021, NY.GDP.PCAP.CD

Sub-Saharan Africa GDP/capita 50 year increase (1970-2019)	High Income Country GDP/capita annual increase (Jan-Dec 2016)	High Income Country GDP/capita annual increase (Jan-Dec 2017)
\$1,383	\$1,634	\$2,478

⁸ World Bank, dataset last accessed Dec 2021, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/DT.ODA.ODAT.PC.ZS?locations=ZG>

⁹ World Bank, dataset last accessed Dec 2021, NY.GDP.PCAP.CD

GDP / capita \$40,444.07 in High Income Countries 2015 & GDP / capita \$45,406.63 in High Income Countries 2019 **increasing** by \$4,962.57 in the 2015-2019 period or \$1,240.64 per year

GDP / capita \$713.82 in Low Income Countries 2015 & GDP / capita \$688.28 in Low Income Countries 2019 **decreasing** by \$25.54 in the 2015-2019 period

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<https://www.cfr.org/blog/why-cobalt-mining-drc-needs-urgent-attention>

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¹³ Gold mine production, World Gold Council, June 2021, <https://www.gold.org/goldhub/data/historical-mine-production>

¹⁴ Top 10 Diamond Producing Countries in the World 2020, BizVibe, 2020, <https://blog.bizvibe.com/blog/top-diamond-producing-countries>

¹⁵ Combination of two World Bank databases, last downloaded Dec 2021, GC.TAX.TOTL.GD.ZS & NY.GDP.PCAP.CD.

2019 Zambian Tax Revenue (% of GDP) 16.68%, GDP per Capita \$1305.00, Tax revenue per Capita \$217.64

2019 Mali Tax Revenue (% of GDP) 14.5%, GDP per Capita \$879.12, Tax revenue per Capita \$127.47

2018 Tanzanian Tax Revenue (% of GDP) 11.7%, GDP per Capita \$1042.84, Tax revenue per Capita \$121.96

¹⁶ Combination of two World Bank databases, last downloaded Dec 2021, GC.TAX.TOTL.GD.ZS & NY.GDP.MKTP.CD

2018 East and Southern Africa Tax Revenue (% of GDP) 19.35%, Total GDP \$980 billion, Total Tax revenue \$189 billion

2019 Netherlands Tax Revenue (% of GDP) 24.02%, Total GDP \$ 910 billion, total Tax revenue \$218 billion

¹⁷ World Bank database NY.GDP.PCAP.CD, last downloaded Dec 2021, GDP per Capita World 1999 - \$5,407, 2019 - \$10,814

¹⁸ Combination of three World Bank databases, *NY.GDP.MKTP.CD*, *GC.TAX.TOTL.GD.ZS*, *SP.POP.0014.TO*, last downloaded Dec 2021, (U15 total multiplied by 1.2 estimate to approximate U18) produces this table for 2019:

Country	GDP Total (a)	Tax Revenue % of GDP (b)	Population Under 18 (c)	Tax income per child (d) = (a) * (b) / (c)
France	\$2,728,870 million	24.55%	11,971,760	\$55,965.50
Madagascar	\$14,191 million	10.467%	10,886,657	\$136.45

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	% of \$650 billion SDR Allocation	SDR Allocation per child
Europe (44 countries)	32.5%	\$59.66
Africa (54 countries)	5.2%	\$2043.64

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underwritten by a broad political consensus in support of generous development assistance. The Netherlands have also met the target since the 1970s, while Luxembourg and the United Kingdom have attained it since 2000 and 2013, respectively. **Official Development Assistance**, Inter Agency Task Force on Financing for Development Issue Brief Series, August 2016. The UK has since suspended its commitment to 0.7% during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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⁵¹ "160 million children – 63 million girls and 97 million boys – were in child labour globally at the beginning of 2020, accounting for almost 1 in 10 of all children worldwide", p.5, **Executive Summary, Child Labour Global Estimates 2020, Trends and the Road Forward**, ILO June 2021, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---ipec/documents/publication/wcms_800278.pdf

⁵² p.19, **A Fair Share to End Child Labour: Universal Social Protection for Children in Low-Income Countries**, Laureates and Leaders for Children, Sep 2021, https://www.laureatesandleaders.org/files/ugd/811759_806e57eb7d294879a80ff68cae9b9782.pdf

⁵³ p.9, Ibid

⁵⁴ p.15, Ibid

⁵⁵ p.12, Ibid

⁵⁶ p.14 & p.16 Ibid