The Role of the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Adressing Child Labour in Indonesia from 2020-2022

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ABSTRACT

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is an international organization committed to promoting workers' rights through cooperation among governments at both national and regional levels to create world peace. The ILO is involved in labor issues, one of which is child labour. Child labour is a serious global issue, with 160 million children working at the beginning of 2020, and this number is expected to increase to 168.9 million children by 2022, according to global estimates. Employing children normalizes exploitation, resulting in the restriction of children's rights, such as the right to education and adequate healthcare facilities. This paper aims to analyze the role of the ILO in addressing the issue of child labour in Indonesia from 2020-2022, considering the worsening economic conditions due to the pandemic. The authors use a qualitative approach with a descriptive method, drawing data from literature studies. The research findings illustrate that the ILO plays a role in addressing child labour in Indonesia by: (1) serving as the basis for Indonesia's child labour policies, (2) acting as a platform that facilitates Indonesia's participation in forums for the elimination of child labour, and (3) acting as an independent actor aiming to take concrete steps to eliminate child labour in Indonesia.

***Keywords:**, Role of International Organization, Child Labour, International Labour Organization*

INTRODUCTION

Since 1919, the ILO has been a meeting platform for governments, employers, and workers in 187 countries. ILO is an international organization focused on labor standards, workers' rights, and social issues related to employment. Member countries of the ILO aim to set labor standards, develop policies, and design programs to create decent work for people, both men and women (ILO, 2024). In 2020, the ILO reported that there were around 160 million child laborers, including 63 million girls and 97 million boys, representing 1 in 10 children worldwide. The increase in poverty in 2022 due to COVID-19 is expected to add 9 million children to the number of child laborers, putting them at risk of becoming child laborers. According to the National Labor Force Survey (Sakernas) in August 2020, there were 3.36 million Indonesian children working, with 1.17 million categorized as child laborers. Indonesia, an agrarian country with a strong economic sector, is considered the third-largest cocoa producer in the world. This significant agricultural sector faces major challenges, especially in rural areas, where the highest proportion of child labor is found (Save the Children, 2022). The ILO found that the number of child laborers in Indonesia from 2011 to 2020 showed a decline. There was no significant increase in the number of child laborers due to the

pandemic. In 2019, the number of child laborers aged 15-17 decreased from 31 per 1,000 children to 26 in 2020. Additionally, data from Sakernas in 2021 indicated a decrease of 500,000 child laborers aged 15-17 from February 2020 to February 2021. Most child laborers in Indonesia are still in rural areas, predominantly in the agricultural and manufacturing sectors (ILO, 2021).

According to the ILO, the Worst Forms of Child Labor (WFCL) in Indonesia include slavery, the production of pornography, gambling, the trafficking of alcohol and drugs, and any work that can endanger a child's health, safety, and morals. The government has made various efforts to address cases of child labor; however, the success of these efforts depends on factors such as the level of program implementation, law enforcement, and community support. International organizations also assist by providing additional resources and knowledge to strengthen the government's efforts in tackling this issue. This paper aims to explain the role of the ILO in addressing cases of child labor in Indonesia from 2020 to 2022.

METHODS

In this paper, the author uses a descriptive method aimed at objectively depicting or describing a situation. Descriptive methods involve fact-finding with accurate interpretation (Nazir, 2005). The author uses this type of research to describe and analyze the role of the International Labour Organization (ILO) in addressing child labor in Indonesia from 2020 to 2022. This period was chosen because child labor in Indonesia is possible to grew rapidly due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which exacerbated child labor issues by increasing poverty. The research method employed in this study is qualitative research. Qualitative data analysis involves literature studies and additional information from mass media to find detailed information about the research object, providing a realistic depiction of the object (Sugiyono, 2016). The author seeks to explore the role of the ILO in handling child labor cases in Indonesia by focusing on examining the subject in relation to contextual changes that may affect the ILO's role, such as economic, political, and social changes.

The author uses secondary data as the data collection technique. Secondary data refers to data that is indirectly provided to the data collector, which can be found in documents related to the research topic (Sugiyono, 2016). By reviewing relevant literature related to the topic, the data will be systematically identified, evaluated, and the results will be used as research data. The research method employed in this study is qualitative research. Qualitative data analysis involves literature studies and additional information from mass media to find detailed information about the research object, providing a realistic depiction of the object. The author seeks to explore the role of the ILO in handling child labor cases in Indonesia.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

ILO as an Instrument

The role of the ILO as an instrument can be understood as a crucial tool for achieving specific objectives, with the expectation that member countries will share a common understanding of the actions to be taken (Archer, 2001). This enables the ILO and Indonesia to align their perceptions regarding the issue of child labor. The guidelines for aligning perceptions are set out in ILO Conventions. There are two conventions concerning child labor: the Minimum Age Convention No. 138/1973 and the Worst Forms of Child Labour (WFCL) Convention No. 182/1999. Convention No. 138 addresses the minimum age for workers, setting it at 15 years old, with an exception for developing countries where the age limit can be 14 years. Convention No. 182 specifies certain types of work that are prohibited for children, including prostitution, slavery, pornography, drug trafficking, recruitment of children for warfare, and human trafficking. These conventions serve as instruments for the ILO to establish all aspects of the child labor problem, which are to be implemented once a country ratifies the conventions.

Indonesia's efforts to unify goals in reducing child labor issues can be evidenced by the ratification of Convention No. 138 through Law No. 20 of 1999, which sets the minimum age for employment (Indonesia, 1999) and Convention No. 182 through Law No. 1 of 2000, which addresses the elimination of the worst forms of child labor (Indonesia, 2000). These decisions indicate that Indonesia is in agreement with the ILO's stance on child labor. Indonesia has utilized the ILO's role as an instrument to achieve its national interest of reducing child labor. The inability of a country to address certain issues, combined with its unlimited interests, often leads nations to join international organizations (IOs) to achieve their goals with the help of these IOs (Archer, 2001). The role of IOs as instruments is crucial because they can provide tangible contributions to problem-solving when a country is unable to address issues on its own and has not yet optimized its efforts to achieve national interests. Utilizing the role of IOs as instruments is expected to be a tool to accelerate the elimination of child labor in Indonesia.

ILO as an Arena

The role of the ILO as an arena can be seen in its ability to serve as a forum or platform for its member countries to interact, discuss, develop policies, and solve both domestic and international problems (Archer, 2001). The website for the 5th Global Conference on Child Labour, created by the ILO, is an important platform in the global effort to end child labor worldwide. The website explains that during the 5th Global Conference held in Durban, South Africa, from May 15 to May 20 year 2022, the ILO reaffirmed its role as an arena in the effort to end child labor and forced labor by the set deadlines of 2025 for child labor and 2030 for forced labor.

The 5th Global Conference on Child Labour was attended by thousands of delegates from governments, workers' and employers' organizations, UN agencies, civil society, and regional organizations. They agreed to focus on key areas, including child labor in agriculture, children's right to education, and universal access to social protection. One of the speakers from Indonesia was Mrs. Elly Rosita Silaban, President of the Confederation of All Indonesian Trade Unions (KSBSI). She spoke during the session "Side Event 17 - What factors are needed to accelerate progress towards SDG target 8.7". Children also participated in the conference by signing the Durban Call to Action document, expressing their hope for decision-makers to intensify their efforts in eliminating child labor and forced labor.

The main theme of the conference was "Today's Actions, Tomorrow's Progress," which encompassed seven sub-topics; First, eliminating child labor as a prerequisite for positive labor outcomes with a human-centered approach (through education, skill development, continuous learning, and the transition from school to decent work, depending on the age group of the workforce). Second, high incidence of child labor in agriculture, which is closely linked to poverty and family survival strategies. Third, formalizing the economy and designing decent work. Fourth, resource needs and policies to reduce child labor and forced labor and securing adequate funding. Fifth, the COVID-19 pandemic as a challenge in combating child labor and forced labor. Sixth, experiences shared by various regions, particularly from Africa, during the conference.

And last, achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 8.7, which states that all UN member countries will take steps to end child labor by 2025. Consequently, all member countries are required to track their progress during the 2022-2025 period and present their findings at the 6th Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labor. They also agreed to share information on their practices. Thus, the ILO, as an international organization, plays a central role as an arena in raising global awareness and fostering concrete action through shared commitments and actions that can create a more just and sustainable future for all people (ILO, 2022).

ILO as an Actor

The third role of the ILO as an international organization is that of an actor. Nowadays, international organizations can influence global affairs, not just sovereign states. In this context, the ILO acts as an independent actor, where its actions and decisions cannot be influenced by external parties, but are entirely determined by its own members. The ILO has the authority to issue resolutions, recommendations, and directives. This authority can be compelling for its member states (Archer, 2001).

The ILO's role as an actor is exemplified by the MAP16 project: Measurement, Awareness-Raising, and Policy Engagement, aimed at accelerating actions against child labor and forced labor. This project, running from December 2016 to June 2024, is a development cooperation initiative managed by the ILO and funded by the United

States Department of Labor. MAP16 addresses knowledge gaps on child labor, forced labor, and human trafficking through research and development using the latest survey methodologies. It raises public awareness about these issues through data usage, strengthens government and stakeholder policies and capacities to combat child labor, forced labor, and human trafficking, and supports partnerships to advance efforts against these challenges. Through MAP16, the ILO has acted as an actor by providing policy recommendations to relevant parties. As a result of this project, six governments have adopted new laws, policies, and protocols to address child labor (U.S. Department of Labor, 2024).

Additionally, the ILO launched the Asia Regional Child Labour (ARC) program, running from May 1, 2019, to October 30, 2023, in partnership with the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), aims to reduce vulnerabilities to child labor and enhance protection against exploitation. It contributes to the eradication of child labor in India, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar, and Pakistan. In fulfilling its role as an actor, the ILO, through the ARC program, helps minimize child labor by providing recommendations and directives to the target countries of the program. The program includes building the capacity of governments, trade unions, and employer organizations to accelerate the reduction of child labor through information development and dissemination, policy enhancement, implementation strengthening, and integrated service provision (ILO, 2019).

Through the "Roadmap Towards a Child Labour-Free Indonesia in 2022," the ILO has provided recommendations and guidance for Indonesia to achieve a child labor-free status by 2022. The goals of this project include building strong commitments among all stakeholders to collectively work towards the elimination of child labor and its worst forms; prioritizing child labor elimination policies in key areas such as compulsory education, poverty reduction, social protection, and others; strengthening stakeholder human resource capacities in both policy and implementation; and developing a national movement involving stakeholders at national, provincial, and district/city levels. The ILO's strategies through this project involve evaluating the implementation of a 10-year action plan, setting priority policies and programs, integrating the general roadmap into regional development plans, and ensuring the action program is carried out sustainably with stakeholder involvement (ILO, 2015). Based on the three programs described, the ILO has effectively carried out its role as an actor by providing recommendations and directives in the effort to eliminate child labor.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion according to the data found, the COVID-19 pandemic was expected to increase the number of child laborers due to the surge in poverty during the pandemic. However, no significant increase in child labor was observed, and the trend tended to decline. This research demonstrates that the ILO, as an international organization under the auspices of the UN, can fulfill its three roles in addressing child labor cases.

First, the ILO acts as an instrument by issuing the Minimum Age Convention No. 138/1973 and the Worst Forms of Child Labour (WFCL) Convention No. 182/1999. Convention No. 138 addresses the minimum age for child labor, while Convention No. 182 outlines certain prohibited types of work for children, which have been ratified by Indonesia. Second, the ILO serves as an arena by organizing forums such as the 5th Global Conference on Child Labour, attended by representatives from various countries to discuss handling child labor cases. Third, the ILO acts as an actor by taking concrete steps, such as creating the "Roadmap Towards a Child Labour-Free Indonesia in 2022," which provides recommendations and guidance for addressing child labor in Indonesia. This research faced limitations in data collection through interviews due to the difficulty in finding sources from the ILO.

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