

Child labour: A big threat

EDITOR: Child labour remains a serious concern in Uganda, affecting thousands of children across both rural and urban communities. It refers to work that is harmful, exploitative, or interferes with a child's education and development. In districts such as Karamoja (Moroto, Napak, Kotido), many children are involved in cattle herding and mining, often in harsh conditions. In Busoga sub-region districts like Jinja, Mayuge and Kamuli, children are commonly engaged in sugarcane cutting and plantation work. In Kalangala and other fishing communities, children are involved in fishing activities, including night fishing, which exposes them to danger. Across towns like Kampala and Mbale, some children work as domestic workers or street vendors, often missing school. Poverty, limited awareness and social pressures continue to push families to depend on children's labour, instead of sending them to school. The consequences of child labour are severe and long-lasting. Children who spend their days working miss out on education, play, and proper development. Many drop out of school or struggle to keep up with learning due to fatigue and lack of time. Those working on farms, in mines, or at fishing sites face risks, such as injuries, exploitation and exposure to harsh weather. These experiences affect their physical and emotional well-being and reduce their chances of building better futures. At the national level, child labour slows Uganda's development. When children are denied education, the country loses future skilled workers, innovators and leaders. This creates a cycle where poverty continues from one generation to another, especially in regions already facing economic hardship. Ensuring that all children are in school is not only about protecting rights, but also about building a stronger, more productive nation.

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