



PLATFORM FOR LABOUR ACTION STATEMENT ON DELIVERED AT THE NATIONAL COMMEMORATION FOR THE WORLD DAY AGAINST CHILD LABOUR 2025

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National Theme:
End Child Labour – Let Us Speed Up Action
Delivered on Behalf of Civil Society Organizations in Uganda
Date: June 12, 2025

**Our Chief Guest. Hon. Esther Anyakun Davinia
Minister of State for Labour, Employment and
Industrial Relations;**

1. Representatives of the Government of Uganda,
2. Representatives of the Social Partners, NOTU/COFTU and FUE and other Associations
3. Development Partners present
4. Fellow Civil Society Organisations,
5. Private Sector Representatives,
6. Children representatives
7. Media
8. Esteemed Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning!

On behalf of Platform for Labour Action (PLA) and the broader community of civil society organisations (CSOs) committed to child protection and ensuring the realisation of the rights of children, we are honoured to join the nation and the world at large today in commemorating World Day Against Child Labour 2025 under the National timely and urgent theme: **«End Child Labour – Let Us Speed Up Action.»**

On this day, PLA and the broader Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Uganda, stand united in solidarity with children across the country who continue to be robbed of their childhoods, education, safety, and dignity through exploitative labour.

Our Chief Guest, ladies and gentlemen, this year's theme, "End Child Labour: Let us speed up action," is both a warning and a call to decisive leadership. With only months remaining to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal 8.7, which calls for the elimination of all forms of child labour by 2025, we must as a country now shift from commitment to acceleration. This is not just a legal or development issue — it is a matter of childhoods lost, rights denied, and futures stolen. Every day a child remains in labour is a day justice is delayed!

As you may be aware, Uganda remains one of the countries with the highest prevalence of child labour in Sub-Saharan Africa. According to the Uganda National Labour Force Survey (UNLFS) 2021, 6.2 Million children aged 5-17 years are engaged in child Labour excluding household chores with more males than females. Alarming, over a million children are involved in hazardous forms of work, with the highest prevalence in the agriculture, domestic work, mining, informal trade, and sugarcane sectors.

Children in rural and peri-urban areas, particularly in Karamoja, Busoga, and Northern Uganda, remain disproportionately affected. The informal economy, where 90% of child labour occurs, remains largely unregulated and hidden from official protection systems. The recent escalation in cost-of-living, food insecurity, and post-COVID-19 economic stress has pushed more families to rely on child labour as a survival strategy. Children in refugee-hosting districts, urban informal settlements, and hard-to-reach rural areas are

particularly vulnerable.

We note that while as a country, we have made commendable progress including ratifying key international instruments, enacting protective legislation, and launching national action plans, provision of support services to some of the affected children, implementation however remains slow, underfunded, and fragmented, especially in the informal sector where the majority of child labour thrives.

CALL TO ACTION: We therefore call on the Government of Uganda, Parliament, development partners, and private sector actors to take bold, time-bound action in line with national and international commitments:

1. Strengthen and harmonise the Legal and Policy Framework on the elimination of child labour

Fast-track amendments to the Employment Act and the Children Act to explicitly prohibit hazardous and exploitative child labour in informal sectors such as domestic work, family farming, and street-based businesses.

Develop and enforce a national list of hazardous work for children, in alignment with ILO standards, with disaggregated provisions for gender, disability, and age.

Institutionalize child labour response mechanisms within the Parish Development Model and local government ordinances to create enforceable child protection standards at the grassroots level.

2. Invest in Child-Sensitive Social Protection

Scale up the SAGE and Emergency Child Grant models to directly reach households with children at risk of or engaged in labour.

Introduce child-conditional incentives, such as school attendance-linked transfers or food support for vulnerable households and in government programs.

Ensure that child labour prevention is mainstreamed in social protection policies, budgeting processes, and national poverty reduction strategies.

3. Rebuild and Resource Enforcement Structures

Recruit, train, and deploy more labour officers, labour inspectors, community development officers, and probation officers with a clear mandate to cover both formal and informal economies.

Support the revitalization of District and Sub-county Child Well-being Committees, and link them with other community based structures Community Child Protection Committees (CCPCs) and traditional leaders.

Increase budgetary allocations for child protection, labour inspection, and community-based child welfare programming.

4. Expand Access to Quality Education and Retention Support

- Address hidden costs of education that often push poor children into work.
- Invest in second-chance education and vocational training for children withdrawn from work, including those in refugee settlements and conflict-affected areas.
- Mainstream early childhood development (ECD) programs into government schools to promote school readiness and reduce the early entry of children into work.

5. Adopt a national referral and case management system for child labour and trafficking cases, anchored in local government and CSO partnerships.

6. Integrate child labour prevention into national poverty reduction strategies, especially through SAGE, the Parish Development Model, and the National Development Plan (NDP IV).

7. Engage the private sector meaningfully through the implementation of the National Action Plan on business and human rights to ensure that supply chains particularly in agriculture, mining, domestic work, and construction are child-labour free.

8. Empower Communities and Households through Legal Awareness

- Scale up community legal empowerment and paralegal initiatives to raise awareness of child rights and available reporting channels.
- Work with local councils, schools, and religious institutions to change harmful norms that normalize child labour and domestic servitude.
- Create safe spaces and reporting platforms for children to speak out and access protection services.

Colleagues, partners, and leaders, let us remember: child labour is not inevitable; it is preventable. It is a choice society makes and today, we call upon all of us to choose differently.

Let us speed up action. Let us invest in children, enforce the law, empower communities, and eliminate child labour once and for all.

We at Platform for Labour Action reaffirm our commitment to work with government, development partners, businesses, and communities to end child labour in Uganda and we call on all actors to do the same.

Thank you.

Grace Mukwaya
Executive Director
Platform for Labour Action

