Issues of social development – WJEC

Social development refers to the way society is changing. Geographers always want to know if people's lives are changing, in what way they are changing and ultimately if this change is for the better.

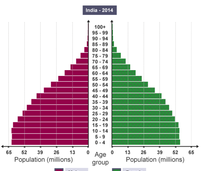
Child labour in South Asia

Within the regions of sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia there are many obstacles which prevent countries and societies changing, such as child labour, gender inequality, conflict, disease and water supply.

It is estimated that nearly 200 million children (aged 5-17) in the world work as child labourers. Often, these children are from poorer families who cannot pay for an education, and instead send them to work in order to support the family. These children may work on farms in rural areas, or hot factories in urban areas. Their pay is low and they work long hours in what are often a dangerous environments. In some parts of the world, these children may work hazardous jobs such as mining underground or working with dangerous machinery. Some children are even signed up as soldiers. In the worst case scenarios, child labourers may be forced to work in the sex industry.

There are 50 million fewer child labourers in 2015 compared with 2000. This is a reduction of 25 per cent.

Child labourers in India, where there are estimated to be over 10 million child workers



The population in India is regarded as youthful – this means that there are many more younger people compared to older people.

Child labour issues in India

There are three main reasons why child labour in India is higher than in other parts of the world.

Poverty

Families in India are on low incomes and often need extra income to support them, so they rely on their children to go out to work and earn more money.

Schooling

In India school is not free like it is here in the UK. For the poorest families, school fees, the cost of books and equipment and the transport to and from school is unaffordable.

Legislation

A lack of legislation means that there are no laws preventing children from working. The map shows India in purple (along with Australia and New Zealand).

The map shows that in India, there is currently no legislation preventing children from working full time

The consequences of child labour

When children are working, the risks of injury and mental scarring dramatically increase. UNICEF estimates that over 5,000 child labourers are killed each year. Children who work are also missing out on an education and the possibilities to develop and improve their quality of life.

In India, girls are much more likely than boys to be uneducated. This too has serious consequences:

- the child of an uneducated mother is more likely to die before the age of one
- women who are poorly educated tend to marry young, and have larger families which add financial strain

Having a good education is empowering, and gives the chance of a higher status within society and better quality of life.

A graphic showing the benefits of a good education for girls to society

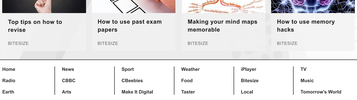
The role of the UN and non-government organisations in combating child labour

In 2005, the United Nations (UN) set up a range of goals, one of which was to halve the number of children missing out on primary school education by 2015. Since then, the numbers globally have fallen from 104 million to 57 million. These goals were known as the 'Millennium Development Goals' and are an example of how world leaders can work together to tackle inequality and world issues.

In addition, UNICEF has been setting up education centres in areas of the world where there is a severe shortage. In India, in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, UNICEF has created an alternative learning centre (ALC) to help educate children who have never been to school. Over 20 per cent of India's working children are from the Uttar Pradesh state, with many of them working in hot factories. The ALC supports local communities, and encourages parents to change their attitudes and send girls to school. The project is mainly aimed at primary school aged pupils, and helps to integrate children into formal education.

An estimated 414,000 children are working in India's cotton industry. Around half are under 14 years old and almost 90 per cent don't attend school.

UNICEF projects address the root causes of child labour, raise awareness of the importance of education, and support schools, communities and officials to end child labour and ensure children go to school



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