POVERTY, TRADE AND CHILD LABOUR IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD: AN ANALYSIS OF EFFORTS TO COMBAT CHILD LABOUR IN UGANDA

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ABSTRACT

Until recently, efforts to combat child labour have focused on demonizing the practice by exposing its adverse short and long term consequences on children. Recent empirical studies have enumerated the causes of child labour as well as its impact on a child’s health, education and well-being. Measures to combat child labour have focused on legislating against the practice, both at the international and domestic levels, improving access to education as well as poverty reduction strategies. Although current statistics indicate that child labour is on the decline, poor countries in Asia and Africa are at risk of increased cases of child labour due to current global trade policies that have left them economically worse off. In addition, a framework for open trade that inhibits access to medication adversely affects socioeconomic structures due to increased disease burdens on households, thereby accelerating poverty and impeding efforts to combat child labour. More calls have been made for the global trade system under the WTO to incorporate human rights in its framework and permit sanctions for human rights violations. This article argues that although such reforms will make human rights more enforceable, it is not efficient in the long run if the global trade system fails to deliver meaningful economic benefits to poor countries. In sum, a global trade system that leaves poor countries economically worse off engenders poverty and decelerates efforts to combat child labour.