

Female Child Labourers in Zimbabwe: A Challenge to Achieving the Millennium Development Goals

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ABSTRACT Child labour negates the provisions of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In Zimbabwe, many girl children are involved in child labour, subjected to inhuman treatment as some suffer physical abuse, economic exploitation and denial of opportunity to education. The thrust of this paper involves an investigation into female child labour as a hindrance to the achievement of the MDGs in Masvingo, Zimbabwe. The research utilised the qualitative methods and data was collected using observations and interviews. Scarcity of resources for schooling, broken families and poverty in households were noted to fuel the problem of child labour. The study established that the MDGs and child labour are inextricably linked causing a myriad of challenges to female child labourers in Masvingo. The female child labourers identified drug abuse, malnutrition and health related problems, dropping out of school and early marriages as the major factors that impede on the achievement of the MDGs. Subsequently, as a way forward, the researchers proposed that there is need for the government to harmonise the International Labour Organization (ILO) labour laws with child rights laws which make it an offence to engage children (0-18 years) in any form of labour.