

# The Right Not to Work by Kate Ruttle

## Children's rights

In 1989, governments around the world agreed to protect the rights of children and young people. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) lists 54 rights that all children have. These include important rights, for example: the right to be safe and to make choices; the right to have shelter and to clean water; the right to have time to play and time to go to school. We are all responsible for making sure that all children have their rights.

## The right not to do dangerous and harmful work

Article 32 of the UNCRC says that Governments must protect children from work that is dangerous or that might harm their education. Child labour is any dangerous and harmful

work that children do which deprives them of their rights to have time to play and to go to school.

Around the world, more than 200 million children are working instead of going to school. Poor families send their children out to work because the money they earn will help to feed the family. But if we buy cheap products which involve child labour, we are encouraging the rich people who make the children work.

## Child labour in agriculture

120 million children around the world are child labourers on farms and in fields. They work for long hours in baking hot places picking bananas, cotton, flowers, tea, cocoa as well as fruit and vegetables which are sold around the world. The children are paid very badly and don't have regular breaks or even clean water to drink during the day. If we buy cheap products which involve child labour, we are encouraging the farm owners who make the children work.

## Child labour in factories

About 15 million children work in factories. They make carpets, fireworks, ornaments, jewellery, glass and footwear. The bargain clothes you wear may have been made by children; the trainers and footballs you enjoy may have been made using child labour. Children don't need much pay, and can work closely together in cramped conditions. This means that the factories can sell the things they make more cheaply. If we buy cheap products which involve child labour, we are encouraging the factory owners who make the children work.

## Child labour in mines and quarries

The most dangerous jobs for children are in deep underground mines. Children who are younger than you, work for hours underground every day breaking up rock, sieving and washing pieces of rock to find gold or diamonds and even carrying and placing explosives. These children are easily injured because they work in such dangerous conditions. If we buy cheap products which involve child labour, we are encouraging the mine owners who make the children work.



## **What can you do?**

Find out more about child labour. We all like bargains, but before you buy bargain clothes, shoes or toys try to find out whether child labour might have been used to make them. Many big companies have promised not to buy anything from farms, factories and mines that use child labour. Find out whether the shops and brands that you like have signed up to the UNCRC. If they haven't, stop buying from them. If no-one buys from places that use child labour, the owners will stop making children work when they should be in school or playing with their friends.