



FACTS ON

Child Labour

One out of six children in the world today is involved in child labour, doing work that is damaging to his or her mental, physical and emotional development.

These children work in a variety of industries, and in many parts of the world. The vast majority are in the agricultural sector, where they may be exposed to dangerous chemicals and equipment. Others are street children, peddling or running errands to earn a living. Some are domestic workers, prostitutes, or factory workers. All are children who have no fair chance of a real childhood, an education, or a better life.

Children work because their survival and that of their families depend on it. Child labour persists even where it has been declared illegal, and is frequently surrounded by a wall of silence, indifference, and apathy.

But that wall is beginning to crumble. While the total elimination of child labour is a long-term goal in many countries, certain forms of child labour must be confronted immediately. Nearly three-quarters of working children are engaged in what the world recognizes as the worst forms of child labour, including trafficking, armed conflict, slavery, sexual exploitation and hazardous work. The effective abolition of child labour is one of the most urgent challenges of our time.

World Day against Child Labour, 12 June 2003 Focus on child trafficking

An estimated 1.2 million children are trafficked – moved within and across national borders through force, coercion or deception – into situations involving their economic and sexual exploitation. Child trafficking is a crime under international law. It is widely recognized as a distinct and egregious violation of children's rights, comprising one of the worst forms of child labour.

Trafficking is not a discrete act – rather, it is a series of events that takes place in the child's home community, at transit points and at final destinations. Whenever a child is relocated and exploited, it is trafficking. And those who contribute to it – recruiters, middlemen,

Key Statistics

- 246 million children are child labourers.
- 73 million working children are less than 10 years old.
- No country is immune: There are 2.5 million working children in the developed economies, and another 2.5 million in transition economies such as the former Soviet states.
- Every year, 22,000 children die in work-related accidents.
- The largest number – 127 million – of working children age 14 and under are in the Asia-Pacific region.
- The highest proportion of working children is in Sub-Saharan Africa, where nearly one third of children age 14 and under (48 million children) are in the labour force.
- Among all of the world's working children, most are in the informal sector where they do not have legal or regulatory protection:
 - 70% are in agriculture, commercial hunting and fishing or forestry;
 - 8% are in manufacturing;
 - 8% are in wholesale and retail trade, restaurants and hotels.
 - 7% are in community, social and personal service, such as domestic work.
- 8.4 million children are trapped in slavery, trafficking, debt bondage, prostitution, pornography and other illicit activities.
 - 1.2 million of these children have been trafficked.

document providers, transporters, corrupt officials, employers and service providers – are traffickers.

Nearly all countries are affected in some way, either as sending, receiving or transit countries for trafficked children. South Asia, South-East Asia, Central and West Africa are areas where the number of children trafficked is particularly high.

Child trafficking is a result of unmet demand for cheap and malleable labour in a variety of industries, particularly for young girls and boys in the commercial sex sector. Though children are generally less productive than adults, they are easier to abuse and less assertive. They can be made to work longer hours with little food, poor accommodation and no benefits.

ILO in action against child trafficking

The ILO operates programmes against child labour on 5 continents. Below are just two examples from a world of activities against child trafficking:

- In South-East Asia, the ILO supports a programme involving the government through the Philippines Port Authority, workers in the shipping industry and individual ferry line owners. Coordinated through a local group called Visayan Forum, the programme trains security guards, police personnel, members of the association of porters, street vendors, pedicab drivers and others to spot and report potential trafficking cases, and take action against illegal recruiters. Training sessions developed for shop owners and managers regularly involve all company employees – from the quayside ‘boarding teams’ to on-ship personnel. The orientations not only show people what to look out for and what to do but also help foster a sense of collective responsibility.

- In Latin America, the ILO monitors the borders through its Programme on Prevention and Elimination of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children along the common borders of Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay. Local committees in cities along the border and cross-border cooperation have led to a greater sense of local empowerment in fighting child trafficking. Capacity-building of the police and judiciary is creating mechanisms that can control the traffic and enforce existing laws. Support programmes are operational in the three main cities in the area, emphasizing education, psycho-social assistance and legal help for children and their families.

The ILO and the fight against child labour: Parents to work, children to school

Eliminating child labour is an essential element in the ILO’s goal of “Decent Work for all”. The ILO tackles child labour not as an isolated issue but as an integral part of national efforts for economic and social development.

1919: The first International Labour Conference adopts a Minimum Age (Industry) Convention (No. 5).

1930: Adoption of the first Forced Labour Convention (No. 29).

1973: Adoption of the Minimum Age Convention (No. 138).

1992: The ILO establishes the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC).

1996: Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action: The elaboration of the principle that a crime against a child in one place is a crime anywhere. The ILO codifies this into an international standard by developing a convention three years later which spells out the role of enforcement and penalties.

1998: Adoption of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work: Freedom of association, abolition of forced labour, end of discrimination in the workplace, and elimination of child labour. All ILO member states pledge to uphold and promote these principles.

1999: Adoption of the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No. 182). Focused world attention on the need to take immediate action to eradicate those forms of child labour that are hazardous and damaging to children’s physical, mental or moral well-being. Ratified by 3 out of 4 ILO member states.

2002: The ILO establishes 12 June as World Day Against Child Labour. More than 80 countries are supported by the ILO in the formulation of their own programmes to combat child labour.

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