

THE WORLDWIDE MOVEMENT AGAINST CHILD LABOUR
PROGRESS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

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Alec Fyfe

Geneva, International Labour Office, 2007

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IPEC

The worldwide movement against child labour - Progress and future directions

by Alec Fyfe

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FOREWORD

For those who began working on the child labour problem in the 1980s it is remarkable how far we have come in terms of the profile of the issue and the resources now available to the fight against it. It is worth pausing to reflect that even at the end of that decade, the ILO had only one dedicated position dealing with child labour – earlier still, child labour was part of a single portfolio encompassing “women and children and other vulnerable workers” – and there was just one field project.

Today, the IPEC programme is the largest technical cooperation programme in the ILO, with an annual budget of some \$60 million and more than 450 staff, nearly 90 per cent of whom are in the field. Twenty years ago this development was unimaginable.

The growth of IPEC is but one element of a much bigger story – the emergence of a worldwide movement against child labour. At the end of the 1990s the child labour issue reached an unprecedented level on the international agenda. It had been put there by a constellation of interests concerned with the impact of intensified globalization on human rights – and in particular children’s rights. Children working in the export sector making goods that found their way into the retail stores of rich countries helped crystallize the problem and was much taken up by the media. It still is.

This report, for the first time, maps the evolution of the worldwide movement against child labour – how far we have come and the distance that we still need to travel if the goal of the effective elimination of child labour is to be attained. The contours of this international campaign are a central part of the ILO’s intellectual history. The report is timely, particularly in the light of the target set out in the ILO’s Second Global Report (2006), of the elimination of all the worst forms of child labour by 2016.

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It is clear that this ambitious target will not be achieved by business as usual. Strengthening the worldwide movement – that has always been a core strategy of IPEC’s – is key to making the accelerated progress that will be needed in the coming years. This will require a more outward-looking approach and a unity of effort from all the key actors of the worldwide movement: governments, international organizations and civil society.

This is all the more a challenging endeavour when one recognizes that some of the momentum generated at the end of the 1990s around the adoption of Convention No. 182, appears to have been lost. More effort will now be needed to re-energize the worldwide movement.

The ILO is not the formal leader of the worldwide movement but it does have an important catalytic role in terms of its standards, knowledge assets and its outreach capacity. But the ILO cannot, and should not, do everything – other standard bearers, at all levels, must be found if a relentless global campaign against child labour is to be waged.

This report is therefore particularly directed towards all those governmental, inter-governmental and civil society actors engaged in combating child labour. We hope that this report will promote more effective dialogue around a common vision, commitments and strategies towards making child labour part of history.

Michele Jankanish
Director
IPEC

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INTRODUCTION

This study provides the first systematic analysis of the worldwide movement against child labour.

Although child labour first became an international issue in the 1860s, it was not until the 1980s, more than a century later, that a global movement began to take shape. Then, in the second half of the 1990s, the international profile of child labour attained unprecedented levels.

Sustaining this momentum, however, has proved challenging.

Key study objective. The report argues that the intellectual and policy frameworks first articulated by the ILO in the 1980s remain important departure points for developing a more coherent, more sustained global effort against child labour. But they need re-visiting and more certain application. A key objective of this study is to identify the means by which the worldwide movement can gain the necessary traction to exert a sustained impact on the problem of child labour.

Scale of the child labour problem. According to new estimates from the ILO published in 2006 there were 218 million child labourers aged 5-17 years in 2004. The number in hazardous work, which accounts for the bulk of the worst forms of child labour (WFCL) was 126 million in 2004. Most working children (69 per cent) are involved in agriculture compared with only 9 per cent in industry. The Asian-Pacific region accounts for the largest number of child workers – 122 million in total, followed by Sub-Saharan Africa (49.3 million) and Latin America and the Caribbean (5.7 million). However, for the first time the ILO was also able to note a positive trend with 20 million fewer working children in the 5-14 year core age group from 2000 to 2004 and a particular reduction of children's involvement in hazardous work. Overall, Latin America and the Caribbean saw the greatest decline in

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children's work.¹ Though this is welcome good news, the child labour problem persists on a very large scale.

What the movement is, and what it is not. As a prelude to discussing the evolution of the worldwide movement and where it has to go from here, it is first important to establish how this study uses the concept.

The notion of a “movement” is now such common currency – applied, as it is, to everything from anti-smoking to peace campaigns – that the concept is in real danger of being both obfuscated and devalued. Simply stated, for the purposes of this report:

- A movement is a group of people who work together to advance a certain goal.
- Although movements differ in scale, they represent a group of interests whose aim is to bring about change.
- They are the result of more or less spontaneous comings together of individuals and groups whose relationships are not defined by rules and procedures, but who do share common concerns and goals.
- In keeping with this informality, movements are fluid in structure, displaying a mixture of organization and spontaneity.
- There are usually one or more organizations that provide identity, leadership, and coordination, but the boundaries of the movement are usually not coterminous with these organizations.
- Movements vary in their duration and, within their life span, they tend to undergo certain changes – leadership tends to evolve, memberships to grow, and goals to shift.

A brief history of the worldwide movement. The worldwide movement against child labour has its roots in national movements that emerged in the first industrial nations during the early 19th century. Broad social alliances were forged in Britain, Germany, and the USA to campaign against child labour abuses. From the 1860s, the labour movement took up the issue of child labour at the international level, ensuring that it became the centrepiece of the International Labour Organization (ILO) at its inception in 1919.

The work of the ILO in its first 60 years did not lead to a new international movement against child labour. This did not yet represent a conscious objective, and setting standards – the staple work of the ILO – had relatively little impact with regard to child labour.

An actual movement, as such, first emerged in the 1980s, when a much broader response to child labour started to develop at *all* levels. New actors, particularly non-governmental organizations (NGOs), began to work with the ILO on

¹ F. Hagemann, Y. Diallo, A. Etienne and F. Mehran, *Global child labour trends 2000 to 2004* (Geneva, ILO, April, 2006), pp. 7-17.

this issue. And with them came new perspectives. For the first time, a broad alliance at all levels – local, national, regional, and global – became a real prospect.

This growing movement did not begin to gain momentum until the mid-1990s. The convergence of concerns with human rights, and child rights as part of that, with responses to intensified globalization, propelled child labour up the international agenda, bringing it unprecedented attention. A number of indicators pointed to this surge in the worldwide movement:

- There was an explosion in the academic literature on child labour and in mass media coverage of the issue.
- Aside from the ILO, other international institutions, in particular UNICEF, the World Bank, and the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, more vigorously took up the issue.
- The worldwide movement was also grounded by the commitment of thousands of concerned individuals and groups as part of a dynamic civil society response.
- Furthermore, child labour became a focus of consumer groups and the growing corporate social responsibility movement.
- Finally, and most critically, governments in both the North and the South moved from apathy and denial to positive engagement with the problem including through the mobilization of resources to tackle the problem.

The worldwide movement today. What is the nature of the worldwide movement against child labour today? It is not a bureaucratic, top-down enterprise run by the ILO. Neither is it a street movement of political activism. Instead, it comprises a loose constellation of individuals, groups, organizations, and governments focused on, and committed to, the elimination of child labour. It is part of a much larger global movement for children. Although the movement has no formal leader, the ILO does play a convening role and provides policy leadership through its standards. Additionally, the ILO has the largest directly focused programme of technical cooperation.

Challenges to come. The challenge for the new millennium is to convert the recent surge in international interest in the problem of child labour into a sustained, coherent, and effective effort on behalf of working children.

This report focuses on international action. This is not to imply that national action is unimportant – quite the contrary. The emphasis instead reflects the fact that the greatest deficits in terms of commitment and coherence currently lie at the global level. What is still lacking is an international climate and architecture conducive to supporting action on behalf of working children and their families at the local and national levels, where it most matters.

Of course, the relationship between the international and the national levels of the worldwide movement works both ways – action at the national level informs international policy and action, which in turn helps to support national efforts against child labour. The levels of the movement are interactive, and ought to be mutually reinforcing.

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The operation of this process remains far from optimal, however, as the report makes clear.

Organization of the report. Chapters 1 and 2 chart the evolution of the worldwide movement, focusing on the last 25 years, including the role of key global actors. On the basis of this historical narrative, Chapter 3 explores major areas of divergence and convergence within the worldwide movement. Chapter 4 identifies major challenges and opportunities facing the worldwide movement, and outlines the role of the key global actors in responding to them.

ORIGINS OF THE WORLDWIDE MOVEMENT

1

Introduction

It is important to understand current issues with some appreciation of their historical roots. This chapter explores the origins of the worldwide movement.

Child labour became an international issue in the 1860s, some three decades after the first national campaigns emerged in the new industrial nations. An international campaign for the abolition of child labour – the labour movement, principally – led to the foundation of the International Labour Organization in 1919 and to the first international standards to combat the problem.

After maintaining a relatively low profile for 60 years, in the 1980s child labour re-emerged on the international stage. This is when the contemporary worldwide movement really started to emerge. Although important progress was made in that decade, particularly in defining a global policy framework, the movement failed to take off in a self-sustaining manner. In fact, the 1980s represented a lost opportunity in the campaign against child labour. Child labour as an international issue only came of age in the latter part of the 1990s, as concerns over child labour in international trade intersected with a resurgent interest in human rights, including children's rights.

1.1. THE FIRST NATIONAL CAMPAIGNS

Compulsory education and declining child labour. By around 1900 the extensive use of child labour began to significantly decline in the first industrial nations. This decline had begun around the middle of the 19th century, starting with the youngest children and then moving progressively up the age range. This decline in child labour went hand-in-hand with national efforts to introduce

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compulsory education. Indeed, the 1870-1914 period was the era of mass education in Europe, Japan, and the United States.

These twin developments did not arise spontaneously. Child labour regulation and universal education, for the most part, were contested over a considerable period of time. This is most clearly demonstrated by the experience of Britain, where child labour and industrialization first became a matter of public debate.

Changing conceptions of childhood. Before the end of the 18th century, child labour went largely unquestioned. Indeed, during the early part of the industrial revolution in Britain, the main problem was seen as entailing too little work for children, rather than too much. Subsequently, the view developed that increasing demand for child labour was a mark of industrial development.² Then, in the 1830s and 1840s, child labour began to be questioned in response to changing conceptions of childhood and to the activities of extra-Parliamentary pressure groups such as the emerging labour movement.

In Britain a variety of actors using diverse means put child labour on the national agenda. The emerging campaign against child labour borrowed from the experience of the anti-slavery movement to the point of depicting child workers as “slaves”. This resonated with a growing view of children as persons whose rights had to be protected. The child labour campaign comprised social reformers such as Lord Shaftesbury alongside enlightened factory owners and the growing labour movement. Popular figures such as the writer Charles Dickens – the “children’s champion” of Victorian Britain – presented the new knowledge of factory conditions in a fictional form with which a mass national audience could identify.³

First legislation protecting children. This agitation prompted public investigation of factory conditions, resulting in the first legislation, in 1833, aimed at protecting children in the workplace and providing part-time education. An inspectorate was established to enforce this legislation. The Factory Act of 1833 was a historic watershed, banning work for those under- nine years of age and restricting the working day to eight hours for those under -14 years. It also opened the way for state funding of education.

Spreading industrialization, concomitant spread of compulsory education and concern with child rights. Until the mid-19th century, debates on child labour under capitalism were focused on Britain, the first industrial nation. But as other countries industrialized, national responses to child labour also emerged and grew. France introduced legislation in 1874 setting 12 years as the minimum age. Prussia enforced the same minimum age in 1878. Meanwhile, the movement for compulsory education (first begun in Germany) gained strength, and, in the last quarter of the century, it had a dramatic effect in transferring

² H. Cunningham, “The rights of the child and the wrongs of child labour: An historical perspective”. In K. Lieten and B. White (eds.), *Child labour: Policy options* (Amsterdam, Aksant, 2001), pp. 41-42.

³ A. Fyfe, *Child labour* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1989), p. 142.

children from the labour force to the schoolroom. This was the age of the primary school. By the early 20th century, compulsory education had taken root and went largely unquestioned.

At the same time, public concern that children would not have enough work shifted to one where the right *not* to work had to be protected by the state. At the end of the 19th century children had, for the first time, moved close to the centre of the political agenda of the modern nation state.

1.2. CHILD LABOUR BECOMES AN INTERNATIONAL ISSUE

Internationalization of organized labour leads to internationalization of debate regarding child labour. In the latter half of the 19th century, debates about child labour became international, and they have since remained so.

How did this transition occur? The rapidly growing trade union movement began to forge international links. The first major expression of this new spirit of internationalism was the International Workingmen's Association, Karl Marx's First International (1864-1872). Founded in London, the First International had representation from Belgium, France, Germany, and Switzerland, and became a vehicle to promote the demands of the resurgent labour movement for improvements in working and social conditions.

The first international discussion of child labour took place at the initial congress of the International, held at Geneva in September 1866. The dialogue largely involved delegates from France and French-speaking Switzerland – the latter sending 33 of the 60 participants. Marx, who did not attend, provided a detailed brief for the General Council on social issues likely to meet with immediate agreement. Child labour was deemed such an issue. Marx's position on child labour as “a progressive, sound and legitimate tendency, although under capital it was distorted into an abomination” met with no opposition.⁴ Marx believed that no child under nine years of age should work. He then divided older children into three age groups – of 9-12, 13-15, and 15-17 years – and suggested that they should be allowed to work two, three, and six hours per day, respectively.

Marx was a supporter of part-time education, and was sceptical about the role of the state in education (he had Prussia in mind). Nevertheless, the second congress of the International, held at Lausanne in 1867, passed a resolution on state responsibility for general education. The fourth congress, held at Basle, called for compulsory education. Recognizing that this would prevent children from working, the congress nevertheless concluded that, “it would not reduce wages and people would get used to it”.⁵

⁴ Quoted in S. Padover (ed.), *Karl Marx on education, women and children* (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1975) p. 91.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

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A growing, not unconnected, debate about international labour standards was paralleling this socialist discourse concerning child labour and education. The International was rooted in the political instability of the middle decades of the century – especially the widespread fear, after the Paris Commune of 1871, of the discontented masses. Anti-socialist reformism, plus concerns over a level playing field in international trade competition, embraced child labour as a relatively non-controversial (i.e. non-political) issue.

First attempts at international child labour legislation. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the centennial anniversary of the French Revolution provided the impetus to organize an international meeting on labour standards. Before the conference could convene in Bern, Germany took the initiative and, in March 1890, hosted a meeting in Berlin. The Berlin conference, which attracted 12 countries from Europe, agreed to set a minimum age for work of 12 years. A decade later, the International Association for Labour Legislation (IALL) – a forerunner of the International Labour Office (ILO) – was established with its headquarters in Basle. In September 1913, the Bern conference of the IALL drafted the first international convention on child labour, prohibiting night work, but this failed to be enacted due to the outbreak of war the following year.

Inception of the ILO. Despite the hostilities, these ideas concerning international labour standards continued to be advanced, particularly by the American Federation of Labor, which called for a labour charter to be incorporated into the Paris Peace Treaty. In 1919, a tripartite Commission of International Labour Legislation, chaired by the American labour leader Samuel Gompers, produced a Labour Charter of nine principles (number six being the abolition of child labour) that was incorporated into the final Treaty of Versailles, 1919. The Treaty also ushered in the ILO.

Child labour and the ILO: 1919-1979

New international standards. From its inception, the ILO provided the international forum for concern over child labour. Article 427 of the Versailles Treaty set as one of the major ILO aims “the abolition of child labour and the imposition of such limitations on the labour of young persons as shall permit the continuation of their education and assure their proper physical development”. The ILO quickly set about its standard-setting work in this area, holding its first conference in Washington DC towards the end of 1919. With 40 countries participating, this was really the first international gathering to discuss and adopt an international standard on child labour. The Minimum Age (Industry) Convention, 1919 (No. 5) set 14 years as the minimum age for employment in industry. In 1920, this minimum age was adopted for maritime work and, in 1921 the same standard was applied to agriculture, with an explicit connection made to compulsory education.⁶ By 1931, these had a higher level of ratification

⁶ Minimum Age Convention, 1921 (No. 10).

than any other class of Conventions. In addition to the standards on minimum age, the exploitation of children through debt bondage and other “contemporary forms of slavery”, such as child prostitution, were examined under the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), which was to have extensive ratification over the years.

Still largely a European, rather than a global movement. Was this standard-setting activity a reflection of a global movement against child labour in the inter-war years? In fact, the member States that ratified these Conventions were almost exclusively European (the USA did not join the ILO until 1934), and, for many of them, ratification was simply an acknowledgement that their domestic legislation regulating child labour conformed to the Convention. Large areas of the world, and of the child labour problem, remained outside these developments.

In subsequent decades, the ILO continued pursuing a cautious, pragmatic approach. The night work of children was further regulated by Conventions in 1946 and 1948. The minimum age, except in family undertakings, was raised to 15; and, in 1945, a resolution called on all governments to aim for a minimum age of 16 – an aim still far from being realized today.

In addition to the standard-setting work, in the early 1940s a brief flurry of research publications on child labour appeared around the world, including in the British Dependencies, British Honduras, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States. But these were not widely disseminated as part of a consistent campaign. Of course, in the 1930s and 1940s higher-order problems faced the ILO, including the admission of the USA, and the very existence of the ILO came into question during the Second World War. At a more technical level, the question of the eight-hour day was infinitely more controversial and significant to the ILO constituents than was child labour.⁷

Factors tending to limit concern only to the formal sector in Europe and North America. Child labour was an area within which the ILO could make progress, but the focus was on industries where workers were unionized and where international competition was an issue – areas, one might add, where working children would be visible. This meant that the informal economy was relatively neglected. It also meant the reinforcement of the geographic focus on Europe and North America.

International concern still largely limited to education. In the 1950s and 1960s, international concern with children focused mainly on education. Typifying this is the International Labour Review (ILR) article of 1951, stemming from a UNESCO initiative that addressed compulsory education and child labour.⁸ The need to harmonize the school-leaving age with the minimum age for work was increasingly being recognized as an important policy issue – but only in industrialized countries.

⁷ H. Cunningham, op. cit., in K. Lieten and B. White (eds.), 2001, p. 21.

⁸ See “Child labour in relation to compulsory education”, *International Labour Review* (64), (Geneva, ILO, November-December 1951).

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Renewed connection between child labour and children's rights. Discourse regarding children gradually began to return to the connection between child labour and children's rights that had been a central feature of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The UN Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade and Institutions Similar to Slavery of 1956, is a good example. This built on the earlier Slavery Convention of 1926 by including those "institutions and practices similar to slavery" to which children might fall prey. Some preparatory studies were conducted in the early 1950s on the child dimension. Article 1 (d) of the Convention eventually contained a prohibition of "any institution or practice whereby a child or young person under the age of 18 years... is delivered by either or both of his natural parents or by his guardian to another person, whether for reward or not, with a view to the exploitation of the child or young person or of his labour". This could encompass debt bondage and forced labour.⁹

International resurgence of interest in child labour

From a child labour perspective, the years 1979-1992 have a certain unity – we might view them as the "long 1980s". This period represented a lost opportunity to launch a sustained worldwide campaign against child labour. Many of the elements were at hand. In 1973, a new comprehensive standard – Convention No. 138 – had been adopted by the ILO. Then 1979 was designated the International Year of the Child (IYC), which stimulated renewed international interest in child labour and launched negotiations concerning a United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. A 1982 UN report and a follow-up seminar in 1985 were devoted to child labour. Campaigning trade unions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) took up the issue, as did the mass media. And there was emerging academic interest in the problem. Finally, a 1990 World Summit for Children provided an unprecedented international focus on the welfare of children.

Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138)

The adoption, in 1973, of the ILO Minimum Age Convention represented a prelude to this decade.

The Convention revised those industry-specific Conventions adopted after 1919 i.e. replaced them for a given country once the new instrument was ratified. The Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), which grew out of the personal initiative of the Director-General Wilfred Jenks¹⁰, marks important progress in raising the standard for general employment in developed countries from 14 years (accepted during the first reading in 1972) to 15 years, or the

⁹ Confusion prevailed from the 1920s concerning the respective roles of the League of Nations and the UN in dealing with (child) slavery and of the ILO in dealing with child labour. This deficit regarding one of the worst forms of child labour persisted until 1999-2000.

¹⁰ The idea of Wilfred Jenks was to consolidate the minimum age standards and to present a standard that developing countries would adopt.

age at which compulsory education ended, whichever was the higher (accepted in 1973). This year was also a historical watershed, marking the end of the post-war boom and a new intensified trend towards globalization. Despite fierce debates at the ILO Conferences over Convention No. 138, its adoption did not prove to be a springboard to a global campaign.

The International Year of the Child, 1979

In 1976, the General Assembly proclaimed 1979 as the International Year of the Child (IYC). The general objectives were to promote the wellbeing of children, drawing attention to their special needs and encouraging national action, particularly for the least privileged and those at work. It was only during the IYC that international attention became fully re-focused on the problem of child labour. The IYC acted as a spur to international agencies and civil society actors alike.

The ILO responded to the opportunity provided by the IYC by making a special effort to promote Convention No. 138, which by 1976 had been ratified by only 13 countries. The Organization began with a request to member States to report by 31 July 1978 on their efforts, including difficulties with implementation. The response from 58 of the ILO member States, however, did not present a full or accurate picture regarding implementation of the new standards. Government reports were therefore requested under article 19 of the ILO Constitution, which would facilitate a general survey by the Committee of Experts.

In his Declaration concerning the IYC,¹¹ the Director-General acknowledged that child labour remained a widespread and disturbing problem in many parts of the world where poverty and tradition precluded its elimination. The Director-General went on to say that the IYC should provide an opportunity for its constituents the world over to assess the situation of children at work and to strengthen action programmes for children. A Resolution¹² adopted by the International Labour Conference (ILC) in June 1979 sounds remarkably contemporary, calling as it did *inter alia* for:

- renewed efforts to implement appropriate ILO standards;
- introduction of compulsory education;
- more effective labour inspection;
- public awareness campaigns;
- development of international solidarity and cooperation with developing countries; and
- efforts to establish a new and fairer international economic order so as to respond more effectively to the need for better child protection.

¹¹ Declaration endorsed by the ILO Governing Body at its 209th session, Feb-March 1979.

¹² Resolution concerning the International Year of the Child and the progressive elimination of child labour and transitional measures.

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There was an additional request that the ILO reinforce its action against child labour through factual surveys of child labour situations and practices for its elimination, and that it prepare for a global revision of the relevant ILO instruments. At the same time, as a contribution to the IYC, the ILO produced a publication for a more popular audience. *Children at work* was the product of 15 national studies.¹³ This milestone in reaching out to a wider audience was constrained, however, by a shortage of credible data.

In October 1979, the ILO hosted a more technical meeting of social scientists from a variety of disciplines and institutions to consider the major analytical and policy problems. In particular, the papers explored alternative methodologies available for research into child work-related issues. The product of these deliberations – *Child work, poverty and underdevelopment* (1981) – focused on the determinants and consequences of child work, conceptual ambiguities, and research techniques for empirical analysis.¹⁴ Again, this marked a milestone, not simply in ILO work on child labour, but in recognizing that this was a field that could (and must) be subject to rigorous academic analysis. It is telling, nevertheless, that this important ILO activity was funded by the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) – an indication of the resource constraints with regard to child labour activities then facing the ILO. In 1981, the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Sussex, the UK, hosted a similar exercise.¹⁵

The Committee of Experts' General Survey, based on responses from over 100 Governments, also appeared in 1981, and was discussed that June at the International Labour Conference (ILC). The report recommended that pilot programmes be conducted in areas of high child labour incidence to test different elimination strategies. In fact, because of resource constraints, this proposal was not be implemented by the ILO until 1989.

The report of the Director-General, 1983

Over 60 years after the adoption of the first child labour instrument, the Report of the Director-General to the 69th ILC (1983) was to provide a comprehensive global review of child labour. The report made plain that, despite impressive progress, child labour remained a widespread, perhaps even growing, worldwide phenomenon. The ILO estimated there were about 50 million economically active children globally – a very rudimentary estimate based on labour force surveys. The report went on to set child labour abuse within the context of children's rights and the recently adopted (1980) International Development

¹³ E. Mendelievich (ed.), *Children at work* (Geneva, ILO, 1979).

¹⁴ G. Rogers and G. Standing, *Child work, poverty and underdevelopment* (Geneva, ILO, 1981).

¹⁵ Proceedings were edited by Ben White, and appeared in *Development and Change*, Vol. 13, No. 4, 1982.

Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade, which expressly called for efforts to eliminate child labour.

The report set out a policy framework that, once again, appears remarkably contemporary. The report stated that child labour could not be approached in isolation, and its reduction would require both direct and indirect measures. Policies not specifically intended to deal with child labour – in particular macro-economic policies and employment programmes, women’s emancipation, and educational expansion – could have a greater impact than direct measures. Furthermore, priority action at both the national and international levels should focus on the worst forms of exploitation and dangerous working conditions, which could neither be condoned by poverty nor allowed to prevail until these ills were fully eradicated.

A major constraint in developing action programmes, according to the report, was lack of information regarding what measures were effective. Research, it suggested, had to be integrated with technical cooperation activities. Greater emphasis was needed, moreover, on pilot programmes and the dissemination of experiences among countries. In addition, more efforts were needed to promote public awareness generally, an important first step towards recognition of the problem of child labour.

The report was perhaps the first to propose that considerable benefits could arise from closer global cooperation among various UN agencies. Child labour, because of its many dimensions, might best be dealt with by applying the “full force” of the appropriate agencies, i.e. the ILO, WHO, UNICEF, UNESCO, and FAO. Many areas – among them poverty alleviation, education and training, health, nutrition, and child rights advocacy – could provide a solid basis for inter-agency collaboration and joint programmes.

Finally, the report acknowledged that enormous resources were required even to make a dent in the problem of child labour. Special efforts were needed, therefore, both to mobilize resources and to economize on them. The report concluded with an appeal for worldwide solidarity and commitment to protecting children, with the ultimate goal of abolishing child labour.

Despite this particular attention to the problem at the beginning of the decade, child labour slipped off the international agenda, maintaining a relatively low profile within the ILO for the rest of the 1980s. That said the ILO did institute a series of regional tripartite workshops, starting with Asia in 1986 and then Africa in 1989. In 1991, another Asian regional meeting was devoted to education and the enforcement of legislation.

In 1988, the ILO published *Combating child labour*, to some extent a hybrid of its two previous publications on the subject, and a Digest devoted to mapping the emerging global response to child labour.¹⁶ Finally, in 1989, resources from the Government of the Netherlands allowed the launch of the

¹⁶ A. Bequele and J. Boyden, *Combating child labour* (Geneva, ILO, 1988) and ILO, “The emerging response to child labour” in *Conditions of Work Digest*, Vol. 7/1, (Geneva, ILO, 1988).

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ILO's first technical cooperation project dealing with child labour – the Smokey Mountain project in Manila, the Philippines.¹⁷

The Anti-Slavery Society

These 1980s developments within the ILO must be viewed within a wider context – one involving other international actors. In particular, it is important to map the role played by such NGOs as the Anti-Slavery Society for the Protection of Human Rights.

The Society was formed in 1839, making it the oldest human rights organization in the world. Although its work on child protection dates back to the early part of the 20th century, it was only in 1975 that – in response to conditions facing children working in carpet factories in Morocco – it began an international campaign on child labour. In 1977, an intensive study led to a report published in the following year and submitted to the UN, with which the organization had consultative status.¹⁸

To mark the IYC, the Society expanded its activities relating to child labour, undertaking a worldwide programme of research and action on child labour, making it a major source of information on the issue – one equivalent to or even surpassing the ILO at the time. The Society produced its own popular publication for the IYC, titled *Child Workers Today*.¹⁹ It also commissioned a series of country reports (12 had been completed by 1985) embracing Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America, and Western Europe. Moreover, these national reports were seen by the Society as the backbone of a campaign to inform public opinion and encourage action at the national and international levels.

The Society submitted these national reports to the governments concerned and to UN bodies such as the Working Group on Slavery and the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, and the ILO, UNICEF, and UNESCO. Indeed, the subject of child labour had been on the agenda of the Sub-Commission since 1979. In the following year the Sub-Commission recommended that a Special Rapporteur, Professor A. Boudhiba, be appointed to produce a comprehensive report on the “exploitation of child labour”.

This did not exhaust the Society's activities on child labour in the early 1980s. The Society was also instrumental in identifying researchers and in promoting the beginnings of an informal network of activists, academics, and institutions concerned with child labour. In the mid-1980s, the Society provided important input to the first UN seminar on child labour and for UNICEF's global review of children in especially difficult circumstances (CEDC).

¹⁷ See S. Gunn and Z. Ostos, “Dilemmas in tackling child labour: The case of scavenger children in the Philippines”, *International Labour Review*, Vol. 131, No. 6, (Geneva, ILO, 1992), pp. 629-646.

¹⁸ L. Levin, *Exploitation of child labour: An international concern* (Geneva, DCI, 1985), p. 53.

¹⁹ J. Challis and D. Elliman, *Child workers today* (London, ASI, 1979).

UN report and seminar: 1982-1985

The Special Rapporteur began work in 1980 and submitted a final report in 1982.²⁰ In his global review, Professor Boudhiba was particularly dependent on recent studies compiled by the ILO and the Society. The concluding chapter of the report, “Towards a global strategy against the exploitation of child labour”, called for a time-bound plan of action over five years.

Public awareness and the media. The first task was “to stimulate a broader, more systematic, more aggressive and more probing will, in order to break down the wall of silence and create awareness of the vast gap between good intentions and... reality”.²¹ This meant a broad public information campaign as a follow-up to the IYC that should not be allowed to “fall into oblivion”. Moreover, Professor Boudhiba pointed to the danger that, after its having been in the spotlight for a year, the mass media would drop the issue.

The Sub-Commission thus had an important role in lobbying the mass media, both national and international, to continue exposing abuses, since this would have more impact on public opinion than “dozens of studies destined to be stored in the archives or desk drawers”.²² Professor Boudhiba felt that the various pressure groups, including the mass media, needed to better coordinate their work. Here, the role of trade unions was singled out. They were essential to any child labour campaign, but, in the judgement of Professor Boudhiba, “They would still seem not to be clearly aware of the magnitude of the question.”²³

Education a priority. UNESCO was called upon to extend high priority to the relationship between education and child labour – especially the implications of compulsory education, training, and apprenticeships – in its future regional and international activities. Regarding some of the worst forms of child labour (WFCL), criminal acts such as the sale and trafficking of children, concerted action was called for from the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL).

Primacy of national action, but need for international support. The report concludes, nevertheless, by affirming the primacy of national action over international. The responsibility for ending child labour lies with States, but they should be able to draw on international assistance and support.

One of the report’s recommendations suggested that a seminar be organized to address the issues raised. The ensuing seminar, “On ways and means of achieving the elimination of the exploitation of child labour in all parts of the world”, was organized by the Commission on Human Rights, and was held in Geneva, 28 October to 8 November, 1985. The seminar attracted 24 governments; UN agencies and bodies, including the ILO, UNICEF, UNHCR, and WHO; NGOs; international trade unions; and national liberation movements.

²⁰ United Nations, *Exploitation of child labour*. Final report submitted by Abdelwahab Bouhdiba, E/CN.4 Sub.2/479/rev.1 (New York, 1982).

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

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Increased public awareness not translating into practical results. The various working papers produced for the seminar helped to shape the discussion. Professor Jaap Doek, a prominent participant, affirmed that the IYC had led to the raising of the profile of child labour among UN agencies and NGOs, but, unaccountably, this increased public awareness had not translated into practical results.²⁴ For example, as of 1 January 1981, only 23 countries had ratified Convention No. 138. This number had increased to 26 by 1983, and to 33 by 1985. As Justice Abu Sayeed Chowdhury, Chairman of the UN Commission on Human Rights (and a former President of Bangladesh), observed, “The combined efforts of the ILO and ...UNICEF would undoubtedly go a long way in creating a sense of urgency in the international community for the effective implementation” of international standards against child labour.²⁵

Ineffectual international efforts. For his part, before focusing on the role that the international community should play, Anti-Slavery Society representative Patrick Montgomery made reference to the “glaring discrepancy between form and substance or between rhetoric and reality” regarding child labour.²⁶ This was a singular contribution to the discussion, given that the ILO working paper focused on *national* action.

Montgomery went on to point to the relative ineffectiveness of international efforts to date in eradicating, or even significantly reducing, the incidence of child labour. As he observed, fewer than 20 per cent of ILO member States had ratified Convention No. 138. Aside from ILO standard-setting, over the previous 60 years, “International concern remained sporadic, relatively unfocused and, to a large extent, ineffectual.”²⁷ Child labour, though never condoned, did not “feature very prominently on the international agenda, even in the human rights area”.²⁸ Though the IYC had helped change the international climate, “it cannot be said that a concerted, practical international response ...has yet emerged. Indeed there remains ...a risk that the problem will be allowed to ‘blow over’ unless some specific commitments are undertaken within the next few years”.²⁹

Perceptions of necessary measures. Montgomery went on to suggest a need to adopt additional international instruments, as well as to develop appropriate technical cooperation programmes. Moreover, human rights concerns had to be integrated into development plans and strategies, while effective monitor-

²⁴ J. Doek, “The exploitation of child labour: What can be done to eliminate it?” HR/Geneva/1985(2) WP.7., p. 3.

²⁵ A. Chowdhury, “Background paper for international seminar on ways and means of achieving the elimination of the exploitation of child labour in all parts of the world”, HR/Geneva/1985 (2) B.P.I., p. 14.

²⁶ P. Montgomery, “A survey and evaluation of measures to eliminate the exploitation of child labour” HR/Geneva/1985(2) BP.4., p. 3.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

ing mechanisms regarding implementation of international standards needed developing. Montgomery also pointed to the lack of funding within the ILO for its child labour work, and the need to better connect its standard-setting and technical cooperation activities. Turning to other UN bodies, he hoped that UNICEF, in particular, would play a more active role (making 10 recommendations for its future work on child labour), including the coordination of national-level work among the various international agencies. Finally, Montgomery requested that UNDP, FAO, and the World Bank develop official policies on child labour.

Again, in retrospect this agenda appears prescient.

Many of these issues were taken up in the seminar recommendations. The recommendations requested UN agencies to reinforce their programmes related to child labour. UNICEF was asked to review its contribution in the light of its policy review of CEDC. The ILO was requested to take steps to encourage the effective cooperation of all agencies, and, in particular, to establish a framework for improved liaison between all concerned actors from Governments to the families of working children. Finally, increased resources were requested from both bilateral and multilateral agencies to tackle the problem of child labour.³⁰

UNICEF policy on CEDC

The UNICEF mandate within the UN concerns the welfare and rights of children. Established in 1946, it is one of the most field-based UN agencies, with extensive presence at the national and, in some cases, sub-national levels.

The UN seminar set ambitious goals for UNICEF. This was entirely understandable. For, as Cunningham points out, in much of its early operations UNICEF showed little concern with child labour.³¹

During the 1980s, UNICEF's strategic focus was on child survival – on ensuring that children survived the critical first five years. This emphasis seemed to some of UNICEF's executive board members – particularly the Nordic group – to court the danger of neglecting important child rights concerns. Why, after all, were children surviving? In 1985, this concern prompted a policy review of CEDC, including working and street children. At the time, UNICEF could draw on some four years of practical experience of supporting street children programmes in Brazil. These programmes emphasized the delivery of basic services as part of a protective strategy, with education viewed as the most effective means of reaching working children.

The executive board paper discussed in 1986 took a pragmatic line, similar to that of the ILO at the time. It recommended targeting the most unacceptable forms of child labour, while ameliorating the conditions of those children who have to work.³² The focus on street children, as part of the wider child labour

³⁰ UN, *Seminar on ways and means of achieving the elimination of the exploitation of child labour in all parts of the world*. ST/HR/SER.A/18 (Geneva, 1986), pp. 26-28.

³¹ Cunningham, 2001, op. cit., p. 22.

³² See Fyfe, 1989, op. cit., pp. 135-136.

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problem, was endorsed as UNICEF's niche – there was a marked reluctance to engage with some of the political complexities of child labour at large. A CEDC unit was subsequently established at Headquarters, first as part of an urban basic services section. By 1989, with the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), UNICEF began a process of reinterpreting its mandate, which gave child protection a much greater profile within the work of the organization in the following decade.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989

Earlier international declarations. The Declaration of Geneva was the first international statement of the rights of the child. It was formulated by the Save the Children International Union (founded in 1919) and adopted by the League of Nations in 1924. The Declaration paid scant attention to child labour, referring to the need more broadly for children to be “protected from every form of exploitation”. In 1959, the UN adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, setting out 10 rights, including “the right to protection against all forms of neglect, cruelty and exploitation”. Neither Declaration was legally binding.

The Government of Poland (which had also proposed the 1924 Declaration and the creation of UNICEF) took the initiative of having a binding Convention on the rights of the child formulated and put forward during the IYC. A working group met for one week each year from 1979 to produce a draft text. The process was a slow one, in part because of limited input from developing countries. In 1986, for example, just 15 countries attended, and far fewer were actively engaged in the drafting process. However, things began to change in 1987 and 1988, when significant input from the Government of India paved the way for the completion of a first draft in 1988, and for its adoption the following year.

The adoption of the CRC had been eagerly awaited by many of the participants of the UN seminar, and others, as a vehicle for raising the political profile of child labour both nationally and internationally. With a binding instrument on children's rights, the international community now had a complementary standard to those emanating from the ILO.

The CRC affirmed the right of all children to education (Article 28) and to protection from economic exploitation (Article 32). Although the Convention contains little detail on child labour, several other Articles have some relevance to the subject. Article 19 refers to protection from physical or mental violence, injury or abuse; Article 24 to health; Article 30 to minorities; and Article 38 to children in armed conflict. Additionally, there are the “general principles” that inform the Convention, particularly Article 2 regarding non-discrimination; Article 3, on the best interests of the child; Article 6, on the right to life, survival and development; and not least, Article 12, regarding the views of the child. Finally, Article 43 established a Committee on the Rights of the Child to monitor progress made by state Parties in implementing the Convention. UNICEF was given a special role in supporting the work of the Committee.

The World Summit for Children, 1990

In September 1990, the largest gathering of world leaders in history assembled at the UN to attend the World Summit for Children. Led by 71 heads of state and government and 88 other senior officials, mostly at the ministerial level, the World Summit adopted a Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and a Plan of Action for implementing the Declaration in the 1990s.³³ World leaders committed themselves to “work for special protection of the working child and for the abolition of illegal child labour”.³⁴

What was novel about the Summit was the setting of specific targets over the decade 1990-2000. This marked a process – one that was to prove a feature of the 1990s – of managing human development according to objectives that are time-bound. Although specific and measurable goals were set for child survival, the plan of action mentioned only “improved protection of children in especially difficult circumstances” and tackling the root causes leading to these situations.³⁵

Child labour and the “social clause” debate

The 1980s were a decade of growing globalization and consequent debates concerning its effects. These developments had critically important impacts on child labour’s international profile.

The 1980s revived the 19th-century concerns about labour standards and international trade. Indeed, in the 1970s, Claude Cheysson, European Community Commissioner for Development, argued that the Community should withhold aid and trade concessions from those countries that failed to tackle WFCL.³⁶ He suggested that any country that wished to trade with or receive aid from the European Community should meet the basic ILO standards on child labour. This type of conditionality came to be referred to as a “social clause”. The Anti-Slavery Society, in its 1979 publication (see above) suggested that such proposals “could have a value in influencing those states which resist all other reforming pressures”.³⁷

Trade unions at the local, national, and international levels were quick to take up the issue. In the UK, the Trades Union Congress (TUC) and UNICEF (UK) brought out a resource book on child labour in 1985.³⁸ Soon after the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) issued its own report, *Breaking down the wall of silence* to its members setting out a clear agenda of how child labour should be tackled on many fronts through trade union concerted

³³ See UNICEF, *First call for children: World declaration and plan of action from the world summit for children* (New York, 1990).

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

³⁶ See Challis and Edilman, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.170.

³⁸ TUC, *All work and no play: Child labour today* (London, September 1985).

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action. The strategy suggested included a mix of long-term and short-term measures covering the promotion of labour standards and an inspectorate to help enforce them and lobbying governments to influence their development policies, especially in favour of rural development. Public education was also critical, for as his report observed: “public opinion was largely ignorant of the problem and must be made aware of the dangers of child labour, the damage it can cause to family life and to entire societies and economies”.³⁹ In the USA, the United Farm Workers (UFW) called for a boycott of Californian grapes, in part because of the use of child labour. The Child Labor Coalition (CLC) was founded in the US in 1989, with around half of its 40 members being labour groups. The CLC began to take an increasing interest in child labour in the export sector, particularly after the United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW) launched a national campaign, charging the country’s largest retailer with purchasing garments from Bangladesh that used child labour. Part of the complaint was over the use of false labels. This attracted considerable media attention.

Parallel to these developments, interest in the US Congress in international child labour, already intensified with the adoption of the CRC and the World Summit, began to revive.⁴⁰ Child labour became the issue that helped to dramatize a wider concern over violations of labour rights in the global economy. Linking this to trade sanctions provided leverage and a way of building political consensus in an area notoriously difficult to define. Child labour in factories producing for the export market was easy to spotlight, and this helped cut through the often semantic debates surrounding the issue.⁴¹ The Child Labor Deterrence Act (more commonly known as the Harkin Bill after its sponsor Senator Tom Harkin) was introduced in the US Senate in 1992, and was to have a dramatic effect on the profile of child labour worldwide.

The birth of IPEC

In context of the World Summit, the Government of Germany approached the ILO with a proposal to launch a global campaign against child labour. Consequently, on 28 September 1990, Minister Norbert Blüm of Germany informed the Director-General of the ILO of his Government’s decision to make a special annual contribution of DM10 million, over a period of 5 years, to help finance the ILO programme on child labour. This development – alongside the ILO decision to make child labour an inter-departmental theme in 1992 – would enable the ILO, in the words of the Minister, to wage “a long-term effective campaign against child labour”.⁴²

³⁹ ICFTU, *Breaking down the wall of silence: How to combat child labour* (Brussels, 1985), p. 33.

⁴⁰ The US and Somalia are the only countries not to have ratified the CRC.

⁴¹ S. Backman, *Development of the Harkin Bill and the garment industry MOU as seen by United States actors* (Kathmandu, UNICEF, 2002) unpublished paper.

⁴² ILO, *International programme on the elimination of child labour*. Project Document, 6 December 1991.

The programme design and financial agreement were completed in December 1991, paving the way for the launch, in 1992, of the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC).

The 1991 programme document establishes, as one of IPEC's major aims, the promotion of "a worldwide movement against child labour, first to expose the evil where it exists; secondly, to exert pressure on society and governments to take action where the commitment is lacking; and, thirdly, to provide support and facilitate positive measures... where there is political will".⁴³

The document goes on to articulate a set of activities that were to be conducted under this rubric so as "to establish an international climate conducive to action on behalf of working children".⁴⁴ These were to include data gathering and its dissemination; mobilizing workers' and employers' organizations and NGOs; advocacy aimed at political leaders; coordination of international agencies; and the international exchange of views and experiences. To the latter end, a world congress was planned for 1993.

1.3. THE CHILD LABOUR ISSUE COMES OF AGE

After a brief flurry of interest in the early 20th century, child labour, until the 1980s, was relatively neglected in international debates on children's rights and the problems of economic and social development. There then followed a series of developments, stimulated to a great extent by the IYC, (1979) which seemed to herald the resurgence of child labour on the international stage.

Around the latter half of the 1980s, the worldwide movement against child labour reached its turning point – but then failed to turn. It was only a decade later – from the mid-1990s – that the international profile of child labour was to reach unprecedented levels. How can this be explained? It was certainly not due to a dramatically worsening global child labour situation. At least in proportional terms, child labour may well have been in decline from the 1950s.⁴⁵ The international community was spurred more by new concerns about the social and economic impacts of globalization. The World Social Summit, held in Copenhagen in 1995, reflected these concerns, as it did the importance of core labour standards, including the elimination of child labour. This also further encouraged the ILO to approach child labour as a human rights issue.

At the same time, in part because of the globalization debate, the international human rights movement was surging. As part of that, children's rights were also to receive fresh attention. The CRC, although it took time to have an impact on some of the main global actors, brought a new perspective to bear on

⁴³ Ibid., p. 16.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 17.

⁴⁵ K. Basu, "Child labor: Cause, consequence and cure, with some remarks on international labor standards", in *Journal of Economic Literature* (Vol. 37, 1999), pp. 1083-1119.

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the problem, one that complemented the more traditional and dominant labour market and economic development paradigms. The issue of child labour in the export sector, as part of “social clause” debates, powerfully brought these twin forces together, focusing political attention particularly within industrialized countries. Child labour became the single most visible issue generating debates about how children’s rights are to be defined and promoted in an era of globalization.⁴⁶

By the mid-1990s, the child labour issue had come of age.

Box 1.1. The worldwide movement 1973 – 2006: Milestones

1973	Minimum Age Convention, No. 138 and Recommendation, No. 146
1979	International Year of the Child
1985	UN Seminar on child labour
1989	Convention on the Rights of the Child
1990	World Summit for Children
1992	Launch of the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour Harkin Bill
1995	World Social Summit
1996	“Targeting the Intolerable” starts new Convention process First international meeting of working children’s organizations
1997	Amsterdam and Oslo international conferences
1998	ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work Global March launched
1999	Convention No. 182 and Recommendation No. 190
2000	Understanding Children’s Work (UCW) launched UN General Assembly Special Session on Children (UNGASS)
2002	First ILO Global Report on Child Labour World Child Labour Day launched
2006	Second ILO Global Report on Child Labour UN Report on Violence against Children

⁴⁶ See W. Myers, “Valuing diverse approaches to child labour”, in Lieten and White (eds.), *op. cit.*

Introduction

The worldwide movement in the 1990s was characterized by a growing diversity of actors:

- ILO, UNICEF, UNESCO, WHO, UNDP, the World Bank and the Regional Development Banks, who conditioned the normative, policy and financial environment.
- Key bilateral agencies provided resources and political support to ensure that the profile of child labour was promoted within these agencies and to encourage greater inter-agency cooperation.
- Much of the innovation and dynamism came from civil society actors at both the national and international levels. Civil society activism took new forms such as consumer movements and organizations of working children.
- As the international profile of child labour rose, the mass media and the academic community paid more attention to the issue.

With a particular focus on developments from the early 1990s, this chapter charts the activities of the major constituents of the worldwide movement.

2.1. THE ILO

A key pillar of the ILO mandate and mission is the effective abolition of child labour. The Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work of 1998 reaffirmed this core commitment of the Organization as a whole. As we saw in the previous chapter, the ILO led important policy discussions in the 1980s.

IPEC enables technical assistance. In the 1990s, the ILO acquired, through IPEC, the capacity to provide technical assistance to its constituents – to turn theory into practice – thereby revitalizing its role. The focus of this section is on IPEC, although this has not been the sum total of ILO contributions to child labour efforts, as other sections of both this chapter and the rest of the report make clear.

In 2004, the ILO undertook an independent evaluation of IPEC, assessing the programme's effectiveness and advising on future directions of ILO strategy to eliminate child labour.⁴⁷ The report makes a useful document both for looking back and for looking ahead to ILO roles in the worldwide movement.

As we noted in the previous chapter, promotion of a worldwide movement was a primary IPEC objective from the outset. The key measure of impact for the programme as a whole was to be the extent to which IPEC initiated or reinforced change in the behaviour and work of local communities, governments, and the international community at large. Indicators were to include the following:

- ratification of ILO instruments (Convention No. 138 being at the time the most modern and comprehensive of these);
- policy statements from governments;
- enhanced campaigns against child labour;
- increased mass media coverage of child labour issues;
- requests for technical assistance;
- specific action programmes; and
- increased interest and requests for information from around the world.

New measures needed. Rather than suggesting new goals, these stipulations demanded new measures to reinforce existing goals. With IPEC, for the first time the ILO had significant operational capability. But it had to navigate largely uncharted waters. There was little experience, for instance, of working with prominent child labour actors, including NGOs. And, in many ways, an even greater challenge lay at the international level. The worldwide movement was a rather weakly articulated element. It was unclear, for example, how action

⁴⁷ ILO, *Evaluation of the Infocus programme on the elimination of child labour* (Geneva, 2004).

at the national level (technical cooperation) was to be integrated with promotional activities at the international level.

During IPEC's first phase (1992-1997), a number of largely ad hoc activities were undertaken under the rubric of the worldwide movement.⁴⁸ These included input into various international – and (sub) regional-level meetings. Additionally, a dialogue was initiated with UNICEF at the international level on rapid assessment methodologies (1993) and on education and the role of teachers (1994).⁴⁹ A global “Letter of Intent”, signed by the respective heads of agency in 1996, set broad parameters for collaboration in key areas such as policy development, research, and field operations,⁵⁰ although neither ILO nor UNICEF actively promoted it. IPEC continued to provide input to the activities of the UN Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery. The ILO also provided advisory input and participated in the first World Congress against Sexual Exploitation of Children held at Stockholm in August 1996.

The pressure of launching the new programme put a brake on what could be accomplished at the international level. And resources were limited. In IPEC's first year, 83.5 per cent of its budget went to action programmes at the national level versus around 6 per cent to the worldwide movement.⁵¹ In IPEC's first review, continued participation in world, regional, and sub-regional events was endorsed as cost effective, and a number of ideas were advanced for future action, among them the following:

- the selection of a major theme or issue, such as child bonded labour, for intensive campaigning;
- the extension of its pilot work on the economics of child labour;
- inter-agency collaboration on the link between compulsory education and child labour;
- improving data collection to get more accurate global estimates;
- improving the quality of media coverage;
- the development of a ILO newsletter; and
- proposal of a major international meeting, perhaps for 1996-1997.⁵²

A new international instrument

In IPEC's second phase (1997-2002), the landscape was dramatically changed by the ILO's Governing Body decision (March 1996) to place child labour on the agenda of the 1998 Session of the International Labour Conference (ILC), with a view to adopting new international standards.

⁴⁸ ILO, IPEC: *Reflections on the past: Pointers to the future* (Geneva, 1994), p. 9.

⁴⁹ Both were initiatives taken by UNICEF, particularly by its research centre at Florence.

⁵⁰ See ILO, *Child labour*, GB.268/ESP/4 268th Session (Geneva, March, 1997), pp. 21-22.

⁵¹ IPEC, 1994, op. cit., p. 20.

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 27-29. As noted later in the report, all of these ideas have been implemented.

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WFCL as the focus. The proposed standards were to prioritize immediate action to halt the most intolerable forms of child labour. This approach was endorsed by the ILC in June 1996, at which session an informal tripartite meeting at the ministerial level discussed child labour. This meeting established the fact that new standards were not to replace existing ones, but rather to prioritize the elimination of the WFCL, thereby setting a strategic focus for the worldwide campaign against child labour.⁵³

A convergence of factors in 1995 provided the background to this decision:

- A prevailing intellectual climate favoured prioritization within the worldwide movement. This was perhaps best expressed by the ILO's: *First things first in child labour: Eliminating work detrimental to children*.⁵⁴ Developed in conjunction with UNICEF, this publication argued that the limited resources available should be concentrated on the WFCL.
- IPEC, in the light of its national experience, could confirm that there was need for a new instrument. Despite the fact that ratification of Convention No. 138 was a principal aim of IPEC's national cooperation activities, by 1995 only Kenya, out of the 11 participating countries, had ratified it. This reflected a wider problem of the relatively low take-up of Convention No. 138 (ratification stood at around 45 member States), which was troubling to the Office given that it was a core Convention.
- This year saw the height of international boycott pressures, particularly those focused on South Asia, concerning the use of child labour in the export sector.
- The World Social Summit in Copenhagen highlighted the fact that child labour is a human rights subject.

A new instrument that would enjoy a wide measure of support, from both North and South, appeared timely and attractive to these various interested parties.⁵⁵

Landmark in the worldwide movement. The unanimous adoption of the new Convention on 17 June 1999 marked a watershed in the worldwide movement. A short-lived campaign team (1999-2002) was put in place to lead the follow-up to the adoption of Convention No. 182. Ratification targets were set for Convention No. 138 and Convention No. 182, which also benefited from an existing ILO ratification campaign of fundamental labour Conventions. More-

⁵³ ILO, "Child labour: What is to be done?". Document for discussion at Informal Tripartite Meeting at the Ministerial Level (Geneva, 1996), p. 5.

⁵⁴ A. Bequele and W. Myers, *First things first in child labour: Eliminating work detrimental to children* (Geneva, ILO, 1995).

⁵⁵ There were initial misgivings from some quarters. For example, the workers' group within the ILO initially questioned the desirability of a new Convention, fearing that it might undermine Convention No. 138 and the long-term goal of eliminating child labour. This concern has never completely receded.

over, from 2000 there was a major expansion of IPEC resources and activities, as the US became the principal donor. Programme expenditure more than doubled from 1999 to 2000.⁵⁶

Primary and secondary IPEC strategies. The evaluation report of 2004 identified the period January 1998 to December 2003 as the phase of accelerated IPEC expansion. The report provides a useful overall assessment, in particular of the worldwide movement – what the report calls a “primary strategy” of IPEC. The report also identifies three “secondary strategies” that IPEC has adopted to support the worldwide movement:

- advocacy and social mobilization;
- building partnerships and strategic alliances; and
- mainstreaming child labour into the social and economic development agendas.

Results-based approach. Since 2000-2001, furthermore, in conformity with ILO policy developments, there has been a greater focus on a results-based approach.

In examining international-level effectiveness and impact, the evaluation report explores each of the supporting strategic lines of action and applies sets of respective performance criteria. At the outset, the report concludes that IPEC’s advocacy work around Convention No. 182 is “one of its most noteworthy achievements”.⁵⁷ The unprecedented pace of ratification of Convention No.182, and the slipstream effect on Convention No.138, are clear indicators of the results of IPEC’s promotional campaigns. The report finds further evidence of successful ILO advocacy efforts in the inclusion of references to child labour and other core ILO Conventions in the international policy documents produced by international summitry and conferences, in particular in the outcome document of the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children (UNGASS), in 2002. This was buttressed by media and campaigning initiatives such as the SCREAM (Supporting Children’s Rights through Education, the Arts and the Media) project launched in 2002 and the 12 to 12 Partnership Initiative linked to the World Day Against Child Labour, initiated in June 2002; and the Red Card Campaign with the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), 2001.

As the evaluation report concludes: “There is substantial evidence that IPEC’s knowledge-based advocacy has informed global partners, generated awareness and mobilized actors against child labour”.⁵⁸ That said, it recommends that IPEC reassess its advocacy strategy to take account of new programme directions that emphasize policy interventions.

⁵⁶ ILO, *IPEC action against child labour: Highlights 2002* (Geneva, 2003), p. 22.

⁵⁷ ILO, 2004, op. cit., p. 34.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 37.

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International partnerships and strategic alliances. Regarding international partnerships and strategic alliances, the report begins by examining tripartite partnerships, a unique ILO feature and one of its comparative advantages. The report sees potential for greater development of tripartite action, with the specific recommendation that workers' and employers' groups at the global level develop and consolidate their child labour strategies.⁵⁹

In assessing partnerships and strategic alliances, the report highlights the need to examine the objective of the collaboration and the nature of the linkage. The report found that IPEC had been successful in attracting a wide number and variety of partners:

- organizations mobilizing working children (The Global March);
- other UN agencies (UNICEF, UNESCO, WHO, UNDP, OHCHR);
- international financial institutions (World Bank);
- multilateral co-sponsored programmes (UNAIDS);
- regional development banks (ADB);
- other multilateral organizations and regional bodies (EC, APEC and MERCOSUR);
- international workers' and business organizations; and
- multi-stakeholder initiatives (garment industry, sporting-goods production, tobacco growing, and the International Cocoa Initiative).

The report draws attention to some of the problems arising from this broad-based approach. Many IPEC partners do not perceive child labour in the same way, for one thing. Transactional and maintenance costs, furthermore, are necessarily high and difficult to sustain in the longer term. The report concludes, however that "there is sufficient evidence that IPEC's partnering and strategic alliances had a significant effect on the global movement."⁶⁰ Nevertheless, there was a need to find other "standard bearers" to ensure the child labour message was heard among the various international-sector groups and consultative/coordination mechanisms where IPEC is unable to participate directly. The report calls for a more strategic – or "differentiated" – approach in this area.⁶¹

The many references to child labour in the outcome documents of key international conferences and summitry on children and development, suggests the report, attests to mainstreaming globally at the higher policy levels. The problem has been the transmission down to the operational level, for example among donor strategies. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) provide an important instrument, but there remains a long way to go to embed child

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 43.

⁶⁰ ILO, 2004, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 50-51.

labour within these broader frameworks.⁶² This challenge will be explored in Chapter 4.

Mixed successes. Of the suggestions advanced in the first IPEC review (1994), most if not all had been acted upon a decade later. In the second half of the decade, IPEC became the leading edge of the worldwide movement. That said, the strategy adopted was somewhat opportunistic. IPEC took a pragmatic approach, seizing opportunities as they presented themselves. This did not always make for a coherent or strategic approach, particularly in the area of partnerships. Neither did it necessarily play to the ILO's comparative strengths.

ILO Global Reports on Child Labour, 2002 and 2006. The ILO produced two important global reports on child labour as mandated under the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. The First Global Report (2002)⁶³ provided updated and refined global estimates, including for the “unconditional worst forms” of child labour (UCWFCL), whilst the Second Global Report (2006)⁶⁴ provided evidence of a positive trend in child labour. According to the latter report, the number of child labourers fell by 11 per cent from 2000 to 2004, while that of children in hazardous work decreased by 26 per cent. The greatest progress had been made in Latin America and the Caribbean where the number of children now in work was just 5 per cent – a drop of two-thirds over the four-year period.⁶⁵ The Second Global Report also presents a Global Plan of Action setting the target date of 2016 for the elimination of all worst forms of child labour. ILO member States would, in line with Convention 182, design and put in place appropriate time-bound measures by the end of 2008. This provides an important part of the context for chapter 4 of this report.

The ILO's social partners. As seen in the previous chapter, workers' and employers' organizations played an historic role in evolution of the worldwide movement. International trade unions helped to put child labour on the international agenda in the 1990s as part of concerns over “the race to the bottom” as globalization intensified and were also important in supporting the right to education as part of a global campaign. Both the World Confederation of Labour (WCL) and the ICFTU⁶⁶ launched campaigns against child labour and in support of the ratification and application of ILO standards. Sector initiatives, such as in tobacco, also engaged the Global Union Federations (GUFs). In 2005 and 2006 these international trade union organizations came together to identify important challenges and opportunities in combating child labour. It is also important to note that from 1996, the ILO had its own dedicated project to support trade

⁶² Ibid., p. 51-53.

⁶³ ILO, *A future without child labour* (Geneva, 2002).

⁶⁴ ILO, *The end of child labour: Within reach* (Geneva, 2006).

⁶⁵ Ibid, xi.

⁶⁶ A new body the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) was launched on 1 November 2006.

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unions in combating child labour, supported by the Government of Norway, that focused initially on the role of teachers and more recently has promoted child labour free zones in the agricultural sector.

From the 1990s employers' organizations were also accelerating action on the child labour issue. In 1996 the General Council of the International Organization of Employers (IOE) adopted a resolution calling on its members to be more active in responding to child labour as part of a global campaign. Subsequently, the IOE issued guidance to its members and in May 2005 adopted a new position paper on child labour. The trend towards corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the 1990s also saw employers' organizations take important initiatives to free supply chains of child labour leading to a number of voluntary sectoral agreements in areas such as sporting goods, tobacco and cocoa. These will be examined in more detail later in the chapter.

The social partners also found in IPEC an important vehicle to expand and deepen their engagement with the child labour problem at all levels, ranging from advocacy to practical projects supporting education, training and child labour monitoring. The role of workers' and employers' organizations will be examined in more detail in Chapter 4.

2.2. UNICEF

As noted in the previous chapter, the strategic focus of UNICEF had from the 1980s been set on child survival, with relatively little attention given to child protection issues. UNICEF's major policy foray into child protection issues had been its 1986 policy discussion on CEDC, affirming UNICEF's street children niche.

Establishment of a global UNICEF policy. It was not until 1994 that UNICEF, in response to the rising profile of the issue and rapid ratification of the CRC, began to formulate a global policy on child labour. In his 11 November 1994 address to the Third Committee of the General Assembly, Executive Director James Grant stated that the CRC was now the framework for all of UNICEF's country programmes. He also called for more focus on child protection concerns. In particular, he suggested that child labour was a feasible area for the introduction of concrete goals and timelines. Finally, making it clear that UNICEF was included in this admonition, he urged the world community to do more to promote and protect children's rights in such sensitive areas as child labour.⁶⁷

In 1994, the ILO and UNICEF met in New York to try to institutionalize their relationship regarding concerns with basic education and child labour, and to agree upon a common policy framework. This was seen as a step towards more effective inter-agency collaboration embracing UNESCO, the World Bank, and

⁶⁷ UNICEF, Executive Director's statement to the UN GA Third Committee (1994), p. 11.

WHO. This initiative, which came largely from UNICEF's Innocenti Research Centre, at Florence was not sustained. UNICEF's Florence centre, nevertheless promoted an unprecedented range of publications (some of them jointly undertaken with the ILO).⁶⁸

In 1995, UNICEF, with the participation of the IPEC manager, held its first major consultation on child labour in Kathmandu. In the same year, UNICEF joined the ILO in a groundbreaking partnership to fight child labour in an industrial sector in Bangladesh. The garment industry project – “the MOU project” – was to become perhaps the best-known child labour initiative of the decade, and was a major vehicle for raising the international profile of child labour.⁶⁹

UNICEF now recognized child labour as the rising tide on the international agenda. In 1996, a high-level task force was constituted at UNICEF headquarters at New York to refine the position on child labour and, over the next three years, to support such key international developments as major international conferences; the drafting of a new ILO Convention; and the preparation of the 1997 “State of the World's Children Report”, which was to focus on child labour. It was recognized by UNICEF that it had much to learn in this area, and that a posture of intellectual modesty was most appropriate.⁷⁰

UNICEF's comparative strengths. The task force also recognized that UNICEF's comparative advantage in child labour laid in its work in support of basic education as both a preventive and protective strategy. UNICEF's other strengths were also recognized: its strong country presence; its ability to work multi-sectorally; and its experience in social mobilization and partnership building with NGOs. Moreover, from its experiences in promoting child survival, UNICEF had learned that the setting of quantifiable, time-bound goals is an important measure for achieving successful outcomes.⁷¹ The World Summit had set over 20 such goals for children by the year 2000. As a result, more than 120 countries – accounting for some 90 per cent of the world's children – had drafted national plans of action. In effect, this constituted a worldwide movement for children.

UNICEF's global activities. UNICEF also recognized the need to expand collaboration and dialogue with other organizations, especially with the ILO, to identify complementarities and build synergies. The task force suggested an informal consultative mechanism to facilitate periodic exchanges regarding policy and programme priorities. UNICEF participated in the Amsterdam and Oslo conferences (in the latter it was a partner with the ILO, contributing the background papers on education and social mobilization). The year 1997 also witnessed the

⁶⁸ Some 12 publications on child labour appeared between 1993 and 1998.

⁶⁹ See a joint ILO/UNICEF report of the MOU project, *Addressing child labour in the Bangladesh garment industry 1995-2001: A synthesis of UNICEF and ILO evaluation studies of the Bangladesh garment sector projects* (Geneva/New York, August, 2004).

⁷⁰ UNICEF, *The state of the world's children report 1997* (New York, OUP, 1996), p. 4.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

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launch of a global capacity-building programme that further refined UNICEF's position on child labour, focusing on a mainstreaming approach.⁷²

As a result of the Oslo conference, at the end of 1998 UNICEF was provided with resource support to launch a global programme, "Education as a preventive strategy". This initiative became operational in 34 countries, and had an early-childhood component. Using child rights as a framework, the global programme promoted important links between education and child protection within UNICEF and with its partners, including IPEC. Indeed, strategic links with IPEC were an explicit objective of the global programme. This major child labour programme, which ran until 2002, was part of the rising profile of child protection issues within UNICEF.

In 1996, UNICEF's executive board conducted a 10-year review of child protection policies and strategies. By 1998, there was a designated child protection section at UNICEF headquarters, and in 2002 child protection was made one of five organizational priorities of its medium-term strategic plan (2002-2005) and was sustained in its corporate plan for 2006-2009.

During the 1990s, UNICEF became a respected international leader in education. One mark of this was UNICEF's leadership of the UN initiative on girls' education. Following the World Education Forum held in Dakar, Senegal, April 2000, in the Education for All (EFA) spirit, 13 agencies including the ILO, UNDP, UNESCO, and the World Bank formed the UN Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI) to mount a "sustained campaign to improve the quality and availability of girls' education". In 2002, girls' education became one of UNICEF's organizational priorities. As UNICEF's State of the World's Children Report for 2004 made plain, despite decades of global attention to the issue, some 121 million children remained out of school, 65 million of them girls.⁷³ UNICEF launched its "25 by 2005" global campaign to complement and enhance existing initiatives to accelerate progress on girls' education. The strategy seeks to help all countries eliminate gender disparity in education by 2005, with a special focus on 25 countries judged to be most at risk of failing to achieve this goal.

UNICEF had a special facilitating role in UNGASS held in May 2002. UNGASS produced an important statement concerning the interconnection between child labour and EFA, as well as the need to mainstream child labour in national development efforts. Moreover, the children's forum marked a watershed for children's participation and was perhaps the Special Session's greatest innovation. The Children's Statement, "A world fit for us", at the UNGASS opening, 8 May 2002, included the following:

- references to "laws that protect children from exploitation and abuse being implemented and respected by all" and "equal opportunities and access to quality education that is free and compulsory";⁷⁴

⁷² See UNICEF, *Towards a global strategy on working children*, (Turin, 11 July 1997).

⁷³ UNICEF, *The state of the world's children: Report 2003* (New York, 2002).

⁷⁴ UNICEF, *A world fit for children* (New York, 2002), p. 11.

- a plan of action underscoring the connection between education and child labour: “Education is a human right and a key factor to reducing poverty and child labour;”⁷⁵
- reference, as part of the implementation strategy, to promoting “innovative programmes that encourage schools and communities to search actively for children who have dropped out or are excluded... especially girls and working children... Special measures should be put in place to prevent and reduce drop-out due to... entry into employment”⁷⁶
- mention, in the section of the outcome document dealing with child labour, of the importance of “providing working children with free basic education and with vocational training and their integration into the education system in every way possible”;⁷⁷ and, importantly,
- a new focus on child labour within the wider context of international cooperation efforts, citing the over-riding need to “mainstream action relating to child labour into national poverty eradication and development efforts, especially in policies and programmes in the areas of health, education, employment and social protection”.⁷⁸

UNICEF also has a special role in supporting the supervisory machinery of the CRC. The Committee on the Rights of the Child, in addition to examining country reports, also holds annual “Days of General Discussions”, one-day discussions on designated topics – one of them has been devoted to economic exploitation (1993). In addition, the process of formulating and discussing national reports are a useful tool in promoting child labour concerns.

Finally, UNICEF provided key support to the *World Report on Violence against Children*⁷⁹ – the first comprehensive, global study on all forms of violence against children. The Study grew out of a 2001 recommendation of the Committee on the CRC and was submitted by Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, as Independent Expert, to the UN General Assembly in October 2006. The collaboration of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNICEF and the WHO, was a central part of the process in developing the study. The ILO was also involved in the development of that part of the study devoted to violence against children in places of work.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 33.

⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 35-36.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 44.

⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 44-45.

⁷⁹ P. Pinheiro, *World Report on Violence against Children* (Geneva, UN, 2006).

2.3. UNESCO

UNESCO had made some early forays into child labour. The 14th International Conference on Public Education, held at Geneva in July 1951 under the auspices of UNESCO, adopted a recommendation affirming the inter-relationship of compulsory education and the elimination of child labour.⁸⁰ The ILO, supported by UNESCO, produced a background paper on this issue. In 1989 UNESCO, in collaboration with UNICEF, published a digest on child labour and education in India and South-east Asia. Compiled by Neera Bura, it follows in Weiner's footsteps.⁸¹

UNESCO's main contribution from 1990 was the promotion of EFA, launched in Jomtien, Thailand. It was only after the Jomtien Conference that UNESCO began to directly focus on street and working children with the launch of a global programme. This programme combined technical cooperation, advocacy, and resource mobilization. It was implemented at the field level by UNICEF and, more particularly, by concerned NGOs.⁸²

This focus, though, failed to infiltrate Jomtien follow-ups at the various high-level meetings held in New Delhi (1993) and Amman (1996), or at the World Education Forum held in Dakar, Senegal, April 2000. Dakar affirmed education as a fundamental right, with free compulsory primary education of good quality as a target for 2015. Special attention was paid to girls, children in especially difficult circumstances, and ethnic minorities – but there was no specific mention of working children as a target group.

This was finally put right in 2002, when UNESCO declared, "If we want to achieve Education for All, the issue of child labour must be taken more squarely into account."⁸³ This was consolidated in the following year at the first high-level roundtable, held in New Delhi, organized by UNESCO, the ILO, the World Bank, and the Global March. As the New Delhi Declaration affirmed: "The international community's efforts to achieve Education for All (EFA) and the progressive elimination of child labour are inextricably linked."⁸⁴

UNESCO has subsequently become a member of an inter-agency Global Task Force on Child Labour and Education for All (GTF) that was launched in 2005 and its regional office at Bangkok has actively promoted the connection to getting girls out of work and into school.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ See ILR, 1951, op. cit.

⁸¹ UNESCO-UNICEF, Digest 28. M. Weiner, *The child and the state in India: Child labor and education policy in comparative perspective* (Princeton, PUP, 1991).

⁸² See A. Fyfe, "Child labour and education: Revisiting the policy debates", in Lieten and White (eds.), op. cit., 2001, p. 76.

⁸³ IPEC, *Combating child labour through education* (Geneva, 2004), p. 4.

⁸⁴ Global March, (New Delhi, 13 November, 2003).

⁸⁵ UNESCO, *Getting girls out of work and into school*, Bangkok, 2006.

2.4. WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

The very first accounts of child labour, during the period of industrialization, examined its impacts on health. That this focus has not been sustained is one of the strangest anomalies of the worldwide movement. And this is all the more puzzling when one notes that the concepts now current – “child labour”, “the worst forms of child labour”, “the unconditional worst forms of child labour” – turn, to an important degree, on health criteria of harm, both of a physical and a psychosocial nature.

In 1981, WHO confirmed that the relationship between health and child labour had been little explored. Moreover, it was recognized that child labour would have to be addressed if the WHO goal of “Health for All by 2000” were to be attained. WHO set out an agenda for immediate action (concerning data collection and case studies utilizing the WHO regions) to remedy this deficit. This contribution was updated in 1985 as part of a second revised edition of the Defence for Children International publication *Child labour: A threat to health and development*.⁸⁷

A WHO Study Group on Special Risk Factors of Children at Work met in Geneva from 10-16 December 1985.⁸⁸ Primarily, it aimed to identify the special health risks to which children at work were subject. The ILO and UNICEF were also represented at the meeting. The report of the Study Group did not appear until 1987. It presented a more comprehensive treatment of the subject, and made recommendations for action at the community, national, and international levels. Interestingly for the worldwide movement as a whole, the Study Group suggested that an inter-agency committee on child labour be created with representation from all concerned international organizations. Moreover, it recommended, this body should deal not simply with health issues, but rather with all aspects of the child labour problem. The inter-agency committee would adopt a division of labour to respond to various dimensions of the health issue, while also dealing with other aspects of the child labour response.⁸⁹

As is so often the case, international follow-up was left to certain dedicated individuals. When these individuals moved on, the issue went into eclipse within the WHO and other international organizations, to be revived, rather fitfully, only at the end of the 1990s.

This revival took the form, from 2000, of a number of mainstreaming activities in the area of children’s environmental health. There was also growing

⁸⁶ D. Pitt and P. M. Shah, *Child labour and health* (Geneva, DCI, 1981), p.13.

⁸⁷ P. M. Shah, *Alternative health approaches for the health care of working children* (Geneva, DCI, 1985), pp. 37- 41. Shah also contributed a paper to the 1985 UN seminar.

⁸⁸ A technical group that supported the Task Force met in September 1982 and May 1984.

⁸⁹ WHO, *Children at work: Special health risk*. Technical Report Series 756 (Geneva, 1987), pp. 42-43.

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collaboration with the ILO with activities aiming to better define hazardous work within the framework of Convention No. 182. WHO made important contributions to an expert meeting, held at the ILO on this issue in October 2002, from which emerged the proposal to form an inter-agency group comprising WHO, the ILO, and UNICEF. To date this network has failed to be sustained.

However, WHO collaborating centres in occupational health have identified child labour as one focus of 15 task forces and priority areas with 19 identified activities. In support of these activities, the WHO began work on a position paper on child labour and health in 2005, and a training course was piloted in a number of countries in 2006, whilst the WHO's campaign on "Children and Health" in Europe also made a connection to child labour.

2.5. WORLD BANK

The World Bank is the newest major actor on the international child labour scene, and potentially one of the most powerful.

Role in reducing poverty. In the run-up to the Oslo Conference, the Bank began to formulate a child labour policy that emerged early in 1998. In its position paper a clear rationale is presented for involvement through its overall poverty-reduction mission. A role is set out in terms of problem analysis, policy dialogue with governments, and lending activities – at a minimum, it suggests, Bank-financed projects should not contribute to the child labour problem.⁹⁰

Role in promoting education. The Bank has served an indirect, yet critical role as a global actor in education. The Bank – as the largest international actor in education and social development – was a key sponsor of the Jomtien and Dakar conferences. At the latter, it pledged that no country serious about EFA would lack the financial support for its realization. This was followed by its Fast Track Initiative (FTI) in education and its promotion of debt relief and national poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs). These frameworks affirmed the Bank's commitment to empowering poor people as one pillar of poverty reduction, making child rights issues such as education and child labour a legitimate subject for its policy dialogue with Governments and other stakeholders.

Role in promoting employment. The World Bank is also a key player in the Secretary-General's initiative on youth employment, where it partners the ILO and where the ICFTU played a prominent role.

The World Bank recognizes that child labour is one of the most devastating consequences of persistent poverty, and it has adopted a clear position on child labour through its ongoing poverty reduction efforts and new initiatives. The importance it accords child labour was reflected in its position paper on child labour, where it called for the Bank's further engagement through both lending

⁹⁰ P. Fallon and Z. Tzannatos, *Child labor: Issues and Directions for the World Bank* (Washington DC, 1998).

and non-lending activities. In May 1998, the World Bank Global Child Labor Program (GCLP) was established to enhance the effectiveness and to increase, through its ongoing poverty reduction efforts, the impact of the World Bank's work on children's issues. The main objectives are to identify and strengthen the comparative advantage of the World Bank in this area, and to engage the World Bank in proactively addressing the issue of child labour in its lending and non-lending operations – in particular in PRSPs and Country Assistance strategies (CASs). Bank strategy, furthermore, includes knowledge management and partnership.

Research and policy perspectives. If the variety of relevant circumstances and complex realities are to be addressed effectively, it is essential to understand household decision-making and the incentives and constraints facing families. The Bank emphasizes the need for multi-sectoral approaches to child labour. Where incentives are the problem because expected returns are greater for work than school, educational reforms are the most important policy instrument. The goals of these reforms should focus on reducing educational costs while at the same time, ideally, increasing educational quality and, hence, the returns from education. Where the problem is the constraints faced by poor or vulnerable families in sending their children to school, the key responses are social-protection interventions that provide a safety net or overcome failures in financial or labour markets.

There was a general recognition at the 1997 Oslo Conference that, despite a common policy framework – ILO Conventions and the Convention on the Rights of the Child – action addressing child labour was insufficiently coordinated across agencies. The World Bank has responded to these calls by forging partnerships with the ILO and UNICEF particularly through the Understanding Children's Work (UCW) research project⁹¹ and the Global Task Force (GTF) on child labour and education.

The recent development of the Bank-wide Children and Youth framework of action presents an opportunity to move forward in promoting child labour issues, especially in the area of translating research analysis into the development of effective programmes and projects. Regional and sectoral activities within the Bank, as well as others in collaboration with international partners, are having an impact. Conditional cash-transfer programmes, now in place in several Latin American countries, have proven a promising tool.

2.6. DONOR COUNTRIES

The ILO representative at the 1985 UN seminar pleaded for resources for an enhanced global response to the problem of child labour: “One of the major constraints on efforts to promote national and international action is the gross

⁹¹ See www.ucw-project.org. based at the University of Rome “Tor Vergata”.

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inadequacy of resources allocated by national and international agencies for child labour programmes.”⁹²

More resources. The call for increased resources was, in fact, the seminar’s final recommendation. And, in the following decade, available resources did indeed expand. As seen above, IPEC was launched by a substantial German contribution in 1992 and, five years later, 16 donors were supporting the programme. The real expansion in donor support occurred after 1997, particularly from 2000 onwards, once the US began making significant donations. Other international agencies also benefited, with both UNICEF and the World Bank receiving support for the first time to launch global programmes on child labour. Trade unions and NGOs also won support for their child labour activities.

Roles of the bilateral agencies. It would be misleading, however, in appraising the role of the bilaterals in stimulating the worldwide movement, to focus simply on the evolution of financial support. As important, if not more important, was the role they played in helping to shape policies, priorities, and processes towards greater integration at the international and national levels.

As it is, a large number of donors have entered the child labour arena. Most countries providing international development assistance have included child labour in their portfolio. We shall examine their role by looking at the example of four particular countries: Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and the United States.

Germany

As was seen in Chapter 1, Germany’s decision to provide resources for the ILO to mount a more effective global campaign against child labour was influenced by the CRC and the World Summit. As have been so many developments in the worldwide movement, the donation was the inspiration of one individual – Norbert Blüm, the German Minister of Labour.

This support had not been foreseen by the ILO, which was then presented with the challenge of designing and implementing a fairly novel mechanism of technical cooperation. Germany’s contribution, which had the added advantage that it came with no particular restrictions attached, was renewed in 1995 at the World Social Summit for another five years.

The Netherlands

In June 1995, during a parliamentary hearing on the outcome of the UN World Social Summit, the Minister for Social Affairs and Employment, Ad Melkert, announced that the Netherlands would begin joint activities with IPEC. As a follow-up, IPEC organized a child labour study day in October 1995. One of the outcomes of this study day was a proposal for a joint Netherlands/ILO conference on child labour in the first half of 1997.

⁹² UN, 1986, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

The Amsterdam child labour conference, organized by the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment and the ILO, was held on 26 and 27 February 1997, and focused on the most intolerable forms of child labour. The conference aimed at preparing the ground for a new ILO Convention, the first discussions for which were scheduled for the 1998 ILC.

During the Amsterdam conference, a financial commitment was made to the ILO to establish the Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour (SIMPOC). But it was only after a series of questions in Parliament that the Minister for Development Co-operation decided that the Netherlands would become a donor to IPEC.

The Netherlands played an important role in the short-lived informal donors group on child labour that was established after the Oslo conference. The Netherlands also organized the second follow-up donors meeting at The Hague, in October 1999, where they took the lead in promoting a response to child domestic workers, a category many felt had been neglected in Convention No. 182. At the same time, the Netherlands encouraged IPEC and UNICEF to focus more on the role of early childhood interventions and education in their responses to child labour.

The Netherlands also set out its policy on child labour in a May 1998 memorandum that affirmed the special emphasis on support for IPEC in future Dutch assistance. UNICEF was also mentioned as a possible recipient.⁹³

In keeping with the close association between the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and the ILO, a follow-up conference was organized, this time at The Hague (25-27 February 2002), focusing on the theme of hazardous work. Although it attracted more than 300 participants from over 40 countries, the conference failed to achieve the same high-level government representation seen five years earlier, and did not appear to have the same impact.⁹⁴

Norway

The outcome of the Amsterdam conference provided input to the October 1997 Oslo conference.

The decision by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) to call a conference on child labour was the product of two forces. First, there was the development of Norway's strategy on how best to follow up on the CRC and the World Summit for Children. At the same time, the Confederation of Trade Unions (LO), as part of the ICFTU campaign against child labour, approached the government seeking a conference that would examine the links between child labour and trade.

⁹³ M. Stegeman and A. van Leur (eds.) *Child labour policy memorandum: Child labour worldwide* (The Hague, Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, May, 1998, p. 31.

⁹⁴ See report, *Combating child labour: Building alliances against hazardous work* (The Hague, Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, 2002).

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In 1995, the MFA decided to call for an international conference on child labour, but dropped any reference to trade issues.⁹⁵

The MFA broadened the conference focus by basing it on the CRC and bringing in UNICEF in addition to the ILO. By September 1996, the MFA had decided that it wanted the CRC to form the basis of the conference, and, during the winter of 1996/97, the MFA introduced UNICEF as an equal conference co-organizer.

Paralleling the inter-agency preparations facilitated by Norway, various NGOs began to make their own preparations. In Bangkok, a sub-regional inter-agency working group was created a few months before the conference and, with the object of providing input to the conference, assigned the task of formulating a regional perspective on child labour in the Asia and Pacific region. This inter-agency initiative was continued after the conference.

Early in the preparation stages, the final document was conceived as an “Agenda for Action”. Throughout 1997, the work on the agenda was developed through a consultative process that included preparatory regional conferences held at Brasilia, Lahore, and Pretoria. The aim was to establish consensus on a common ground for international child labour policy that took account of the CRC, ILO standards, and the need to prioritize the WFCL.

The International Conference on Child Labour was held in Oslo, 27-30 October 1997. The conference attracted over 350 delegates, including ministers of development cooperation, labour, social welfare, and justice from 40 industrialized and developing countries, as well as leaders of trade unions and employers’ organizations, UN agencies, other multi-lateral organizations (the World Bank and regional development banks), and leading child labour experts.

Oslo was the most prominent international meeting ever-staged on child labour. That said the absence of high-level representation on education was a significant deficit. The lack of major representation from working children and youth organizations (who participated in a parallel forum) also detracted from the consensus building that lay at the heart of the stated objectives of the Oslo conference.

What difference did the Oslo conference make? The overall objective of the conference was to advance the worldwide movement against child labour, with a specific goal of establishing an agenda for action that would build on an emerging consensus, taking it further into a new phase of international policy and practice.⁹⁶ The agenda was meant to provide direction and coherence to international action. This was perhaps overly ambitious.

An evaluation commissioned by the MFA in 2003 set out to assess the impact of the Oslo conference and suggest future steps. The report concludes that much was achieved in the short run by the Oslo conference, but that ulti-

⁹⁵ L. Bjerkan and C. Gironde, *Achievements and setbacks in the fights against child labour: Assessment of the Oslo conference on child labour* (Oslo, FAFO, 2004), p. 15.

⁹⁶ See *Agenda for action* (Oslo, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1997).

mately the Agenda was not a binding instrument. The Oslo conference had no authority to change the mandates of the key international agencies such as the ILO, UNICEF, and the World Bank. Consequently, each agency took from the Agenda what it felt fitted its own institutional interests. Moreover, subsequent resource support went in support of each agency's own priorities, perpetuating a lack of inter-agency cooperation.⁹⁷ The one exception was the support given to collaboration in research and data collection, which resulted in the inter-agency project UCW. Even here, however, inter-agency tensions led to a delay of two years in launching the project, and its first three years were marred by divergent perceptions of its role and impact.

The real deficit, as with so much child labour action, was insufficient follow-through on the part of Norway and other bilaterals in sustaining the spirit of Oslo. The informal donors group, established just prior to Oslo, maintained the momentum from 1997-2000, but then lapsed. Difficulties became apparent within a year of the conference. One donor country, reportedly, responded to its invitation to the September 1998 first annual donors meeting in Oslo by asking: "Child labour? Isn't it child soldiers this year?"⁹⁸

Changing political priorities in the international system were to make a sustained focus on child labour more problematic as time went on.

The United States of America⁹⁹

The USA was represented at Oslo, but it did not join the informal donors group that came together to promote its follow-up.

Although the US was relatively late in joining IPEC, and provided only modest funding from 1995 to 1998, this expanded rapidly from 2000. By this time, the US had overtaken Germany as IPEC's single largest donor. This is all the more remarkable when one considers that in 1995 there was a serious proposal in the US Congress, with some support in the Department of State, to have the US withdraw from the ILO. Instead, only four years later, in President Clinton's State of the Union address, the US pledged to lead the effort to adopt and ratify the new ILO Convention on child labour. In 1999, as a symbol of this commitment, President Clinton became the first US President to attend the ILC in Geneva.

Also remarkable – given that the US has not ratified the CRC and many other UN human rights treaties – is the fact that the US was the third country to ratify Convention No. 182.

How can these extraordinary developments be explained? As we noted in the previous chapter, US concerns in the early 1990s with trade and employment protection took the form of a draft bill sponsored in the US Senate in 1992 by Senator Tom Harkin. In 1993, the Congress directed the Secretary of Labor to

⁹⁷ Bjerkan and Gironde, 2004, op. cit., pp. 38-45.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 39.

⁹⁹ The source for this section is ILO, *The silver book* (Geneva, 2004).

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conduct a study identifying foreign industries and host countries using child labour in producing goods imported into the USA. Six major reports were produced after 1994 by the US Department of Labor (USDOL) under the generic title: *By the sweat and toil of children*. The Senate bill was also amended over time. The trading element was toned down, with the emphasis shifting towards the rights of children (particularly the right to education) and the global elimination of child labour.

Senator Harkin was key to these developments. From the mid-1990s, he began pressuring the Clinton Administration to support a global programme against child labour. The USDOL did not have legal authority to conduct technical cooperation programmes overseas, and it was not until Alexis Herman became Secretary, in 1996, that a way around this was found so that significant resource support could go to IPEC and the ILO.

US involvement has not been confined to financial support. In 1996, Secretary of Labor Robert Reich suggested that the ILO conduct a study of social labelling and its role in child labour elimination efforts. In 1999, both the USDOL and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) began to promote the use of education in child labour efforts. Furthermore, in 2000 USDOL supported the emerging concept of time-bound programmes (TBPs), and organized an international conference, in conjunction with the ILO, to help prepare the ground for the launch of the first TBPs at the ILC later that summer. The US has also been at the forefront of global action against some of the unconditional WFCL, particularly trafficking and the use of child soldiers, and has continued to fund ILO work on these areas.

2.7. INTERNATIONAL NGOS

Introduction

From the late 1970s onwards, NGOs around the world were involved in efforts at local, national, and international levels in addressing the increasingly visible abuse of young children in the streets and workplaces of developing countries. They were unanimous in saying that “something had to be done” to reduce this abuse. But their ideas regarding exactly what was needed were as diverse as their respective backgrounds.

For much of the past 20 years, disagreements between NGOs over the most appropriate strategies, often expressed in terms of conflicts between prominent NGO personalities, have dominated and divided the NGO movement concerned with child labour.

NGOs and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

During the 1980s, international NGOs concerned with children worked hard to influence the provisions of a new Convention on the Rights of the Child that was being drafted by the United Nations.

Efforts to make the voices of child workers heard. Prominent among these NGOs were Save the Children, an alliance of independent charities, each based in an industrialized country and each funding projects in the developing world, and Defence for Children International (DCI). While the draft was under discussion, activists concerned specifically with the exploitation of children in South-east and South Asia became worried that questions about the child workers were receiving inadequate attention. This provided impetus to the establishment in 1985 of Child Workers in Asia (CWA), a new regional network of NGOs which tried to influence the new Convention, in part by ensuring that the voices of child workers were heard during debates regarding its provisions.

Following adoption of the Convention in 1989 and its rapid ratification, these NGOs were determined to see its provisions implemented across the board, with particular attention to four generic provisions that they had successfully sought to include in the Convention:

- the non-discrimination principle (by then fairly standard in human rights treaties);
- the principle that the best interests of the child should always be a prime consideration in actions concerning children;
- the duty of governments to ensure the survival and development of children; and
- children’s right to express their views and have these taken into account in accordance with their age and maturity.¹⁰⁰

This broad approach, in which a child’s right to protection against one form of abuse was to be seen in a broader context of efforts to enable them to exercise all their rights – and, above all, to survive and develop – was sometimes referred to as “an integrated approach” and, later, as “the child rights approach”.

The key to making choices about which rights took precedence lay in the principle that action affecting the child should only be taken if it was in his or her (or their) best interests.

NGO strategies in response to child labour

It was clear that, from at least 1989, NGOs concerned with working children were pursuing a range of diverse and often contradictory strategies.

“Best interests” at issue. Not all the NGOs campaigning against child exploitation were familiar with the implications of the “best interests” principle. Many were inclined to continue as before, reckoning that they knew what forms of exploitation were obviously not in the child’s best interests – even if they did not ask the children concerned, or if the young people concerned did not agree.

¹⁰⁰ Respectively, Articles 2, 3 (1), 6 (2), and 12 (2) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

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Furthermore, it soon emerged that, even within individual organizations, there were many different interpretations, when it came to the world of work, about what was in a child's best interests.

NGOs with a specific focus and their supporters

Many NGOs were set up to combat specific types of abuse and exploitation. By 1990, many of these already had years of campaigning experience.

- In South Asia, during the 1970s and 1980s in India and in the 1980s in Pakistan, activists involved in a campaign against debt bondage noticed that the numbers of children involved were increasing. They decided to move the focus from adults to child bonded labourers. In 1989, they formed a South Asian regional organization, the South Asian Coalition on Child Servitude (SACCS), dominated by India's anti-bonded labour campaign, the Bandhua Mukti Morcha (BMM), Bonded Liberation Front.
- In South-east Asia, activists were focusing attention on tourists paying for commercial sex with young girls in Thailand and elsewhere. A widely supported campaign, "End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism" (ECPAT), was eventually transformed in the mid-1990s into an international NGO searching for ways to stop the commercial sexual exploitation of all children anywhere in the world. In 1996 and 2000, it played a key role in international conferences addressing this issue.
- In sub-Saharan Africa, the focus was on children recruited as soldiers or members of militias and insurgent groups, after this issue came to prominence as a result of child recruitment in Uganda in the early 1980s. The question of the minimum age for the recruitment of soldiers was hotly debated by diplomats in the 1980s; but the provision agreed in the CRC did not change the existing international standard, which allowed the recruitment of 15-year-olds. In the early 1990s, international NGOs were looking for new ways to raise this minimum age. In 1993, their lobbying resulted in UN decisions to commission a "Study on the impact of armed conflict on children", and to draft an Optional Protocol to the Convention on the involvement of children in armed conflicts. When the drafting of this Protocol became bogged down, six international NGOs established, in 1998, a Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers to lobby for progress.¹⁰¹ During the second round of discussions about the provisions of the new ILO Convention, in June 1999, they participated in efforts to categorize as a WFCL the recruitment or deployment of all under-18-year-olds. A new Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflicts was eventually adopted in 2000.

¹⁰¹ See Stuart Malsen, "Lessons learned from the international campaign to end the use of children as soldiers", in Wolfgang H. Reinicke and Francis Deng, with Jan Martin Witte, Thorsten Benner, Beth Whitaker, and John Gershman, *Critical choices - The United Nations, networks, and the future of global governance* (IDRC, 2000), ISBN 0-88936-921-6.

When mainstream human rights NGOs began focusing their attention on exploited children for the first time in the 1990s, they usually also started by drawing attention to cases causing tangible harm to the children involved, rather than to child labour in general. For example, in 1996 the US-based Human Rights Watch (HRW) published its first report on cases of child labour, focusing on bonded child workers in India and subsequently produced other reports on the problem;¹⁰² it went on to play a prominent role in efforts to stop the recruitment of children as soldiers.

Many of the NGOs concerned with specific forms of exploitation had developed with the support of other, usually larger, NGOs or faith groups. Members of Christian churches played a role in setting up NGOs opposed to the commercial sexual exploitation of children, while the Quakers, long-time opponents of war, promoted efforts to stop children being recruited to fight. Anti-bonded labour activists in South Asia found an ally in the Anti-Slavery Society. In both Latin America and South-east Asia, Catholic Church activists helped get organizations supporting child workers off the ground. The initial links did not always last, however, especially when the new NGOs took on a life of their own, and became embroiled in disputes regarding the most useful tactics for helping child workers.

NGOs supporting working children's organizations

The assumption that working was harmful for children, or at least harmful for children below the age of 14 years, was challenged in parts of Latin America and India by NGOs that emphasized the importance of the right of children to voice their own views.

The priority among these NGOs was ensuring that the children's opinions were taken into account in decisions affecting them, including decisions by governments and by inter-governmental organizations such as the ILO. NGOs supporting what came to be called "children's participation" helped working children set up organizations of their own to articulate their views about what measures would or would not be helpful to them as workers. In most cases, these were adolescents rather than younger children. These movements will be examined in more depth in the last section of this chapter.

NGOs concerned with the social impact of globalization

The diverse group of NGOs concerned about working children at the beginning of the 1990s were next joined by a group of activists from quite a different background: organizations based in Europe and North America preoccupied with the social impact of globalization.

¹⁰² See for example, *Small change: Bonded labour in India's silk industry* (New York, HRW, 2003).

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These NGOs interpreted increases in the number of child workers as symptomatic of the harmful impact of globalization. Within this group, some were committed to supporting trade union protests in industrialized countries against imports of products made by workers who were paid much less than their colleagues in the industrialized world. At the beginning of the 1990s, the campaign in the United States against imports of garments from Bangladesh was soon supported by a range of NGOs, most of them based in industrialized countries, which worked alongside trade unions to demand greater corporate social responsibility. As it turned out, this campaign was not entirely in the best interests of the child workers. News from inside Bangladesh soon revealed that the threat of a US boycott of goods produced by children under 14 years had led to the mass lay-off of adolescent girls employed in garment factories, generating considerable hardship.¹⁰³

These side effects, however, did not stop smaller organizations and many journalists from continuing to focus attention on children working in export industries, knowing that such cases were more likely to receive attention from the media. Within the developing world, opposition in India – one of the countries with the strongest civil society movements against child labour – to the idea that pressure on exports was a sensible strategy led to a split in the BMM. One faction, led by Kailash Satyarthi, committed itself to working closely with trade union partners in the USA and Europe, identifying itself in English as the South Asian Coalition on Child Servitude (SACCS), while taking the name of Bachpan Bachao Andolan (BBA) in Hindi.

The International Working Group on Child Labour

Working out what's best for working children. In 1992, one NGO with a long-term interest in ending abuse suffered by children, the International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPAN), joined with DCI to review both (a) the experience that children had of working and (b) the effects of efforts by Governments and others to address the children's situation. This International Working Group on Child Labour (IWGCL), it was hoped, would produce solutions from which others could learn.

Factionalism an obstacle. However, the IWGCL soon became embroiled in NGO factionalism. While compiling a set of valuable reports on what was happening in specific countries under the leadership of Nandana Reddy, CWC head in Bangalore, the IWGCL emphasized the importance of providing support to working children's organizations and promoting these as the most legitimate voice on the issue of children and work. When young workers began speaking out in support of their rights to work and to establish organizations of their own, also calling for improvement in their conditions of work, they and the NGOs that supported them not surprisingly antagonized trade unions.

¹⁰³ See ILO/UNICEF, 2004, op. cit.

The Global March Against Child Labour

Background. Within the global child labour campaign, the Global March came closest, however briefly, to the popular notion of a “movement”. What were its origins? The Amsterdam conference in 1997 was preceded by a meeting at The Hague of a range of NGOs and trade unions responding to a call by Kailash Satyarthi to mount a “global march” to denounce child labour. Satyarthi already had experience in India of conducting protest marches over long distances, notably one concerning child labour that began at Cape Kumari (Comorin), on the southern tip of India, and ended in New Delhi.

The suggestion that there should be a worldwide campaign against child labour received support from organizations around the world. Some were NGOs concerned about development question in general, among them NOVIB (a member of Oxfam International based in the Netherlands) and Christian Aid (based in Britain), both of which funded projects and campaigns throughout the developing world. Others had already been campaigning on the issue for many years, including the Washington-based International Labor Rights Fund and the London-based Anti-Slavery International (previously known as the Anti-Slavery Society), whose leaders backed Satyarthi’s initial call for a global march. Still others, such as the Abrinq Foundation in Brazil and the Network against Child Labour in South Africa, were working at the national level in developing countries. With only a few exceptions, these NGOs were preoccupied with the abuse which working children were suffering, but had not been involved in efforts to adopt an “integrated approach” to child rights issues. They were joined by some trade union representatives, notably the head of the GUF campaigning most vocally against child labour, Neil Kearney, General Secretary of the International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers’ Federation.

The Hague meeting agreed to go ahead with a global march against child labour and to recruit others. For several months the name of the campaign remained in doubt. Some organizations argued that the march should be against “the exploitation of child labour”. Others, particularly trade unions, sensed some moving away from the commitment they wanted from NGOs to campaign against *all* cases of under-age work. For a while, it looked as though the march might split apart before it had started. But unity was regained under the banner “From exploitation to education”.

Some general aims of the campaign were agreed, but, both at the outset and later, it was evident that the Global March Against Child Labour was a coalition of groups that all wanted to see child labour eradicated, but, once again, they held diverse views about how best to achieve this. The coalition did not consist exclusively of NGOs in the usual sense. Trade unions were also recruited, with Education International (EI), for example, soon joining its international steering committee. From the point of view of some participating NGOs, this presented an opportunity to work with one of the ILO’s constituencies to support the introduction of a new international standard to help children in the most abusive forms of work, at the same time steering trade unions away from a perceived

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focus on child workers in the export sector. Others embraced the trade union approach, and welcomed a worldwide campaign to publicize their message.

Launch of the march. At this early stage, the link between the Global March and ILO activities regarding child labour remained unclear. It was already public knowledge that the ILC would hold two rounds of discussions, in June 1998 and 1999, about a possible new Convention on “intolerable” forms of child labour, so the Global March’s initial planning session agreed to stage a march during the first half of 1998.

After some initial hesitation, this was agreed. Once the destination was clear, several legs of the march were scheduled to start in different parts of the world: the first in Manila, in January 1998; the second in Rio Janeiro, in February; and the third in Cape Town, in March. Many UNICEF country offices supported these events.

The Global March organizers widened their support base during 1997, and, by the start of January 1998, the participants reflected a range of views about what should be done about child labour, although those who advocated children’s right to work were excluded.

As increasing numbers of working children were recruited as marchers. The march gave these children a voice, and they talked – not about working part-time to pay for continuing schooling, or about losing out through starting work at 14 instead of 15 years – but rather about being subjected to a range of abuse. If any doubt remained in some quarters regarding the need for a new ILO Convention focusing on the most abusive forms of child exploitation, those inflicting most harm on working children, here was compelling evidence that such a treaty was needed.

The Global March persuaded only one working children’s organization to join its campaign. The others reiterated that they only wanted improvement in their working conditions, not to lose their jobs altogether.

Impact of the march. The six-month march ended in Geneva, in June 1998, with a noisy group of marchers led by Kailash Satyarthi and accompanied by at least one European government minister. The ILC welcomed them as they proceeded into the hall at the UN’s Palais des Nations where the ILC was meeting. Such an encounter between the organized, diplomatic world of inter-governmental organizations and the disorderly reality of the informal world of work occurs only rarely – and in this case months of negotiations between the ILO and the UN had been required to smooth its way in the face of diplomatic and security concerns of the UN.

While the march itself was over, some NGO members of the Global March took part, in 1998 and 1999, in the ILC discussions concerning the new Convention. In the second round, NGOs were given an opportunity to make a formal contribution to the conference committee considering the new Convention. And, for the first time, a child worker – a 17-year-old girl heading the Philippines organization of child domestic workers (SUMAPI)¹⁰⁴ – delivered a statement to

¹⁰⁴ SUMAPI (Samahan at Ugnayan ng mga Manggagawang Pantahanan sa Pilipinas) means “to join”, and stands for the Association and Linkage of Domestic Workers in the Philippines. See www.visayanforum.org.

the conference committee, speaking on behalf of Asian NGOs. At the conference committee and lobbying events organized around the ILC, NGOs that had taken part in the Global March were joined by others – both NGOs with their own substantial experience of child labour, and others based in Geneva or with representatives in Geneva.

The Convention was adopted unanimously. The momentum achieved by the Global March was in part responsible for this. Were the Convention's provisions influenced by the Global March? Almost certainly they were, for both the workers' group preparing the elements they wanted to have included, and others, used the testimonies of child marchers as a reference point.

But the marchers did not get their own way on all points:

- They failed to have the employment of anyone younger than 18 years in the army or any other armed group categorized as a “worst form”.
- The provisions of the new Convention affecting domestic workers were weaker than they wanted.
- Convention No. 182 remained essentially a tripartite instrument that gave neither NGOs nor child workers a role in helping to identify types of work that should be categorized as hazardous under Article 3 (d) of the Convention. Article 6, concerning the design and implementation of programmes of action to eliminate the WFCL, gave NGOs a role, under the rubric of “other concerned groups”, to voice their views on what action should be taken – views which the tripartite community was required to simply to “take into consideration”. Recommendation No. 190, accompanying the Convention was more generous, and mentioned (still in connection with programmes of action) “taking into consideration the views of the children directly affected by the worst forms of child labour, their families and, as appropriate, other concerned groups committed to the aims of the Convention and this Recommendation” (I.2).

Developments after 1999. After the adoption of the new Convention, some members of the Global March wanted to wind up its activities. Kailash Satyarthi and others argued, however, that it still had a role to play.

Some suggested that the network of organizations involved could play an invaluable role in collecting information regarding cases of child labour and reporting these publicly. The Global March's secretariat in India set up a press service to perform this function.

Leaders of the March agreed that it should focus initially on persuading States to ratify the new Convention and that in 2001, building on the slogan, “From exploitation to education”, it should move its focus to Education for All (EFA). In 2000, Kailash Satyarthi attended the World Education Forum, held in Dakar, Senegal, to focus on education policies. In 2003, the Global March helped sponsor a round table on child labour and education held in New Delhi, and, in 2004, Kailash Satyarthi was elected President of the Global Campaign for Education. Other meetings on child labour and EFA were subsequently held

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at Brasilia (2004), Beijing (2005) and Cairo (2006) and helped to launch the GTF of which the Global March is a member.

The International Save the Children Alliance

The International Save the Children Alliance is the world's leading independent child rights organization, with members in 29 countries and operational programmes in more than 100. The Alliance was centrally involved in many of the developments outlined in this section. The next chapter will examine their role in policy debates in child labour at the end of the 1990s. In 2003, the Alliance set forth its position¹⁰⁵ on children's work in general and one several key issues in particular such as: the positive and negative effects of work; macroeconomic policies and child work; education and child work; legislation; the responsibilities of employers'; and working children's organizations.

The Alliance was also a key contributor to the World Report on Violence against Children by facilitating the involvement of children at national, regional and international levels. It also contributed to the substance of the report, including on workplace violence, from its field consultations. Additionally, the Alliance developed an important piece of research exploring the impact and lessons learned from working children's participation.¹⁰⁶

2.8. CONSUMER MOVEMENTS

Development of corporate social responsibility

During the 1990s, large businesses throughout the world came under pressure to pay greater attention to the impact that their activities were having on the environment, on the human rights of their workforce, and on others affected directly or indirectly by their activities. By the end of the decade, "corporate social responsibility" had itself become an *industry*, providing advice to companies on what they should or should not be doing, and monitoring the effects of corporate activity on both workplaces and other areas. This development was also supported by the UN with the launch in 1999 of the Secretary-General's voluntary initiative – the Global Compact.¹⁰⁷

New pressures, greater accountability. From being accountable almost exclusively to their share-holders, companies based in North America and

¹⁰⁵ International Save the Children Alliance, *Save the children's position on children and work* (London, March 2003).

¹⁰⁶ International Save the Children Alliance, *Opening minds, Opening up opportunities: Children's participation in action for working children* (London, March 2004).

¹⁰⁷ This initiative has over 2,000 companies and other stakeholders participating supporting a set of core values in the areas of human rights, labour standards, the environment and anti-corruption.

Europe, particularly those importing goods manufactured in developing countries, found themselves under pressure to accede formally to, or adopt, codes of conduct, and in some cases to agree to independent monitoring of both their own activities and those of their suppliers.

This change was due in part to a series of corporate disasters, among these the mass loss of life that followed a factory gas leak in Bhopal, India, in 1984. Momentum also came from publicity concerning the role of multinational companies in areas where indigenous and tribal peoples were the victims of mass detentions and killings, such as the oil-rich Niger River Delta, Nigeria. In the 1990s, as noted earlier, the change was also due to the publicity that trade unions and NGOs gave to the involvement of child workers in the manufacture of products imported into North America and Western Europe, accompanied by a message, implicit or explicit, that encouraged consumers to use their purchasing power to avoid buying certain products and to promote certain others.

This review of the use of consumer pressure to combat child labour starts by looking at media campaigns that focused on products that child workers helped to produce imported into Europe or North America. It goes on to examine the influence of other initiatives, including social labels guaranteeing, for example, that a product is “child labour free”; fair trade; and ethical trade. It ends by summarizing the approach taken, at the beginning of the 21st century, by “ethical investors”.

Consumer campaigns denouncing the use of child labour and sector alliances

Campaigns to halt the exploitation of children in one part of the world by exerting public pressure in another had been tried before the 1980s. But the focus had seldom been on products made by children for export.

Campaign impacts on export sales. The first campaign of this kind concerned children in virtual slavery – child bonded labourers making hand-knotted carpets in a part of northern India, which became known as the “carpet belt”. The volume of both India’s carpet exports and the number of children making them climbed rapidly in the 1980s and activists in India sought ways of addressing the problem. These included asking their partners in Germany – which accounted for more sales of Indian carpets than any other single country – and elsewhere to influence carpet importers and purchasers. A loosely coordinated array of actions were exerted in India and abroad, including the following:

- raids by police on carpet looms where captive children were working;
- establishment of residential centres where children who had been bonded labourers could live and retrain; and
- publicity in India, Germany, and elsewhere concerning the abuse.

By the end of the 1980s, Western importers of Indian carpets were complaining about the impact of the campaign on their sales. Some importers became involved in schemes to look after rescued children. In 1995, following

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the murder of a boy who had worked as a bonded labourer and later led protests, adverse publicity focused on hand-knotted carpet production in Pakistan, and the local carpet industry was also to complain of falling sales. In both cases, people purchasing carpets in Europe and North America may have been reacting to reports in the media, although some commentators attributed the decline in sales to other causes.¹⁰⁸

This long-running campaign, which began in the 1980s, remained intense for almost a decade and still continues. The campaign has pursued different strategies over that period.

Social labelling. By 1990, some campaigners were arguing that they should call for a global boycott of Indian hand-knotted carpets (bonded child labour, reportedly, was not being used in the manufacture of other types of carpet); but others pointed out that this would punish manufacturers and exporters indiscriminately. In 1991, SACCS, opened discussions with German NGOs about ways of promoting carpets which were *not* made by child labourers. This involved the development of a scheme called “Rugmark” to check that no children younger than 14 years were involved in the manufacturing process and to offer a guarantee in the form of a label attached to each carpet. With financial support from the German Ministry of Cooperation, Rugmark was established in 1994. Rugmark was a pioneer in the field of “social labelling”, as far as child labour was concerned.¹⁰⁹

This campaign provided a reference point for several later initiatives. In North America, some who had taken part argued in favour of a “social clause” in international trade, one that would precipitate sanctions against the import of products made by young children or forced labour. As the campaign evolved, its focus changed from bonded children to under-age workers in general, in part on the grounds that it was difficult to distinguish bonded children from other child workers. This change of focus was favoured by activists who wanted to end the employment of children under 14 years of age.

The next two key campaigns also focused on countries in South Asia: Bangladesh and then Pakistan. This was a region in which huge numbers of children younger than 14 were being absorbed into economies that were rapidly expanding and producing a wide range of goods for export at much lower costs than those incurred in industrialized countries. Both campaigns, as seen earlier in the chapter, were initiated by trade unions. The first focused on Bangladesh’s new garment-making industry, which by 1992 had become one of the world’s major

¹⁰⁸ In the 1995 case, the chairman of the Pakistan Carpet Manufacturers and Exporters Association reported before the boy’s death that the industry was in decline, and blamed this on the Government’s fiscal policy. See “This menace of bonded labour”, in *Debt bondage in Pakistan* (London, Anti-Slavery International, 1996), ISBN 0-900918-35-7.

¹⁰⁹ Rugmark has been the subject of scores of articles and reports, some praising it and others questioning both its effectiveness and its honesty. See for example Alakh N. Sharma, Rajeev Sharma, and Nikhil Raj, *The impact of social labelling on child labour in India’s carpet industry*, Working Paper for IPEC (New Delhi, Institute for Human Development, 2000).

exporters of clothing and was making rapid in-roads into the North American market. By 1992, about 1 million women were working in the industry; alongside them were between 50,000 and 75,000 children younger than 14, most of them girls.¹¹⁰

Consequences of the “social clause” and “social labelling”. The initial response of businesses in Bangladesh to the proposed US Senate bill of 1992 was to try to hide child workers. In 1993, however, when employers in Bangladesh thought the bill was about to become law, and they were about to lose their US market, they reacted more drastically. They laid off under-age workers *en masse*, without warning and without compensation. It was not the consumer movement that caused this, but businesses’ fear of losing profits. Many children and their families were to suffer harsh consequences, with many children moving into much more dangerous jobs.

The Harkin Bill, as it was known, never became law (although a related provision was adopted in the US in 1997, as is discussed below). It still had a substantial impact, however. It convinced some NGOs that the threat of consumer power could be successful in persuading retailers in Western Europe and North America not to buy products made by children or other oppressed workers. In the US, this campaign mobilized consumers against “sweatshop labour”, both in the US and abroad, leading well-known brand names to sign formal agreements to respect minimum labour rights standards. In Europe, the Clean Clothes campaign involved both trade unions concerned principally about jobs in Europe, and NGOs that usually focused on the developing world.

The football campaign. Other NGOs drew quite different conclusions from the Bangladesh experience, however, noting that campaigns to boycott child labour were inherently harmful to the children concerned and that they, as NGOs concerned about children’s rights, had a responsibility to use their influence to reduce these harmful side effects.

This view assumed prominence in 1996, when a new trade union campaign focused on children involved in manufacturing footballs. This involved a relatively small group of working children involved in stitching the leather faces of footballs in and around the town of Sialkot, in Pakistan’s Punjab. Between half and three-quarters of the world’s leather footballs were manufactured in this area and, after the campaign started, the ILO estimated (1996) that more than 7,000 children between the ages of 5 and 14 years were working on a regular, full-time basis in and around Sialkot. Large numbers of women were also involved, but rather than working in factories, they were working in their own homes.

The campaign was launched in Europe just a few months before the 1996 European Football Championship. Television footage showed children stitching footballs, and the ICFTU lodged a complaint with FIFA, football’s international regulating body, that children were being used to manufacture balls that carried

¹¹⁰ See UNICEF, *The state of the world’s children 1997: Focus on child labour* (Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 60.

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FIFA's logo. In the US, the "Foul Ball" campaign was initiated two years after the US had hosted the football World Cup in 1994, and was aimed especially at mothers buying "soccer balls", as they were known in the US, for their children.

The impact of this campaign differed from the one in Bangladesh. The ILO, UNICEF, and international NGOs had learned that they had to get involved more rapidly to deal with any potentially harmful side effects on children. Furthermore, the international sporting goods industry had already given some thought, at a meeting organized by the World Federation of Sporting Goods Industry (WFSGI) in Switzerland in late 1995, to the action its companies might take on the issue of labour standards.

Campaign initiatives and manufacturer responses. Companies importing footballs into the USA initially responded in a piecemeal way. Reebok established an adults-only factory unit in Sialkot, which reportedly had the effect of excluding women as well as children. The company began putting a label on individual balls, guaranteeing that their manufacture had not involved child labour, a further development of the social labelling that Rugmark had pioneered. It was far from clear, however, that this approach was sustainable on a wider scale.

At the beginning of 1997, the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) signed an agreement with the ILO and UNICEF in Atlanta, USA, pledging that child labour would be eliminated from Sialkot's football industry by the end of 1998. The ILO conducted relevant research and was given a monitoring role. UNICEF was involved in increasing the number of school places for children and in improving the quality of available education. Save the Children UK took on the role of collecting information and working with families and children to increase school attendance and reduce, in a sustainable way, the involvement of children in stitching footballs. Eventually, more than 70 Sialkot businesses joined a partnership with Save the Children UK to achieve the Atlanta Agreement's objectives. The deadline initially fixed for the end of 1998 slipped to March 1999; even then, only 39 of the 69 companies exporting footballs were involved.¹¹¹

Six years after the original publicity, in the run-up to the 2002 World Cup, the Global March reported that child workers were still stitching balls together for well-known companies, and that leather was being taken outside the area covered by child labour initiatives in Sialkot to be assembled in a village some 250 kilometres away.

The Sialkot campaign concerned relatively few children, but, once again, it provided a basis for other efforts addressing child labour in the same industry in other areas. In 1997, Christian Aid, based in London but working with SACCS in India, published a report estimating that 25,000 to 30,000 children were involved

¹¹¹ Samuel Poos, Sialkot, Pakistan, "The football industry: From child labour to workers' rights", for the Clean Clothes Campaign, November 1999; www.cleanclothes.org/publications/child_labour.htm.

in manufacturing sporting goods for export in neighbouring areas of India's Punjab.¹¹² The response from Indian businesses followed the Sialkot model, but the Indian Government reportedly objected to the ILO becoming involved in checking whether child labour was still prevalent. Eventually, in 2000, a programme to tackle child labour was launched, with FIFA financial support, by Indians sports goods manufacturers. Also in 2000, the WFSGI adopted a code of conduct for its members, prohibiting the employment of workers younger than 14 or 15 years in accordance with ILO Convention No. 138.

In 2006, the problems of Sialkot resurfaced with continued concern over labour rights violations at local factories supplying Nike – a development all the more surprising given the growth of trade unionism over the years as a result of ILO intervention.

The fourth example of a consumer-orientated campaign is a more recent one, and concerns cocoa produced in West Africa. In various ways this campaign resembled the India carpet campaign, for it was not initiated by trade unions and, once again, started with a focus on slave labour. Whereas India's carpet campaign moved on to cover all "illegal child labour", this campaign followed the adoption of Convention No. 182, so the focus was on the WFCL.

Like the Sialkot campaign, this one began with a television documentary, shown in Britain in September 2000, featuring teenage boys from Mali working in neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire. They were held in captivity on a cocoa farm and subjected to beatings. The initial publicity prompted cocoa importers in Britain to investigate whether the report was credible, and whether, as the documentary claimed, the cases were part of a wider pattern of abuse. At the international level, cocoa importers, chocolate manufacturers, and related businesses formed a Global Industry Group (GIG) to manage such threats.

The members of this group in Europe and North America were given a jolt six months later by publicity surrounding a quite separate case of child trafficking, unrelated to cocoa production, in other West African countries. The story of a ship full of West African so-called "child slaves" dominated the Western media over Easter, a time when children in Europe and North America are traditionally given large amounts of chocolate. A British government minister publicly linked the two stories. The chocolate industry, particularly in the USA, reacted swiftly to limit the impact of the adverse publicity. By this time the industry did not require consumer pressure to react; businesses knew they would lose sales if they were not seen to be reacting rapidly and adequately.

The Chocolate Manufacturers Association (of the US) convened the GIG and others considered to be significant stakeholders. In September 2001, they signed a "Protocol for the Growing and Processing of Cocoa Beans and their Derivative Products in a Manner that Complies with ILO Convention 182

¹¹² Christian Aid, "A sporting chance: Tackling child labour in India's sports goods industry" (May 1997); www.christian-aid.org.uk/indepth/9705spor/sportin2.htm. A subsequent report commissioned by India's National Labour Institute reported a lower estimate of 10,000.

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Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor”. This protocol recognized that child labour could not be made to vanish overnight. It committed signatories to producing, by July 2005,¹¹³ “industry-wide standards of public certification... that cocoa beans and their derivative products have been grown and/or processed without any of the worst forms of child labor”.

The importers’ rapid action succeeded as a damage-control exercise. It is less clear what benefits it brought to children in West Africa, where the publicity coincided with a growing political split between southern Côte d’Ivoire, where the cocoa farms are situated, and both the north of the country and its northern neighbours Mali and Burkina Faso. As Côte d’Ivoire embarked on civil war, conditions were far from suitable for any practical action to be taken concerning cases of economic exploitation.

Despite the cocoa importers’ rapid initial action, it was far from clear by the beginning of 2005 that the industry-wide initiatives were making progress. Individual importers began obliging their suppliers to sign an undertaking that no “abusive child labour” had been involved.¹¹⁴ NGOs in Europe and North America complained that no significant improvements had occurred on farms in West Africa. The International Labor Rights Fund, which had played a role in most of the child labour campaigns in the US during the 1990s, launched a court action in the USA in October 2004, alleging that the US Administration was not respecting its own laws – which from 1997 onwards banned the import of products made by forced child labour.

Impact of sector alliances: A balance sheet

Each of the campaigns mentioned above achieved considerable impact, both in industrialized countries and in countries where child labour was being used. In general, however, the key actors were not ordinary consumers, but rather companies involved in exporting and importing the products concerned, trade unions, and some NGOs. Furthermore, the impact was by no means entirely positive.

On the plus side, these campaigns were part of a process that resulted in the development of an entirely new set of standards for corporate social responsibility. It started with codes of conduct of limited scope being adopted by individual companies, and later with codes adopted by groups of companies importing and retailing similar products. The codes became increasingly general in scope, with dozens of codes on core labour rights and other issues such as environmental protection being issued by companies, trade unions, NGOs, faith-based organizations, and professional verification agencies. This voluntary approach was also taken up by the UN.

¹¹³ Subsequently extended to July 2008.

¹¹⁴ For example Cargill, a major US importer. See “Cargill’s own initiatives in cocoa and Côte d’Ivoire”, www.cargill.com/news/issues/cocoaindustry.htm#P20_3228.

At the national level, the campaigns helped to persuade the authorities in some industrialized countries to adopt legislation concerning either child labour, specifically, or labour standards in general. Although the Harkin Bill, did not become law, in 1997 the US adopted the Sanders Amendment to the Tariff Act (1930), which already prohibited the import of goods involving forced labour. The Sanders Amendment explicitly prohibited the import of goods produced by forced *child* labour.

In hindsight, it is easy to observe that many company codes and the associated verification processes were intended primarily to benefit the businesses involved. From this perspective, they were an essential element of a risk-reduction strategy. Major companies that have *not* taken action to protect themselves against revelations that they or their suppliers are employing children younger than 15 or 14 years are now likely to be deemed by investors to be taking an unacceptable risk.

Does this mean that, in the end, the gains essentially accrued to the companies rather than to working children – or even to the adult workers whose trade unions backed the campaigns? It is certainly not clear that the campaigns on Bangladesh and Pakistan¹¹⁵ saved jobs in industrialized countries. But they did have a substantial effect on the lives of children working in the targeted industries. Most investigations have focused on the negative effects. Nevertheless, there were clear benefits for some children.

Possible negative outcomes. Following the Bangladesh episode, the stakes were raised, and both those for and against the campaign cited evidence to back up contradictory claims. This made it all the more important that detailed evidence be collected regarding the impact of both initial publicity and subsequent concrete measures. There have been several studies of this kind. For example, an investigation in Sialkot, published in 2004,¹¹⁶ presented five negative conclusions:

- the Project eliminated a source of income for women;
- family income among families whose members stitched soccer balls declined;
- child stitchers moved into other occupations;
- the Project further segregated soccer ball manufacturers in Sialkot; and
- Sialkot soccer ball manufacturers became less competitive in global markets as soccer ball production shifted elsewhere.

This investigation focused specifically on the impact in the Sialkot area. But the campaign had wider ramifications. It upstaged an existing campaign concerning other child workers in Pakistan's Punjab – bonded children who were producing hand-knotted carpets in conditions similar to those in India.

¹¹⁵ At the end of 2006 both countries were in the news again for reported violations of labour standards in the garment and soccer ball sectors.

¹¹⁶ Eliot J. Schrage, *Promoting international worker rights through private voluntary initiatives: Public relations or private policy?* A report to the US Department of State on behalf of the University of Iowa Center for Human Rights, 2004. <http://www.uichr.org>.

Social labels

In India and other countries the use of “social labels” caused controversy. In the case of Rugmark, this was fuelled by the opposition of India’s Carpet Export Promotion Council, which in 1995 began issuing a label of its own: “Kaleen”. This had the effect of sowing confusion regarding which labels were backed by a meaningful verification process. Rugmark itself faced repeated challenges about the effectiveness of its verification procedures. By July 2003, it reported that it had granted labels to 2.9 million carpets exported from India, in addition to others from Pakistan and Nepal.¹¹⁷ It reported detecting 1,387 cases of illegal child labour in India. Several hundred of these were bonded children, some of whom were returned to their families while others were moved to a Rugmark-run rehabilitation centre.

Beyond Rugmark and Kaleen, there were a variety of other projects designed to guarantee that carpets were not made by under-age children.

The carpet campaign was more directly oriented to consumers than the other campaigns mentioned (which instead emphasized publicity and, with it, an implicit threat of consumer boycotts, to which businesses were virtually bound to respond). With the development of Rugmark, NGOs had an incentive to influence consumer choices. In Germany, NGOs backed a mid-1996 survey of 1,550 people to determine whether they would prefer products to provide information about whether child labour had been involved – a high proportion, 85 per cent, said they would – and whether they had heard of Rugmark.¹¹⁸ Despite such efforts, almost 10 years later few products are on sale in Europe that provide such information, and some that do assert that a product is “child labour free” without offering any proof. The level of information retailers have made available to consumers about labour standards involved in the production process has hardly improved, even though retailers have been signatories to numerous schemes to prevent child labour.

Consumer movements within developing countries

Those initiatives mentioned so far sought to mobilize the concern of consumers in industrialized countries about children in the developing world. There were also some cases in which consumers were mobilized about children in their own country, notably in Brazil.

The Abrinq Foundation for the Rights of Children and Adolescents was established by Brazilian businesses in the early 1990s to end the abuse of children, in particular the exploitation of child labour. Abrinq set up a “Child Friendly Business Programme”,¹¹⁹ asking Brazilian companies to make 10 promises to children, including a commitment not to employ children younger than 16 years

¹¹⁷ <http://www.rugmarkindia.org>.

¹¹⁸ Aktionsbrief Teppichknüpfer14, Heidelberg, December 1996.

¹¹⁹ Programa empresa amiga da criança.

except in formal apprenticeships, and then only from the age of 14 years. Once again, this may not sound like direct pressure from consumers, but the Abrinq programme mobilized “child friendly” journalists and others to influence the public, calling for an end, for example, to the involvement of children in cutting sugarcane used to make the alcohol that fuels cars in Brazil as an alternative to petrol. By 2006, nearly 2,000 companies in Brazil had signed on to honour Abrinq’s 10 promises.¹²⁰ The “child friendly” movement struck a responsive chord with both the public and with many businesses in Brazil.

“Fairtrade” and “ethical trading”

A much broader approach has been taken by organizations pursuing the similar-sounding goals of “Fairtrade” and “ethical trading”. In practice, however, their aims are rather different.

Fairtrade. The Fairtrade movement began developing well before the 1990s’ focus on labour standards. It represents an effort to put producers in developing countries into direct contact with importers and retailers in Europe and North America, thus ensuring small-scale farmers better conditions of trade.

While Fairtrade products carry a label, it is not a “social label” as such, but rather an indication that the product has by-passed conventional marketing channels. When the media started paying more attention to the issue of child labour during the 1990s, however, the Fairtrade movement took action to ensure that it was not left behind. It introduced a series of minimum standards concerning the production process. The movement’s umbrella organization, Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International (FLO) now sets a series of minimum standards for both farmers’ organizations and enterprises that hire workers, prohibiting the use of forced labour, child labour (the employment of under 15s) or discrimination against workers or potential workers, as well as governing a range of other labour and environmental issues.¹²¹

The Fairtrade movement, operating in 16 countries by 2003, has been in a good position, in the face of child labour campaigns, to call attention to the guarantees that its products carry. For example, in 2001, when cocoa farms in Côte d’Ivoire were being criticized, it was able to point to its guarantee that neither child labour nor forced labour was involved in the production of Fairtrade cocoa in Ghana, or of Fairtrade chocolate sold in industrialized countries.

Ethical trading. In contrast, the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI), established in Britain in 1998, appears a reaction to the experience, examined above, of the previous six years, when NGOs and trade unions were denouncing cases of child labour and companies were essentially on the defensive. ETI comprises an alliance of companies, NGOs, and trade unions trying to work together

¹²⁰ Information about the companies is available at www.fundabrinq.org.br/index.php?pg=empresas.

¹²¹ Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International. Generic Fairtrade Standards for Hired Labour. January 2003.

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to “share experience and promote learning about implementing international labour standards in international supply chains”.¹²²

In contrast to the barrage of different codes of conduct for the workplace issued in the late 1990s, the premise of the ETI’s work is that no one yet knows the most appropriate techniques for assuring that satisfactory standards are respected in the workplace, but that everyone involved has a common interest in working together to identify and promote best practices.

The ETI has benefited from the fact that the publicity-oriented campaigns that were a feature of the 1992-1997 period have largely been abandoned, allowing it to convene its constituents in a less contentious climate. By 2004, the ETI had 36 corporate members. Its “base code” – the minimum standards it aims to uphold – are essentially the same as those contained in most other codes, reflecting the provisions of ILO Convention No. 138.

In an annual report published in 2002, the ETI announced that it was embarking on a child labour project in India’s Tamil Nadu State to identify “a credible and co-ordinated response to child labour.” Two years later, however, it reported that the project had been halted. Despite, or perhaps because of, the experience of the previous decade, the magic bullet for dealing with child labour seemed as remote as ever.

Investors and child labour

Nevertheless, by 2004 it was clear that some of the fundamental rules had been transformed. A key change was that companies trading in the industrialized world could no longer safely view child labour as merely a cheap resource to be exploited. Instead, it had to be perceived as a risk, one that businesses had to be seen to be taking action to minimize. With the rapid development of investment funds describing themselves as “ethical” or “socially responsible”, businesses were pressed to guarantee that their activities did not involve employing children aged younger than 15 years. Consequently, businesses no longer required managers or shareholders to opt for an “ethical” approach before taking action to stop child labour: they now had to do so simply to continue attracting risk-averse investors.

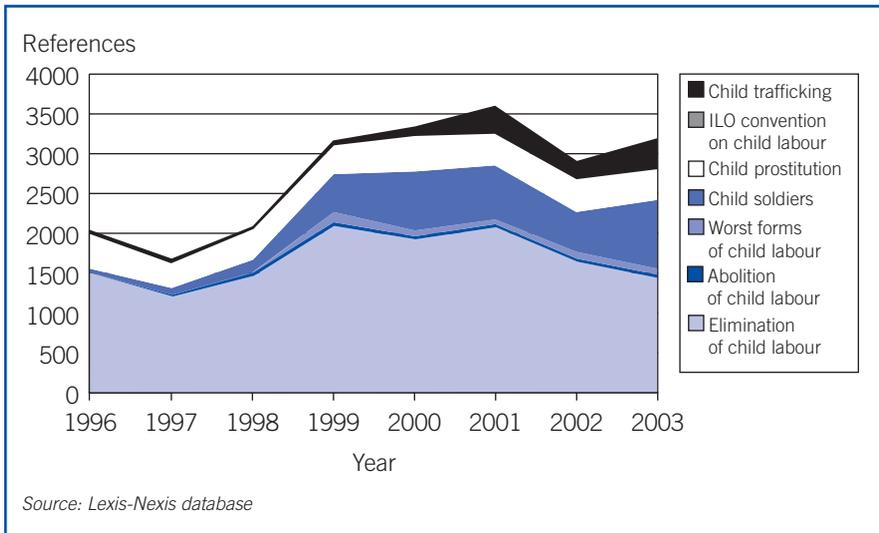
2.9. THE MEDIA

From the 19th century to this day, a socially concerned press has been key to mobilizing public opinion against child labour. Most countries that have succeeded in combating child labour have done so only after national and international media have dramatically raised the problem in the public consciousness.

Before the early 1990s, media coverage of child labour issues was very limited. Some argue that this is due to the fact that many journalists are unfa-

¹²² From the ETI’s web-site www.ethicaltrade.org/pub/about/eti/main/index.shtml.

Figure 2.1: Key child labour aspects in the media, 1996-2003



miliar with Conventions on children’s rights promulgated by international organizations. Some have even suggested creating a code of conduct and providing specific training for journalists who intend to write about children’s issues.¹²³

With the publication of the ILO’s report *Targeting the Intolerable*, in 1996, child labour began attracting considerable media attention, opening up the debate regarding the definition of child labour and how to tackle the problem at the international level.

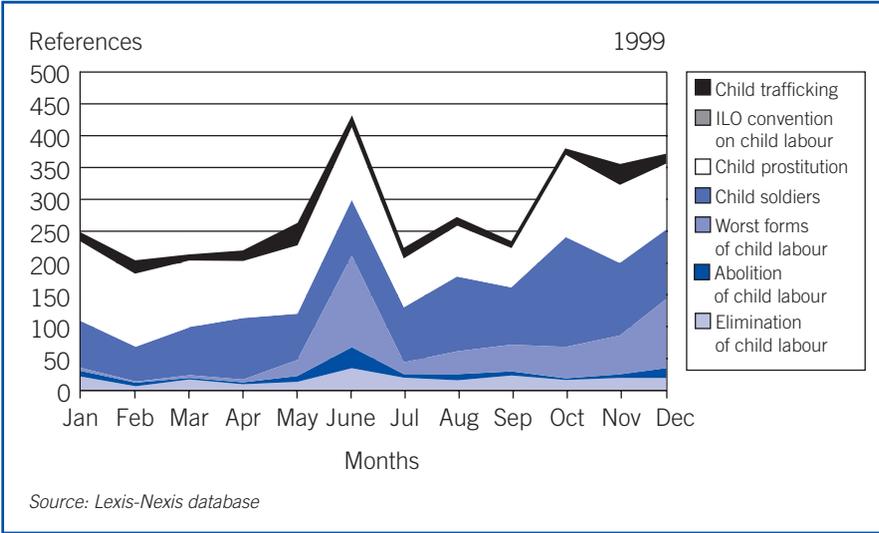
After the two international conferences in 1997, media coverage steadily increased, as shown in Figure 2.1, above.¹²⁴ Throughout 1998, the ILO urged the international community to take immediate action to eliminate the WFCL, which helped keep the issue on the media’s agenda. Media coverage peaked around the time the Convention was adopted (see Figure 2.2 for the year 1999). This was in part facilitated by the presence of President Clinton at the International Labour Conference in 1999. Celebrity endorsement more generally has proven an excellent tool in attracting media attention in both developed and developing countries alike.

¹²³ See International Federation of Journalists, www.ifj.org.

¹²⁴ The graphs were generated by searching for the key terms “elimination of child labour”, “abolition of child labour”, “child soldiers”, “child prostitution”, “ILO Convention on child labour”, and “worst forms of child labour” on the Lexis-Nexis database available online. The years surveyed were 1996-2003. It has to be noted that the survey was somewhat limited given that some of the major publications were unavailable in electronic form before a certain date. Nonetheless, the Lexis-Nexis database includes major newspapers worldwide.

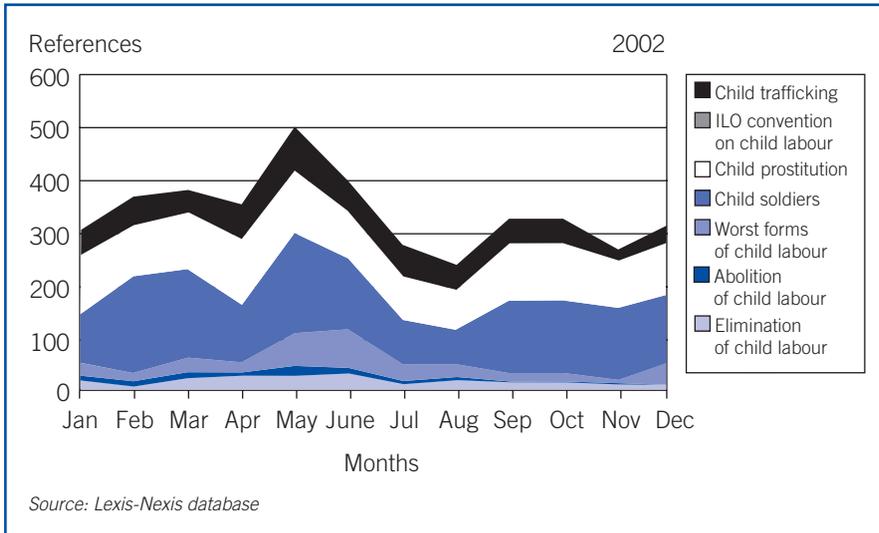
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Figure 2.2: Key child labour aspects in the media, by month (1999)



In 2002, the ILO first global report “A Future without child labour” attracted considerable public interest. The launch of the report in June was followed by the first “World Day Against Child Labour”. The year 2006 saw the most clips logged in one year by the ILO – 1,630 – and the most logged in one day – 197 – after the launch in May of the second global report on child labour.

Figure 2.3: Key child labour aspects in the media, by month (2002)



In 2004, because of its innovative methodology and groundbreaking results, “Investing in every child: An economic study of the costs and benefits of eliminating child labour” also attracted considerable media interest, including articles in the world’s major economic and business papers such as the *The Economist*.

While the amount of media coverage has been increasing at a steady pace, the quality of this coverage has also been improving, but more slowly. Until a few years ago, sensational news coverage dominated the scene. Only recently has media coverage become more thoughtful, highlighting cases of exploitation of children, providing insights and details regarding their working conditions, and making suggestions on how to improve the situation.

The media, then, are collectively a very important actor in the worldwide movement. But it is one that is highly reactive to events. That said the media have been influential in motivating other actors to take up the child labour issue, a good example being the research community.

2.10. THE RESEARCH COMMUNITY

Introduction

This section briefly reviews both quantitative and qualitative developments in the social science literature on child labour.

Following the threads of intellectual curiosity and current fashion alike, academic and research interests tend to change substantially over time. In the social sciences, the link with public and political interests is obviously much more direct than it is in other areas. Sometimes research helps to set the agenda of public and political interest; at other times public awareness of, and concern with, given issues are the more important factors. With child labour, the attention of researchers, especially in economics, has *followed* increasing public concern.

Quantitative aspects

Sources. The last decade has seen sustained growth in research into child labour. The evidence presented below draws from the bibliographical database of the UCW project, which was constructed using the most common bibliographical research engines for social sciences¹²⁵ and from other sources.

For the purpose of this report, only papers published in academic journals or in journals that are indexed in the social sciences bibliography were considered.¹²⁶ The selection of papers obviously suffers from a degree of arbitrariness.

¹²⁵ Igens, Econlit, etc. Another indicator of the growth of the child labour field can be found in: ILO, *Annotated bibliography on child labour* (Geneva, December 2002).

¹²⁶ Working papers and papers presented at conferences, etc. have not been considered.

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Though the papers selected focused mainly on child labour, it was difficult to exclude other contributions relevant to the subject, however, even where they were not directly concerned with child labour; these “extensions”, however, have been kept to a minimum.

Figure 2.4 presents an overview of the quantitative trend of research articles on child labour and related issues. The number of papers, obviously, does not link directly with the relevance and quality of the research outcome. It does, however, represent an indicator of the attention paid by the research community to child labour.

Academic interest in child labour was already evident in the early 1990s. But the number of papers published started to rise significantly around 1997, with a greater than threefold increase by 2001, compared to the early 1990s. One can see a substantial increase, especially within the field of economics. The trend, however, seems to have stabilized from 2002. It is difficult to make forecasts about the level of publications, since this depends both on research production and on the timing of revision and approval from journals. In any event, given the number of working papers and other information regarding research currently underway, one can expect sustained research interest in the near future.

Regional analysis. Identification of the geographical focus of research is, again, to some extent arbitrary, since it is not obvious how to treat papers with a regional, or even more, a sub-regional focus.

Figure 2.4: Number of publications related to child labour, 1992-2002

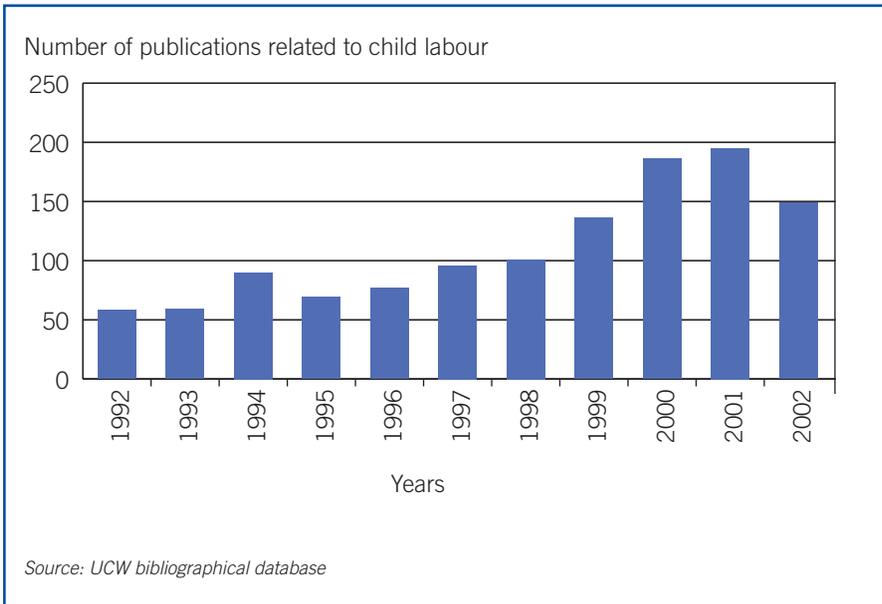
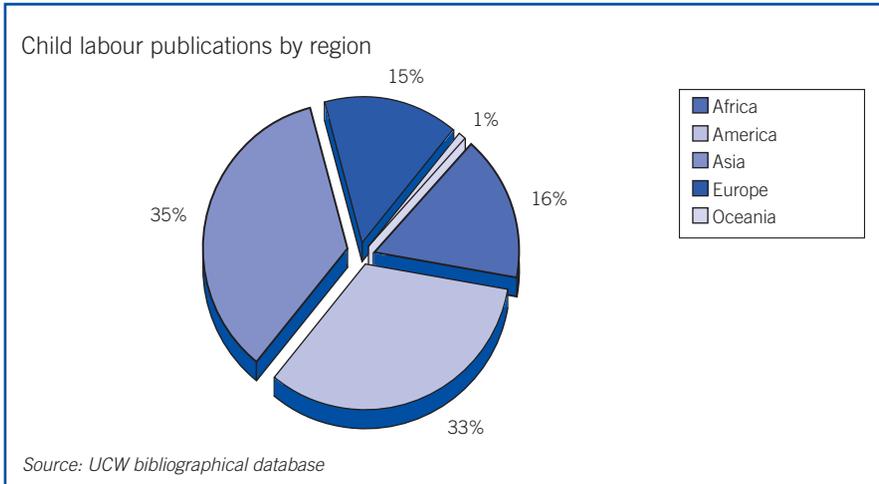


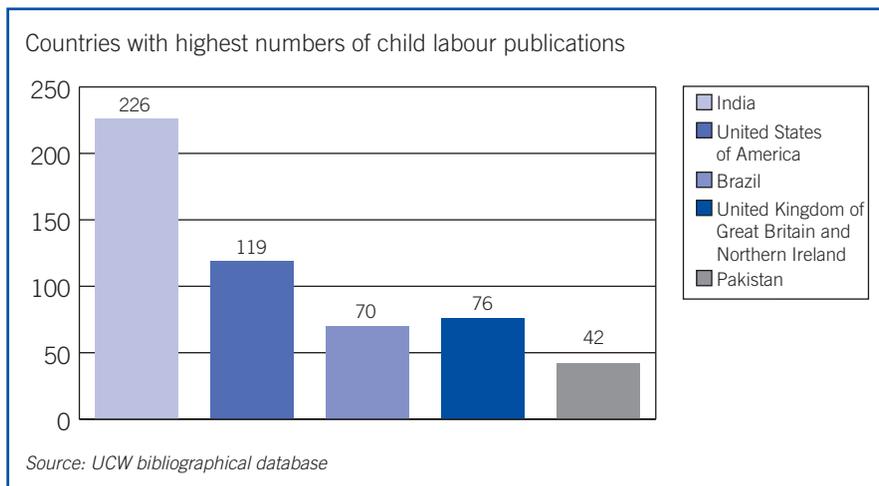
Figure 2.5: Child labour publications by region, 1992-2002



Asia. Figure 2.5 shows that Asia has received most attention from the researchers; and India is the most analyzed country in the region (Figure 2.6). However, it is worth noting that many of the papers on India have a specific sectoral or geographical focus, and do not address the overall issue at country level. Considerable attention has also been extended to Bangladesh and Pakistan.

The Americas. The number of papers published with a focus on the Americas falls just short of those targeting Asia. It is also worth stressing that the emphasis has mainly been on child labour within the USA, much of it from a historical perspective.

Figure 2.6: Countries with the highest number of child labour publications, 1992-2002



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Africa. Child labour in Africa has also been studied extensively, but the number of papers published is much smaller than that in Asia or the Americas. The focus appears to be relatively balanced, although a few countries receive more attention than others.

Europe. A substantial number of papers have been published on Europe. In this case, however, one country – the United Kingdom – has received by far the largest share of attention. Research focusing on the UK has mainly had an historical focus, inevitably focusing on early industrialization and the associated debates.

Qualitative aspects

Introduction

The literature of the early 1990s focused mainly on specific areas and child labour cases. Attention was devoted to describing and analyzing the characteristics of child labour, either in limited country areas or in specific forms of employment. There was little generalization to the broader national, regional, or global levels. This literature was largely non-economic, taking mainly anthropological and sociological approaches.

More descriptive than analytical. Research was generally “descriptive”, rather than analytical; and it helped to bring the issues of child labour to the attention of both the general public and the policy-makers. It also contributed to a greater understanding of the characteristics and circumstances of child labourers and their families.

A new focus in the economic literature. The publication in 1997 of a special issue of the *Journal of Population Economics* devoted to child labour marks the beginning of the focus on child labour within the main economic literature. This is the first time that the issue of child labour is raised as such in a mainstream and highly regarded economic journal. The focus of the special issue was mainly empirical, but it brought to the attention of the research community the issue of child labour.

Three main themes. Since that date three main strands can be identified within the economic literature concerning child labour:

- The first extends the focus of the existing human capital and education literature to child labour. It is mainly empirical in content, and tries to measure the effects of community, household, and individual characteristics on the supply of child labour.
- The second develops new empirical and theoretical models aiming at capturing the complexities of household decisions concerning the use of children’s time.
- Finally, child labour is increasingly recognized as an issue in the analyses focusing on general development problems.

Relative neglect of formal and informal-sector firm demand. In short, the economic literature has recognized the special nature of the child labour

issue and its relevance for the overall agenda of development research. With few exceptions, however, the analysis has focused mainly on the supply of child labour and on demand from family farms or businesses. Far less attention has been paid to the theoretical and empirical issues related to the demand of child labour by employers in the formal or informal economy.

Relative neglect of the “unconditional” WFCL. Analysis of the so-called “unconditional” WFCL, both theoretical and empirical, has also been rather limited. The exception has been a set of theoretical analyses related to bonded labour.

Some main threads in recent child labour research are examined in depth below.

Historical analysis

The work of academic historians and economists was especially important to the intellectual foundations of the worldwide movement. Attempts to combat child labour are inevitably informed by some sense of the past. In particular, policy-makers are likely to have before them the experience of the first industrial nations, where child labour, once so endemic, in time was virtually eliminated. Indeed, it can be argued that, without such examples, realistic hopes for a worldwide movement could hardly be sustained.

Historical analysis, therefore, plays an important part in the worldwide movement to end child labour, and it does this best when it illuminates the present, as well as the past, while helping to chart the future. Greater understanding of the past might shed light on the quest for improved policies and programmes – policy-makers should, at the very least, try to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past. As UNICEF has found, furthermore, advocacy efforts can only benefit from drawing attention to the fact that today’s industrialized countries themselves passed through development phases that included gross exploitation of children i.e. the fact that today’s developing countries did not invent child labour.¹²⁷

UNICEF has done much to explore historical trends in child labour in both European and non-European countries, and to encourage special interest in the history of child labour. Recent historical analysis has provided a more refined view of the factors behind the decline in both supply and demand relating to child labour. The traditional view – in part a romantic story of rescue – has it that the efforts of campaigners, above all the passage of child labour laws, effectively ended child labour.

Accounting for declining rates of child labour. In recent years, this account has been challenged. At least five factors¹²⁸ have been proposed as being the principal causes of the historical decline of child labour:

¹²⁷ J. Himes, *Foreword*, in H. Cunningham and P. Viazzo (eds.) *Child labour in historical perspective, 1800-1985: Case studies from Europe, Japan and Colombia* (Florence, UNICEF, 1996), p. 7.

¹²⁸ See H. Cunningham and P. Viazzo, *Some issues in the historical study of child labour* *Ibid.*, pp. 11-21.

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Family strategies. First, the simplest explanation, put forward by Clark Nardinelli and Colin Heywood, argues that child labour is a function of poverty and, once household incomes rose, particularly the wages of the male “breadwinners”, the need for an economic contribution from children necessarily declined. Rising wages allowed working class families to change their strategy, instead investing in their children by sending them to school.

Technological change. The second explanation argues that the early phase of industrialization was highly labour intensive, requiring the sort of unskilled labour that made adults and children virtually interchangeable substitutes. Child labour was strategically important in the transition to factory production, and children made up a large proportion of the labour force in mills and mines throughout the Industrial Revolution. But once technology became more sophisticated the demand for child labour declined.

Child labour laws. The third, traditional explanation suggests that the most important factors in the decline of child labour were state legislation and the regulation of labour markets. Examples cited include the impact in Britain of the Factory Act of 1833, the 1864 Act that reduced child labour in the potteries, and the 1844 Mines Regulation Act; the first child labour regulations in Prussia and France in 1839 and 1874, respectively; and the US legislation of 1933.

Compulsory education laws. The fourth explanation is associated with Myron Weiner,¹²⁹ who argues, as part of his analysis of why India has failed to make progress against child labour, that compulsory primary education is the policy instrument that effectively removes children from the labour market. To take the British example, the participation of 10- to 14-year-olds in the labour market declined markedly in the 1880s after the introduction of compulsory education. Compulsory education laws, moreover, are easier to enforce than are minimum-age laws. Weiner’s contribution has been the most insightful from a policy standpoint.

Changing ideologies of childhood. Finally, according to the British social historian Hugh Cunningham, industrialization was accompanied by a changing view of childhood. Under the impact of the “romantic movement”, childhood began to be defined as a period of happiness and dependency to which children had a natural right. It was in the 1830s and 1840s in Britain that child labour began to be viewed as wrong because it violated this sense of the right to childhood itself, something the state had a duty to protect. The view began to prevail that it was the duty of the state to protect children – to protect those who could not protect themselves. Indeed, what is being asserted for the first time is the right of children *not* to work.

¹²⁹ Weiner, 1991, op. cit.

Objections to these accounts as principal factors. Each one of these explanations, where advanced as the prime causal factor, is open to critique:

- To begin with, the rise in real wages does not always neatly fit the chronology of the removal of children from the workforce. For example, real wages more than doubled in Belgium between 1853 and 1891, although children continued to work and were contributing a higher percentage of the family income.
- A similar counter argument can be found regarding technology where advances e.g. in mid-19th century Catalonia – led to an *increase* rather than a decrease in child labour.
- And, so far as legislation is concerned, it could be argued that the impact of child labour laws may have been as much an *effect* of declining child labour as its prime cause.
- Similarly, it might be argued that compulsory education laws do not guarantee the completion of schooling. Neither do they absorb all the time available for work.

Combined effect of these factors. It is difficult, therefore, to derive a “magic bullet” from historical analysis. Each of the above factors played an important part in the decline of child labour. But they tended to act in concert. The historical record suggests a step-by-step process to child labour elimination:

- In the first stage, the age at which children entered the labour market gradually rose, and the conditions under which they worked were slowly improved, largely through factory laws and accompanying inspection. Children still contributed essential funds to the family economy.
- In a second stage – one associated with declining fertility rates, rising living standards, and the introduction of compulsory education – children ultimately ceased to contribute to the family economy, their place being taken by women.
- Moreover, as Basu points out, once child labour decline reaches a historical “tipping point”, the fall-off can be quite rapid.¹³⁰ In the USA, child labour remained widespread until 1900, despite more than 70 years of state government attempts to ban it. When it did finally begin to decline, however, the decline was extremely rapid. By 1930, child labour had almost disappeared. Basu also points to the more recent decline of child labour in China, between 1980 and 1990, associated with rapid economic development.

Historical experience offers hope. Current anti-child labour efforts should draw encouragement from this kind of experience concerning the pace of change, as well as from the realization that a number of important historical

¹³⁰ K. Basu, “The economics of child labour”, *Scientific American* (October 2003), p. 91.

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changes have occurred over the 150 years that make the elimination of child labour a much less daunting challenge.¹³¹

An important result of these changes is the emergence of the contemporary worldwide movement itself. This phenomenon incorporates a new global ethic regarding the elimination of child labour. ILO standards and the CRC provide powerful advocacy tools that were entirely lacking during the early child labour reform movements of the 19th and early 20th centuries. There is now virtual universal acceptance – a global consensus that was missing in the past – of the principle of eliminating child labour and of extending free and compulsory education, at least to the end of the primary phase.

The economics of child labour

Historical analysis has also informed the growing interest in child labour from economists, many of them associated with the World Bank.¹³²

Supply and demand. Economists focus on market forces – supply and demand – as the determinants of child labour.

On the supply side, household size and time allocation within the household are important factors, as is the role of risk management in the household. Larger household size increases the probability that children will work. Households send children to work to augment household income, but also to better manage income risk or shocks due to adult job loss or harvest failure. Child labour plays a significant role in the self-insurance strategy of poor households.

On the demand side, the economic value of children is determined by the structure of the labour market. Here the key issue is whether the tasks assigned to children are similar to those performed by adults, or whether there are opportunities to substitute the labour of one for the other. Only if substitutability is high will it be relatively easy to phase out child labour.

In the informal sector many small enterprises are organized to take advantage of the availability of children. Equally, however, this may be a sign of poor work management and low levels of technology leading to small profit margins. The quality of the education system also plays a role in household and employer decision-making, which has an impact on both supply and demand.

Basu has theoretically demonstrated, furthermore, that the market for labour, including child labour, can settle into multiple equilibria – either wages are high and adults work,¹³³ or wages are low and both adults and children work. A total ban on child labour, properly enforced, could lead to a substitution effect that tips the economy from one equilibrium to another – where adult wages are high and children go to school. This would be a one-time effort that becomes self-reinforcing.

¹³¹ Himes, 1996, op. cit.

¹³² See for example, C. Grootaert and H. Patrinos, *The policy analysis of child labor: A comparative study* (New York, St. Martin's Press, 1999); and Z. Tzannatos and P. Fallon, 1998, op.cit.

¹³³ Basu, 2003, op. cit., p. 88.

The economics of child labour leads to a complex and densely textured analysis – one that does not suggest a simple recourse to legislation will solve the problem. This has to be combined with economic incentives, for example higher adult wages and access to affordable credit and insurance that improve household incomes of the poor. Economic incentives such as a midday meal and conditional cash transfers, can also help reduce the cost, and thereby the attraction, of education to poor households.

Elimination of child labour as a high-yielding global investment. The ILO has recently made an important contribution with the first integrated study of the economic costs and benefits of eliminating child labour throughout the developing and transitional world.¹³⁴ This study found that, globally, the elimination of child labour and its replacement by universal education had a 6.7 to 1 ratio of benefits over costs. The total cost of eliminating child labour was estimated as just over US\$760 billion over a 20-year period.¹³⁵ Moreover, the average annual cost over each decade pales in comparison with other global expenditures, particularly debt servicing and spending on the military. This study was in line with research conducted by the World Bank, for example, on the returns to education. It also reveals the economic character of eliminating child labour as a generational investment – after twenty years it would provide nothing but benefits derived from improved education and health, with no further costs. Demonstrating that the elimination of child labour is a high-yield global investment adds impetus to advocacy efforts within the worldwide movement.

Effects of economic globalization. Finally, what are the effects of economic globalization on child labour? As yet, only a limited number of studies of globalization and child labour have appeared, and these tend to focus on international trade, although a few have examined the impact of direct foreign investment (FDI) and price liberalization. The findings broadly support the view that, under the right circumstances, the globalization process *could* lead to a reduction in child labour – for example where there is a relatively large pool of workers with at least a basic education, complemented by active social policies. Broadly speaking, child labour appears to be negatively associated with FDI, the benefits tending to be in the areas of technological transfer and the modernization of industry. This points to the fact that investment in education is key to benefiting from globalization and central to a “fair globalization”¹³⁶ and the elimination of child labour.

Childhood and child development studies

New insights have also emerged from the study of childhood and child development, and these have encouraged a child-centred perspective that we shall

¹³⁴ ILO, *Investing in every child: An economic study of the costs and benefits of eliminating child labour* (Geneva, 2004).

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹³⁶ See ILO, *Fair globalization: creating opportunities for all* (Geneva, 2004).

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explore in the next chapter.¹³⁷ The notion that childhood and child development are strongly related to culture and historical context have led to a more sophisticated view of children as being:

- resilient as well as vulnerable;
- capable as well as inexperienced;
- knowledgeable as well as ignorant, and
- active rather than merely passive agents of their development.

Prerequisites of effective intervention and support. From this perspective, effective intervention and support for working children must begin with a better understanding of how work affects their social world, personal identity, and self-esteem. Consequently, psychological, sociological, and anthropological perspectives are being brought to bear at the micro-level on individual children, their families, and their communities.¹³⁸

Empowering the children. These new insights have also called attention to the diversity, cultural relativity, and self-organizing nature of child development, suggesting that protective approaches that involve and empower children are more likely to have the desired developmental effects than approaches that are imposed on them as passive victims or beneficiaries. This focus on the “agency of children” has led to the promotion of the participation rights of children, and is reflected in the various working children’s movements (examined below) and the increasing role children are playing in the research process itself. This perspective also highlights the potential value of safe work as an important vehicle of children’s development and social integration. Consequently, as we shall see in the following chapter, some have stressed children’s right to work¹³⁹ while others have reacted to blanket bans on child labour by stressing the positive aspects of child work.¹⁴⁰

2.11. WORKING CHILDREN AND YOUTH MOVEMENTS¹⁴¹

Origins and background

The most novel aspect of the worldwide movement in the 1990s was the rise of working children and youth organizations. This phenomenon has already been touched upon earlier in the chapter. This section aims to briefly chart its development and impact.

¹³⁷ See J. Boyden, et al., *What works for working children* (Stockholm, Radda Barnen, 1998), pp. 27-74.

¹³⁸ A good example of this approach can be found in O. Nieuwenhuys, *Children’s life-worlds: Gender, welfare and labour in a developing country* (London, Routledge, 1994).

¹³⁹ For a summary of this approach, see Bjerkan and Gironde, 2004, op. cit., pp. 22-23.

¹⁴⁰ See Myers, in K. Lieten and B. White (eds.) 2001, op. cit.

¹⁴¹ This section derives from P. Miljeteig, “Creating partnerships with working children and youth”, Social Protection Discussion Paper No. 21 (World Bank, Washington DC, 2000).

Working children's organizations emerged in the 1970s in various parts of the world, growing out of popular movements supporting the empowerment of the poor. These groups were initiated by adults, or by adults and youth in collaboration, and had their origins in grassroots concerns with worker's rights and poverty reduction. These evolved into national movements before they came together to form an international network in the second half of the decade.

Important national movements that subsequently emerged were the following:

- the National Movement of Street Boys and Girls (MNMMR), Brazil;
- the National Movement of Organized Working Children and Adolescents of Peru (MNNATSOP);
- the African Movement of Working Children and Youth, based in Dakar, Senegal; and
- Bhima Sangha, active in the state of Karnataka, India.

Impact at local and national levels

Working children's movements, at both the community and national levels, have worked to influence legislation relating to children and youth in general, or more specifically to child labour.

The most striking example of their impact has probably been in Brazil, where they have significantly influenced the new Constitution and national legislation. More generally, working children's movements have participated in local child rights campaigns, and established partnerships with local NGOs and trade unions. In Senegal and Mali, the national movements have become official IPEC partners.

International impact

The first international meeting of working children and youth took place in Kundapur, India, 27 November – 9 December 1996, when working children from 32 countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America adopted the Kundapur Declaration of 10 principles, including: "We are against exploitation at work but we are for work with dignity with hours adapted so that we have time for education and leisure."

This international engagement continued with representatives from organizations of working children and youth participating in international meetings held in 1997 at Amsterdam, Trondheim, and Oslo. An embryonic International Movement of Working Children and Youth met at Dakar, Senegal, in March 1998 to form the International Committee of Working Children's Movements. This movement met at Berlin, 19 April – 2 May 2004. These organizations were also represented in the 1998 and 1999 discussions of the new Convention held at the ILO. And, as outlined earlier, in 2002 this culminated in 400 children attending – for the first time in the history of UN meetings – as delegates and active participants in every formal meeting and supporting session of UNGASS.

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This evolution had not been without a certain awkwardness and controversy, particularly at the beginning, when the focus was on including children and young people in international meetings. In Amsterdam, they enjoyed special status as part of a working children's panel, while in Oslo they were part of the NGO group.¹⁴²

Working children and youth made themselves both visible and heard in the international arena at the end of the decade. This added a new and irreversible dimension to the worldwide movement—now it had a “face”. Working children and youth are now increasingly viewed as partners in child labour efforts. In addition to providing first-hand information about their situation, they both reflect, and have given impetus to, the child-centred perspective that helped inform the global policy debates that are examined in the next chapter.

¹⁴² P. Miljeteig, *Establishing partnerships with working children and youth* in K. Lieten and B. White (eds.) 2001, op. cit., p. 122.

INTRODUCTION: PLURALISM AND THE WORLDWIDE MOVEMENT

At one level, the growing diversity of global actors and perspectives within the worldwide movement outlined in the previous section could be perceived as creating a positive environment – one within which things moved forward through creative tension.¹⁴³ On the other hand, factionalism presented an ever-present threat to progress towards global consensus and concerted action against child labour. At times, during the 1990s, the worldwide movement appeared unnecessarily polarized, particularly between elements of the NGO movement and the international agencies.

Then, with the adoption of Convention No. 182, the tide turned, creating the potential for accommodating diversity within unity. It is against this background that this chapter explores the respective forces for divergence and convergence within the worldwide movement – the nature of the different perspectives and policy positions among the various global actors on the one hand, and the growing common ground.

¹⁴³ See W. Myers in K. Lieten and B. White (eds.), 2001, *op. cit.*

3.1. DIVERGENT PERSPECTIVES

Impact of the CRC

The international divisions that existed regarding child labour elimination in the 1980s were ideological products of the Cold War. This is best exemplified by the complacency exhibited on both sides of the ideological divide at the UN seminar in 1985. On the one hand, child labour had been consigned to the scrap heap of history by the socialist States; on the other hand, the US had stopped collecting child labour statistics in 1950 because of a prevailing view that the problem was only of a marginal nature.

Resurgent view of children as rights holders. This situation was to change in the 1990s. The resurgence of the view that children were “rights holders” was to prove the single most important change in the international discourse on child labour. As we have seen, this attitude has a provenance dating back to the first national child labour campaigns in the early 19th century. But the adoption and unprecedented near universal ratification of the CRC gave it new force. Indeed, this was to mark a turning point in the global discourse on child labour, with a definition of child labour that focused on the effects of work on the child.

Of the nearly 40 articles of the CRC, it was, in fact, not Article 32, dealing with economic exploitation, but rather Articles 3 and 12, addressing the best interests of children and their right to have their opinions heard, that had the greatest impact on international child labour debates, which intensified from around the middle of the 1990s.

“Have we asked the children?” Article 3 of the CRC requires that “in all actions concerning children... the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration”. Article 12, meanwhile, guarantees children’s right to participate in decisions concerning them “in accordance with the age and maturity of the child”. Although both articles present considerable operational challenges, the take-up of the CRC, in particular by civil society actors (not least children themselves) did inject quite a new “child-centred” perspective into international child labour debates. “Have we asked the children?” became the rallying cry for many NGOs.

Rights versus development?

Is it possible to typify better the dominant child labour perspectives that characterize the worldwide movement? In fact, historically, the international campaign against child labour has involved just two broad discourses. As outlined in Chapter 1, since the 1830s campaigners have always used rights-based arguments, while, alongside these, more utilitarian arguments have also been advanced. In current terms, these broad cases reflect what are essentially the economic development and human rights approaches to child labour.

The dominant perspective has hitherto been the economic paradigm that views child labour in terms of arguments related to labour markets, human capital, welfare, international trade, and economic development. Following the adoption of the CRC and a series of human rights-affirming developments within the

international community in the 1990s, this was increasingly being critiqued and opposed by a human rights approach to child labour. However, these two broad orientations – economic development and human rights – have to be examined from another axis.

The political dimension is also important, for example in mobilizing to uphold the rights of the marginalized to education, and, at another level, the use of trade-based strategies to promote labour standards. It is worth recalling, as set out in Chapter 1, that the analysis of child labour began in the 19th century within a political economy context, and it is important not to lose sight of this perspective.¹⁴⁴ It provides a macro view to set against a child-centred perspective preoccupied with individual children, their families, and their communities. At times, this can appear dangerously apolitical.

Rights and development: The two pathways

A rights-based path does not deny an economic rationale in favour of education for all and the end to child labour. It simply sees this approach as redundant. Rights trump economic considerations. As the ILO cost-benefit study makes plain, economics does not provide the justification – the *why* – for eliminating child labour, but it offers an additional rationale and argument. Justification is already sufficiently grounded in international human rights law, part of which is comprised of ILO child labour standards. Indeed, it was the labour movement, campaigning for the abolition of child labour that helped establish the international right to education.¹⁴⁵

On the surface, the human rights perspective appears to pose yet another set of false polarities – child labour as a human rights issue versus child labour as an economic development concern. This surface tension is in part the result of setting up the human rights-based approach in opposition to the economic development paradigm. Instead, they ought to be viewed as complementary. But polarities do catch on, and can be pushed too far.¹⁴⁶ For example, human rights and child-centred approaches are not the exclusive preserve of a limited, politically correct group of international actors. Human rights concerns must take priority over all other considerations; thus they must also come to pervade the economic development agenda.

The notion that child labour needs to be mainstreamed i.e. placed on the agendas of finance and planning Ministries, not simply on those of the weak social Ministries, was part of an emerging global consensus at the end of the 1990s. More fundamentally, from a human rights perspective, the CRC and Convention No. 182 provide the foundations of a growing global consensus, one that embraces diversity within unity.

¹⁴⁴ There is a whole socialist discourse on child labour starting with Marx and Engels that has been neglected. See Cunningham, in K. Lieten and B. White (eds.), *op. cit.*, 2001, p. 26.

¹⁴⁵ K. Tomasevski, *Education denied: costs and remedies* (London, Zed Books, 2003), p. 24.

¹⁴⁶ A. Sen: “I do not like the propensity to draw contrasts because it catches on.” Quoted in A. Fyfe, in K. Lieten and B. White (eds.), 2001 *op. cit.*, p. 67.

3.2. FORCES FOR CONVERGENCE

The very concept of a worldwide movement implies a degree of consensus. But consensus for consensus's sake is unhelpful. What is commonly agreed has to advance the cause of eliminating child labour – to shift the global consensus in more positive directions that promote that goal.

Before the early 1990s, no global consensus prevailed regarding the urgency of dealing with child labour. Many countries were reluctant to acknowledge the existence of child labour for fear of negative international reaction, including possible trade sanctions. The issue of traditional values and national pride, as well as ideological barriers associated with the Cold War, hindered

Box 3.1. Key milestones and global commitments

A series of important milestones and actions have heralded a gathering global resolve regarding the elimination of child labour:

- the long tradition of ILO minimum-age standard setting and supervision dating from 1919, culminating in the adoption of the umbrella Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), now ratified by the majority of member States;
- the impetus provided by the adoption of the CRC in 1989, and its near universal ratification;
- the World Summit for Children in 1990; its goal-setting and follow-up;
- continued support for IPEC, now operational in close to 100 countries;
- increased activism by civil society actors regarding child labour;
- unanimous adoption of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) and the subsequent campaign for its universal ratification (now achieved in more than 160 countries) and implementation;
- the reference to the elimination of child labour as fundamental principles and rights in the Social Summit (1995) and under the ILO Declaration (1998);
- international action on education and the increasing connection made to child labour elimination;
- an increased commitment to measuring the extent of child labour. National surveys have now been carried with SIMPOC assistance in some 50 countries, including transition and developed economies;
- Incorporation of workplace violence in the World Study on Violence Against Children (2006);
- the outcome document of UNGASS in 2002;
- research providing new insights into the causes, dimensions, and means of action; and
- The adoption by the ILO of 2016 as the target for the elimination of all worst forms of child labour.

frank discussion of child labour. Today, however, developing, transitional, and developed countries alike are linked by a shared acknowledgement that this problem touches them all. The era of denial is over.

The past decade has seen an unprecedented convergence of thought and action within the worldwide movement to combat child labour. An emerging mainstream now embraces basic concepts, causal analysis, and strategic lines of action. Not least, there is agreement concerning the distance that remains to be travelled and the challenges that lie ahead. This is not to deny disagreements or to claim unanimity of thought and action within the movement. There is little point in bringing back the era of denial in another guise. Any disputes, however, have to be put in perspective. Today, the worldwide movement embodies a more confident unity of purpose.

Central to this growing global consensus has been an undoubted convergence of thinking concerning child labour within a human rights and development framework. The rights track is embodied in the CRC and in ILO standards on child labour demanding urgent and immediate action. The other mainstream track emerged from the World Social Summit, which identified the elimination of child labour as key to sustainable social development and poverty reduction. In the new millennium, child labour is increasingly being viewed as part of more fundamental global commitments to attack poverty and promote universal human rights.

The focus of abolition efforts

Conventions Nos. 138 and 182 set the boundaries of the types of work that are unacceptable under international standards. To the international community, the term “child labour” does not encompass all work performed by children under the age of 18 years. The consensus view is that as of a certain age work that does not interfere with the child’s health and development or prejudice its schooling can be positive.¹⁴⁷ This includes activities such as helping parents care for the home and the family or earning pocket money outside school hours and during holidays. Permissible light work contributes to children’s development and to the welfare of their families; it provides them with skills, attitudes, and experience, and helps to prepare them to be useful and productive adult members of society.

Child labour that is proscribed under international law falls into three categories:

- Labour performed by a child younger than the minimum age specified for that kind of work which is thus likely to impede the child’s education and full development.

¹⁴⁷ IPU/ILO, *Eliminating the worst forms of child labour: A practical guide to ILO Convention No. 182* (Geneva, 2002), p. 15.

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- Labour deemed to be hazardous work, including that demanding excessive numbers of hours worked, which endangers the physical, mental, or moral well-being of a child.
- The unconditional worst forms of child labour, internationally defined as slavery, trafficking, debt bondage and other forms of forced labour, forced recruitment of children for armed conflict, prostitution and pornography, and illicit activities such as the drugs trade.¹⁴⁸

Under the Declaration, the elimination of all these forms of child labour became the shared goal of the 179 ILO member States. It is also an objective of the Organization as a whole.

The worst forms of child labour

The adoption of Convention No. 182 has been the single most important factor in the emergence of a global consensus within the worldwide movement.

In face of the hesitancy and divisions characterizing much of the 1990s, the Convention helped to provide much-needed focus. It did not presage, and should not be a pretext in any way for the abandonment of the ultimate goal of the elimination of all forms of child labour. Rather, it signalled the need to put first things first in the global campaign, and to use the WFCL as an entry point towards the ultimate goal. Given that the WFCL constitute more than half of the total child labour to be targeted this appears to make strategic sense. The concept also helps to focus attention on *children*, as well as on the work they perform.

Under the Convention, the WFCL are defined as follows:

- all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced and compulsory labour, including forced and compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict;
- the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances;
- the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant treaties; and
- work, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is performed, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children (Article 3).

A distinction can be drawn between two categories of the WFCL:

- those that the ILO has termed “unconditional” WFCL (first three bullet-points above) because they are fundamental violations of children’s basic human rights; and

¹⁴⁸ ILO, 2002, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

- hazardous work, as defined by national legislation (last bulletpoint above). Hazardous work had also been singled out in Convention No. 138 as requiring a minimum age for admission of 18 years or older. Its identification as a WFCL adds impetus to the drive to eliminate it.

Indeed, these two fundamental Conventions have progressed in tandem since 1999, with ratification of Convention No. 138 seemingly being pulled along in the wake of the historically rapid ratification of Convention No. 182, attesting to the growing political will to tackle the problem of child labour.

The gender dimension and the most vulnerable

It has long been recognized that priority has to be given to those at special risk. This is explicitly recognized in Convention No. 182, Article 7. Meanwhile, Recommendation No. 190 that accompanies Convention No. 182 identifies those groups that ought to be accorded special attention in the implementation of action programmes under the Convention. These include:

- younger children;
- girl children;
- hidden child workers, a category in which girls are at special risk; and
- other groups of children with special vulnerabilities or needs.

The 1990s saw growing consensus concerning the particular disadvantages facing women and girls in development and the urgent need to address gender inequalities made at international meetings held in Vienna, Cairo and, importantly, in Beijing. Gender equality was subsequently built into the MDGs.

The majority – perhaps 70 per cent – of the world’s poorest people are women. Poor women often face a double disadvantage, firstly because of their gender and secondly because of their poverty. Moreover, poor women are more likely to suffer from the non-material aspects of poverty: isolation, lack of information, inability to have their voices heard, and vulnerability to personal and social forms of violence.¹⁴⁹

Child labour is an important mechanism for reproducing gender inequality. This often begins with the girl-child not being sent to school, or being taken out of school earlier than her brothers. Indeed, some 60 per cent of out-of-school children are girls. Parental objections to their daughters going to school are more likely to be on the grounds of safety or economics than from a belief that girls should not be educated – although these beliefs do persist in some communities. They may feel that a school is unsafe, or that the journey to school is perilous or too long, putting girls at risk of sexual assault or other forms of violence. Alternatively, they may believe that sacrificing a daughter’s work at home or in the fields would jeopardize family income and survival. For poor families, bearing

¹⁴⁹ DFID, *Eliminating world poverty: A challenge for the 21st century* (London, 1997), p. 31.

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the opportunity costs of sending a girl to school may not seem economically justifiable in the short term. This is especially true in societies that have not embraced the idea that women have the right to paid employment or where jobs for educated women are scarce.

The effects of not attending school are greater for girls than for boys and their impact transfers to the next generation of both boys and girls. Whether educated or not, girls are more at risk than boys of HIV/AIDS, sexual exploitation, trafficking, and domestic labour. Lack of the knowledge of individual rights and life skills that a school can provide compounds their vulnerability to the WFCL.

Marginalized groups – women, girls, indigenous and tribal peoples and other ethnic minorities, and refugee and displaced populations – are especially disadvantaged. Discrimination against them generally goes unrecorded, tending to leave development policy-makers unaware of the problem, thereby exacerbating neglect of the rights of the marginalized. Part of the problem is often simply a failure to document births. The right to a birth certificate is a foundation right, for without this a school place is denied and labour laws cannot be properly enforced.

Despite growing awareness of this vulnerability, and in particular of the special risks facing girls, international agency programme responses have sometimes been slow.¹⁵⁰ In 2000, for instance, IPEC initiated a gender review. Two years later, IPEC's implementation report outlined the need for a wider integration of gender in work. That said, the evaluation study concluded that good progress had been made in gender mainstreaming in IPEC.¹⁵¹ Furthermore, as we noted above, in 2002 UNICEF made girls' education an organizational priority. Finally, trafficking and child domestic labour, where girls are disproportionately involved, were made themes of the World Day against Child Labour in 2003 and 2004, respectively.

Poverty and the causes of child labour

There has always been general agreement that poverty lies at the heart of child labour. Recent years, however, have seen more subtle understanding of the links between these issues.

The fact that child labour and poverty are inextricably connected is widely acknowledged, virtually undeniable. In countries with an annual per capita income of US\$500 or less, the labour force participation of children aged 10 to 14 years is 30-60 per cent, compared to only 10-30 per cent in countries with an annual per capita income of between \$501 and \$1,000.¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ A general failure of the UN system to respond adequately to gender issues was a particular conclusion of the High-Level Panel on UN reform in 2006.

¹⁵¹ ILO, 2004, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

¹⁵² ILO, 2002, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

There is also a general consensus that child labour is both a result and a cause of poverty. Household poverty pushes children into the labour market to support family income or, in extreme cases, even to survive during crises caused by economic shocks. Furthermore, evidence clearly indicates that, by lowering human capital formation, child labour perpetuates household poverty across generations, thereby slowing economic growth and social development.

Increasingly, however, it is being recognized that the various aspects of poverty need examination, together with other causes of child labour, and efforts made to understand how these interact with one another in given situations. Only thus can we get a more rounded picture of the forces pushing and pulling children into the various types of child labour. NGOs in particular have argued the need to consider the given situations of individual children, families, and communities in developing an effective and sustainable response to child labour.

Central importance of education

Just as child labour is inextricably linked to poverty, so its effective abolition is widely linked to education. What has stayed constant in child labour debates at all levels is the primacy accorded to education as a policy instrument.

A growing consensus confirms that child labour elimination and universal education are inter-related challenges. Recent years have seen an appreciable shift within global EFA debates towards acceptance of the integral significance of the child labour dimension. This connection is now endorsed by: the G8, the ILO, UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank, UNDP, Education International, the Global March, and the Global Campaign for Education.

The right of all children to free and compulsory education is enshrined in a series of international instruments that affirm the global community's belief that children belong in the schoolroom, not the workplace. These key instruments include the following:

- **The Universal Declaration of Human Rights** (1948), which states: "Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory."
- **The UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education** (1960), which states: "The States Parties to this Convention undertake to formulate, develop and apply a national policy which... will tend to promote equality of opportunity and of treatment... and in particular... to make primary education free and compulsory."
- **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights** (1966). which states: "Primary education shall be compulsory and available free to all; secondary education in its different forms, including technical and vocational... education, shall be made generally available and accessible to all by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education..." (Article 13 [2]).

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- Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which stipulates in Article 28 that the right to education should be achieved “progressively”, and establishes a core minimum of free compulsory primary education for all, as well as different forms of secondary education and vocational guidance “available and accessible” to all. Articles 19, 22, 23, and 30 are also pertinent, as is Article 32, regarding economic exploitation.
- ILO Conventions No. 138 and No. 182. According to Article 2 (3), Convention No. 138: “The minimum age... shall not be less than the age of compulsory schooling.” Convention No. 182, on the other hand, states: “Each Member shall, taking into account the importance of education in eliminating child labour, take effective and time-bound measures to... ensure access to free basic education, and, wherever possible and appropriate, vocational training, for all children removed from the worst forms of child labour.”

In addition to advances in international law, the 1990s witnessed growing concern over the failure to achieve universal education. The revival of the international community’s commitment to this goal began in Jomtien, Thailand, in March 1990. Convened by UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, and the World Bank, and attended by 155 governments and NGOs, the EFA conference outlined an “expanded vision” of quality, child development, and the needs of the poorest countries. Six key goals were identified, including “universal access to and completion of primary education by the Year 2000.”¹⁵³ The goals promulgated in Jomtien were also reflected in a series of subsequent international meetings and UN conferences.

From these meetings emerged a global consensus from the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to strive for the following goals:

- “universal access to basic education by 2000, with completion by 80 per cent of primary-age children;
- closure of the gender gap in primary education and secondary education by 2005; and
- universal primary education by 2015, together with improvements in the quality of education, and enhanced access for low income communities”.

In 2000, these were incorporated into the MDGs.

The World Education Forum held in Dakar, Senegal, in April 2000, reviewed the progress towards EFA after Jomtien. It affirmed education as a fundamental right, with the goal, by 2015, of achieving free compulsory edu-

¹⁵³ UNESCO, *World Declaration on Education for All and Framework for Action* (Paris, 1990).

cation of good quality but ignored child labour. In 2002, UNGASS produced a consensus outcome document affirming that: “All girls and boys must have access to and complete primary education that is free, compulsory and of good quality.”¹⁵⁴

In 2006 both monitoring reports of progress on the MDGs and EFA identified child labour as a constraint on access to education and affirmation of the policy connection noted earlier.¹⁵⁵

The need for mainstreaming

An important truth has resurfaced in recent years. While direct action has its role, the effective abolition of child labour is only possible if national development policies and efforts address its causes by, *inter alia*, increasing jobs and incomes, improving access to quality education, and reducing discrimination.¹⁵⁶ Such policies and efforts have to be made more relevant to the elimination of child labour.

Through the MDGs, a global commitment now exists to attacking poverty and providing education for all. The realization is growing that many of the eight goals cannot be achieved without addressing the problem of child labour. The MDGs, therefore, provide a critically important vehicle for eliminating child labour.

Part of the consensus regarding MDGs involves how to approach the translation of these for country-specific situations, aiming to ensure national ownership, reduce duplication, and secure financing – key also to the UN reform agenda.

A range of coordination mechanisms and instruments have been developed to bring together the UN system, International Financial Institutions (IFIs), and bilateral partners at global and national levels in support of this approach. For the UN system these include the UN Development Group (UNDG), United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), the Common Country Assessment (CCA), UN Country Teams (UNCT), and Theme Groups. For the Bretton Woods Institutions, these include the Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF) and PRSPs. These mechanisms provide strategic opportunities for the worldwide movement to mainstream child labour and to achieve real impact.

These frameworks all offer the opportunity to take child labour elimination to scale. The era of the “jewel box” project has to be relegated to the dustbin of history. Everyone agrees that the child labour movement needs new and greater ambition. IPEC’s more recent adoption of time-bound programmes (TBPs) is one important expression of the paradigm shift increasingly called for by members of the international community.

¹⁵⁴ UNICEF, 2002, op. cit., p. 16.

¹⁵⁵ UN, *Millennium Development Goals Report 2006* (New York, 2006) p.7. UNESCO, *Strong Foundations: EFA Global Monitoring Report 2007* (Paris, 2006) p. 69.

¹⁵⁶ This principle was set out in ILO, 1979 and 1983, op. cit.

Prioritizing Africa

There is growing recognition that the greatest challenge to global development efforts are to be found in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA).

The region is currently facing a multitude of serious challenges: sluggish economic growth, widespread poverty, debt burdens, low educational performance indicators, pandemic HIV/AIDS, civil conflict, and poor governance. As a result, the development gap between SSA and the rest of the developing world has been widening.

This also applies to progress in eliminating child labour. At 26.4 per cent, SSA has the highest child work ratio in the world.¹⁵⁷ The 34 SSA countries that figure among the least developed countries (LDCs) are characterized by severe and external constraints on development, and their extreme poverty makes the challenge of eliminating child labour especially difficult. Not only does the practice of child labour tend to be the most rampant and entrenched in these countries, this is also where resource and capacity constraints to combat the problem are most acute. This is just one example why it is thus impossible to apply “a one-size-fits-all” approach to the worldwide movement.

As evidenced by the G8 focus on Africa in 2005, the international community is increasingly coming to see that assistance to the region needs to be greater, more measured, and sustained. Any effort to resolve Africa’s developmental impasse, however, must come to grips with the problem of child labour. A greater recognition of this fact would help Africa’s development prospects.

¹⁵⁷ F. Hagemann, et. al, 2004, p. 9.

STRENGTHENING THE WORLDWIDE MOVEMENT

4

Introduction: Still some distance to travel

Much progress has been made in forging a worldwide movement against child labour. There is a growing recognition that child labour elimination is an important part of the development and human rights agendas. Over the last decade in particular there has been greater activism from an ever-expanding set of actors at all levels of the worldwide movement. Moreover, the donor community has increased the levels of funding to tackle the problem of child labour, particularly for the ILO.

However, the challenges formulated in the 1980s – to develop a global strategy and a more integrated international effort – have not been fully realized. The worldwide movement today is still far too diffuse and fragmented, leading to duplication and sometimes competition and conflicting objectives. The momentum generated around child labour elimination at the end of the 1990s has not been sustained and there is some evidence in recent years that the issue has dropped lower on the list of priorities of many key actors.

Against this background, this final chapter explores how the worldwide movement can be strengthened. It argues that the first step in this task is to engage governments more forcefully, and that the key to ensuring this is through mobilizing civil society actors – it is only they who can generate a “movement” to create the necessary political environment conducive for governments to live up to their obligations concerning children’s rights (and labour rights more broadly) under national and international law.

4.1. THE LEADERSHIP ROLE OF THE ILO

As set out in the introduction to this report, it is neither realistic nor desirable to view the ILO as the formal leader of the worldwide movement. However, it is reasonable to expect the ILO to reinvigorate its leadership role as the convener of the worldwide movement and as playing an essential role in setting the framework through its norms and standards, and the International Labour Office being the intellectual centre of excellence, with the capacity to provide technical advice at all levels.

Moreover, the ILO has shown its commitment by setting an ambitious target for its member States – the elimination of all the worst forms of child labour by 2016.

Increasingly, this leadership role of the ILO will need to be exercised within a UN system that delivers as “One”.¹⁵⁸ This theme will be developed later in this chapter.

2006-2010 Action Plan to strengthen the worldwide movement.

As a follow-up to the Second Global Report on Child Labour under the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, the ILO Governing Body in November 2006 adopted an action plan¹⁵⁹ as a guide to implementing the goal and targets put forth in the Report. Overall, the action plan sets out how the ILO will, over the next four years, strengthen its efforts to develop coherent and comprehensive approaches to eliminating all child labour worldwide.

A key element of the action plan is to deepen and strengthen the worldwide movement as a catalyst for national action. In particular, stress is laid on better targeting of advocacy efforts so that child labour is registered within both the dominant development frameworks, such as the MDGs, EFA and PRSPs, and within appropriate human rights mechanisms. At another level, strengthened advocacy from the ILO is also needed on forms of child labour that have received less attention, such as child domestic labour. More efforts also need to be made to localize advocacy efforts and to develop networking tools.

In pursuing this action plan, two central issues are highlighted. First, that the action plan needs underpinning by solid research as part of establishing the Office as *the* centre of excellence on knowledge about child labour – known for the quality of its insights as much as the number of its action programmes. Knowledge is a core contribution to the worldwide movement. Here the ILO needs to fully capitalize on the knowledge generated by its action programmes

¹⁵⁸ See UN, *Delivering as One: Report of the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel* (New York, United Nations, 9 November 2006).

¹⁵⁹ ILO, *Follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work: Technical cooperation priorities and action plans regarding abolition of child labour* (Geneva, November 2006).

and develop better means to disseminate knowledge for different target groups. A number of important developments are necessary over the coming years to develop particular knowledge areas.

First, despite the prioritization of the worst forms, only few countries have quantified them. As such, policy target often remain numerically obscure. Opportunities are offered by the latest generation of SIMPOC surveys which include tools to measure and analyze the magnitude of hazardous work. SIMPOC also has important methodological work underway to eventually allow for national estimates of the *unconditional* worst forms of child labour. Equally important, the 18th International Conference of Labour Statisticians in 2008 aims to arrive at an operational statistical definition of child labour that can be universally applied for measurement and programmes.

Second, the reasons behind the significant reductions in child labour (as set out in the ILO's Global Report, 2006) are not sufficiently uniform for the lessons to be made available for policy advice to governments. There is a need to go beyond a general prescription concerning what works in child labour elimination to more nuanced and contextual explanations that fully take into account national circumstances and stages of development – a “one-size-fits-all” approach will never do. This will require country-by-country assessments of changes in child labour incidence.

The second issue concerns geographical focus. Everyone in the development community agrees about the need for a special emphasis on Africa, where the least progress is being made on the MDGs, and on child labour elimination. The ILO is to prioritize SSA in implementing its action plan. However, as noted earlier in the report, the largest numbers are to be found in the Asia and Pacific region, where there are significant gaps in the ratification of the core child labour Conventions.

The final element of the ILO's action plan to strengthen the worldwide movement calls for the promotion of dialogue with and collaboration among the UN family and regional institutions, as well as with international NGOs. An important context for this more outward looking approach will be the progress of UN reform.

There are a number of initiatives that can help signpost the way towards greater inter-agency cooperation in child labour. First, the launch of UCW in 2000 has paved the way for stronger collaboration and the development of common perspectives on child labour and policy positions for responding to it. UCW makes an important input to the Global Task Force (GTF) on Child Labour and EFA that also provides a significant model of alliance building, embracing as it does ILO, UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank, UNDP, Education International, the Global March, and the Governments of Brazil, Norway and Senegal. Others will join in the coming years to help advance the case for policy and programme coherence on linking child labour and education – strengthening the recognition among policy makers that child labour represents a key obstacle to EFA and that education policies need to address the situation of working children.

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These models of inter-agency cooperation – in which the ILO plays a leading role – can usefully be adapted to other issues. For example, in 2006 the ILO initiated a policy discussion with the key players in the agricultural sector, such as the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and the IUF. The focus on agriculture for the World Day against Child Labour in 2007 helped to advance this process. It is also of some urgency that inter agency work on health and safety issues around child labour, that were initiated over 20 years ago, be revived in a sustained manner.

The UN study of violence against children (that devoted a chapter to workplace violence) is another successful model of a participatory process that needs building upon. The World Report, launched at the end of 2006, was a comprehensive global effort that embraced governments, UN agencies and bodies, civil society organizations, research institutions and children. This rich collaborative effort generated expectations of sustained follow-up. Responding to the recommendations of the Report on workplace violence against children¹⁶⁰ offers an important platform for the ILO at global, regional and national levels to continue its collaboration with international and civil society partners.

Means should also be found to develop a more regular dialogue with international NGOs regarding policy and practice. Finally, an international review meeting to assess progress made over the last decade in child labour elimination efforts could be a significant means to help refocus and re-energize the worldwide movement for which donor support would be needed. This gathering need not be on the scale, for example, of the Oslo conference, but would need a similar methodical preparation and high-level participation, particularly from key global child labour and education actors.

4.2. MOBILIZING THE UN AND OTHER MULTILATERAL AGENCIES

As noted earlier in the report, many actors, including the ILO, have long recognized the critical need to deploy the full force of the UN system within the worldwide movement. This has not happened. This is a collective failure, not an individual institutional one. There has been a growing tendency, as set out in the UN Secretary-General's 2006 High-Level Panel Report, towards fragmentation, overlap and duplication of efforts in the UN system. Cooperation between organizations has been constrained by competition for funding and mission creep.¹⁶¹ The response to child labour has not been an exception to this process but part of the general rule.

The coming years, in all likelihood, will witness a fundamental change in the way the UN does business at all levels. The concept of 'One UN' that delivers a common strategy in pursuit of one set of goals in line with the principle of country ownership will have profound consequences for the ILO's child

¹⁶⁰ See Pinheiro, *op. cit.*, pp. 268-271.

¹⁶¹ UN, 2006, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

labour programme – and indeed for the ILO in general. It also offers the ILO an opportunity to demonstrate its capacity for leadership in those areas where it has substantive advantages: global norms and standards, policy development, research and statistics, and promoting best practice as part of its convening role. UCW and the GTF are important pilot experiments in acting as *One*. However, a major step would be for the various UN agencies and bodies that have a key interest in the child labour issue to define better their comparative advantages so that a more coherent international division of labour can be arrived at. This may be something for the review meeting to examine.

Finally, the World Bank and the Regional Development Banks have an important role in influencing government's macroeconomic and development policy – dialogue with Finance and Planning Ministries are critical for ensuring that budget allocations support education and social safety nets. However, corporate positions on child labour must penetrate through to the business end – for example, the Country Assistance Strategies (CAS), lending activities, and the PRSPs.

4.3. THE ROLE OF THE ILO'S SOCIAL PARTNERS

Employers' and workers' organizations are indispensable to the success of the worldwide movement.¹⁶² They have a critical role to play in their own right, but also as constituents of the ILO and as part of civil society they provide a bridge between the international agencies and civil society – the real dynamo of the worldwide movement. Indeed, trade unions, for example, have often been most effective as part of broader social movements.

Both employers' and workers' organizations have a very strong vested interest in combating child labour. For employers, eliminating child labour from supply chains helps ensure continued market access and productivity. Employers also have a vested interest in the training of their future workforce. For trade unions, child labour runs counter to their basic objectives – more jobs and rights at work – and opportunities for adult workers to take home a living wage.

What do the social partners bring to the worldwide movement? As mass membership and vertically integrated organizations that link the local with the global; trade unions and employers' organizations bring important assets to bear at each level in the fight against child labour. For example, sectoral and local trade unions and employers' organizations are well placed to work at the grass-roots level developing practical action programmes and using their expertise, supported by their national centres, that can play a convening role and act in policy arenas with governments as part of their promotion of international standards. At the international level, bodies such as the IOE and ITUC can support national centres and lobby within global policy debates.

¹⁶² ILO, *The role of employers' and workers' organizations in combating child labour* (Geneva, October, 2006).

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At the same time, each contributes particular tools as part of the worldwide movement, for example, the use of collective bargaining by trade unions and codes of conduct by employers' organizations. However, the key role of the social partners is as pressure groups – lobbying governments to live up to their obligations under international law, and to put practical measures into place to combat it.

Challenges facing the social partners. Both workers' and employers' organizations need to deepen and widen their commitment to the elimination of child labour and better define their respective roles and comparative advantages within the worldwide movement.

Trade unions face a particular set of capacity constraints and policy dilemmas in responding effectively to the problem of child labour. Trade unions, unlike many NGOs, are not single-issue organizations but have a range of concerns, principally relating to their own organizational strength – child labour may appear as one of a host of issues, if at all. Moreover, child labour is concentrated in the rural and urban informal economy – typically not traditional sectors of trade union mobilization. Organizing workers in both environments presents major challenges, not least the legal constraints in some countries in organizing young workers.

There is still a way to go, therefore, in convincing some trade unions that combating child labour, particularly in the informal economy, is not diversionary, but key to building effective trade union structures for the future – as a vehicle to promote social dialogue on core labour rights linked to child labour (such as freedom of association) and as an entry point into the informal economy. However, the problem is not a lack of reflection and insight. There is no lack of ideas from the trade union movement – the problem is turning these into action.

Employers' organizations encounter other limitations regarding their effective role within the worldwide movement. As seen in chapter 2, employers' organizations face the temptation to be purely reactive rather than proactive in the face of public perception of child labour in supply chains. Moreover, rushing to head off negative publicity and possible buyer demands can lead to negative unintended consequences for working children and their families. It is important that child protection concerns come before attempts at industry protection.

Moving forward. Both workers' and employers' organizations face critical challenges in realizing their potential as key actors within the worldwide movement. These deficits boil down to the four "C's": capacity, commitment, coherence and cooperation. The ILO is committed to building the capacity of the social partners as part of its 2006-2010 action plan set out above. However, there is much work the constituents themselves need to do to develop and put in place coherent strategies that play to their comparative advantages and avoid duplication with other actors, such as NGOs. Providing direct services to working children, generally speaking, falls outside this notion of comparative advantage. Forming alliances with other civil society actors remains a considerable challenge for both workers' and employers' organizations.

Finally, much could be done by the social partners to develop policy coherence on young workers in the informal economy – for instance, on the contin-

uum between child labour prohibition on the one hand and youth employment on the other, as part of a life cycle approach to the Decent Work Agenda that is now part of a UN-wide commitment and essential to achieving the MDGs. The 2006-2010 Action Plan calls for a comprehensive programme of work in developing the linkages between child labour and youth employment.

4.4. OTHER CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS

Much of the innovation and dynamism within the worldwide movement has come from NGOs. Moreover, NGOs have been particularly active in the informal and rural sectors.¹⁶³ When it comes to the delivering services to working children and their families, NGOs have stepped in to fill the void so often left by governments. As seen earlier in the report, at the international level NGOs have led debates on children's participation. Their access to many children in the worst forms of child labour has also enabled NGOs to highlight good practice in programme interventions and to use this access and accumulated knowledge in advocacy efforts.¹⁶⁴

These comparative advantages of NGOs need to be fully utilized for the benefit of the worldwide movement. Unfortunately, for much of the 1990s, there was an often sterile debate concerning "what works for working children" that led many of the NGOs to adopt different policies from those advocated by the ILO. Part of the problem was a lack of regular dialogue with the international agencies, such as the ILO and UNICEF (certainly at the global level), to share experiences and explore positions on a range of key issues. Time previously devoted to internal reflection now needs to be balanced by time devoted to external dialogue.

As the previous chapter made plain there is now much that the international NGOs and the UN agencies and bodies hold in common regarding child labour and areas where their comparative strengths could be more optimally deployed. A number of areas suggest themselves from the review set out above.

A focus for NGO child labour efforts in the coming years could be:

- active participation in the ILO's ratification campaign;
- mainstreaming efforts to insert the elimination of child labour into the key development frameworks;
- participation in inter-agency activities on child labour and education;
- advocacy on neglected aspects of the worst forms of child labour, such as child domestic workers;

¹⁶³ ILO, *Interregional workshop on child domestic labour and trade unions: Report* (Geneva, 2006), p. 57.

¹⁶⁴ See in particular the work of Anti-Slavery International (ASI) regarding child domestic workers, *Child domestic workers: Finding a voice, a handbook on advocacy* (London, 2002) and *Child domestic workers: A handbook on good practice in programme interventions* (London, 2005).

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- follow-up to the UN violence study at global, regional and national levels; and
- developing good practice on children's participation.

4.5. SUMMING UP

The challenge in the coming years will be to revive the momentum of the worldwide movement around a common vision, goals and strategies. Developments making for consensus, set out in the previous chapter, provide a framework and grounds for cautious optimism that the challenge can be met. However, this will not be achieved through “business as usual” – particularly given the ambitious goal of eliminating all the worst forms of child labour by 2016 will require accelerated progress. The ILO has a central role to play as a catalyst and as a leader in policy and knowledge areas. Employers' and workers' organizations have a particular challenge to better use their structures to integrate the strategic levels of the worldwide movement – local, national and global – and to form more effective alliances within civil society. NGOs in particular can demonstrate their capacity to work at the grassroots level, not least in ensuring that working children themselves become both the means, and not simply the beneficiaries, of a more vigorous and effective worldwide movement against child labour.