



International
Labour
Office

Geneva

Child labour

BOOK I

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS
AND EDUCATION

International
Programme
on the
Elimination of
Child Labour
(IPEC)

Child labour

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS
AND EDUCATION





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Child Labour - An Information Kit for Teachers, Educators and their Organizations, International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), International Labour Organization (ILO), Geneva, 1998.

For further information please contact IPEC at the following address:

International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC)
International Labour Office, CH-1211 Geneva 22
Switzerland

Tel: +41-22-799-8181
Fax: +41-22-799-8771
e-mail: ipec@ilo.org

ISBN 92-2-111040-0

Acknowledgements:

This resource kit was produced by Natalie Drew and Yayoi Segi, under the supervision of Panudda Boonpala and Chhanda Bose. It was edited and revised in its new format by Nick Grisewood in November 2004. It is an outcome of the interregional project *Mobilizing teachers, educators and their organizations in combating child labour*. The project is a collaboration between Education International, UNICEF, UNESCO and IPEC.

ILO-IPEC would like to thank the following for their technical support to the information kit: Education International, UNICEF, UNESCO, IPEC staff at headquarters and in the field, the national consultants in Brazil, Costa Rica, Egypt, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Nepal, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Thailand and Tanzania.

ILO-IPEC would also like to thank the following for contributing their materials to this publication: Child Workers in Asia (CWA), African Network for Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN), Concern for Children and Environment Nepal (Concern) and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU).


A special thanks also to the children from around the world whose beautiful drawings and paintings have been reproduced to illustrate the kit.

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1. Child labour





**EY HAVE
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LDHOOD**

Getting to know the working child

All over the world, children start working at a very early age. At the age of six or seven, they may be helping around the home sharing household chores, running errands and helping their parents in the fields.

These activities are often encouraged by adults in the family because it is believed that such activities can be beneficial to a child's growth and development. Children learn a sense of responsibility and take pride in carrying out tasks that help a family to survive. By observing and working with others, children learn skills and gain knowledge that will help them in their later lives. Work in this sense becomes a door to the world of adult work and earning and is part of the progression from childhood to adulthood.

Unfortunately, many children do work which, far from having a positive effect on their lives, actually impedes their growth and development. This is what is known as child labour.

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Child labour

What is child labour?

All work which is harmful to a child's health and development is child labour.

- **Sushila**, eight years old, works all day in a plantation and does not go to school.
- **Maya**, eight years old, helps her mother look after her younger brothers and sisters and also goes to school.

The work done by Maya is not necessarily harmful. It does not put her health in danger. It is not her only activity. She has time to attend school and play with her friends. Maya's work is not considered to be child labour. Sushila, on the other hand, does not get the opportunity to play or to get a basic education because she works all day. The environment in which she works can seriously harm her health and development. Sushila's work is a form of child labour.

Millions of children all over the world do work that is harmful. In many countries, everyone from the young to the elderly in poor families will do anything to earn a living in order to survive. Children are often forced into work from a very early age, in conditions that are hazardous to their well-being.





The causes of child labour

What forces children to work under harmful conditions?

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Children are forced to work for many reasons. Poverty is one of the most significant causes of child labour. Many governments, when facing economic crisis, do not give priority to areas that would help to alleviate the hardships endured by the poor, such as health care, education, housing, sanitation, income-generating schemes, skills training etc. Life consequently becomes a day-to-day struggle for survival for the poor. Children are therefore forced to take on family responsibilities, either by helping out at home so that the parents can go to work, or by going out to work themselves to earn money for the family.

Another cause of child labour is the belief in many societies that children should share family responsibilities by participating in the work of the parents, earning outside of the family,

or helping with the running of the home. The latter is especially true for girls who are expected to look after their siblings and take care of household duties, to the extent that it becomes their main and only activity. These cultural beliefs mean that the burden of responsibility is taken on by children at an early age, unquestioned, from generation to generation.

The demand for child workers also plays a part in causing child labour. Poverty forces children to work and employers take advantage of this poverty. By employing children, they are guaranteed malleable, docile, submissive and untroublesome workers, who are unable to defend their rights and are prepared to do even the most menial of jobs for a much lower wage than adults.



Why are children forced to seek work at a young age?

Because:

- Governments do not invest sufficiently in areas that would help to alleviate poverty and provide for social protection for children and their families.
- Families are faced with such hardship that they have no alternative but to send their children to work in order to survive.
- Some societies believe that children should take on family responsibilities by working at an early age.

Why do employers employ children?

Because:

- Children have no means of defending their rights and can be taken advantage of.
- Children are young, defenceless and obedient and can be bullied into doing work that adults will not do.
- Children are paid less than adults and so provide employers with cheap labour. Usually they are not covered by health insurance nor do they receive other benefits. They can easily be dismissed if labour demands should fluctuate.

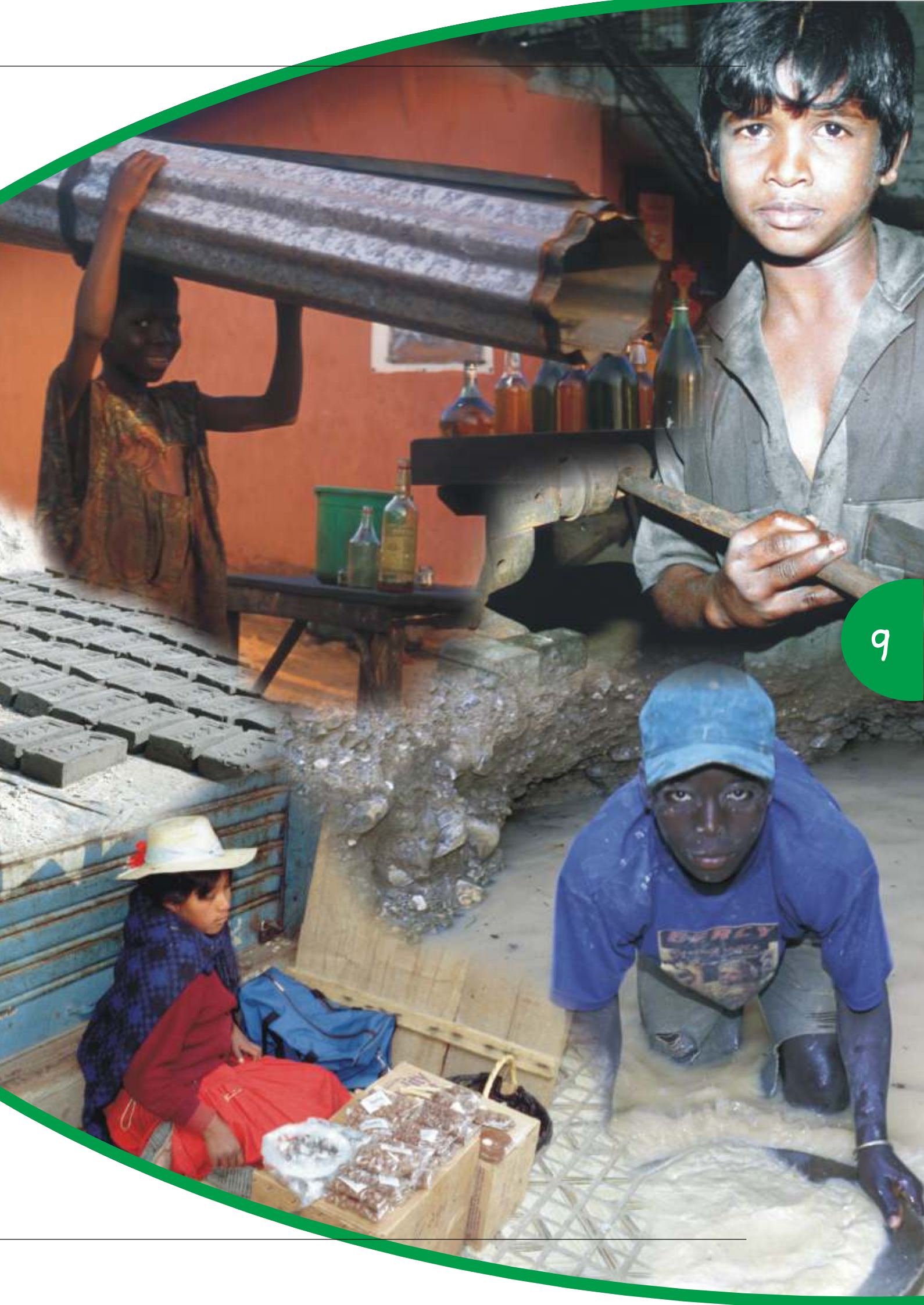
The different forms of child labour

What kinds of labour are children commonly found in?

Millions of children are doing work that is hazardous, abusive and exploitative. They are commonly found in the following forms of labour, among others:

- In industry, doing dangerous work, such as glassmaking, construction and carpet-weaving.
- In agriculture, performing heavy work and being exposed to many hazards associated with the introduction of modern machinery and chemicals.
- At home, looking after younger siblings, or helping in family farms or businesses, to the extent that this becomes their main and only activity.
- In outright slavery, or in labour arrangements that are tantamount to it, such as bonded labour and child prostitution.
- In domestic service, carrying out arduous work under conditions of isolation, working excessively long hours and being subjected to physical and sexual abuse.





What kind of work should children never do?

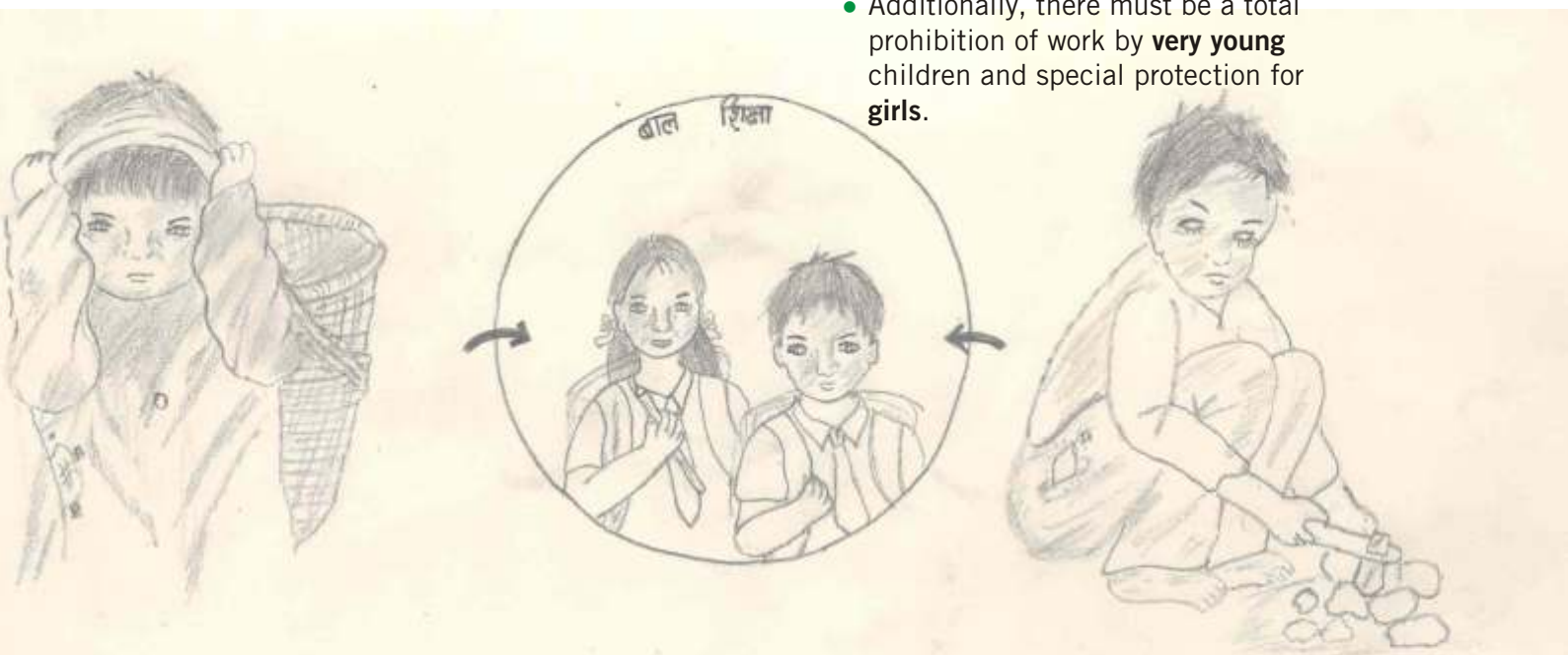
- Work that violates children's fundamental rights as human beings.
- Work that is dangerous or threatening, that exhausts their strength, damages their bodies and takes advantage of their young age.
- Work that harms their growing up or robs them of the precious period of time that is childhood.
- Work that prevents them from going to school and gaining basic skills and knowledge for their growth and future.

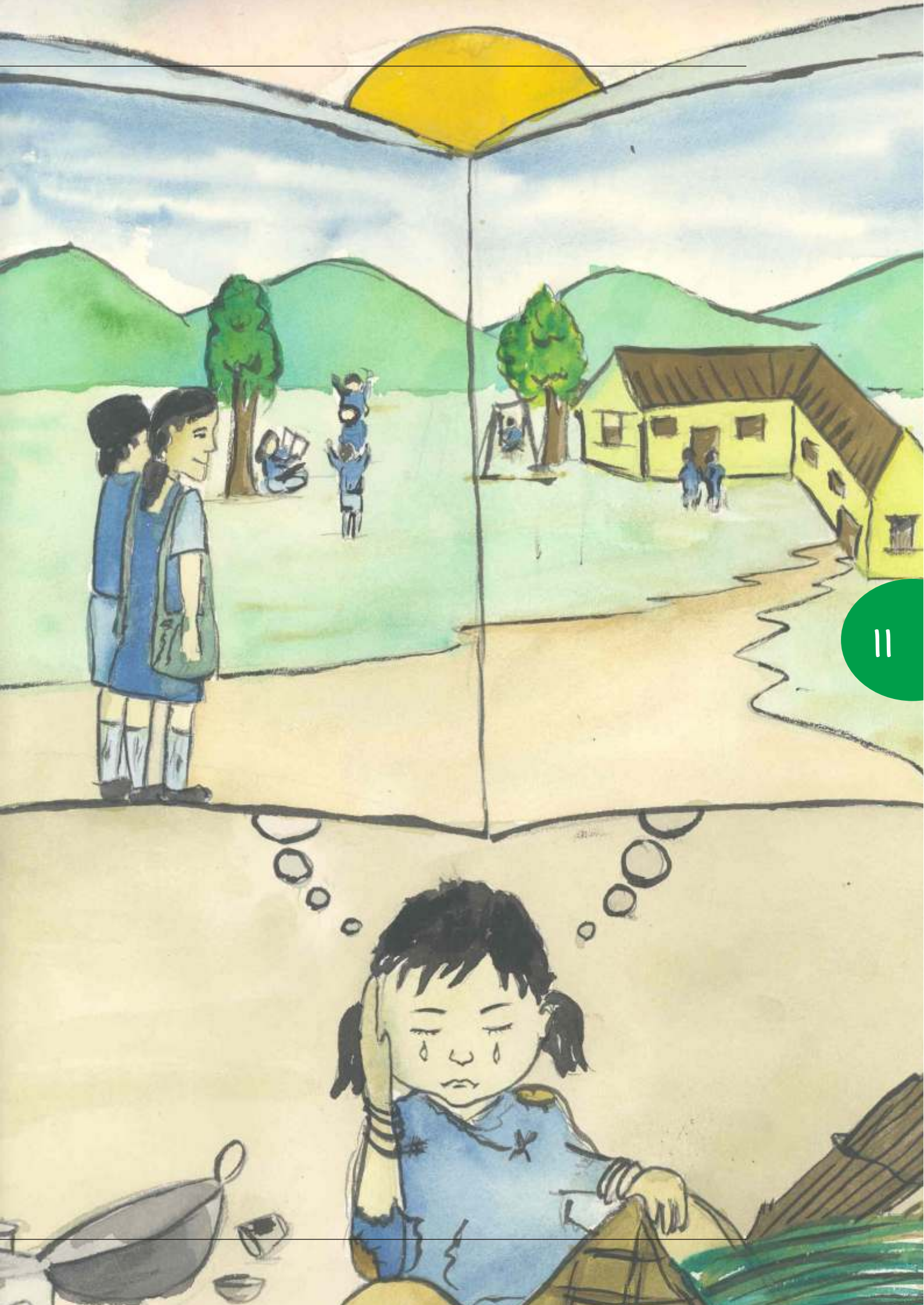
Child labour which is harmful to a child's health and development must be prevented and eliminated. Certain forms of child labour, however, put children in extreme danger and therefore must be abolished as a matter of urgency.

The goal is the immediate elimination of the following intolerable practices worldwide:

- Activities that are contrary to fundamental human rights, such as **bonded child labour**, children working under conditions of **slave-like practices**; **children in prostitution**; the **use of children in drug trafficking** or the **production of pornography**.
- Activities that expose children to particularly grave hazards to their safety and health such as work with **chemicals, dangerous tools** and machines, or involving heavy loads and complex tasks.
- Activities that are performed under hazardous working conditions and environment, involving the **risk of physical violence, sexual harassment**, work in **isolation** or **at night**, excessive working hours and work under **extreme temperatures**.
- Additionally, there must be a total prohibition of work by **very young** children and special protection for **girls**.

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The effects of child labour

How does work affect the development of a child?

Childhood provides us with important opportunities to learn from the world around us. We develop skills that enable us to become social beings and participate fully in family and community life. This early period of life is critical in determining our future existence. Child labourers miss out on much of this precious time. Their work gets in the way of childhood activities and becomes an obstacle to their physical, emotional and social development.

Physical development

Child labourers are far more vulnerable than adults because their bodies are still growing and are not yet fully formed. They experience poor physical health because the work that they do exposes them to the risk of injury and illness. These effects can be both immediate, like a burn or a cut, or can have consequences that last a lifetime, like suffering from a respiratory disease or catching AIDS.





Emotional development

Child labourers frequently work in environments that are exploitative, dangerous, degrading and isolating. They often suffer ill-treatment, abuse and neglect at the hands of their employers. Children may, as a consequence, find it very difficult to form attachments and feelings for others. They have problems interacting and cooperating with others and attaining a real sense of identity and belonging. They often lack confidence and experience feelings of low self-esteem.

Social development

Children who work do not have the opportunity to participate in activities that are a crucial part of growing up, such as playing, going to school and socializing with their peers. They do not obtain the basic level of education that is needed to cope in life. Nor do they get the opportunity to interact with others and actively participate in and enjoy life. These activities are abandoned in favour of work and children are consequently pushed into adulthood before they are ready, doing work that requires an adult level of maturity.

Child labour is an obstacle to children's development and future prospects. All children, regardless of race or social and economic status, are entitled to enjoy their childhood years and to grow up fully and naturally. All have the right to love, education and protection. Knowing and understanding these rights is the first step in preventing child labour and providing children with education so that their future can be a better one.





The nature of hazardous and exploitative work

The dangers that children face vary with the kind of work that they do. Some dangers are immediate, others have long-term consequences. Here are some examples of the threats child labourers face.

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Dangerous work	Work in hazardous conditions that can cause serious injuries, disease and even death.
Working too young	Work that prevents children from going to school and deprives them of the chance to enjoy their childhood. Young children lack physical, mental and psychological maturity necessary for work.
Long hours	Work that can last from 12 to 16 hours a day, sometimes for 7 days a week. Children frequently suffer from physical and mental exhaustion.
Bondage and slavery	Work whereby children and their families attempt to pay off a debt or loan. Some children are born into an enslaved family, others may be kidnapped or sold to employers.
Strenuous work	Physically demanding work. Heavy work can affect normal growth and can cause emotional distress.
Sexual exploitation	Exploitation of children for sexual purposes, prostitution and sexual abuse. Girls, but boys too, who are subjected to any kind of sexual exploitation are vulnerable to sexually transmitted diseases, AIDS and psychological trauma.
Violence and abuse	Beatings, physical punishment and verbal abuse. Employers may take advantage of children's docile nature and vulnerability with devastating effects on their physical and mental well-being.
Heavy responsibilities	Work requiring a level of responsibility for which the child is too young and ill-prepared.

Examples of child labour and its possible consequences



Yog, 12 years old, tea plantation worker

"My father is always sick and I'm the oldest child so it's up to my mother and me to earn the money for the family.

I earn just over 12 rupees (25 US cents) a day. For that I have to pick 16 kilos of leaves and carry them to a weighing centre. It's about a mile from the gardens and the heavy load makes me very tired.

Most of the time I feel ill. I often get sick with stomach and headaches and I cut and bruise myself all the time. A little while ago, I got this deep cut from the sickle. I have to keep it bandaged with a rag. We don't get any help if we are sick. There are no days off. Every day is a working day, whether you are sick or not."

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Agricultural work

Tasks

Cultivating the land; planting and picking coffee, cotton, sugar cane, fertilizing, etc.; using tools, machinery and agrochemicals.

Hazards

Unsafe machinery, dangerous substances; long and strenuous work; working in extreme weather conditions for hours at a time; lack of basic facilities.

Consequences

Chemical poisoning (chronic and acute) often undiagnosed or attributed to non-occupational causes; physical injuries due to accidents with dangerous tools and machinery; general poor health due to lack of adequate facilities; spine problems due to bad posture required by the work; illness due to exposure to harsh weather conditions.



Shankar, six years old, bonded carpet-weaver

"I worked with heavy instruments to cut the knots in each carpet. I was always getting cuts on my thumbs and fingers. When it hurt a lot, I would cry for my mother but the master would beat me and tell me to shut up.

He never took me to the hospital or gave me any medicine. All he did was take a matchstick and fill the cut with the matchstick powder, then he would set fire to it to stick my skin together. The pain was so bad I would cry for my mother. Then he would beat me again."

Carpet-weaving

Tasks

Weaving in a squatting position for many hours; handling chemically treated wool.

Hazards

Long hours of strenuous work in squatting position; exposure to chemicals; inhalation of wool dust.

Consequences

Leg and back deformities and water retention in the knees caused by long hours of work in a squatting position; swellings and infections of the fingers due to the handling of chemically treated wool; lung infections and even tuberculosis because of wool dust inhalation.



**Sumina, 13 years old,
factory worker**

"We make furniture in the factory where I work. The room is always hot and filled with dust. We breathe it in every day.

I am always sick with fever, coughs and 'flu. The company doesn't give us any medicine so we have to buy our own. It's the only way we can keep on working. Often we have to work through the night, even on holidays.

I start at 7 in the evening and have a break at midnight for a meal, which is usually an egg and some vegetables. At 1 in the morning, we go back to work again. We are always tired and the managers and supervisors are so strict with us that it is not very nice. Nobody is happy working there."

Factory work

Tasks

Producing various types of consumer products.

Hazards

Long, strenuous working hours; exposure to dangerous substances such as chemicals; working with dangerous tools and heavy machinery with moving parts, not designed to be operated by children; poor, dangerous and unsanitary working environment with no fire precautions or safety measures; girls are at risk of sexual harassment from male supervisors and co-workers.

Consequences

Stunted physical and emotional development due to nature of work; accidents and injuries ranging from eye strain to severed limbs, resulting from unsafe working practices, environment and equipment.

Rojaline, 12 years old, scavenger



"I started working as a garbage scavenger two years ago when I left school.

I go from place to place, looking through garbage for things that I can sell. I have to walk a lot to find the good garbage and sometimes I even go to the airport which is 5 or 6 miles from where I live.

I get out early every morning before the other scavengers take all the good stuff. It's also important to go through the rubbish before the people wake up. If they see us in front of their houses, they get angry and chase us away because they think we are going to steal their things."

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Scavenging and rag-picking

Tasks

Collecting and selling reusable materials from garbage heaps.

Hazards

Burns from explosions caused by combustion of refuse; cuts from glass and metal; exposure to dangerous and toxic household and hospital substances; smoke and fume inhalation; danger of being run over by trucks and bulldozers, particularly at night; temptation to eat rotten food; risk of becoming a victim of violence at the hands of drunks, gangs, etc.

Consequences

Infected wounds sometimes resulting in death from tetanus; chemical poisoning from toxic substances; risk of contracting infectious diseases from decaying refuse; food poisoning; potentially lethal accidents from combustible materials, bulldozers, trucks, etc.



Saichan, 16 years old, beggar

"When I was 9 years old, I took a train to Bangkok and lived in Huolomphong railway station for a while. At the start, it was exciting. The city was full of life and new things to see. Coming from the countryside, I had no idea that a city like Bangkok even existed! I wandered through the streets every day and got by on what I could beg. I wasn't ashamed to beg! Why should I be? I had to survive somehow... Life on the streets is tough. Some gangs there use children for begging. Then take whatever the children get on the streets and leave them with nothing.

I know all about the gangs, but I can't say anything more. I'm too afraid of what they might do to me.

I was often caught by the police for begging on the streets and living on the pavements. Eventually they sent me to a remand home run by the government. It was there that I met a boy who knew about the Kua Koon group. He persuaded me to run away with him and I've been with the Kua Koon group ever since."*

* The Kua Koon Group is a group of volunteers who care for street children in Bangkok, Thailand.

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Street trades

Tasks

Selling goods; providing services such as shining shoes and pulling rickshaws; hawking; begging; stealing, etc.

Hazards

Exposure to drugs, violence, criminal activities; exposure to exhaust fumes from vehicles; danger of becoming victims of police harassment, gang violence and exploitation.

Consequences

Exposure to physical violence of street environment; danger of becoming a victim of drug addiction; risks of sexual abuse, exploitation; effects on emotional well-being leading to low self-esteem and feelings of rejection and hopelessness; being branded a social outcast; being convicted for criminal activities which can lead to anti-social behaviour.

Pom, 15 years old, a victim of prostitution

"My mum agreed and took US\$ 80 from the man and as soon as I entered the brothel, I started working. Then I was getting only 20 US cents a time. The brothel was open from 7 in the morning to 3 in the morning the next day. One time, they fined me US\$ 20 for sleeping during working hours and being slow at giving service. I was afraid of the pimps and of the owner who always beat up those who tried to run away."

The Centre for the Protection of Children's Rights rescued Pom from the brothel. After a medical check-up, it was discovered that Pom had contracted AIDS.



Prostitution

Tasks Providing a sexual service.

Hazards Being under forced working conditions and hence exposed to physical violence and sexual abuse, total loss of freedom; risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases, including AIDS; emotional and psychological trauma.

Consequences Illness and even death from sexually transmitted diseases such as AIDS; emotional trauma and a distortion of values due to ill-treatment and abuse by those involved in the sex industry; danger of becoming a victim of sexual and physical violence; risk of pregnancy at a young age.



Rahima, 10 years old, domestic child worker

Rahima was a domestic child worker earning just over US\$ 1 a month. She worked for two years without any time off. She could not even visit her parents' house. Her employer beat her regularly. When the violence became too much, she ran away. One of the neighbours saw her and took her to the police station. An "ASK"* investigator was there at the time and he took her to the hospital for treatment. A case was filed on behalf of her mother against her employer. But while the case was in progress, the employer settled the matter by offering her mother about US\$ 460. She accepted the money and withdrew the case. Rahima went back to the village with her mother.

* This account was drawn from an article written by "ASK". "ASK" is an organization in Bangladesh that provides working children with advice and help on health, education and legal issues.

Domestic work

Tasks

All types of domestic work, including looking after young siblings, cooking, cleaning and laundry.

Hazards

Long working hours; risk of physical and sexual abuse at the hands of the employer; strenuous and demeaning tasks; isolation from one's family and society.

Consequences

Poor physical and emotional health due to demanding and demeaning nature of work and the lack of basic facilities; risk of physical injury and psychological trauma as a result of harassment and abuse; emotional distress due to poor living and working conditions, ill-treatment by the employer and isolation from the family.



Sonsingh, 11 years old, bonded labourer

"My mother, my brother and I have to work in the landlord's house, and my father works as a labourer on the landlord's farm. I work for more than 10 hours a day for less than two kilos of rice. It's hard but I always do the work I'm asked to do, including collecting cow-dung for fuel. I am not allowed to leave my master's house until the loan has been paid back. My master beats me sometimes when I make mistakes."

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Bonded labour

Tasks

Work in repayment of a debt or loan, or work under physical coercion.

Hazards

Total loss of freedom; physical and sexual abuse at the hands of the master; being sent to work in hazardous and exploitative environments; ill-health due to neglect.

Consequences

The degree of damage to physical and emotional health depends on the type of work carried out by the bonded child labourer and the treatment he or she receives from the master. Children are trapped in bonded labour, unable to pay off mounting debts and therefore lose their fundamental right to freedom. They are treated as objects, entirely at the mercy of their "owners". This leads to feelings of degradation, low self-esteem, lack of confidence, of individual identity and hopelessness.

Discussion topics



The discussion topics suggested below for the different groups are not the only relevant issues. They are intended to stimulate your own ideas. You may think of others and should include these as points of discussion.

With your colleagues

Do you think that children should help in the home?

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What are some of the hazardous jobs you have seen children performing in your community?

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Do you think your pupils are aware of the child labour issue?

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With your class

Do you help around the home? What kinds of tasks are you expected to help with?

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How long do these tasks take you? Does it prevent you from attending school? Does it prevent you from finishing your homework?

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Do you know any children who work in your community? What kind of work do they do? Is this work dangerous?

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What sort of activities do you think a child worker misses out on?

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With parents and the community

Does your child help at home? What does he/she do? How many hours a day do these tasks take? When does your child do his/her homework?

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Does your child work? What kind of work does he/she do? Does he/she get paid? How many hours a day? Is the work difficult?

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Do you think this work affects your child's development? Does it affect your child's education?

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Notes



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2. Children's rights





International measures

All human beings, adults and children alike, are entitled to enjoy their fundamental rights. It has long been recognized that children require special attention and protection. A number of international instruments have been adopted in order to try and protect these rights. These include:

- The ILO Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 105).
- The ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138).
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989.
- The World Declaration on Education for All, 1990.
- The ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, 1998.
- The ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).
- The Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All, 2000.

These international instruments aim to protect children's rights, safeguard them from exploitation and to ensure that all children have access to an education and are able to develop properly.



ILO Forced Labour Convention

Abolishing Forced Labour

ILO Minimum Age Convention

Setting the Minimum Working Age

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Promoting the Rights of the Child

World Declaration on Education for All

Advocating Education for All

ILO Declaration

International Commitment to Eliminate Child Labour

ILO Worst Forms Convention

Eliminating Worst Forms of Child Labour

Dakar Framework for Action

Providing Universal Access to Basic Education



Global instruments to combat child labour

More detailed information on the International Labour Organization (ILO) and its International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) can be found in the User's Guide. The ILO has long been concerned with the issue of child labour. It has adopted various instruments in order to tackle the problem. International conventions are agreements between states drawing up

rules of behaviour based on norms accepted by the majority. These agreements are usually developed in the context of the UN, its specialized agencies or other international organizations. Governments that sign and then ratify these agreements are supposed to incorporate them into their own legislation and make sure that these laws are applied and respected.



Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138)

One of the most effective methods of ensuring that children do not start working too young is to set the age at which children can legally be employed. The main principles of the ILO's Convention concerning the minimum age for admission to employment concern:

- **Basic minimum age**

The minimum age at which children are allowed to start work should be set at 15, or at the age at which children finish compulsory schooling.

- **Dangerous work**

Any work which jeopardizes children's physical, mental or moral health should not be done by anyone under the age of 18.

- **Light work**

Children between the ages of 13 to 15 years old may do light work, as long as it does not threaten their health and safety, or stop them from attending school or participating in vocational orientation and training programmes.

The Convention also recommends that the minimum age for employment should not be less than the age for completing compulsory schooling.

	GENERAL (The minimum age at which children can start work)	EXCEPTIONAL CASES
BASIC MINIMUM AGE	15	14
DANGEROUS WORK	18	16
LIGHT WORK	13-15	12-14

Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182)

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Child labour, as the statistics clearly demonstrate, is a problem of immense global proportions. Following its comprehensive research into the issue, the ILO concluded that it was necessary to strengthen existing Conventions on child labour. Convention No. 182 helped to focus the international spotlight on the urgency of action to eliminate, as a priority, the *worst* forms of child labour, which it defines as:

- all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or 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;

- work, which by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.

IPEC has emphasized that education is one its key weapons in the battle to eliminate child labour. Among the aims of Convention No. 182 is the need to provide direct assistance for the removal of children from the worst forms of child labour and ensuring the access of these children to free basic education and appropriate vocational training.

It is *because* child labour continues to be a problem in spite of all the efforts undertaken around the world to fight it, that the ILO and IPEC need more than ever the help and support of all actors in society to join together in the global effort to eliminate it. This was the premise for the adoption of this very important Convention which underpins the work and activities of IPEC.

Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, 1998

In 1998, the International Labour Conference adopted a solemn Declaration which recognized that all ILO member States, even if they have not ratified the relevant Conventions, have an obligation to respect, promote and realize four principles concerning fundamental rights:

- freedom of association and the recognition of the right to collective bargaining;
- the elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour;
- the abolition of child labour;
- the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

While the Declaration does not have the same status or role as ILO Conventions, it is nonetheless an important international instrument. Effectively, every member State has committed itself, among other things,

to the abolition of child labour. This commitment is for all countries regardless of their level of economic development, cultural values, history or even the number of ILO Conventions they have ratified.

The Declaration contains mechanisms involving a reporting process which obliges member States to produce and submit relevant reports on these four principles and for the ILO to produce an annual global report on one of them. Reports from governments show their progress towards achieving respect for these principles and rights. An interesting point for teachers and their organizations is that workers' and employers' organizations are encouraged to take an active part in the reporting process by promoting the Declaration and commenting on the relevant government reports.

Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29)

Forced or compulsory labour both for adults and children is universally considered to be unacceptable. The ILO's Forced Labour Convention is one of the most widely ratified ILO Conventions. It protects children from

some of the worst forms of exploitation such as bondage and prostitution. This Convention requires that countries adopt effective measures in order to abolish these work practices, to make them illegal and a punishable offence.



UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989

Children, like adults, are entitled to basic human rights. But because of their special needs and vulnerability, children's rights need to be addressed with particular care and attention. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was drawn up in order to enforce and safeguard children's rights. These rights include:

Survival rights

All children have the right to life and to meeting their most basic needs, including food, shelter and access to health care.

Development rights

All children have the right to develop properly, without hindrance. They have the right to education, play, freedom of thought, religion and conscience and all other rights that will allow them to develop to their fullest potential.

Protection rights

All children have the right to be protected from all forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation.

Participation rights

All children have the right to take an active role in their community and nation, including freedom of expression, to be members of a group, etc.

The Convention also focuses on specific areas that are relevant to the child labour problem:

Child labour

Children should be protected from exploitation and any work that endangers them in any way or stops them from getting an education.

Education

All children have the right to receive primary school education. Secondary school education should be promoted and encouraged.

It is important that children supported by teachers, parents, communities and others, come to realize that with rights come responsibilities. As can be seen from the context of the UN Convention and also the development of such programmes as citizenship and social education in schools worldwide, children need support to realize and understand that they too have an important role in society and therefore should seek to participate actively in bringing about change – change in attitudes and in behaviour. Teachers and educators have a critical part in this process and the SCREAM Stop Child Labour education programme can be an important resource for them (see Book 2, page 6).

World Declaration on Education For All, 1990

A conference was held in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990, to devise international measures advocating the rights of all children to receive basic education and skills training. The key elements of the Declaration are:

Education For All (EFA)

Each individual should have access to basic education. Everyone should be equipped with the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes which will allow them to improve their lives.

Quality education

Education must be flexible and broad in scope. It should be relevant and useful to the lives of the people. Alternative education programmes should be adopted for children who have little or no access to schooling, and these should have a standard of learning equal to that of mainstream national schools.

Targeting the disadvantaged

Everyone must have access to education regardless of gender, economic status, geographical location, etc. Sectors of society that find themselves at a particular disadvantage

socially, culturally, economically or otherwise, need to be targeted as a matter of priority.

Awareness-raising

Parents and the community should also receive a basic standard of education. Educating and raising the awareness of the population on the importance of education is an essential step in creating a stimulating learning environment for the children.

Mobilization

All sectors of society should be mobilized in order to bring about changes in the education system. Government bodies such as departments of labour, education and finance, along with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), teachers' unions, schools, the community and families, should work together in achieving the goal of basic education for all.



The Dakar Framework for Action on Education For All, 2000

In the decade following the Jomtien conference, the goals set by the Declaration were only partially reached. The World Education Forum, held in Dakar, Senegal, in 2000, re-affirmed the vision enshrined in the Declaration. It adopted a Framework For Action that outlined six key goals:

- **Early childhood care**
Comprehensive early childhood care and education must be expanded and improved.
- **Time-bound commitment**
All children should have access to free and compulsory primary education of good quality by 2015.
- **Learning and life-skills**
The learning needs of young people and adults should be met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes.
- **Adult literacy**
By 2015, there should be a 50 per cent improvement in the levels of adult literacy and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.

- **Gender disparities**

By 2005, gender disparities in primary and secondary education should be eliminated and, by 2015, gender equality in education should be achieved, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.

- **Quality of education**

All aspects of the quality of education should be improved so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all.

Although education for all is everybody's business, the prime responsibility for achieving these six goals lies with the countries themselves. This is stipulated in the Framework For Action which also assigned the international community to launch a global initiative to develop strategies and mobilize resources to support national efforts. UNESCO is charged with coordinating the work of the EFA partners and to sustain the global momentum.

Discussion topics



The discussion topics suggested below for the different groups are not the only relevant issues. They are intended to stimulate your own ideas. You may think of others and should include these as points of discussion.

With your colleagues

Have you or your colleagues read the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child? If not, obtain a copy either through the Internet or from the relevant body in your country. Share this information among your colleagues.

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Do you feel that the children in your school and in the wider community have access to the rights listed in the UN Convention? If not, which ones do you think they forego?

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At what age do you think children should complete their schooling? At what age should they be allowed to start work? Should they be allowed to do any form of work or should there be an age limit on various forms? Which ones and why?

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Has your government ratified the Conventions mentioned in this manual? If not, do you think that society and civil organizations should be doing something to bring about ratification? If it has, how are the Conventions being applied in practice, if at all?

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Has your school organized any activities relating to children's rights and the elimination of child labour?

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Do you know of any organizations either nationally or in your community that defend children's rights and take action to prevent and eliminate child labour? Can you offer them any support, for example, by conducting awareness-raising activities within your school?

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Is your representative organization active within the Education For All campaign? How can you support this campaign locally and nationally?

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With your class

Do you understand what is meant by “children’s rights”? What are they? How should rights and responsibilities counter-balance each other?

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Do you feel that you enjoy your basic rights? If not, which rights don’t you have? Do you think you can do anything as a group to change this situation?

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Which basic children’s rights do you think child labourers do not have? How do you think their lives would change if they did have these rights?

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What could be done to promote your rights as children? What can you do to promote your own rights? How can you fulfil your responsibilities in society?

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With parents and the community

Did you know that there was a UN Convention to protect children's rights? Do you know what these rights are?

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Have you ever heard of the Education For All campaign? Do you agree that all children should have access to quality basic education? How can you support this campaign in the community?

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Do you know the laws regarding child labour in your country?

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At what age do you think children should complete their schooling? At what age should they start working? Do you think that some forms of work should be forbidden to children until they reach a certain age? Do you think some forms of work should always be forbidden to children and young people?

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Has action already been taken in your community to defend and protect children's rights, to prevent child labour and to remove children from dangerous work? Was this action successful? How does the community ensure that their action is sustained?

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Do you know of any organizations locally and nationally that are concerned with issues relating to child labour, children's rights and education? How could you support their work?

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3. Education:

Preventing child labour
and addressing the
needs of working
children





The role of education

Child labour is a complex problem and needs to be addressed on many different levels. Governments must take positive steps in targeting and eliminating the problem as a matter of urgency. They must take measures to improve the situation faced by poor families. But governments are not the only actors in this struggle.

The whole of society must be mobilized into taking action in order to prevent child labour and release the children from harmful working conditions and provide them with adequate alternatives to work. Education plays a key role in the effort to eliminate child labour.

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Why is it important for children to receive an education?

Education is one of the basic rights of every child. It is essential that children receive an education because:

- **It gives them the opportunity to develop their capabilities and talents.** The basic knowledge and skills they acquire, such as reading, writing and arithmetic, are essential in their everyday lives. A basic education will enable children to find better jobs.
- **Education prepares children to play an active role in society,** to develop values and learn communication skills that will help them become responsible and involved citizens in the future.
- **Through education, children are made aware of their rights and responsibilities** and are less likely to accept hazardous work and exploitative working conditions.
- For working children in particular, **education can play a key role in improving their existing situation.** Relevant and quality vocational and technical training enables them to seek better work alternatives in the future.



Problems in education

Why do some children not attend school?

Compulsory education means that all children are entitled to receive basic schooling. In practice, however, many children do not attend school. Some enrol but drop out after a short period of time, others do not enrol at all. There are several reasons for this:

- Though most countries have introduced free compulsory education, in reality **school is never altogether free of charge**. Children need school bags to carry their books, food to eat at lunchtime and clothes or uniforms to wear to school. All this is a financial burden on a poor family.
- **The lack of schools** in some regions, particularly remote rural areas, is another problem. Even if there are schools, they may be so far from home that children have to cover long distances on foot, thus putting their safety at risk.
- **Education systems rarely take into account the specific needs** and requirements of working children. They are very often inflexible and do not include measures that would enable child labourers to successfully make the transition from work to formal education.
- Education systems **do not always make provisions for marginalized groups** within society, such as ethnic minorities, migrants, tribal people and people living in urban slum areas. Schools are often inaccessible to these children.
- **Girls in many countries are even less likely to attend school than boys**, since they are expected to run and maintain the home. Often, too, education for girls is traditionally thought of as less important, if not as actually undesirable.
- In many countries, **schools lack the basic materials**, such as text and writing books, pens and pencils, etc., that make teaching and learning possible.

- Education systems in many countries fail to provide children with quality education that meets their specific needs because:
 - ▶ **The school curriculum is often irrelevant to the lives** of the children and the schools grossly underresourced. The education they receive does not capture their interest or provide them with the knowledge and skills they require to seek better living conditions and work opportunities in future.
 - ▶ **Teachers do not receive sufficient training** and consequently lack many of the skills necessary to provide children with an education that meets their needs.
 - ▶ **The size of the class is often far too large** for the teacher to give each individual pupil the attention he or she deserves.
 - ▶ **Many teachers are underpaid** (they are sometimes not paid for months at a time) which makes it hard for them to support their family, let alone do a hard job well.



Improving education in order to prevent child labour

Kerala, a State in India, is a good example of how education can be an effective tool in combating child labour. By expanding and improving the school system, by making education available to all, Kerala has, in effect, eliminated child labour on a significant scale, particularly its abusive forms.

For education to play its part in the elimination of child labour, problems in education systems need to be addressed. Countries must make a

major effort to develop policies and programmes of action in order to provide all children with quality education that is relevant, accessible and free. These interventions in educational systems must also be accompanied by measures to alleviate poverty. Only by taking into account the survival needs of the family, by providing parents with alternatives to sending their children to work, can we ensure that children will receive a basic education.



What needs to be done?

Social mobilization and awareness campaigns

- Teachers, educators and their organizations as well as civil society, must be mobilized to launch child labour campaigns at local (schools and communities), national and international levels.
- The different actors within society should set up networks with one another in order to join their efforts and coordinate their action to eliminate child labour.
- They should advocate an increase in resources in order to provide universal, free, relevant and compulsory education for all children, with special attention to those at high risk of becoming child labourers.
- They should also advocate an improvement in the working conditions and status of teachers. Improving these will also contribute to redressing the shortage of teachers worldwide and improving retention rates in the profession.

Strengthening the national policy on education

- National education policies should make provisions for improving basic education as a whole. They should also address the issue of child labour specifically and include programmes which target child labour and provide specific resources in order to tackle the problem.

Improving formal education to prevent child labour and attract/retain (ex-) child workers

- The quantity and quality of formal education systems should be strengthened in order to reach out to children at high risk of child labour, including girls, children of ethnic groups, migrants, minorities, the rural and urban poor, etc.
- Innovative non-formal education methods that target child labourers should be a part of the formal education system.
- Primary education should incorporate awareness-raising activities on the issue of child labour.

Improving transitional education and skills training for (ex-) child workers

- The quality and structure of non-formal education received by child labourers should be improved, so that they can re-enter formal education and skills training.
- Transitional education should provide younger children with general education and pre-vocational skills training.
- (Ex-)child workers should also be provided with skills that will allow them to seek better employment opportunities.

What can teachers do?

Teachers, educators and their organizations can play a key role in combating child labour. Millions of teachers are already actively involved in education campaigns that seek to improve education systems and eliminate child labour. By joining forces with educators and their organizations, NGOs, employers' and workers' organizations, the community, parents and children, teachers can:

- influence national educational policies and programmes and budgets;
- raise awareness on the importance of education and skills training as alternatives to child labour;
- mobilize communities against hazardous and exploitative work practices;
- implement tailor-made educational programmes designed to prevent child labour.





Discussion topics



The discussion topics suggested below for the different groups are not the only relevant issues. They are intended to stimulate your own ideas. You may think of others and should include these as points of discussion.

With your colleagues

Why do you think education is important for children?

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Do you remember an important teacher in your life? What was his/her influence on you?

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Which of the problems in education mentioned in this chapter apply to your school?

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Can you think of ways in which you have made school a better place for your students?

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Can you think of an occasion when you have made the students happy or unhappy?

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Can you think of activities your school could organize to raise awareness on child labour and promote action against it?

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Whose support could your school enlist in order to organize activities and campaigns to eliminate child labour and ensure that all children in your community receive an education? (Education authorities, teachers', workers' and employers' organizations, NGOs, local community leaders, neighbouring schools, parents, children, etc.)

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With your class

In what ways does your school make you happy or unhappy?

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If you could change something about your school, what would it be?

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What would you like to be when you grow up and what skills would you need to have for that job?

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With parents and the community

Did you receive an education? If you did, are the things you learned useful to you in your adult life? If you didn't, do you think you missed out on work or other opportunities in life?

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Does your child go to school? If not, what are the reasons for your child not attending school?

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Are you happy with the education your child receives in school? Do you think it will be useful to him/her in the future?

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What do you think could be done to improve the quality/accessibility of education for your community's children?

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Who in your community and beyond could play a part in action to defend children's rights, eliminate child labour and advocate the improvement of the education system? (Education authorities, teachers', workers' and employers' organizations, NGOs, local community leaders, parents, children, etc.)

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