

# FACTS ON *Child Labour*



International  
Labour  
Organization

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

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

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

But that wall is beginning to crumble. While the total elimination of child labour is a long-term goal in many countries, certain forms of child labour must be confronted immediately. An ILO study has shown for the first time that the economic benefits of eliminating child labour will be nearly seven times greater than the costs. This does not include the incalculable social and human benefits of eliminating the practice: nearly three-quarters of working children are engaged in what the world recognizes as the worst forms of child labour, including trafficking, armed conflict, slavery, sexual exploitation and hazardous work. The effective abolition of child labour is one of the most urgent challenges of our time.

## ***World Day against Child Labour, 12 June 2005 Focus on children in mining and quarrying***

Children who work in mines and quarries risk their health, their safety and their future. An estimated one million children currently work in this sector, and the number is on the increase in some parts of the world. Because of its inherent dangers, work in mining and quarrying falls under C.182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, and must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Almost all child miners today work in artisanal, small-scale mines in remote areas. They work for small local mining or quarrying concerns, with their own families on small concessions near bigger mines, or in mines abandoned by multi-national companies. Children as young as five years old can be found doing tasks around mines.

*...continued on back*

## ***Key Statistics***

- 246 million children are child labourers.
- 73 million working children are less than 10 years old.
- No country is immune: There are 2.5 million working children in the developed economies, and another 2.5 million in transition economies.
- Every year, 22,000 children die in work-related accidents.
- The largest number of working children – 127 million – age 14 and under are in the Asia-Pacific region.
- Sub-Saharan Africa has the largest proportion of working children: nearly one-third of children age 14 and under (48 million children).
- Most children work in the informal sector, without legal or regulatory protection:
  - ◆ 70% in agriculture, commercial hunting and fishing or forestry;
  - ◆ 8% in manufacturing;
  - ◆ 8% in wholesale and retail trade, restaurants and hotels;
  - ◆ 7% in community, social and personal service, such as domestic work.
- 8.4 million children are trapped in slavery, trafficking, debt bondage, prostitution, pornography and other illicit activities.
  - ◆ 1.2 million of these children have been trafficked.

Continued from front...

## **World Day against Child Labour, 12 June 2005**

These children dig and haul ore out of underground mines, dive into rivers and flooded tunnels, and transport heavy materials. They grind rock and mix it with mercury to extract gold. They pound rocks into gravel. On a daily basis, they risk serious injury, chronic illness and even death. The risks are compounded by the environment they live in, where soil, water and air may be contaminated with heavy metals. Health services and schools are often lacking, and even where schools are available, working children may be unable to attend.

### **ILO in action against child labour in mines and quarries**

Child labour in mining and quarrying is a problem that can be solved, and government officials, enterprises and workers' organizations in this sector have the will to solve it. Mining sites, though remote, are concentrated in particular areas, and the numbers of children involved are large but not overwhelming.

Pilot projects undertaken by ILO's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) in Mongolia, Tanzania, Niger and the Andean countries of South America have shown that the best way to assist child miners is to work with the children's own communities. The ILO builds national and local capacity through its constituents and partners, with a focus on the following actions.

### **Health and social services**

Children found working in mines are immediately provided with food and drinking water, vaccinations, first aid and health care. Supportive services for youth of legal working age include safe rest areas, drop-in centres, counselling.

### **Legal protection**

Monitoring and labour inspection of mines and quarries, plus enforcement of mining industry compliance with minimum age and safety regulations, help reduce child labour in the sector. Policing of frontier areas can increase safety for youth of legal working age.

### **Education**

Day-care and pre-school for younger children reduce or eliminate working parents' need to bring them to the mines. Scholarships and remedial classes increase opportunities for older children who have already missed a lot of school, or can't afford to go on to higher education. Non-formal education and vocational training are of benefit to older youth and those of working age.

### **Income generation and alternative employment**

Poverty drives children into working in mines and quarries. In many cases their income is necessary to the survival of their families. They cannot be removed from labour in the mining sector until adequate alternative sources of income for their families are in place. Parents can be supported through credit, training and job placement to decrease the need for their children to work.

For more information: [www.ilo.org/childlabour](http://www.ilo.org/childlabour)

## **The ILO and the fight against child labour**

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

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

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

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

**1992:** The ILO establishes the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC). Action includes: assessment studies, capacity building, legal reform, awareness raising and social mobilization, prevention, withdrawal and rehabilitation of children from hazardous work, and the creation of alternatives for the families of child labourers.

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

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

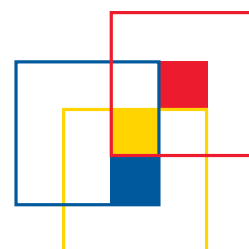
**1999:** Adoption of ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No. 182). Focused world attention on the need to take immediate action to eradicate those forms of child labour that are hazardous and damaging to children's physical, mental or moral well-being. Ratified by 3 out of 4 ILO Member States.

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

**2004:** The first global economic study on the costs and benefits of eliminating child labour says the benefits will be an estimated US\$ 5.1 trillion.



International Labour Office  
4, route des Morillons  
CH-1211 Geneva 22 Switzerland  
Tel. +4122/799-7912  
Fax +4122/799-8577  
[www.ilo.org/communication](http://www.ilo.org/communication)



June 2005