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## **WORLD DAY AGAINST CHILD LABOUR 2009**

### **ILO SAYS CRISIS INCREASES RISK OF GIRLS BECOMING CHILD LABOURERS**

GENEVA (ILO News) – The global financial crisis could push an increasing number of children, particularly girls, into child labour, according to a new report issued by the International Labour Office (ILO) for the World Day Against Child Labour on June 12.

The ILO report, entitled *Give Girls a Chance: Tackling child labour, a key to the future*<sup>1</sup>, notes that while recent global estimates indicate the number of children involved in child labour has been falling, the financial crisis threatens to erode this progress.

“We have seen some real progress in reducing child labour. The policies chosen in the present crisis will be a test of national and global commitment to take this fight forward.” said ILO Director-General Juan Somavia.

The report says the danger of girls being forced into child labour is linked to evidence that in many countries families give preference to boys when making decisions on education of children.<sup>2</sup> It states that because of the increase in poverty as result of the crisis poor families with a number of children may have to make choices as to which children stay in school. In cultures in which a higher value is placed on education of male children, girls risk being taken out of school, and are then likely to enter the workforce at an early age.

Other factors which could push up the numbers in child labour include cuts in national education budgets, and a decline in remittances of migrant workers, as these remittances often help to keep children in school.

This year’s World Day against Child Labour also coincides with the tenth anniversary of ILO Convention No. 182 on the elimination of the worst forms of child labour.

“With 169 ratifications we are now just 14 short of universal ratification by our member States” said Mr. Somavia. “It is a remarkable expression of commitment. This Convention calls for special attention to the situation of girls and we want to highlight the particular risks that girls face during this

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<sup>1</sup> ILO: *Give Girls a Chance: Tackling child labour, a key to the future* (ILO-IPEC 2009). ISBN: 987-92-2-122374-0 (print) 978-92-2-122375-7 (web pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Of the 16per cent of the world’s population that is illiterate, almost two out of every three are female. 55 per cent of out of school primary aged children are girls. A significant number of countries enrol only around 80 girls for every 100 boys.

crisis. Protecting girls – and all children – from child labour calls for integrated responses that include jobs for parents, and social protection measures that help them to keep both girls and boys in school. Access to basic education and training for girls and boys must also be part of the solutions for the future.”

The ILO report says the most recent global estimate indicated that more than 100 million girls are involved in child labour, and many are exposed to some of its worst forms. Girls face a number of particular problems that justify special attention, including:

- Much work undertaken by girls is hidden from public view, which creates particular dangers. Girls make up the overwhelming number of children in domestic work in third party households and there are regular reports of the abuse of child domestic workers;
- In their own homes, girls take on household chores to a much greater extent than boys. Combined with economic activity outside the household, this imposes a “double burden” that increases the risk of girls dropping out of school; and,
- In many societies girls are in an inferior and vulnerable position and are more likely to lack basic education. This seriously restricts their future opportunities.

The report highlights the importance of investing in the education of girls as an effective way of tackling poverty. Educated girls are more likely to earn more as adults, marry later in life, have fewer and healthier children and have decision-making power within the household. Educated mothers are also more likely to ensure that their own children are educated, thereby helping to avoid future child labour.

#### ***Note to correspondents***

*On June 12 hundreds of events will be organized in some 60 countries around the world to mark the World Day against Child Labour. In Geneva a special session of the International Labour Conference will mark the World Day and the tenth anniversary of ILO Convention No. 182.*

A range of materials produced to support the World Day can be accessed at <http://www.ilo.org/ChildLabourWorldDay>

*The ILO’s International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) has activities in almost 90 countries worldwide. It works at the policy level, supporting development of legislative and policy frameworks to tackle child labour, as well as through programmes aimed at preventing and withdrawing children from child labour, and has developed a Global Action Plan to eliminate its worst forms– including hazardous work, commercial sexual exploitation, trafficking and all forms of slavery – by 2016. Many of ILO-IPEC’s local programmes are working with girls, providing them with a chance of education or training as an alternative to child labour.*

For more information or to interview experts on child labour, please visit the World Day website or contact the ILO International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour at +4122/799- 7341, +4122/799-6568 (English, French Spanish) or +4122/799-8286 (English only), or via email [ipec@ilo.org](mailto:ipec@ilo.org)