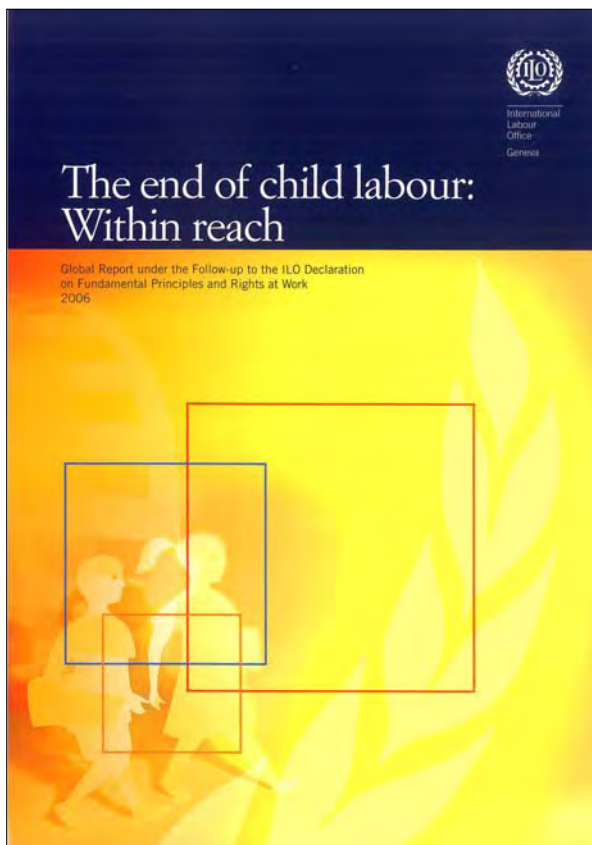


# ILO GLOBAL REPORT ON CHILD LABOUR 2006



In the Philippines, the **Global Report on Child Labour** was launched at a press briefing hosted by the Foreign Correspondents Association of the Philippines (FOCAP) at 10 a.m., Thursday, 4 May 2006 at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel.

ILO Subregional Office (SRO) for South-East Asia and Pacific Director Linda Wirth presented key messages from the Global Report.



ILO-SRO Director **Linda Wirth**, (*left*) presents the *Global Report* to the foreign media as FOCAP President **Karl Robert Wilson**, Agence France-Presse-Philippine Bureau Chief, intently listens.



## IN THE NEWS



The **Global Report on Child Labour** was featured in an afternoon news program last Friday, 5 May 2005.

ABS-CBN News Channel (ANC) 23 focused its episode on the major findings of the Global Report via its 4 p.m. segment, "ANC Chat," hosted by Ms. Lia Andanar.



*Lavador*



*Samuel*

Representing the ILO-SRO Manila were Mr. Temesgen Samuel, Senior International Labor Standards Specialist; and Ms. Serenidad Lavador, Chief Technical Adviser of the ILO-IPEC Time-Bound Programme.





## ***BREAKING NEWS***

### **Child labor declining in Asia, but more efforts needed--ILO**

May 04, 2006

Updated 10:56pm (Mla time)

Child labor in Asia and the Pacific is declining but the region still has some of the highest concentrations of under-age workers in the world, the International Labor Organization said on Thursday.

The ILO said the number of children working in Asia and Pacific countries fell 3.9 percent from 127 million children in 2000 to 122 million in 2004.

Most of the youngsters have agricultural or domestic-service jobs, the ILO said in its latest report released Thursday.

Worldwide, the child labor force fell 11 percent in the same four-year period, from 246 million to 218 million.

Of these, about 126.3 million are trapped in the worst forms of labor, such as the sex trade, heavy laboring such as mining, military service and drug trafficking.

ILO officials said there was a growing commitment among governments and communities in many Asian countries to end child labor.

"Increased political will, coupled with rising social movements, are taking girls and boys out of workrooms and into classrooms," said Lin Lean Lim, deputy regional director for the ILO's Asia-Pacific branch.

Of the 29 countries covered in the region that stretches from Fiji through China and India, 14 have ratified ILO agreements to end child labor.

Major reasons for child labor, such as poverty and a lack of importance on education, have improved in countries such as Thailand and China, prompting families to pull their children from the workforce.

But in Sri Lanka, Nepal and Indonesia, military conflict and natural disasters have left more children prone to exploitation.

"While Asia and the Pacific has certainly made progress, we must not be complacent," she said.

"The Asia Pacific must ask itself whether it has done enough to end child labor."

Panudda Boonpala, an ILO senior child labor specialist, said many governments needed to work harder to combat the problem. Although many governments have developed sound policies, some were failing to implement them properly, she said. "This has to change," she said.

Another problem was convincing families in some societies that education was important for their children's future.

"They do not see the value of that education, compared to putting children to work," she said.

The ILO, however, was cautiously optimistic that child labor would continue to decline and hoped to eliminate the problem by 2016.

Although the task was ambitious, conceded Lim, the goal was within reach as long as governments stepped up efforts and social attitudes improved.

"The challenges are formidable," she said.

"There must be a sea change of attitudes among communities and families to accord every child the right to their childhood."

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## **Fewer child laborers, but worst of abuses still there**

Benjie Guevarra, Correspondent  
8 May 2006

HEIGHTENED international efforts to combat child labor have led to 28 million fewer minors out of work in the Philippines and the rest of the world over the past four years, and, it is hoped, back in schools, according to the International Labor Organization (ILO).

The assessment is found in its second global report where it stressed, though, that much more needs to be done to sustain the drive and meet the target of licking the worst forms of child labor – and guaranteeing the right of every child to enjoy his or her youth – in 10 years' time.

The ILO reported that the number of child laborers fell 11 percent from 246 million to 218 million over the 2000-2004 period, and more than half of these working minors (126 million) are in the Asia-Pacific region and another 49.3 million in Sub-Saharan Africa.

“The end of child labor is within our reach,” said Juan Somavia, director-general of the ILO in a press statement. “Though the fight against child labor remains a daunting challenge, we are on the right track. We can end its worst forms in a decade, while not losing sight of the ultimate goal of ending all child labor.”

An executive summary of the report furnished by the Makati-based ILO subregional office for Asia and the Pacific noted a sharper decline of 26 percent from 171 million to 126 million over the same four-year period, in the number of minors, between the ages of five and 14, who are engaged in hazardous work, including child trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, domestic work, and recruitment for armed conflict or drug trafficking.

In the Philippines, a 2001 survey under the ILO's International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC) showed there were 2.2 million Filipino children trapped in child labor, according to the second ILO Global Report.

The balance of the world's child laborers are found in Latin America and the Caribbean, with 5.7 million; and 13.4 million more are in the other regions, the ILO report said.

Among the world's working children, almost seven out of 10 are employed in the agriculture sector, another 9 percent in the industrial sector and the remaining 22 percent in the service sector.

"We are beginning to see signs of a reduction in child labor – especially its hazardous forms – in many parts of the world," ILO director general Juan Somavia said in a statement in the 2006 report. "Our report indicates that the number of child laborers globally has fallen by 11 percent over the last four years."

"That's 28 million fewer children at work. And the sharpest decline is in the area of hazardous work by children where we have seen a 26-percent reduction," he said.

Somavia added, though, that, "Now is not the time to relent. It is the time to redouble our efforts. It is the time to take our work to the next level. That is why our report sets out the goal of eliminating the worst forms of child labor in the next 10 years."

Noting its central role in promoting a "more cohesive and coherent worldwide movement" to meet this 2016 target, the ILO said it has, through Ipec, pursued programs totaling \$350 million since 1992 that all seek to eliminate this practice and make it a priority concern under the Decent Work Agenda. These IPEC projects have so far benefited five million children, it added.

In Asia, child labor issues have been included in the national programs in Cambodia, Indonesia, Nepal and Pakistan, and "mainstreaming is being pursued" in such countries as the Philippines and Vietnam, said an ILO fact sheet on Asian child labor.

Moreover, it said, efforts to integrate child labor and trafficking issues into "Education for All" initiatives are being made by ILO through its IPEC agenda in the Philippines, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Vietnam.

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## ***Child labor in decline worldwide; elimination possible in 10 years — ILO***

May 8, 2006 at 5:20 pm · Posted by Alecks Pabico  
Filed under In the News

IN a new “cautiously, optimistic” report, the International Labor Organization (ILO) declared over the weekend that child labor, especially in its worst forms, is in decline for the first time worldwide. If the current pace of such decline is maintained and the global momentum continues, the ILO also predicted that child labor could be feasibly eliminated, in most of its worst forms, in 10 years.

“The end of child labor is within our reach,” said Juan Somavia, ILO director-general, quoting from the report’s title. “Though the fight against child labor remains a daunting challenge, we are on the right track. We can end its worst forms in a decade, while not losing sight of the ultimate goal of ending all child labor.”

The actual number of child workers worldwide, the ILO’s second global report on child labor said, fell by 11 percent between 2000 and 2004, from 246 million to 218 million.

Other key findings of the report include:

- the decrease by 26 percent (126 million in 2004 from 171 million in previous estimate) in the number of children and youth aged 5-17 trapped in hazardous work
- an even more pronounced 33-percent drop among younger child laborers aged 5-14
- around five million children have benefited directly or indirectly from the work of the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC)

In terms of regions, Latin America and the Caribbean have the most rapid decline in child labor over the four-year period, with the number of child workers falling by two-thirds. Only five percent of children are now engaged in work in the region.

Asia and the Pacific also registered a significant decline in child-worker population, though the region still has the largest number of working children in the 5-14 age group at about 122 million.

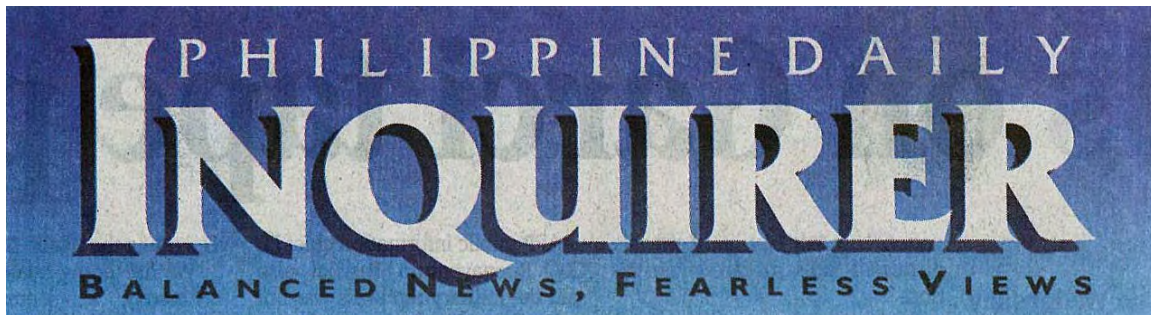
Subsaharan Africa, meanwhile, has the highest proportion of children engaged in economic activities of any region in the world, with 26 percent, or almost 50 million, working children. But the ILO report said progress in combating child labor has been hindered by the convergence of high population growth, grinding poverty, and the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

New estimates of the child-worker population in the Philippines peg the total at 2.2 million in the 5-14 age group, 1.4 million (13.4 percent) of them males and 0.8 million (8.4 percent) females.

The ILO attributed the decline to “increased political will and awareness and concrete action, particularly in the field of poverty reduction and mass education that has led to a worldwide movement against child labor.”

Despite the considerable progress in the fight against child labor, the ILO highlighted important challenges ahead, particularly in agriculture, where seven out of 10 child laborers work. The report added that greater efforts are also needed in addressing the impact of HIV/AIDS on child labor, and building stronger links between child labor and youth employment concerns.

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## Dealing with child labor

May 08, 2006  
Updated 01:24am (Mla time)  
Jigger S. Latoza  
Inquirer

THE significance of the Labor Day celebration last Monday was overshadowed by the Arroyo administration's usual panic in the face of its fear that the holiday would be turned into another occasion for destabilization and power grab. As it turned out, the administration was simply afraid of its own shadow.

Traditionally, Labor Day is when society at large celebrates what the Church profoundly calls the "dignity of labor." It is the time when politicians heap praises on workers and exalt the latter's contribution to the country's economy. It is likewise an occasion where the myriad problems of workers are brought into the open, with the hope that some sensible public servants would respond to those problems by going beyond rhetoric, seriously probing into these and coming up with relevant and sustainable solutions.

One problem in the labor sector that, until today, has not been addressed is child labor. In a report released two months ago by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor of the US State Department, it was noted that there were approximately 4 million child laborers in the Philippines last year. Of this alarming number, according to the Unicef and the International Labor Organization, around 2.4 million have been sweating it out in hazardous working situations, such as quarries, mines, docksides and fishing boats, and in prostitution dens. The report likewise took cognizance of the rising number of underage domestic helpers in the country.

In the provinces of Negros Occidental and Negros Oriental, the Center for Investigative Research and Multimedia Services (CIRMS) noted an increasing number of child laborers, particularly in the haciendas. Negros Oriental was

reported to have nearly 200,000 child workers, while neighboring Negros Occidental has around 140,000. An average of 8,600 new child laborers join Negros island's workforce every year.

The various faces of child labor in the country have been vividly depicted in the video-documentary, "Minsan Lang Sila Bata" (They're A Child But Once), directed by a friend, Ditsi Carolino, for the Ateneo Center for Social Policy and Public Affairs and the Archdiocese of Manila Labor Center. The documentary, in black and white, tells the stories of elementary school-age children laboring hard in a slaughterhouse, in a sugarcane plantation and at a dockside, transporting bags of cement. Anyone who had watched that film without getting affected by it could only be afflicted with the worst form of apathy.

In December 2003, the country's Anti-Child Labor Law (RA 9231) was enacted. Among others, the law aims to eradicate what are widely considered the worst forms of child labor, such as slavery (e.g., the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage, serfdom, including recruitment of children for use in armed conflict), prostitution and pornography; use of children for illegal activities, including drug trafficking and any work that is hazardous and harmful to the health, safety and morals of children.

The law seems to recognize that eliminating child labor is not simply a matter of willing it. The prevalence of child labor as a social and legal issue is symptomatic of the much bigger and complex issue of poverty. In a country where independent research organizations place the poverty incidence level at more than 50 percent of the population, the phenomenon of child labor no longer surprises anyone. Indeed, the sight of child laborers, under the age of 15, has become so common in the country that people have taken it as something normal. This is quite tragic because in the ideal scheme of things, child labor should not only surprise civilized society; it should scandalize – more so, right-thinking Filipinos.

Hence, although the spirit of the law is to stamp out child labor, it actually allows children to work, provided that they do so in "non-hazardous" situations. The law stipulates that children below 15 years of age, if working in non-hazardous conditions, may work for not more than 20 hours a week. On the other hand, 15- to 17-year-old children may work but not more than 40 hours a week. Considering the nature of children, work at night is prohibited.

The problem of child labor is widespread, and a law has been enacted on it; yet, according to the same US State Department Report, as of 2005, only four persons have been convicted for violating the anti-child labor law. Here, as it is in almost

all aspects of our legal system, we have the usual discrepancy in law enforcement.

While it is granted that seriously prosecuting and punishing violators of the anti-child labor law are vital steps toward the elimination of the problem, it is equally important to uproot the conditions that leave many poor families without a choice but to make children work to alleviate their miserable plight. On deeper analysis, it is grinding poverty – aggravated by ineffective, inefficient and unethical governance, in conspiracy with some socially irresponsible and profit-greedy members of the business community – that spawns child labor.

To get at the root of the problem, we might learn from other countries – such as, Bangladesh, Brazil and Mexico – which compensate poor parents for sending their children to school. Compensation is in cash or in kind – for example, a ganta of rice for each day the child is in school; in Mexico, the compensation comes with health services. These schemes recognize that education is one of society's most important investments in its future.

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