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PRESS RELEASE

New ILO Study Looks at Public Attitudes to Child Labour and Education

JAKARTA (ILO News): To mark the World Day against Child Labour, on Monday, 13 June 2005 the ILO will release the findings of new survey which provides important new data on attitudes to child labour and education. The ILO launched the World Day in June 2002 as a means of raising the visibility of the problem and highlighting the global movement to eliminate child labour, particularly its worst forms.

The new study was conducted by the ILO in collaboration with a leading market research company, Taylor Nelson Soffres (TNS), from January to March 2005. The survey looked at 1200 households across five provinces of Indonesia: East Java, West Java, North Sumatra, East Kalimantan and South Sulawesi. The target group was poorer households with children of junior secondary school age, as it is these children who are most likely to become child labourers.

Some of the key findings of the survey were:

- 19% of school age children below 15 were not attending school.
- The average costs of keeping one child in elementary school and one in junior secondary school for one year, including transport and uniform costs, can be more than two months gross salary at the level of the provincial minimum wage.
- 71% of respondents whose children were out of school cited costs of education as the main factor.
- Only 50% of respondents knew that the Indonesian government's policy is for all children to complete school for nine years to the age of 15. 39% thought it was six years (completion of elementary education).
- Despite cost factors there is a high commitment to the idea of education. Most households who have children out of school, either in the labour force or helping at home, are not strongly committed to this behaviour. This implies that if cost issues could be addressed then education participation would increase.

- When asked about the number of hours it might be acceptable for a child below 15 to work 37% indicated 3 hours or less. 27% said 4 hours, 19% said 5 hours, and 15% said 6 hours or more. This finding is important because other research suggests that when children begin to work longer hours (more than 3 hours a day) their attendance at school falls.
- Whilst the vast majority agreed that children below 18 should not be allowed to work in illicit sectors (prostitution, drugs), the numbers were much smaller when it came to sectors that are regarded by the law as hazardous. Only 16% said children should not be allowed to work with chemical substances, only 23% said children should not be allowed to work in off shore fishing, and only 27% though children should not be involved in heavy lifting work.

According to the ILO Chief Technical Adviser, Patrick Quinn, there are three key messages to be drawn from the report. Firstly, there is an urgent need to reduce the direct and indirect costs of education to poorer families. “If that can be done, the level of school drop out can be reduced,” said Patrick.

Secondly, more needs to be done to ensure people know about the government policy of nine years basic education. The fact that almost 40% think that only six years education is required suggests that in many areas the message of 9 years basic education is not getting across to the public.

“Thirdly, more needs to be done to increase awareness that long working hours are damaging to children as is employment in hazardous industrial occupations. It can be done. We can get children out of work and into schools,” he concluded.

The findings of the study will be used by the ILO to help design awareness raising programmes in provinces where this Organization is working with government and other partners as part of efforts to support Indonesia’s National Action Plan on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour. The ILO project is supported by the US Department of Labor.

According to the ILO, there are nearly 250 million child labourers worldwide. In Indonesia, according to data from the most recent National Welfare Survey (2003):

- 1,502,600 children between 10-14 are in the labour force and not attending school.
- Another 1,621,400 between 10-14 are not attending school and are described as helping at home or doing other things.
- 4,180,000 children of junior secondary school age (13-15) are not attending school. This represents 19% of the 13-15 age group.
- The incidence of child labour and non attendance at school is highest in the rural areas. (In cities 90.34% of 10-14 year olds are reported to be in school, compared to 82.92% in rural areas).

Almost 40 percent of child labourers aged between 10 and 17 work in the agricultural sector, while the remaining 60 percent are employed in other, mainly informal sector activities.

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