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Practical Action to Eliminate Child Labour
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1. INTRODUCTION

1. Since the beginning of the 1990s, child labour has become the focus of increasing attention, in developing as well as in developed countries. As a result, practical action against child labour in the form of policies, programmes and projects has been building up on an unprecedented scale. A number of factors have contributed to this development. First, an often-felt perception that the exploitation of child labour has become more serious and could well continue to do so in several parts of the world. Second, a concern that, by employing children at an age and in conditions that do not conform to universally accepted standards, some countries might gain a comparative advantage in international trade over those which more strictly apply such standards. Lastly, a stronger commitment to the cause of human rights, and the rights of children in particular, by civil society in many countries.

2. The struggle against child labour has thus gained momentum and a wide variety of actors have joined in, including governments, NGOs, trade unions, employers' organizations, and international organizations, to name just a few. Important lessons can be learned, especially in the framework of the ILO's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC). The experience gained can provide valuable guidelines for policy formulation and the development of programmes and projects targeting child labour particularly in its most extreme forms.

3. This paper gives an overview of the major approaches of practical action in the struggle against child labour. First it examines policy issues and the elements of a national policy against child labour. Then it looks at the programme and project level and explores experiences made in practical action targeting some of the most intolerable forms of child labour, namely children working in hazardous industries and occupations, prostitution and trafficking, and bonded child labour. Finally, a number of important lessons derived from this experience are considered.

2. POLICY DEVELOPMENT

4. Until recently, child labour was viewed in many countries with a sense of apathy. Largely perceived as a natural by-product of poverty, child labour was rarely a direct focus of government policies. This attitude has largely changed over the last few years and many countries have developed explicit policies and accompanying programmes of action dealing with the problem of child labour.

5. There is sometimes a tendency to confuse the terms, policies, programmes and projects. They are, of course, closely linked but it is important to define them clearly. A policy on child labour is a public commitment to work towards the elimination of child labour, setting out objectives and priorities and designating the authorities and institutions responsible for implementation. Policies in turn are implemented through programmes consisting of a comprehensive and coherent set of interventions. Projects, finally, constitute the building blocks of programmes. They are limited in scope and time and usually focus on a very specific objective and target group.
The need for a national child labour policy

6. The development of a concrete national policy on child labour is important mainly for two reasons. First, it demonstrates a clear commitment of government and society to attack the child labour problem in a systematic way. Second, it provides a coherent framework and sense of direction for the various actors and programmes and projects in the field. A clear national policy against the exploitation of children, reflected in both legislation and administrative regulations as appropriate, is the fundamental basis and point of departure for any action on child labour.

7. Several countries, for example Bangladesh, Brazil, India, Indonesia, Nepal, the Philippines, Tanzania, Thailand and Turkey, have already adopted national policies and programmes of action. India was one of the first, formulating a national policy on child labour more than 10 years ago. Others have done so in the last few years.

8. A national policy on child labour can stand on its own or be part of a more comprehensive policy framework setting forth development or economic benchmarks to be achieved. Brazil, for example, derived its child labour policy from a comprehensive statute on Children and Adolescents (ECA), enacted in 1990, which sets out a catalogue of child rights based on a constitutional article. Indonesia has included child labour as an issue in its latest five-year development plan for 1994-99 (Repelita VI).

9. The development of such a policy is first and foremost the responsibility of government. However, in order to be an effective guide for action, it has to take into account the experiences and positions of a wide range of actors, such as workers' and employers' and their organizations and other non-governmental organizations. In many countries, broadly attended national seminars or conferences, discussing and developing country-specific approaches and strategies to combat child labour, proved to be the starting point of a policy-formulating process. Most recently, such national conferences took place in Argentina, Ecuador, Peru, Senegal, Venezuela and Zimbabwe, to name only a few.

Policy elements

10. National policies and programmes of action against child labour commonly contain the following elements:

   - a definition of national objectives regarding child labour;
   - a description of the nature and context of the problem;
   - an identification and description of the priority target groups;
   - a description of the intervention approaches to be used;
   - a designation or creation of an institutional authority.

11. Defining national objectives. Clarity about the goals to be achieved is essential to any policy. Most national policies affirm the objective to (i) eliminate child labour and (ii) actively work towards this end by means of prevention, removal and rehabilitation. Policy objectives can, of course, only gain relevance if based on appropriate legislation. In a number of countries, the establishment or refinement of child labour and minimum age laws therefore went hand in
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Hand with the formulation of national child policies. India, for example, defined its national policy in the same year (1986) it formulated a comprehensive Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act which regulates the minimum age for admission to employment in specified sectors and occupations. In other cases, policy moves preceded legislative activities. In the Philippines, for example, legislation was reviewed after the plan of action on working children (1987) called for a strengthening of child labour laws.

12. Describing the nature and context of the problem. The availability of timely and reliable data on the extent of child labour by region, sector, gender, etc. is an essential requisite for this. In order to assist countries in these often difficult and time-consuming tasks, the ILO has established two specific data collection instruments: (i) a statistical survey methodology on child labour and (ii) a rapid assessment technique. The survey methodology was developed to obtain a comprehensive set of statistics on the child labour situation in a country and generate data on specific core variables. It was first tested in India, Indonesia, Senegal and Ghana and has subsequently been successfully used in other Asian and African countries. The rapid assessment technique was designed to obtain relatively quickly a stock of qualitative and quantitative information with a view to develop action programmes. Information derived from this process could be at the basis of the government's policy statement on the problems to be tackled. It will in turn determine the approaches and instruments to be used in practical action programmes and projects.

13. Identifying and describing priority target groups. An important step in elaborating a national child labour policy is to identify potential target groups and to indicate priorities among them. While the total elimination of child labour should be the overall goal, it makes economic sense to concentrate scarce resources on the most extreme forms of child labour first. These will, of course, vary from country to country, but they might include debt bondage or other slavery-like arrangements, prostitution and trafficking of children, and work under hazardous or otherwise abusive conditions which seriously endanger the physical and psychological development of a child. Box 1 gives a brief overview of the different priority areas for action in selected countries, as stated in national plans.

14. Choosing and describing the intervention approaches to be used. As the following sections show, single-issue approaches and narrowly focused projects seldom achieve a sizeable effect if not embedded in a larger, multi pronged strategy, encompassing the development of appropriate legislation and its enforcement, and action in such areas income-generation and employment promotion, education, welfare and advocacy of children's rights. Having set clear priorities, the national policy and programme of action should encompass action that prevents child labour, interim measures that seek to protect children who are working and activities aimed at removing children from dangerous work, combined with rehabilitation efforts. The distinction between these fields of action can be blurred sometimes and some activities may follow objectives which aim, for example, to rehabilitate as well as prevent. In general, however, prevention, removal, rehabilitation and protection will include the following action:

- Prevention: Action that halts children taking up specified types of work before reaching a certain age, such as identifying the geographical areas, social groups or situations from which a consistent flow of these children tends to come, identifying the push and pull-
factors and systematically addressing both through activities with a long-term impact.

- **Removal**: Action that immediately, or through phases, takes children out of dangerous situations, such as releasing them from bonded labour, removing them from a hazardous workplace and providing them with shelter and immediate care in specifically established reception centres.

- **Rehabilitation**: Action that puts children, who have suffered from the work performed, back on their normal development path. This may include medical care, counselling and special educational and vocational preparation programmes. Rehabilitation efforts should always lead to the provision of a meaningful alternative activity, usually the attendance of school.

- **Protection**: Action that is undertaken at the workplace to reduce or eliminate the impact of hazards while keeping the children at work.

15. IPEC experience suggests that it is easier and less expensive to prevent child labour than to withdraw children from work and rehabilitate them. This applies in particular to children working in hazardous conditions. They and their workplaces are often hidden from public view and attention. Many rehabilitation efforts thus naturally focus on groups of child workers easier to reach and thereby miss out on the worst forms. Where rehabilitation is difficult and costly because of a large array of obstacles, preventive action becomes even more important. National plans should take account of that and emphasize prevention.

16. **Designating the actors.** Most initiatives against child labour today still come from non-governmental organizations. However, the burden of the campaign against child labour is far too
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heavy for NGOs to carry alone. Broader social mobilization is required. Government and the social partners need to contribute their share.

17. Three fundamental types of action against child labour can be provided only by the government: (i) child labour legislation and appropriate enforcement mechanisms; (ii) a national child labour policy that sets public priorities and reaches out to engage all the important social actors; and (iii) a publicly funded system of basic education that ensures universal attendance and quality schooling. Education is perhaps the most powerful of all tools against child labour and ways will have to be found how to coordinate effectively a national child labour policy and educational policies.

18. Workers’ organizations are the logical leaders for discovering and denouncing child labour abuses at the local, national and international levels. They can become credible advocates for the protection of children against workplace exploitation by documenting concrete cases of child labour and its effects on the children involved. Trade unions are also in a good position to communicate to large numbers of adult workers and their families the importance of promoting the education of their children, of protecting them against work hazards and of keeping them as much as possible from premature engagement in the labour market. Notable amongst the various anti child labour activities workers’ organizations and national and international trade union federations have carried out over the last few years are surveys on child labour, awareness campaigns, the provision of schooling for children, and collective agreements on child labour.

19. Employers and their organizations also have an indispensable role to play in the fight against child labour. Obviously, the best way for individual enterprises to contribute in this field is to adhere strictly to the minimum age provisions of national labour laws and regulations. Where the employment of children is not legally proscribed, they can ensure, in particular, that child workers are kept away from any dangerous substance or machinery and that their working hours and schedules do not hinder or affect school attendance and performance. In a number of countries employers’ organizations at the national and international level have assisted their members in these important tasks, especially by raising awareness of the human, economic and social costs of child labour.

20. There are many other reasons for employers and their organizations to be interested in child labour issues. Child labour degrades the human capital necessary to achieve sustainable economic development. Former child workers, especially those who have not benefitted from any schooling and have been working for years in hazardous conditions, can hardly become productive adults. If child labour is allowed to continue today, badly needed skills might be in short supply tomorrow. Moreover, the use of child labour can ruin a company’s reputation. This is especially true in the case of large, often multinational enterprises, where child labour, for example in subcontracting arrangements, can damage a carefully built-up brand image from one day to the next and have strong repercussions on profit and stock value.

21. Other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) at the local, provincial, national or international levels have an equally decisive role to play, particularly when it comes to assisting specific target groups. In many countries NGOs have been at the forefront in the struggle against child labour, often operating a wide range of direct support programmes at the community and the local levels. Close proximity to, and insider knowledge of target groups, have allowed them
in many instances better than any other group to develop and conduct concrete activities which 
meet the need of working children and their families. Independence and creativity can be other 
hallmarks of NGOs involved in child labour issues. NGOs have often played a crucial role in 
discovering and publicizing concrete cases of abusive child labour and in denouncing the 
shortcomings in government action, in particular failure to enforce relevant laws and regulations. 
Some NGOs, however, are hindered by their smallness and lack of managerial skills. 
Sometimes they are only informal groups built on the vision and drive of a single individual. 
Care has therefore to be taken not to overburden them and to ensure that managerial 
capacities are commensurate with the tasks entrusted to them.

22. In addition to the above-mentioned groups, there are, of course, other groups and 
institutions which have an important role to play in the struggle against child labour. Their 
weight and influence will vary between countries but in general they may include 
parliamentarians, universities and research institutes, teachers, religious leaders and the media. 
Particularly the media have often played a pivotal role in uncovering child labour and bringing 
it to the forefront of national and international attention.

23. Creating the necessary institutional capacity. Child labour issues cut across the work of 
numerous governmental and non-governmental agencies and organizations. Responsibility for 
work on child labour is often diffuse. Defining and implementing a national policy against child 
labour thus requires the creation of an institutional mechanism within the government apparatus 
with responsibility for: (i) setting priorities in close partnership with the representative 
organizations of employers and workers and other relevant groups of civil society; (ii) promoting 
and coordinating the activities of various ministries and other governmental institutions 
concerned with child labour; (iii) encouraging the participation of the private sector and ensuring 
that measures taken by the public and private sectors complement each other; and (iv) supporting 
practical action in the form of programmes and projects against child labour.

24. Over the last few years, broad-based advisory bodies or national task forces on child 
labour have been established in a number of countries where child labour has been recognized 
as a priority policy issue. In IPEC-participating countries, institutional capacity has been built 
up in the form of National Steering Committees (NSCs) which have been created as independent 
bodies, mostly under the Ministry of Labour. Including a broad range of governmental and non- 
governmental agencies and organizations, the NSCs have proved to be effective vehicles for the 
development and implementation of coherent strategies on child labour. In many cases, NSCs 
have become official national coordinating bodies for child labour.

3. PROGRAMME AND PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

25. Over the last few years, a multitude of projects against child labour have been carried out, 
in all parts of the world. Important lessons can be derived from of this experience. The following 
sections concentrate on some of the worst forms of child labour, the problems faced and the 
approaches used.
3.1 Child Labour in Hazardous Industries and Occupations

26. Defining which work or occupation is hazardous is not an easy task. The ILO Minimum Age Convention No. 138 stipulates that the minimum age for admission to employment or work which may jeopardize the health, safety and morals of young persons should not be less than 18 years (or 16 in case full protection can be ensured and adequate instruction be given). It furthermore requires ratifying countries to determine what kinds of work exactly fall into this category. Almost all countries have now incorporated the principle of prohibition of child work in hazardous conditions and activities in their national legislation, or defined the conditions under which children may work. In some countries the definition of hazardous work is extremely restricted. For example, it may be confined to underground work, work in industrial painting or work involving the use of white lead and lead sulphur. In other countries the scope is somewhat broader. It may cover, for example, various occupations in transport, industrial workshops, factories and plantations.

27. Most national laws and regulations prohibit child work in industries and activities such as:

- underground or underwater work;
- work on construction sites;
- work involving machinery in motion;
- work involving the manufacture, preparation, or handling of chemicals or other hazardous substances;
- work in places of public entertainment, such as bars and nightclubs.

Work-related hazards and risks

28. Taking a closer look at the dangers many child workers may face, one can generally distinguish between physical and psychosocial work hazards. Physical work hazards are those which seriously endanger the normal child’s health and normal physical development or even place children’s lives in immediate peril. Various characteristics of the work performed can be at the source of these dangers. The most obvious ones are contact with or use of chemicals or other hazardous substances or work processes which are intrinsically dangerous because of the likelihood of accidents, injury or disease.

Box 2

ILO/IPEC: Helping countries to overcome child labour

The ILO’s International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), established initially with a major endowment from Germany, is the world’s largest technical cooperation programme on child labour. It assists member states in the progressive elimination of child labour by strengthening national capacities to deal with the problem and by creating a worldwide movement against child labour. Priority target groups are bonded child labourers, children in hazardous working conditions and occupations, and children who are particularly vulnerable, i.e. very young working children and working girls.

Support given to partner organizations includes the development and implementation of measures which aim at preventing child labour, withdrawing children from hazardous work and providing alternatives, and improving the working conditions as a transitional measure towards the elimination of child labour.

Since its inception in 1992, the Programme has grown tremendously. 28 countries on four continents are now participating, many more are slated to join in the next few years.
29. In many instances, it is not one hazard but a combination of hazards which make a specific work situation dangerous to children. In glass-making, for example, one can identify a whole range of occupation-specific hazards such as high temperatures, open flames or exposure to dust. In addition to hazards related to the production process of certain goods or services, many enterprises, particularly but not exclusively in the informal sector, expose their workers to general hazards arising out of poor working conditions or a degraded working environment. These could include lack of sanitation, poor lighting, loud noise, or excessive working hours. Table 1 (Annex 1) provides an overview of some examples of child labour in hazardous occupations and its possible consequences.

30. Hazards also arise from the context in which children have to work. Child labour may have serious non-physical consequences due to psychosocial hazards, especially when it is burdensome or abusive. Some children, for example, are vulnerable because of their work situation and not so much because of the nature of their occupation. Divorced from natural links to their family, often totally dependent on their employers, deprived of education and play and largely invisible to the outside world, many child workers are seriously stunned in their social and psychological development.

31. It is, by now, well known that work hazards that affect adults affect children even more seriously. As children are still in the process of growing up their normal development can be severely endangered by conditions that might not constitute such a peril to adults. Children suffer more from exposure to hazardous substances because of their weight and body size and insufficiently developed mechanisms for detoxication. Young workers also have a lower heat-tolerance and are more susceptible to noise-induced hearing loss. Due to their more limited working capacity, children are, in general, more prone than adults to occupational injuries due to inattention, fatigue, poor judgement and lesser knowledge.

32. Various interventions at different levels are needed in order to effectively tackle the problem of child labour in hazardous occupations and industries. Roughly speaking, most of the activities can be grouped in two categories, namely the preventive approach and the rehabilitative approach.

**Prevention**

33. Prevention is a cornerstone of virtually all country programmes working towards the elimination of child labour, whether it is of a hazardous nature or not. It usually takes a long-term perspective and includes policies, laws and programmes that combat poverty, provide basic services, develop human resources, administer justice and regulate the behaviour of business and industry with a view to stamp out child labour. Sustainable and long-term results will be achieved only when new generations of children are effectively prevented from entering hazardous occupations. Investment in prevention has proven to be the most economical method in the long run.

34. There are several essential steps in protecting children from work hazards. First and foremost it is important to identify dangerous work and the children currently or potentially engaged in it. Government and the general public have to be informed and mobilized in order to secure broad-based social support. The importance of awareness-raising in prevention
activities cannot be overestimated for experience over many years and in all parts of the world has clearly demonstrated that (a) significant public pressure is needed to ensure and support government action against child labour and (b) awareness among the key actors, i.e. children, their parents and communities, as well as employers, about the serious consequences of hazardous work at a young age, provides the essential basis for its eventual abolition. Much hazardous work is not visible to the public, and often even the families of child workers in dangerous occupations and industries are not sufficiently aware of the dangers.

35. Another obvious and essential starting point is the adoption of appropriate laws and regulations defining the minimum age for admission to hazardous work and the conditions under which children may or may not work. Such laws are important not only because they provide a legal basis for action in the best interest of the child but also because they can have inspirational value and encourage initiative. In many countries, large numbers of children working under hazardous conditions are not covered by child labour laws. Where they are covered, enforcement of the laws is often weak so that many violations either remain undetected, or are insufficiently sanctioned.

36. Preventive programmes and projects can, of course, be successful only if the population groups at risk are provided with viable alternatives and options, such as affordable good-quality education and the justified expectance of adequate job opportunities for school leavers. Relevant educational offers in the form of universal, free public schooling will ultimately be the most effective instruments for the elimination of child labour. Experience in different parts of the world has shown that school attendance has a major effect on reducing the number of children in hazardous work. First, most detrimental forms of child labour are inconsistent with regular school attendance. In cases where it is combined with part-time work it may at least reduce excessive hours of work which often account for the bulk of strain put on a young child worker. Second, educated persons are more aware of their rights and so less likely to accept hazardous working conditions. Third, educated persons, it has been proven, have fewer, better educated and healthier children when they become adults, a factor which should contribute to the overall reduction of child labour in hazardous occupations in future generations.

37. Child labour is a product of poverty and the difficult income situation of families is usually at the basis of the parents' decisions to send their children to work. Strong economic growth and development are important beneficial factors to any preventive strategy of child labour. However, growth in itself does not necessarily take care of a country's child labour problem, not even of its worst forms. A number of countries which have achieved substantial growth rates in the last few years have seen child labour drop, but not to the dramatic levels one might expect and many children remain trapped in obviously hazardous conditions. In order to tackle child labour effectively the benefits of growth will have to be distributed more equitably and income disparities will have to be reduced. Only if poverty alleviation and full productive employment are accorded top priority among the developing country's priorities will a basis for the elimination of all forms of child labour be created.
Rehabilitation

38. The elimination of hazardous child work will take time, and preventive approaches will bear fruit only in the long run. For this reason, rehabilitation assumes an important role in the short to medium term. Rehabilitative actions tend to reach out to individual children who are already in the labour market, either providing them with certain services intended to protect them from the hazards they face or providing them with alternative options subsequent to their removal from work.

39. Withdrawing children from work is not an easy task. Viable alternatives have to be offered, especially in terms of education and training, and the foregone income on which the child labourers’ families often depend has to be substituted by other sources. In order to facilitate the removal of child workers from hazardous work, a number of projects have offered economic incentives such as cash grants or in-kind payments. An ILO study which surveyed a variety of these programmes found that economic incentives work best when combined with other activities, e.g. income-generating activities for the child workers’ parents. However, rarely can the level of grants and payments match up to the lost income and many children have returned to work after the subsidies ceased.

40. A child’s withdrawal from work has to be accompanied by a whole range of supportive measures. Care has to be taken to ensure that the attempts to remove children from one sector or industry do not push them into industries or occupations which may even be more hazardous or exploitative. In addition to education, training and health services, former child workers need to be provided with intensive counselling, a safe environment and often legal aid. In many cases, so-called “drop-in centres” have been set up as a first-call station, often run by NGOs, which offer professional services from social workers, family or child therapists and psychiatrists.

Box 3

Tanzania: Employers joining the struggle

By way of a number of fresh and innovative approaches, the Association of Tanzanian Employers (ATE) succeeded to reduce the incidence of child labour on coffee and tea plantations. Child workers on the plantations are often exposed to long hours under extreme climatic conditions. Many of them have to carry heavy loads and are in frequent contact with poisonous pesticides.

After the identification of plantations with a high incidence of child labour, ATE conducted sensitization workshops for owners, managers and supervisors, followed by discussions and consultations. Action plans were drawn up, adapted to the specific problems and possibilities of individual plantations. Activities range from simply putting up signs that no children under the age of 15 can be employed to contributing to the improvement and running of primary schools and day-care units in the plantations’ vicinity. Compliance is strictly monitored by the employers’ association.

A unique feature of the programme is the targeting of employers without the threat of coercion or sanctions. The employers’ association is perceived by the plantation owners to be on their side and to act only in the interests of its members.

Source: IPEC

41. In India’s carpet belt, for example, one NGO went all the way from identifying child labourers at the loom, removing them from work to enrolling them in specially designed education schemes or in government schools. Almost 2,000 children could be freed from work and rehabilitated. Crucial to the success of the intervention was an integrated strategy which combined a public campaign with community involvement and the offer of adequate education programmes and a steady dialogue with employers - many of whom could be persuaded personally and in village meetings to renounce the use of child labour. In another project in Bangladesh, an NGO is providing children removed from hazardous work in tanneries and brick fields with non-formal education while the parents are introduced to cooperative poultry farming in order to compensate for the lost income. In the long run the aim is to establish independent small family farms with the help of small bank loans.

42. In places where it has not been possible or initially partially possible to remove children from hazardous occupations, special protective programmes have been established as a transitional measure to minimize the dangers these children face or to upgrade their skills. For example, health dangers may be reduced with regular medical examinations and assistance; non-formal education or vocational training can be offered in the evenings or on weekends; or employers can be encouraged to improve their workplaces or work organization in a way that hazards are generally reduced or that child workers are shifted to less dangerous tasks. In Bangladesh, for example, an NGO has been distributing safety equipment (gloves, masks, goggles, safety shields) to more than a thousand child workers in hazardous occupations. There is, of course, a danger in making work more attractive by reducing or removing its worst hazards and thereby actually encouraging child workers to stay on their job. Essential to the success of these protective measures therefore is the need to emphasize their transitional character and to package them in larger programmes leading to the eventual removal and provision of alternatives.

**Box 4**

**Bangladesh: From textile factory to classroom**

Threats of trade sanctions and Western consumer boycotts led to the dismissal of tens of thousands of child workers in Bangladesh’s garment industry in 1994. Many children were faced with destitution. Thousands sought and found other often more dangerous jobs. Some ended up in prostitution.

In order to phase out child labour in a more acceptable way to the children and their employers, an innovative and ambitious project was set up to place garment industry child workers into schools. The project marks the beginning of a very promising cooperation between the garment industry employers, the Government of Bangladesh, several NGOs and the ILO and UNICEF.

First, the number of children working in garment factories was identified. Then appropriate education programmes and schools were established. In order to avoid economic hardship, stipends have been provided to children leaving the factory for school. No child worker is taken out of employment unless an adequate school place is secured. Factories and participating schools are regularly monitored with a view to ensure that all children will be removed from work, no new children will be employed and that those in school keep up regular attendance and do not enter other types of employment.

*Source: IPEC*

43. Two projects are illustrative in this respect. In the Philippine capital Manila the Smoky Mountain Project helped scavenger children working on a garbage dump in a most distressing social milieu through a phased approach of protection and removal measures. In the first phase it provided immediate care and protection,
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subsidized meals and first aid in a drop-in centre, while in the second phase it aimed at removing child workers from scavenging and rehabilitating them with a range of measures which included vocational training, non-formal basic education, health care and income-generation activities. In three years it assisted about 1,200 child workers and removed 160 from the dangers at work and placed them into school.

In the Brazilian states of Pernambuco and Bahia, a workers' organization followed a similar approach by providing rescue and education to children in hazardous agricultural work in a fruit-producing region. The trade unions conceived a scheme which offered non-formal education to child workers and trained them in skills that would help them find better jobs in the future. As the project progressed, it succeeded in withdrawing children from work and enrolling them in schools. Close contact with the parents and the awareness and commitment of the whole community were seen as essential in ensuring long-lasting results.

3.2 Prostitution and Trafficking of Children

Context

Prostitution and trafficking of children have emerged in recent years as a major global concern. Both developing and developed countries are facing the problem, although the situation in the former is greater in intensity. Facilitated by globalization and modern communications means and technologies, the sexual exploitation of children is becoming increasingly transnational in scope.

Commercial sexual exploitation of children is defined as "sexual abuse by the adult and remuneration in cash or kind to the child or a third person or persons." Child prostitution, pornography and trafficking of children for the purpose of sale into the sex trade are the most common forms of abuse. Overall, the majority of victims are girls although in some countries boys may at least be equally affected.

It goes without saying that the commercial sexual exploitation of children is not only a particularly hazardous form of child labour but also a violent crime. It flouts the basic notion of humanity and strips away the dignity and freedom of society's most vulnerable members. Its impact can be disastrous. Child victims of commercial sexual exploitation are robbed of their childhood, deprived of a normal development and often have to face extreme forms of physical and psychological abuse which leave long-lasting scars. Many get infected with sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS or are beaten or tortured.

Because commercial sexual exploitation is often invisible or only marginally visible, it is very difficult to obtain accurate data on the problem and therefore to quantify its extent. It is estimated that each year more than one million children are tricked or drawn into the multi-billion-dollar sex trade. The nature and scope of commercial sexual exploitation of children vary from one country to another. Generally, Asia and Latin America are regions known for the

highest incidence of child prostitution and child trafficking. In recent years, however, Africa and Eastern Europe have emerged as new regions of concern.

49. Various factors facilitate and lead to the commercial sexual exploitation of children at the national and international levels. Poverty and ignorance are probably the most important ones. Poor families searching for means to increase their meagre income are often easy victims for exploiters. Powerful criminal groups dominate the sex business in most countries and many children are tricked into the trade, unaware of the cleverly concealed real intentions of recruiters. Parents in rural areas, for example, may be told that their children will be put into respectable jobs in town, such as work in a restaurant or as a shop attendant but instead the children end up in brothels. In some countries, children from specific groups of the disadvantaged and poor such as indigenous populations or lower castes face a particular risk to be lured into the sex trade. The increased commercial sexual exploitation of children in recent years has also been fuelled by the demand for ever younger prostitutes based on the misconceived notion that sex with children will prevent the danger of HIV infection. Further contributing factors may be the alienation effects of rural-urban migration and an array of traditional discriminatory practices against the girl child in many parts of the world. Indifference to, and ignorance of the problem by community leaders and government officials, also often facilitate the exploitative practices.

50. Given this broad context, commercial sexual exploitation of children requires multifaceted responses. Interdisciplinary strategies with long-term impact are needed, at the national as well as international levels. While prostitution and trafficking of children have long been ignored as quiet evils, growing awareness has been building up over the last few years and a number of important steps have been taken to tackle the problem. Many governments have now entered into strong commitments against the sexual exploitation of children and are assisted in their efforts through international cooperation and technical assistance arrangements with IPEC and other programmes.

Countermeasures

51. Practical action against the commercial sexual exploitation of children is severely complicated by vested interests of those profiting from the practice and by the illegal nature of the problem. However, activities of governments, NGOs and committed individuals have shown that successful action against it is possible by mobilizing all key actors in the society to show concern and come up with innovative measures. As in the case of action against other forms of child labour, success crucially depends on closing society’s ranks against the scourge, through close cooperation between the partners involved, complementarity of measures and a coherent coordination of overall action.

52. Activities generally aim at (i) preventing children from being lured, coerced and trafficked into commercial sexual exploitation, (ii) withdrawing the victims from the trade and providing them with rehabilitation, repatriation as well as social and economic reintegration programmes, and (iii) creating public awareness and mobilize public support against all forms of commercial sexual exploitation of children.

53. In order to be effective, practical action will have to be based on two basic pillars: (i) a national policy on prostitution and trafficking of children and (ii) appropriate legislation. The
policy could either stand alone or be a component of an overall policy framework against child labour as such. Most countries in which the sexual exploitation of children is a significant problem have formulated such a policy. In the Philippines, for example, an Indicative Framework for Action to Attack Child Labour was adopted during a national planning workshop sponsored by ILO/IPEC in 1994. The workshop brought together a wide range of government representatives, NGOs, trade unions, employers and researchers in the field. Victims of child trafficking and children trapped in prostitution were identified among the four priority target groups in this framework for action. Similar events also led to the inclusion of the subject as a priority area in national child labour policies also in Nepal, Cambodia and other countries.

54. An important precondition for policy formulation and project targeting is a thorough analysis of the causes of the problem, its extent and the groups involved. The collection and analysis of such information should be an ongoing process due to the multiple facets of the problem, illegality and the fast-changing environment surrounding this exploitative practice. National focal points could be established to process and disseminate the gathered information.

55. Protection of children from commercial sexual exploitation depends on effective laws and policies and their implementation at the national and local levels. Most countries now have some form of legislation against the sexual exploitation of children. It may be a specific law or may be part of the general criminal code. Most often, however, it is not the existence of applicable laws but the effective enforcement of these which poses a formidable problem. To strengthen law enforcement, the quality and training of police force, the judiciary and other law enforcement personnel must be improved. Legislation should focus on the criminalization of the conduct of customers and intermediaries and should not penalize the child victims.

56. Given the transnational nature of prostitution and trafficking, cross-border and international cooperation among law enforcement agencies are needed. Extradition agreements and mutual assistance arrangements could be expanded to facilitate the transfer of alleged criminals to face charges in the country where the exploitation has taken place. In this context, laws should be harmonized between different countries, including the age criteria for child protection. Children who are trafficked across borders are especially vulnerable because they are isolated by language and culture and do not have legal papers. Special legal provisions for their care and return to their home countries could therefore be considered.

Prevention

57. The best way to approach the problem of commercial sexual exploitation of children is to prevent it. Preventive action in this field largely relies on awareness-raising and other activities which inform the public about the harmful consequences children face in the sex trade. In order to be effective, preventive action will have to target a number of different groups at the same time, such as society in general, children and families at risk, the business sector and the media.

58. Prevention at the level of society: Traditional cultural values which discriminate against women and girls in some societies may facilitate a girl's entry into the sex trade. The stigmas linked to these values may aggravate the plight of child victims of exploitation, rendering rehabilitation more difficult. Experience has shown that the impact of traditions that perpetuate
this exploitative practice can be reduced or eliminated by educating society about their harmful effects on children. Here, as elsewhere, community participation is essential. In many countries, it was concerned communities that took the first steps in self-defence of their girls, e.g. through community watch programmes and local child protection committees working closely together with law enforcement agencies. Often, it was rather unconventional means which succeeded in raising the population’s awareness of child abuse. In Kenya, for example, an NGO toured a number of districts staging a theatre play performed by school children which depicted the daily life of working children, including child prostitutes and domestic servants. Thought-provoking debates after the performance spurred the involvement of teachers, parents and community leaders to engage actively in the identification of child labour and child prostitution in their communities.

59. Prevention at the level of the family: The family plays an important role in the protection and prevention of commercial sexual exploitation of children. As pointed out earlier, poverty and economic hardship have led some parents in effect to sell their children into the sex trade, often with the mistaken belief that the children are entering a respectable job. In cases where parents of child prostitutes have been informed about their child’s real occupation, many seem unaware of the potential, sometimes life-threatening risks faced by the children in such a situation. Educating parents on the fate or hardships faced by children employed in the sex market could reduce dramatically the number of parents willing to even consider such sale or other regrettable agreements with recruiters. Promotion of child rights in family education and new approaches to family development assistance such as the introduction of innovative and cost-efficient social security plans are other important steps to be considered to tackle this problem at the family level.

60. Business sector: The rise of sex tourism has increased the occurrence of transcontinental commercial sexual exploitation of children. The tourism industry has increasingly condemned that part of the industry which abuses and exploits children. However, much more needs to be done. Sex tourism should be discouraged more strongly and the service sector, including travel agencies and national tourism promotion boards, could act more responsibly on this issue. Industry-wide campaigns could be launched to reduce this grave abuse. This may include the dissemination of information through distribution of leaflets at the departure or

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**Box 5**

**Thailand: Preventing child prostitution at the community level**

Girls in 70 communities in Thailand’s Chiang Rai Province no longer risk falling prey to prostitution. In an area where there is a high incidence of trafficking of girls within the country as well as across its border the Daughters’ Education Programme (DEP) assists in preventing young village girls from being tricked into prostitution.

Girls at risk are given temporary shelter and are enrolled in education programmes. DEP has mobilized the support of teachers and local community leaders in identifying these girls. Together with the community leaders, DEP staff visits the families and discusses with parents the effects of prostitution on their children and tries to convince them that other options are available. DEP then offers alternative education, which is a combination of basic education and skills-training programmes for the children. Other issues such as social values and the development of self-esteem are discussed while the girls are in the programme. In addition, leadership training is given to selected groups so that girls can play a leading role in fighting prostitution in their communities once they return from the programme.

Source: IPEC
arrival airports and the incorporation of warnings against the commercial sexual exploitation of children in guidebooks.

61. **Media:** The media plays an important role in disseminating information and raising awareness on the problem. But the media can also aggravate the plight of child victims of commercial sexual exploitation by insensitive coverage or general lack of understanding of children’s rights. Therefore, codes of ethics and professional guidelines, the promotion of specialist children’s correspondents and training on child rights for journalists could be considered to make the media a more effective ally in the fight against child prostitution. In Thailand, for example, the National Youth Bureau in the Office of the Prime Minister sponsored a project to train radio producers and announcers on the most effective ways of sending out child labour messages. As a result, radio listeners are now informed about (i) health risks children face in certain occupations, (ii) ways of filing a labour court case and (iii) which government agency or NGO should be contacted in case violations of child labour legislation are detected.

**Rehabilitation**

62. Sexually exploited children often lose self-respect and develop post-traumatic stress symptoms such as depression, aggression and heavy violence. Rehabilitating these children is extremely difficult because they lose trust in others, particularly adults. The emotional abuse many of them have experienced can be extreme, preventing their return to a normal way of life. Many sexually exploited children are said to be suicide-prone.

63. When planning rehabilitation measures, these obstacles to rapid results have to be fully taken into account and one needs to be aware of the fact that rehabilitating former child prostitutes may entail a very long process. The right methodology coupled with an appropriate training of rehabilitation personnel is often the key to success. The priority of any measure should be to reduce the child victims’ vulnerability in the future so that they do not fall back into the grips of exploiters. It could consist of the provision of shelter and food, legal aid, medical care, counselling, and social and economic reintegration. The latter may include education and vocational training to give the children a means to earn their livelihood and develop marketable skills. In this process, access to child-friendly services should be promoted. For victims of HIV/AIDS, support facilities, subsidies, medical care and accommodation could be provided.

64. Given the emotional impact of prostitution and trafficking on children, the restoration of family and friends, home life and self-esteem is very important. Real rehabilitation comes only with reintegration into the community and society. However, the stigma attached to children who have fallen victims of such exploitative practices and many a community’s lack of understanding makes the reintegration of these children into society difficult. Greater emphasis needs to be placed on working with families and communities to accept and support children who have been sexually exploited.

65. Because of its increasing transnational nature, commercial sexual exploitation of children affects almost all countries today. To combat and find practical solutions for this transnational problem, regional and worldwide cooperation is indispensable. Bilateral and multilateral action and agreements could be considered to monitor commercial sexual exploitation of children, to detect the exploiters and trace the children affected, to facilitate prosecution, and to assist the
recovery of children. Technical cooperation should also be promoted to share knowledge and experiences on this issue.

3.3 Bonded Child Labour

66. Slavery should belong to the past. Yet there are still millions of victims of slavery and new forms of it such as debt bondage. Adults as well as children are affected and often the victims are the sons and daughters of adult workers themselves in bondage.

67. The international community is showing an increasing concern over the issue. In 1992, the ILO in collaboration with the United Nations Centre for Human Rights organized a regional seminar on child bondage in Islamabad, Pakistan. ILO/IPEC has made child bondage one of its top priorities and is supporting various action programmes in different countries. Regularly the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations raises the problem of bonded labour, including that of children, and by repeating each year the request for complementary information keeps the issue on the agenda of governments. Furthermore, it is proposed that the new international standards on the elimination of the most intolerable forms of child labour, scheduled for discussion at the International Labour Conference in 1998 and for adoption in 1999, should call for ratifying member states to suppress immediately all forms of slavery including debt bondage and serfdom.

Forms of bondage

68. The UN defines debt bondage as "the status or condition arising from a pledge by a debtor of his personal services or of those of a person under his control as security for a debt, if the value of those services are not respectively limited and defined".3 Bondage in the case of children is found in three principal forms according to whether it consists of a hereditary debt, an occasional debt or an advance on salary.

69. **Hereditary debt bondage:** A child can be in bondage due to the simple fact of being born to parents who are slaves themselves. The family, riddled with debts, is unable to refuse their employer taking the child to do what he or she wishes. This system is usually found in rural communities which are more or less isolated from public view, as in large agricultural estates, plantations, forest exploitation, stone quarries, mines and brickyards.

70. **Occasional debt bondage:** The child is a member of a non-bonded family but due to extreme poverty the parents are not able to collect enough money to face exceptional expenditure such as a marriage, a funeral or serious sickness of a family member. The child is placed in bondage in exchange for a sum of money to pay the bill. The growth mechanism of the initial debt rapidly transforms a temporary situation into a permanent one.

71. **Bondage by advance on wages:** In some cases workers are not able to survive with their families on their wages and ask their employer for an advance on their future wage. The overall

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amount of advances and interest can become so substantial that the worker sees no other solution than to place a child on a gage at his employer's abode.

72. The sum borrowed is sometimes only a small amount and it is not always money which is lent. It could also be goods such as a working utensil, an animal, medication, food, or a service such as transport to a region where the worker envisages finding work. The borrower only having at his disposal his labour force or that of his children, gives this in exchange. The crucial point in this transaction is that the lender, who will be the employer of the child, commonly takes advantage of his position of power to leave undetermined the duration of labour of the bonded child. As costs for food and medication are often added to the debt, a vicious circle is easily created where because of ill-defined rewards debt cannot be repaid, no matter how long and how much the child works.

73. The “effectiveness” of bonded labour is based on several aspects. First, there is the highly unequal and almost captive relationship between worker and employer. Debt bondage often occurs in regions with semi-feudal land ownership structures where landless peasants have no other choice but to accept any kind of work, however badly remunerated or hazardous the work may be.

74. One of the major problems confronting action against child debt bondage is its invisibility. There are primarily two reasons for this. First, bonded child workers are difficult to locate. They may work in small workshops with difficult access, remote quarries, building sites, agricultural estates far from residential areas or as domestic workers where entrance is often prohibited due to the fact that the workplace is a home and considered as private property. Second, in the case of bondage, the employer is more than an employer, he is the proprietor of the child worker, just as one could be the proprietor of an animal or a machine. Fearing repression from the employer/proprietor, bonded child workers generally remain silent. Even in those cases where bonded children were freed they have often for years been unable to talk about their experiences and have retained a deep distrust of adults in general.

75. To keep the bonded children at their service the proprietors also need the silence of the public. They therefore usually see to it that all contact between the workers and possible investigators is prohibited and that no information is allowed to filter out. In some cases the proprietors may have supplementary protection, which is at the same time part of the machinery of recruitment and control of the slaves, namely the intermediaries. There can be three categories of intermediaries: the recruiters, the transporters and the surveyors.

76. The recruiters: Throughout the villages or slums they may visit the most poverty stricken, especially in periods of financial difficulty. A loan may be proposed to the family by attracting them with the possibility of reimbursement through the labour of one of their children. The recruiters, acting, for example, on behalf of an enterprise active in mining or forest exploitation, may offer to pay the travel expenses to the place of work and to be reimbursed later. Sometimes the child is taken away without payment of any advance, merely with the promise of feeding him and letting him acquire some skills in a particular trade. In many cases, the recruiters do not operate clandestinely. They might even be well known to the families, sometimes to the extent where the parents consider them sympathetic and trustworthy.
77. The escorts: The greater the distance between the family and the place of work, the more the child will have difficulty in fleeing or being rescued by his family. This does not mean that children in bondage are automatically taken hundreds of kilometres away from home: in the plantations, the stone quarries or brickyards, children in bondage often live with their parents at the workplace. But this physical proximity of the family is far from being the usual lot of bonded children. There exist, for example, escorts who are simply charged with putting the children on a train or a truck and seeing that they arrive at the destination. In cases where inspections cannot be avoided, especially when national borders have to be crossed, escorts pose as members of the family of the children in their charge.

78. The surveyors: A child in bondage is an income asset and the proprietor usually requires the uninterrupted physical presence of the child at the workplace. The more workers in bondage on a site, children or adults, the more the surveillance of the workers will be strict and organized. The surveyors’ task is to prevent any escape attempts or communication with the outside world. In many cases, groups of private police, usually armed, watch over the workers.

79. In such a clandestine environment it is impossible to get precise figures on the extent of the phenomenon of child debt bondage. However, from existing documentation, one can confidently draw the following conclusions with certitude:

- The extent of the child debt bondage system is immense and the victims can number in the millions.
- It exists in a large number of countries.
- Its victims are almost exclusively from poor rural populations and minority social groups, notably indigenous peoples.
- It is often exercised in connection with other criminal acts such as kidnapping, the trafficking and selling of children or child prostitution.
- It is illegal everywhere but it is often sustained by an insufficient political will to fight it.

Practical action

80. A number of international conventions explicitly condemn slavery, including child bondage. Most national legislations prohibit slavery. However, certain legislations whilst prohibiting slavery or forced labour are not adapted to this specific form of slavery. In fact only two countries have equipped themselves with laws expressly aimed at bonded labour; these are India in 1976 and Pakistan in 1992.

81. As in the case of other forms of child labour, even when the appropriate legislation is in place, enforcement of the law presents the real problem. On top of the usual difficulties which governments face in enforcing child labour legislation, bonded child labour poses a particular problem because of its hidden character and the often powerful vested interests at the root of the system.
82. It is at the national level that the suppression of slavery can be achieved for it requires not only measures which are within the jurisdiction of each government, but changes in social practices at times profoundly anchored in national history and culture. Such changes cannot be brought about without the committed engagement of local populations. In order to be effective, all policies and projects must be specific to debt bondage and not simply an intensification of measures taken in respect to child labour as a whole. Practical action should address three main target groups: the society in general, the slave masters and the children in bondage.

83. **Targeting society in general:** Priority must be given to a policy of prevention. This is least costly for society, it affects the greatest number of children and its effects are long-term. Preventive action can be of a legislative, economic and educative nature.

84. In countries where bonded child labour exists, legislation should be enacted to deal with the problem. It should define in precise terms the forms of debt bondage existing in the country. Slavery must be considered a crime and not simply an offence. Sanctions strong enough to be dissuasive should be provided for. Regulations must be established facilitating the implementation of the law, in particular to ensure rapid action from the judiciary. Laws and regulations should also be transmitted swiftly with the appropriate instructions to the local institutions and authorities charged with enforcement. Legal aid could be placed at the disposal of the child victim's parents to enable them to claim their rights, and arrangements could be considered in cases where it is not possible to find the parents within a reasonable time-limit.

85. The poverty, which is one of the main causes of child bondage, is either of a structural or a circumstantial nature and should therefore be attacked by different policies. At the structural level several types of action are necessary. In a rural environment the land properties may have to be more strictly supervised and a redistribution through an agrarian reform may, in certain regions, be required.

86. In most cases the bondage of a child is the consequence of an urgent temporary financial need. Providing credit opportunities other than the employer and region’s dominant landlord could break the vicious circle and provide an opening for the gradual lessening of dependence.
Close to 10,000 institutions providing small loans have been listed in the world and many of them are modelled after the Grameen Bank approach. NGOs with the capacity to adapt appropriate micro-bank models to the local situation and introduce them to communities at risk might be one of the most promising ways of countering bonded labour.

87. **Targeting the slave masters**: One cannot treat the slave masters simply as employers of children who must be persuaded to cooperate with programmes of action. They are guilty not of an offence but of a crime. A policy of deterrence must be set up and the population informed of this policy. It could include the following elements:

- provision of sanctions strong enough to serve as both punishment and dissuasion;
- acceleration of judicial process in regard to bonded child labour;
- punishment of all persons and institutions, who actively participate in placing a child in bondage, not only the direct employer but equally the recruiters, escorts and surveyors;
- publication at the national level, and in affected regions or communities, of the names of persons condemned with the sentences imposed.

88. **Targeting children in bondage**: The experience of direct action programmes concerning children in bondage, although limited, clearly presents two major lessons: firstly, without action directed towards the society in general and the slave masters in particular, the activities targeting bonded children will have limited results and above all will not be able to suppress the practice of bondage; secondly, whatever the type of intervention may be, it must be organized around the fact that the child is in slavery and not simply at work under harsh conditions. Direct action with bonded children always involves three characteristic stages: identification, release and rehabilitation.

89. Identification means not only to physically discover a child and his place of bondage (although, in itself, this represents a major difficulty) but to have the child be recognised as being in a state of debt bondage. Slave masters often deny that a state of debt bondage exists. To shortcut this stage renders unfruitful and often impossible the following two stages. Several paths of action may be envisaged:

(i) periodically to launch appeals to the population to denounce known cases of bondage; when children are discovered at work in bondage-prone areas, to have labour inspectors, police and social workers to systematically verify whether these children are in bondage;

(ii) to inform and sensitize the parents so that they will testify to the bondage of their children; and

(iii) to set up procedures permitting children to express themselves on their situation.

90. The release of a child is not an easy operation. Firstly the child must be physically taken out of his slave environment; this requires the parents, the child or the workmates, to overcome
physical barriers and thwart the surveillance of the guards in order to escape, which is often impossible. An outside intervention is therefore usually necessary but cannot be organized by an individual who has no right of entry to private property. Specific solutions could include the creation of special police units and the granting of a legally recognized intervention power to certain special authorities.

91. Secondly, one must ensure that a child who has been freed from bondage is not recaptured by the employer. A very long period of time may elapse before the child is able to be returned to his parents. Often the child is distraught and traumatised by violence. The slave masters may take advantage of this to regain control of the child. Temporary reception centres must be set up. Speed of operation being a key factor, emergency procedures must be elaborated enabling the identification and the release of the child to be effected simultaneously.

92. Thirdly, there is no real liberation until the debt which binds the child to the employer has been officially nullified. Such a decision in law assumes the participation of the two parties. As the parents of the child are often paralyzed by fear of the employer and by lack of awareness of their rights, free legal aid should be put at their disposal.

Rehabilitation

93. Only by rehabilitation is the process of liberation completed. Rehabilitation means supporting the return of the child to a normal place in his community. It must respond to two fundamental needs of the liberated child. Firstly, he must be guaranteed the material needs for survival. It goes without saying that if the economic situation of the family remains unchanged and if the causes which had provoked the bondage persist, the provision of a temporary allowance, for example, would have little effect. Secondly, specialized treatment is needed to repair the psychological damage suffered by the child and to assist his social reintegration.

94. Amongst the existing rehabilitation programmes for children formerly in bondage, the one of Mukti Ashram, linked the South Asian Coalition against Child Servitude, in a suburb of the Indian capital New Delhi, merits particular attention. It was created in 1990 and has since rehabilitated close to 1,600 children. It receives boys for periods of up to three to six months. Its pedagogy is based on a flexible accompaniment of the evolution of the child while permanently maintaining his integration in a group of other children liberated from bondage and in contact with specially trained adults who have themselves been in bondage in the past. One of the successes of this approach is the increased number of children and youths who after their rehabilitation in their communities of origin have become engaged in the fight against bondage.

4. CONCLUSIONS

95. This decade has witnessed a phenomenal growth in activities against child labour. In the beginning, much of it was experimental. Numerous small-scale projects were undertaken under a variety of different, often unconnected programmes. It is now important to move from scattered pilot approaches to strategic action geared to the mainstreaming of child labour issues in a coherent national policy and plan of action. An essential start towards this end should be the
development of national time-bound programmes of action which should aim at eliminating the most intolerable forms of child labour within a clearly set time-frame.

96. A broad social alliance, based on the concept of creating synergies and complementarities, is essential to the success of interventions. Civil society has to be mobilized and governments should closely work together with NGOs, workers and employers' organizations, research institutions, teachers and educators, the media and other relevant parties. The capacities and commitments of the various actors will inevitably vary from country to country. It is therefore important to build up institutional capacity within the different actors and an institutional mechanism to coordinate and guide the various activities.

97. To ensure that child labour-targeting activities achieve the intended objectives, action will have to be based on empirical research. Data on the child labour situation in different countries are needed, broken down by sector, region, gender and ethnicity. Above all, a regular monitoring of trends is essential.

98. The removal of children from work and subsequent rehabilitation and provision of alternatives are important tasks and many projects focus on this aspect, often encouraged by international attention. Yet, important as these interventions are, they are often very difficult and costly measures. Prevention is just as important as - and in many cases even more important than - rehabilitation. An approach that puts emphasis on prevention would be likely to achieve the objective of total elimination of child labour much faster than one that merely rescues and rehabilitates children already at work.

99. Education should be the centerpiece of any preventive strategy. The most effective way of reducing and eventually eliminating child labour will be through the provision of adequate access to primary and secondary education. The education provided would need to be universal, of good quality (to be attractive to children and parents) and affordable. Nevertheless, interactions between education systems and child labour have often been neglected. The problem of child labour should be taken into account to a greater extent in educational planning, and vice versa.

100. The total elimination of child labour will take time. Priorities should therefore be set with a view to concentrate on the worst forms of child labour first. There can, of course, be no universal definition but in general this should include the use or engagement of children in slave-like and bonded conditions; in prostitution, pornography and the drugs trade; and in any type of work which is hazardous or seriously endangers the physical or psychological development of a child.

101. While child labour is essentially a national problem, assistance of the international community in the form of technical and other cooperation is crucial to the success of national efforts. First, many of the national actors have neither the technical capacity nor the financial resources to effectively address a problem of such a magnitude. Second, countries should benefit from each others' experiences. International assistance can be an important facilitator of such exchanges of information. Third, with the decreasing relevance of national borders, child labour, especially in such areas as domestic work and prostitution, is rapidly becoming a transnational phenomenon which can be solved only by effective international cooperation.
### Annex I - Table 1: Some examples of child labour in hazardous occupations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation/Industry</th>
<th>Main tasks</th>
<th>Hazards</th>
<th>Possible Consequences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mining</td>
<td>Underground digging</td>
<td>Exposure to harmful dusts, gas, fumes and extreme humidity and temperature levels; awkward working positions (bending, kneeling, lying)</td>
<td>Respiratory diseases that can develop into silicosis, pulmonary fibrosis, asbestosis, emphysema; musculo-skeletal disorders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brick-making</td>
<td>Processing of clay (extraction, crushing, grinding, screening and mixing)</td>
<td>Exposure to silicate, lead and carbon monoxide; excessive carrying of weights; burns from ovens; accident-provoking equipment</td>
<td>Musculo-skeletal deformation; injury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial agriculture</td>
<td>Working with machinery and agrochemicals</td>
<td>Unsafe machinery; hazardous substances (insecticides, herbicides); heavy lifting</td>
<td>Chemical poisoning (chronic and acute); injury attributed to non-occupational causes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpet weaving</td>
<td>Weaving hand-knotted carpets on a loom</td>
<td>Inhalation of wool dust contaminated with fungal spores; poor (squatting) work posture; poor lighting; poor ventilation; hazardous chemicals</td>
<td>Respiratory diseases; musculo-skeletal diseases; eye strain and defective vision at premature age; chemical poisoning; aggravation of non-occupational diseases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction work</td>
<td>Digging earth; carrying loads; breaking stones or rocks; Shovelling sand and cement; metal work</td>
<td>Being struck by falling objects; stepping on sharp objects; falling from heights; exposure to dust; heat and noise; heavy lifting</td>
<td>Health impairments from noise; vibration and exposure to harmful substances; incapacitation through accidents and injury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tannery</td>
<td>Tanning and preserving hides and skins</td>
<td>Exposure to corrosive chemicals and bacterial contamination of the hides</td>
<td>Anthracosis, dermatitis and fungal infection</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deep-sea fishing</td>
<td>Diving to depths of up to 60m to attach nets to coral reefs</td>
<td>Exposure to high atmospheric pressure; attacks by carnivorous and poisonous fish; congested and unsanitary conditions</td>
<td>Decompression illness (rupture of ear drums); death or injury; gastro-intestinal and other communicable diseases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glass factory</td>
<td>Drawing molten glass, carrying molten loams</td>
<td>Radiant heat and thermal stress; noxious fumes; silica dust; stepping on or handling hot broken glass</td>
<td>Accidental trauma; eye cataract; heat stress; respiratory diseases; serious burns and cuts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matches and fireworks</td>
<td>Mixing hot (steaming) chemicals, making matchsticks and stuffing cracker powder into fireworks</td>
<td>Exposure to hazardous chemicals; fire and explosions</td>
<td>Synergistic effects of chemical intoxications; burns and death; respiratory diseases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scavenging</td>
<td>Demaning, unsanitary work; reclaiming usable material from garbage heaps including dangerous waste from hospitals and chemicals plants, often with bare hands</td>
<td>Cuts from glass/metal, exposure to hazardous substances, inhaling stench from putrefied matter; infestation by flies; temptation to eat leftover food</td>
<td>Cuts resulting in depth from tetanus; chemical poisoning and risk of contracting or carrying infectious diseases; food poisoning; burns (from build-up of methane gas and explosion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slate making</td>
<td>Carrying heavy loads; making pencils and slates</td>
<td>Effects of carrying loads; exposure to siliceous dust</td>
<td>Musculo-skeletal diseases; lung diseases and premature incapacitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street trades</td>
<td>Hawking goods; shoe polishing; prostitution</td>
<td>Exposure to drugs, violence, criminal activities; danger to health and moral standards</td>
<td>Drug addiction; sexually transmitted diseases; branded as social outcasts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>