

Child Labour in Asia and the Pacific

SOME KEY DATA ON CHILD LABOUR IN THE REGION

- The ILO has recently estimated that some 217.7 million children ages 5 to 17 are engaged in child labour around the world. Of these, some 126.3 million are caught in the worst forms of child labour.
- Roughly 122.3 million children ages 5 to 14 are economically active in Asia and the Pacific, 49.3 million in Sub-Saharan Africa, 5.7 million in Latin America and the Caribbean, and 13.4 million in other regions.
- Among working children ages 5 to 14 in the world, 69% are employed in the agricultural sector, 9% are employed in the industrial sector and the remaining 22% are employed in the services sector.

With 122.3 million economically active children ages 5 to 14, the Asia and the Pacific region has the highest number of working children worldwide. Many worst forms of child labour are a problem in the region, including child trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, bonded child labour, child domestic work, hazardous child labour, and the recruitment and use of children for armed conflict or drug trafficking. A high tolerance for child labour in many countries and political volatility and conflict in certain others (e.g. Afghanistan, Nepal, Indonesia and Sri Lanka) exacerbate the problem and can hinder the implementation of action against it. In addition, a large number of children in areas affected by the tsunami in Thailand, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and India are vulnerable to entering child labour.

- Results from the Bangladesh National Child Labour Survey (IPEC-SIMPOC, 2002-03) indicate that 3.4 million or 18.5% of males, ages 5-14, work and 1.3 million or 7.8% of females, of the same age group, work resulting in 4.7 million or 13.4% of all children, ages 5-14, working.
- The Cambodia Child Labour Survey (IPEC-SIMPOC, 2001) estimated that there were about 1,516,363 children aged 5-14 who can be considered “working children”, about 44.8% of children in this age group. More boys than girls in the age groups 5-9 years old, 10-14 years old and 15-17 years old were working children.
- The total economically active child population between 5 and 17 years by current activity status was estimated at 68580 during 2002-03 in Mongolia. The overall child work rate is 10.1 percent. For the child population of aged 5-14 years, the child work ratio is 7.2 percent, but is considerably higher for the age group 15-17 years at 18.5 percent.

- Among the 40 million children aged 5-14 years in Pakistan, 3.3 million, i.e. 8.3 per cent, were economically active in 1996.
- Results from the Philippines Child Labour Survey (IPEC-SIMPOC, 2001) indicate that 1.4 million or 13.4% of males, ages 5-14, work and 0.8 million or 8.4% of females, of the same age group, work resulting in 2.2 million or 11.0% of all children, ages 5-14, working.
- In Sri Lanka, Child Activity Survey (1999) estimates that out of 4,344,770 children in the age group 5 - 17 years in Sri Lanka, 926,038 (21 percent) are engaged in some form of economic activity. The proportion of children who are engaged either in housekeeping activities or in education in addition to an economic activity is about 25 percent. The proportion of children engaged only in economic activities is 7.5%. The corresponding proportion for males is 9.4% and for females it is 4.2%. Out of all working children residing in the urban sector, 14.0% are engaged only in economic activities whereas the corresponding proportion in the rural sector is 7.1%.

STRATEGIES

IPEC strategies in Asia, as elsewhere, are well in line with ILO priorities in the Region. As an integrated part of the ILO's programme in the countries, IPEC works towards mainstreaming child labour into government policies, strategies, plans and budgets. Child labour issues have been included in the national PRSPs in Cambodia, Indonesia, Nepal and Pakistan, and mainstreaming is being pursued in other countries, such as the Philippines and Viet Nam. Efforts are being made to integrate child labour and trafficking concerns into Education for All initiatives in Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam. ILO priorities for the next biennium within the framework of fair globalization are: skills development, labour, migration, youth employment, collaboration with sub-regional and cross-regional groupings (such as APEC and ASEAN), working out of poverty, advancing gender equality and addressing the needs of the most vulnerable - children, migrants and young women. These are all areas that offer potential for integrating child labour concerns within the broader Decent Work Agenda. Migrants, children and young women are among the most vulnerable.

Strategies such as capacity building of the social partners and IPEC implementing agencies, advocacy for adherence and implementation of ILO Conventions, awareness raising of the public and target groups and focused direct assistance are slowly but surely making inroads into the child labour problem.

Awareness and support for the eradication of the WFCL in a comprehensive manner is on the rise. Several national time-bound support projects are now being developed and implemented and an increasing number of regional sectoral programmes addressing child trafficking and child domestic work are in place. Progress is also being made with respect to children working in hazardous conditions. A regional tripartite workshop on the implementation of hazardous provisions of Conventions No. 138 and No. 182 was held in June 2005.

IPEC PROJECTS - 2004-05

TBP Support Projects - 6 + 1: Cambodia, Nepal, the Philippines, Indonesia (includes response to tsunami in Aceh province), Pakistan, Mongolia (starts 2005), Bangladesh (Prep-Phase)

Country Programmes - 3: Lao PDR, Mongolia, and Viet Nam - (all completed 2004-05)

SIMPOC National Surveys - 2: Completed: Bangladesh, Mongolia

Country, sectoral or area-based projects focusing on children in specific worst forms: 18

- Bangladesh (3): Garments (completed 2004), Hazardous sectors; Informal sector
- Cambodia (1): Hazardous sectors (completed 2004)
- Indonesia (2): Footwear, fishing (closed 2004)
- Philippines (1): Child soldiers;
- Pakistan (5): Carpet weaving, Soccer ball, Surgical instruments, Education and training, Media project
- India (3): Hazardous sectors covering four states, Andhra Pradesh State-based project, Sericulture industry in Karnataka State
- Nepal (1): Bonded labour
- Sri Lanka (2): Child soldiers; Prevention of child labour in the tsunami affected areas

Regional sectoral projects: 6

- APEC awareness raising campaign: eliminating the WFCL and providing educational opportunities (Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam in Asia)
- Assessing the situation of children in the production, sales, and trafficking of drugs (Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand). (Completed 2004)
- Child domestic workers (Cambodia, Indonesia, Pakistan and Sri Lanka)
- Child trafficking for labour and sexual exploitation, TICSAs Phase II (Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Indonesia and Thailand)
- Trafficking in children and women in China
- Trafficking in children and women in the Mekong countries (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, Viet Nam, and Yunnan province in China), Phase II