



FACTS ON

Child Labour



International
Labour
Organization

Of all the world's children, one in seven is involved in child labour of some kind. For the past decade, this fact has moved the international community - in collaboration with the ILO - to mount one of the largest social reform movements ever seen. Now, the work of countless individuals and organizations is bearing results. According to the second Global Report on Child Labour prepared by the ILO, the end of child labour is now within our grasp.

Prepared under the ILO's Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), the new report, entitled "*The end of child labour - Within reach*"*, says we are beginning to see an encouraging reduction in child labour - especially its worst forms - in many parts of the world. What's more, the report says that if the current trends continue, child labour in its worst forms may be eliminated within the next decade.

The report indicates that the number of child labourers globally has fallen by 11 per cent over the last four years - or 28 million fewer than 2002. The sharpest decrease is in the area of hazardous work by children - where there has been a 26 per cent reduction overall, and 33 per cent fewer children between the ages of 5 and 14 endangering their lives in hazardous work.

This progress has not been automatic. It has taken political mobilization of workers, employers and governments combined with the practical action of parliaments, non-governmental organizations, local authorities, consumers and the public at large. This is truly a global movement against child labour.

* The end of child labour - Within reach, Global Report under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, report to the International Labour Conference, 95th Session 2006

** For more country data, please visit: www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipecc/simpoc/index.htm or for background documents visit www.ilo.org/declaration

Key Statistics

- The global number of child labourers in the age group 5-17 decreased from 246 million in 2000 to 218 million in 2004, a decrease of 11 per cent. The percentage of child labourers in this age group went down from 16 per cent (1 in 6) in 2000 to 14 per cent (1 in 7) in 2004.
- The number of children aged 5-17 engaged in hazardous work has declined by 26 per cent, from 171 million in 2000 to 126 million in 2004. With 33 per cent, the decline in the age group 5-14 has even been sharper.
- Around 5 million children have benefited directly or indirectly from IPEC's work.
- Latin America and the Caribbean stand out in terms of a rapid decline of child labour. The number of children at work in the region has fallen by two-thirds over the last four years, with just 5 per cent of children ages 5-14 now engaged in work.
- With 26 per cent, or close to 50 million child workers, the proportion of children engaged in economic activities in sub-Saharan Africa is currently the highest of any region in the world.
- In the Asian-Pacific region, 122 million children ages 5-14 are engaged in work, 5 million fewer than four years ago. Less than 20 per cent of Asian children in that age group are now at work.
- In industrialized countries, about 2.5 million children under the age of 15 were at work in 2000.
- Almost 7 out of 10 working children are in the agricultural sector; whereas 22 per cent work in services and 9 per cent in industry, including mining, construction and manufacturing.
- The estimated cost of the elimination of child labour is US\$760 billion over a 20-year period. The estimated benefit in terms of better education and health is over US\$4 trillion. The economic benefits would therefore outweigh the costs by nearly 6 to 1, not to mention the unquantifiable social benefits to be gained.

THE FIGHT AGAINST CHILD LABOUR: A TIMELINE

Eliminating child labour is an essential element in the ILO's goal of "Decent Work for All". The ILO tackles child labour not as an isolated issue but as an integral part of national efforts for economic and social development.

- 1919** The first International Labour Conference adopts the first international Convention against child labour, the Minimum Age (Industry) Convention (No. 5).
- 1930** Adoption of the first Forced Labour Convention (No. 29).
- 1973** Adoption of the Minimum Age Convention (No. 138).
- 1992** The ILO establishes the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC).
- 1996** Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action: The elaboration of the principle that a crime against a child in one place is a crime anywhere. The ILO codifies this into an international standard by developing a convention three years later which spells out the role of enforcement and penalties.
- 1998** Adoption of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work: Freedom of association, abolition of forced labour, end of discrimination in the workplace and elimination of child labour. All ILO member States pledge to uphold and promote these principles.
- 1999** Adoption of the ILO's Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No. 182). Focused world attention on the need to take immediate action to eradicate those forms of child labour that are hazardous and damaging to children's physical, mental or moral well-being. Convention 182 has been ratified by 9 out of 10 ILO member States while Convention 138 has been ratified by 4 out of 5 ILO Member States.
- 2001** The first Time Bound Programmes on the implementation of Convention 182 and 138 are launched by three countries. Over 20 countries are currently implementing time bound programmes with ILO support.
- 2002** The ILO publishes its first Global Report on Child Labour and establishes 12 June as World Day Against Child Labour. The Organization supports more than 80 countries in formulating their own programmes to combat child labour.
- 2004** First ILO global study on the costs and benefits of eliminating child labour says that economic benefits would outweigh costs by nearly 6 to 1.
- 2006** The ILO's second Global Report on Child Labour on child labour says that child labour is declining worldwide.

For more information on the ILO's International Programme to Eliminate Child Labour (IPEC), please visit www.ilo.org/ipecc or for information on child labour visit www.ilo.org/declaration

GLOBAL GOALS

The ILO urges member States to commit themselves to eradicating the worst forms of child labour by 2016. To do this, all countries are requested to design and put in place appropriate time-bound measures by 2008.

The action plan is based on three pillars:

- supporting and mainstreaming national responses to child labour;
- deepening and strengthening the worldwide movement against child labour; and
- further integrating child labour concerns in overall ILO strategies to promote decent work for all.

If the trend observed over the last four years continues, the worst forms of child labour could be eliminated by 2016. Meeting the UN Millennium Development Goals by 2015 would further help to eradicate this scourge.

GLOBAL ACTION

The ILO's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) was created in 1992. By December 2005, it was operational in 86 countries, with an annual expenditure on technical cooperation projects that reached over US\$70 million.

- IPEC is the largest programme of its kind globally and the biggest single operational programme of the ILO.
- IPEC has made a difference in countries like Brazil, Tanzania, Turkey and Thailand - just to name a few.

The number and range of IPEC's partners has also expanded over the years, and now includes other international and government agencies, employers' and workers' organizations, private businesses, community-based organizations, NGOs, the media, parliamentarians, the judiciary, universities, religious groups and, of course, children and their families.

National and community action is crucial for the success of the IPEC programme. Through local authorities and municipalities, IPEC can reach children in the informal economy and small and medium-sized businesses that provide the bulk of employment, as well as promote integrated approaches to get children out of work and into school.

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