



FOURTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work: Technical cooperation priorities and action plans regarding abolition of child labour**Introduction**

1. One of the leading ways by which the Office has given effect to the 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work is the publication of an annual Global Report examining each of the four areas of fundamental principles and rights specified in the Declaration in turn. According to the Declaration follow-up mechanism, the Global Report is to provide a dynamic picture of the situation, assess ILO action in the area, and include a draft action plan to assist the Governing Body to determine “priorities and plans of action for technical cooperation to be implemented for the following four-year period”.¹ At its current session, the Governing Body is called upon to consider technical cooperation priorities and an action plan regarding the effective elimination of child labour, following the International Labour Conference discussion of the second cycle of Global Reports under the follow-up to the Declaration.
2. In 2002, the ILO published its first Global Report on child labour under the Declaration follow-up mechanism.² The Report contained a global estimate of the number of children involved in work worldwide, and was accompanied by a paper outlining the methodology used in developing this estimate.³ The second Global Report⁴ presented to the

¹ Declaration, Annex III(B)(2).

² ILO: *A future without child labour*, Global Report under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, Report I(B), International Labour Conference, 90th Session, Geneva, 2002.

³ ILO: *Every child counts – New global estimates on child labour*, Geneva, 2002.

⁴ ILO: *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 I(B), International Labour Conference, 94th Session, Geneva, 2006.

International Labour Conference in 2006 contained a new global estimate, showing a reduction of some 11 per cent in child labour worldwide from 2000 to 2004. The decline was more rapid for younger children and for those involved in hazardous work.⁵

The first action plan

3. In order to assist the Governing Body in setting priorities for future technical cooperation, the first Global Report on child labour contained a draft action plan.⁶ The action plan adopted by the Governing Body in November 2002⁷ envisaged a change in the role of IPEC from that of *managing* to that of *facilitating and providing technical and policy support* to country efforts to reach the objectives of Conventions Nos. 138 and 182. The main thrust of the action plan to abolish child labour can be summarized as follows:

- national and international focus on the worst forms of child labour;
- promotion of national initiatives and ownership;
- information: availability, quality and utilization;
- partnerships.

Part II of the 2006 Global Report reviewed the progress that has been made in ILO action against child labour as part of the framework set out in the action plan.

The second action plan

4. The action plan proposed in the 2006 Global Report on child labour builds on the same framework in a more focused manner. It starts from the premise that effective elimination of child labour can only be achieved at the country level and that member States must be at the forefront of such efforts. In particular, the plan calls for the adoption of time-bound targets to meet the goal of eliminating the worst forms of child labour – and eventually all its forms – within the next ten years and identifies various means by which the ILO can support this process. A summary of the proposed action plan is appended to this document.

5. The Global Report, including the draft action plan, was discussed extensively during the 95th Session of the International Labour Conference in June 2006.⁸ Overall there was

⁵ ILO: *Global child labour trends 2000 to 2004*.

⁶ The draft action plan set out a three-pillar approach to strengthening the ILO's support to national stakeholders in their efforts to abolish child labour, particularly its worst forms:

- reinforcing the work of IPEC (in the areas of advocacy; research and policy; and technical cooperation);
- mainstreaming the effective abolition of child labour in the Decent Work Agenda; and
- forging closer partnerships.

⁷ GB.285/TC/5.

⁸ A summary of the discussion is included in *Provisional Record* No. 25, "Reply by the Director-General to the discussion of his Report", International Labour Conference, 95th Session, Geneva 2006.

broad consensus on the elements of the action plan. This document highlights some salient points of the action plan and asks the Governing Body for its endorsement.

The global target and proposed measures for member States

6. In paragraph 368 of the Global Report the action plan proposes that:

... the International Labour Organization and its member States continue to pursue the goal of the effective abolition of child labour by committing themselves to **the elimination of all worst forms of child labour by 2016**. To this effect, all member States should, in accordance with Convention No. 182, design and put in place **appropriate time-bound measures by the end of 2008**.

The child labour trends highlighted in Part I of the 2006 Global Report suggest that the target of eliminating the worst forms of child labour by 2016 is an attainable one if the effort is sustained. It would parallel and contribute to both the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on education and poverty, and to the effective abolition of *all* forms of child labour, which is a fundamental goal of the ILO.

7. While the 2006 Global Report provides guidance and information on concrete action steps that can make a difference, the draft action plan itself does not specify particular measures that member States might include in their Time-Bound Programmes (TBPs). However, the Report argues strongly that **free and compulsory education of good quality up to the minimum age for entering into employment or work** is the most important tool for child labour elimination. A Global Task Force on Child Labour and Education For All has been recently established with UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Bank and the Global March against Child Labour as key partners, with the ILO as the lead agency. Consequently, the ILO is well placed to promote this link. The basis for this cooperation is the shared view that **child labour is an obstacle to achieving Education For All (EFA)**, and that education programmes and policies need to take child labour concerns into account.

8. Analysing the experience of IPEC over recent biennia, the following additional measures associated with the time-bound programme approach seem particularly appropriate for member States to take into consideration in designing their time-bound measures:

- adapting the legal framework to international standards, including the definition of a list of occupations that are hazardous for children;
- setting time-bound targets;
- formulating programmes and policies specific to the worst forms of child labour, considering the special situation of the girl child;
- integrating child labour concerns in relevant development, social and anti-poverty plans and programmes;
- collecting and analysing data on the child labour situation;
- establishing a credible and comprehensive child labour monitoring and reporting system.

Special focus on combating child labour in sub-Saharan Africa

9. The draft action plan recommends a special focus on child labour in sub-Saharan Africa. This is against the backdrop of the global estimates, which show less progress towards the elimination of child labour in this region than elsewhere.⁹ The 2006 Global Report made the case for higher priority to Africa and proposed several areas of IPEC's work in Africa that should be significantly strengthened, in particular the need for:
- enhancing the knowledge base on child labour in the region, particularly through greater cooperation with African research institutes and networks, notably the research units of social partners;
 - providing technical assistance to member States in the development of national child labour policy where it does not exist;
 - promoting the mainstreaming of child labour concerns in broader policy frameworks;
 - emphasizing the links between child labour and universal education as an important goal in itself and a crucial pillar of a strategy to eliminate child labour; and
 - strengthening capacity for action, notably by the social partners, including the various levels of the government, and other major stakeholders.

These orientations should be reflected in the decent work country programmes (DWCPs) in Africa. To this end, IPEC must develop modalities for providing technical assistance that enable it to support, as needed, national efforts in a much larger number of African countries as they pursue the goal of eliminating the worst forms of child labour in the coming decade. Clearly, however, IPEC action can only be effective in an environment in which member States are committed to putting in place appropriate policies, backed up with adequate resources from internal sources as well as from the international community. Particular attention also needs to be paid to incorporating measures against child labour in response to programmes addressing various crises such as the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

The role of workers' and employers' organizations and the supporting role of the ILO

10. In paragraphs 377-379, the draft action plan in the Global Report addresses the role of workers' and employers' organizations in the struggle against child labour and in the worldwide movement against child labour. In order to make this part of the action plan more operational, the Office has prepared a paper on this issue on which consultations with the social partners are to take place. One of the proposed outcomes of these discussions would be a plan for workers' and employers' organizations to set their own targets for their work against child labour at the national and regional levels.

Follow-up to the programme evaluation of IPEC

11. The programme evaluation of IPEC in 2004 recommended that:

⁹ Table 1.2 in the 2006 Global Report.

The Governing Body reconfirm its commitment to the elimination of child labour as one of the Organization's highest priorities, and endorse ILO/IPEC strategies and programme approaches to support a worldwide movement against child labour and strengthen national capacities.¹⁰

12. The Governing Body may wish to:

- (i) endorse the action plan as summarized in the appendix to this report;**
- (ii) endorse the global target set out in paragraph 368 of the Global Report, and quoted above in paragraph 6;**
- (iii) request the Director-General, when writing to the member States asking them to commit themselves to the targets set out in paragraph 368 of the Global Report, to specifically take into account the measures outlined in paragraphs 7 and 8 above;**
- (iv) specifically endorse the proposed focus on sub-Saharan Africa and call upon member States and international development partners to support endeavours of African countries in meeting their commitments; and**
- (v) endorse the recommendation in paragraph 11 above.**

Geneva, 2 October 2006.

Point for decision: Paragraph 12.

¹⁰ ILO: *Independent evaluation of the InFocus Programme on Child Labour (IPEC)*, Geneva, November 2004.

Appendix

Proposed action plan: A summary

The action plan proposes that the International Labour Organization and its member States continue to pursue the goal of the effective abolition of child labour by committing themselves to *the elimination of all the worst forms of child labour by 2016*. To this effect, all member States would, in accordance with Convention No. 182, design and put in place appropriate time-bound measures by the end of 2008.

The proposed action plan is aimed at defining the role of the Office in assisting member States and the world community in pursuing the above objective, which, as the Report has shown, is within reach.

In pursuit of the above, the ILO will, over the next four years, strengthen its efforts to develop coherent and comprehensive approaches to abolishing child labour worldwide. The proposed action plan rests on three pillars:

1. Supporting national responses to child labour, in particular through more effective mainstreaming of child labour concerns in national development and policy frameworks.
2. Deepening and strengthening the worldwide movement as a catalyst.
3. Promoting further integration of child labour concerns within overall ILO priorities.

In pursuing this action plan, two important points need to be borne in mind. The first is that, for the ILO to be *the* centre of excellence on knowledge on child labour, all three pillars will have to be backed up by solid research, particularly in regard to the relationship between child labour and other relevant aspects, such as education, population growth, national employment and poverty reduction. The ILO will help build/strengthen research capacity at national level and promote networking among research institutions.

The second point concerns the need for a special emphasis on Africa, where the least progress has been made. To this end, IPEC proposes to devote a larger proportion of its efforts to this continent.

Supporting national responses to child labour

Comprehensive action against child labour requires a multiplicity of interventions at policy and programme levels and different degrees of involvement and support from a range of institutions. A focus on policy approaches, and dedication to upgrading successful pilot programmes to the national level, are the most effective.

However, this has to be allied to a strategic vision. The Report has highlighted important gaps that need to be addressed – Africa is one, but there are others, particularly responses to child labour in agriculture, bonded and forced labour, child domestic labour and the special plight of girls.

Through its role as a repository of knowledge, and building on its years of experience with interventions across a range of countries and types of child labour, the ILO is in a position to provide crucial technical support to member States and national partners to develop strategic approaches to the problem. Major emphasis will be put on strengthening capacities and instruments at the national level, as appropriate. Direct action in the form of targeted interventions would receive less emphasis and be limited to very specific situations, such as those involving certain worst forms of child labour for which the knowledge base is not yet adequately developed. Specific elements of ILO action in support of national action will include:

- further development of the time-bound programme approach;
- mainstreaming child labour concerns in national development and policy frameworks, including human rights frameworks;
- development of knowledge, tools and capacity; and
- resource mobilization.

Deepening and strengthening the worldwide movement

The unprecedented surge in the awareness of child labour in the 1990s has been accompanied by growing international attention to poverty and development that has found concrete expression in the MDGs, concern with the plight of Africa, and links with security issues. Maintaining international attention on child labour, and translating it into concrete global support for action at the country level, call for new approaches to the worldwide movement that would emphasize, inter alia, accumulation of evidence to demonstrate that child labour is an impediment to development that can be eliminated, and that its elimination is a precondition for achieving the goals espoused by the international community, in particular the MDGs.

Employers' and workers' organizations are central to an effective global campaign against child labour. Their vertically integrated structures give them a unique capacity to connect the global with the local. Involving the social partners more intensely and strategically against child labour is a clear priority for the ILO.

The ILO's advocacy efforts need greater strategic targeting so that child labour is registered within both the dominant development frameworks, such as the MDGs and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), and within appropriate human rights mechanisms. Although the growing number of examples of the successful integration of the child labour issue within PRSPs is encouraging, this trend needs continuous reinforcing through policy support from the international financial institutions at the global level.

Among other measures that the ILO will pursue are:

- promoting the integration of child labour concerns in the MDGs, PRSPs and EFA, among other development-related policy frameworks;
- strengthening the human rights impact of other bilateral and external assistance frameworks, including strengthening reporting mechanisms and instruments to assess their impact on human rights, more particularly on child labour;
- preparing a technical report and draft resolution for the 18th International Conference of Labour Statisticians in 2008 suggesting an operational statistical definition of child labour that may be universally applied for measurement and programme intervention purposes;
- strengthening advocacy on neglected worst forms of child labour such as child domestic labour;
- lobbying to place child labour on regional agendas, such as that of the European Union, in a more coherent fashion; and
- promoting dialogue and collaboration at the international level within the United Nations family and the regional institutions as well as with international NGOs.

Further integration of child labour within overall ILO priorities

The DWCPs will be the ILO's main delivery vehicle at the country level in the coming years. They therefore provide the principal entry point for the more effective mainstreaming of child labour concerns within the overall priorities of the ILO. To this end, the Office will have to concentrate its efforts on two fronts. In the first instance, IPEC needs to analyse more intensively the conceptual links between child labour, on the one hand, and such other concerns as education, poverty and youth employment, on the other, as part of the life cycle approach of the Decent Work Agenda. Secondly, from an operational perspective, IPEC will need to review its technical cooperation and donor funding modalities to facilitate integration and synergy with the DWCPs. Decentralizing the control and management of child labour projects allows better mainstreaming of child labour elimination into the overall country programme framework. Integrating single programmes with other technical programmes and policy advice at national level will become even more important with decent work country programming.

A comprehensive programme of work should be developed on the linkages between child labour and youth employment as a follow-up to the resolution concerning youth employment adopted by the 93rd Session of the International Labour Conference in 2005.

The work of the ILO supervisory bodies – most notably the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations – provides an instructive overview regarding areas of high activity by member States and those where more action is required. While this should guide countries in setting their priorities, the ILO's supervisory work should also help give direction to the technical cooperation agenda of the Organization. In order to ensure greater coherence between technical cooperation and normative action in the field of child labour, regular coordination exercises will be held, bringing together the parts of the Office active in these two areas.

ILO action on the abolition of child labour has intensified over the last four years and significant advances have been made since the first Global Report on the subject. The challenge of the next four years will be for the ILO to work in a more focused and strategic way to act as the catalyst of a re-energized global alliance in support of national action to abolish child labour. This transformation in approach to global leadership will ensure that the ILO will contribute more effectively to consigning child labour to history.