



# FACTS ON CHILD LABOUR 2010



International  
Labour  
Organization

For over a decade, child labour has been recognized as a key issue of human rights at work together with freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining, the abolition of forced labour, and non-discrimination in occupation and employment. However, despite the large social reform movement that has been generated around this issue, more than 200 million children worldwide are still in child labour and a staggering 115 million at least, are subject to its worst forms.

The global campaign to end child labour is at a critical juncture. As the new Global Report under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on fundamental Principles and Rights at Work\* shows, child labour continues to decline worldwide but at a much slower pace than before. The report, entitled “Accelerating action against Child Labour”, says there are clear signs of progress but also disconcerting gaps in the global response.

The new trends point to a major shift in the international fight against child labour compared to 2006. Then, encouraged by the positive results of the second Global Report, the ILO set the target of 2016 for eliminating the worst forms of child labour. Almost half-way towards that date, the report shows that in some critical parts of the world the fight is in danger of being lost. It warns that if current trends continue the 2016 target will not be reached.

There have been a number of leadership initiatives over the past years and important achievements in advocacy, enhanced partnerships, support of corporate social responsibility, data collection and research. Perhaps the most important step forward has been the overwhelming global consensus in support of the Education for All\*\* movement. However, a renewed sense of commitment is needed. Governments have options when it comes to policy choices and budgetary allocations. The current global economic crisis cannot serve as an excuse to shift our priorities. A world free of child labour is possible.

\* *Accelerating action against Child Labour*, Global Report under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. Report to the International Labour Conference, 99th Session 2010. ISBN: 978-92-2-121873-9

\*\* Education for All is a global movement aiming to meet the learning needs of all children, youth and adults by 2015.

## *Among the reports key findings:*

- ◆ Child labour continues to decline, but only modestly – a three per cent reduction in the four year period covered by the new estimates (2004 - 2008). In the previous report (covering the period 2000 – 2004), there had been a 10 per cent decrease.
- ◆ The global number of child labourers stands at 215 million, only seven million less than in 2004.
- ◆ Among 5-14 year olds, the number of children in child labour has declined by 10 per cent and the number of children in hazardous work by 31 per cent.
- ◆ Whilst the number of children in hazardous work, often used as a proxy for the worst forms of child labour, is declining, the overall rate of reduction, has slowed. There are still 115 million children in hazardous work.
- ◆ There has been a welcome 15 per cent decrease in the number of girls in child labour and a 24 per cent decline in the number of girls in hazardous work. Boys, however, saw their work increase, both in terms of incidence rates and in absolute numbers. The extent of hazardous work among boys remained relatively stable.
- ◆ There has been an alarming 20 per cent increase in child labour in the 15-17 years age group – from 52 million to 62 million.
- ◆ With regard to children aged 5-14 in economic activity, the Asian-Pacific region and Latin America and the Caribbean experienced a decrease. In contrast, for the same age group, the number of children in economic activity is increasing in Sub-Saharan Africa. The situation is particularly alarming in Sub-Saharan Africa, where one in four children aged 5-17 are child labourers, compared to one in eight in Asia-Pacific and one in ten in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- ◆ Most child labourers continue to work in agriculture (60 per cent). Only one in five working children is in paid employment. The overwhelming majority are unpaid family workers.
- ◆ There has been considerable progress in the ratification of ILO standards concerning child labour, namely of Conventions 182 (on the worst forms of child labour) and 138 (on minimum age). However, one third of the children in the world live in countries that have not ratified these conventions.

## The fight against child labour – 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).

**1997** Amsterdam and Oslo International Conferences. These events helped raise international awareness of the child labour problem and the need for a forward looking strategy.

**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. Ratified by 9 out of 10 of the ILO's member States.

**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 benefits would outweigh costs by nearly 6 to 1.

**2006** Encouraged by findings of the second global report on child labour, which says that child labour is declining worldwide, the ILO launches a global campaign to eliminate the worst forms of child labour by 2016.

**2008** The ILO adopts the **ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization**, which recognizes the particular significance of the fundamental rights, including the effective abolition of child labour.

**2009** The 183 Member States of the ILO unanimously adopt the **Global Jobs Pact** as a guide to recovery from the global economic and jobs crisis. The Pact calls for increased vigilance to achieve the elimination and prevention of an increase of forced labour, child labour and discrimination at work.

**2010** The ILO launches the third Global Report on Child Labour, warning that the pace and profile of progress is not fast enough to achieve the 2016 deadline of eliminating the worst forms of child labour worldwide.

**2010** **The Hague Global Conference on Child labour-aimed at strengthening progress towards the 2016 target and the ratification and implementation of Conventions 138 and 182.**

For more information on the ILO's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), please visit [www.ilo.org/ipec](http://www.ilo.org/ipec)

## Global goals

Encouraged by the positive results of the second Global Report on Child Labour in 2006, the ILO set the deadline of eradicating the worst forms of child labour by 2016. The ILO's Global Action Plan is based on three pillars:

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

The Global Action Plan urged countries to design and put in place appropriate time-bound measures by 2008. Judging from the results of the third Global Report, many if not most countries have failed to do so. What's more, in the broader context of progress on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and in particular the pace regarding universal primary education, the signs are not too encouraging either.

## Global action

The International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) was created in 1992 to enhance the ILO's response to its long-standing goal of the effective elimination of child labour. Since then, IPEC has grown to become the biggest dedicated child labour programme in the world and the largest technical cooperation programme within the ILO with over \$60 million expenditure in 2008.

Some other facts about IPEC:

- ◆ By 2009, IPEC was operational in 92 countries in all regions of the world.
- ◆ During the biennium 2008-09, IPEC activities benefited some 300,000 children directly and over 52 million indirectly.

In 2008, IPEC set out its vision for the next five years:

- ◆ consolidate its position as the leading centre of knowledge and expertise on action against child labour;
- ◆ maintain and further strengthen its research and data collection capacity, which form the basis for both targeted interventions and policy advice;
- ◆ continue to be the central technical cooperation programme for action against child labour;
- ◆ facilitate country-to-country technical cooperation within regions and across continents;
- ◆ strengthen the worldwide movement against child labour and assume for the ILO a leadership role in the movement;
- ◆ continue the integration of IPEC activities within ILO programming, most importantly within Decent Work Country Programmes.

