

12 JUNE 2011
World day against child labour



International
Labour
Office
Geneva



End child labour

WARNING!
Children in hazardous work

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

WHAT IS THE WORLD DAY AGAINST CHILD LABOUR?

Originally launched by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2002, the World Day Against Child Labour draws attention to the global extent of child labour and the efforts needed to eliminate it. Every year on 12 June, the World Day brings together national governments, employers' organizations, trade unions, civil society and millions of children and adults throughout the world to highlight the plight of child labourers and advocate for change.

WHY IS THIS YEAR'S THEME CHILDREN IN HAZARDOUS WORK?

ILO Member States have set the goal of eliminating the worst forms of child labour by 2016. Since the overwhelming majority of the worst forms of child labour involve hazardous work, tackling hazardous child labour can bring us closer to achieving our goal.

WHAT IS MEANT BY HAZARDOUS WORK OF CHILDREN?

This is work that is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children. Certain industries or types of work carry particular risks, but any form of child labour may contain hazards that can harm a child. Children may be directly exposed to obvious work hazards such as

sharp tools or poisonous chemicals. Other hazards for child labourers may be less apparent, such as the risk of abuse or problems resulting from excessive hours of work.

HOW MANY CHILDREN ARE INVOLVED AND IN WHAT SECTORS?

The ILO estimates that of the world's 215 million child labourers, 115 million are involved in hazardous work, including 41 million girls and 74 million boys; 53 million are aged 5-14, and 62 million are aged 15-17. One concern is that the number of child labourers engaged in hazardous work has been increasing among the 15-17 age group. The highest concentration of hazardous child labour is in agriculture (59 %) followed by 30 % in services (e.g. domestic work, street-based work) and 11 % in industry (e.g. small workshops, mining, construction).

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE SPECIFIC HAZARDS FOR CHILDREN IN THESE SECTORS?

- **In agriculture**, children may be exposed to toxic pesticides or fertilizers, dangerous blades and tools, carry heavy loads and suffer from attacks or bites from animals or insects (e.g. mosquitoes transmitting malaria and other diseases).
- **In mining**, children may use poisonous chemicals, face the risks of

mine collapse and sometimes work with explosives.

- **In construction**, children may carry heavy loads, work at tall heights and risk injury from dangerous machinery.
- **In manufacturing**, children may use toxic solvents, perform repetitive tasks in painful positions and risk injury from sharp tools.
- **In domestic work**, children may suffer from different forms of abuse, long work hours and live in isolation away from their family or peers.
- **In scavenging or waste-picking**, children may be at risk of infection from exposure to toxic chemicals and wastes.

WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF HAZARDOUS WORK ON CHILDREN ?

Hazardous work can have immediate and long-term impacts on children. These may include injury (e.g. a wound from a blade), disability (e.g. crushed limb from a machine) and even death (e.g. as a result of pesticide poisoning). Children and adolescents are specifically vulnerable to the effects of hazardous work because they are still developing physically and mentally. Exposure of children to dangerous chemicals or physical stress can also harm their proper and healthy development. Some of the physical or psychological impacts of hazardous work may not be obvious immediately, but only begin to appear at a later stage in their lives.

IS THERE AN INTERNATIONAL LIST OF HAZARDOUS WORK FOR CHILDREN ?

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) specifies the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation including work likely to be hazardous (article 32). The main ILO standards on child labour, complementing the CRC, are Conventions No. 138 on the minimum age and No. 182 on the worst forms of child labour, and their accompanying Recommendations Nos. 146 and 190 respectively. These ILO standards oblige governments to decide which work is hazardous for children following consultation with employers' and workers' organizations and to prohibit such work for children. ILO Recommendation No.190 includes suggested elements to be considered when determining the list of hazardous work : e.g. work underground, with dangerous machinery, in an unhealthy environment, long hours or working at night. One aim of the World Day is to ensure that all countries have established a list of hazardous work and thereby have a solid base on which to take action.

WHAT ARE THE KEY STEPS REQUIRED TO TACKLE HAZARDOUS CHILD LABOUR ?

The problem of hazardous work is part of the wider child labour problem. Governments need to ensure children below the minimum age of work are in education, and that children of legal working age work in safe conditions. Tackling child labour therefore requires governments to ensure children have the opportunity for free quality education at least until the minimum age of employment. It also requires measures to tackle the poverty that breeds child labour by promoting social protection, ensuring decent work for adults and enforcing laws against child labour. In relation to the specific issue of hazardous work, the ILO's experience is that a combination of several types of action is most effective. It requires :

- Determining or reviewing the list of hazardous work after consultation with employers' organizations and trade unions
- Improving the collection of data on occupational accidents and illnesses, including analysis of the sex and age of children involved;
- Awareness-raising, so that both adults and children recognise the dangers;
- Developing policies and up to date regulations to protect children;
- Promoting effective law enforcement through integrated labour inspection services working in concert with other actors; and,
- Working with workers' representatives and employers' organizations to help ensure that work is safe for all.

HOW IS THE ILO HELPING CHILD LABOURERS AROUND THE WORLD ?

The ILO, through its International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), works with governments and social partners to develop legal frameworks and policy initiatives in line with ILO Conventions on child labour and to build national capacity to eliminate child labour. The ILO also works at the local level to help child labourers and communities. This involves supporting partners who seek to protect children from child labour and developing strategies to prevent children from entering work. Attention to the special situation of children and adolescents involved in hazardous child labour is a priority in these programmes. Special attention is also paid to the situation of girls. ILO programmes help poor children access education and in the case of older children, obtain the vocational skills training and opportunities for decent work. The ultimate goal is to give children the chance of a brighter future.



For more information visit :
WWW.ILO.ORG/IPEC