

12<sup>th</sup> June  
2009



World Day  
Against Child Labour

*Give girls*

*a chance*  
End child Labour



International  
Labour  
Organization

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### *What is the World Day against Child Labour?*

The International Labour Organization (ILO) launched the World Day Against Child Labour in 2002 to focus attention on the global extent of child labour and action to eliminate it. Each year on 12 June the World Day links governments, employers' and workers' organizations, civil society and others – such as schools and the media – in the campaign against child labour. Millions of people in all parts of the world are united on that day to remind us of the plight of child labourers and what we can do to tackle child labour.

### *Why is this year's World Day theme highlighting the situation of girls?*

Around the world a large number of girls who should be in school are working instead, often in some of the worst forms of child labour. Very often their work is hidden from public view, putting girls at special risk. Many girls face a double burden, going to work as well as shouldering the bulk of household chores. Sometimes the extent and nature of these chores are extremely demanding, severely restricting the ability of girls to participate in schooling. ILO Convention No. 182 on elimination of the worst forms of child labour explicitly refers to the special situation of girls.

### *How many girls are involved in child labour?*

The most recent ILO estimates suggest that of 218 million child labourers worldwide, 100 million are girls. More than half of these, 53 million, are exposed to hazardous work.<sup>1</sup>

### *What kind of work are girls doing?*

For the most part girls work in a similar range of activities as boys. Most work by girls is in agriculture – almost 70 per cent. A large number of girls also work as child domestic labourers, an area in which relatively few boys work. Many girls are involved in work in small production workshops and services such as selling in streets and in markets.

### *What are the most dangerous forms of girls work?*

Some of the worst forms of child labour are predominately female, in particular the involvement of girls in prostitution and pornography. Increasing international attention is being paid to the trafficking of young girls for prostitution and other worst forms of child labour. Girls are also victims of bonded labour and slavery-like practices. They can be exposed to violence and abuse, which is a serious risk and occurs all too often in domestic work.

<sup>1</sup> 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 (Geneva, 2006)

### *How many girls are not in school and what is the result of this?*

The most recent international data on education enrolment shows that 75 million children of primary school age are not enrolled in school. Of these, 55 per cent are girls. At secondary school the global average attendance is just 46 per cent for boys, and 43 per cent for girls. In some countries, however, the difference in school attendance between boys and girls is much greater. One result of these inequities in access to education is that globally 96 million young women are illiterate compared to 57 million young men.

### *What are the main barriers to girls' education?*

Some of the barriers to education are the same for girls and boys: the costs of education, poor quality schooling and families relying on child work to support family subsistence. However, girls can face particular problems: the physical distance to school may raise security issues; schools may lack necessary sanitary facilities; traditional thinking may not place any value on girl's education; and, most alarmingly, in some countries there are organized campaigns against educating girls.

### *Is it affordable to get girls into education?*

Investing in educating girls is a sound economic decision. Research has shown that educating girls is one of the most effective ways of tackling poverty. Educated girls are more likely to have better income as adults, marry later, have fewer and healthier children, and have decision-making powers within the household. They are also more likely to ensure that their own children are educated, helping to avoid future child labour. Tackling child labour among girls and promoting their right to education is therefore an important element of broader strategies to promote development.

### *What else can be done?*

Education is vital, but cannot alone address child labour among both girls and boys. Reducing family poverty by providing social safety nets for poor families, enforcement of laws on child labour and education, and providing adults with opportunities for decent work and income all contribute to overcoming child labour. Tackling gender and other forms of discrimination that keep girls marginalised must be a priority.

### *How is the ILO helping girl child labourers?*

The ILO works at various levels with governments and social partners to develop legal frameworks in line with ILO Conventions concerning child labour and to build national capacity to tackle 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 development of strategies to prevent children from entering work. Attention to the special situation of girls is a priority in these programmes. IPEC partners have worked to remove girls from a range of occupational sectors and from various worst forms of child labour. Many of these children are supported to access education, and in the case of older children to receive vocational skills training which can help put them on the road to a brighter future. The ILO and its partners also work with other UN agencies to ensure that girls benefit from development projects and strategies.

**For more information see: [www.ilo.org/ipec](http://www.ilo.org/ipec)**

