



IPEC

International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour



The Global Jobs Pact – Contributing to the fight against child labour

The global crisis and child labour

The global economic crisis and its aftermath mean the world faces the prospect of a prolonged increase in unemployment, deepening poverty and inequality. Among those that stand to be most affected are the children of the world's poor and vulnerable families. Increasing unemployment and poverty threaten to jeopardise children's education, health and welfare. The result could be to halt, or even to reverse, the recent global progress in reducing child labour and increasing children's access to education.

The ILO's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour has highlighted its concern that:

- Reduced living standards could force many poor households to send children to work, or to take children out of school because they cannot afford any more the costs of education.
- Any reductions in national education budgets could have a significant impact on opportunities for access to education and quality of education.
- Declines in remittances could have a negative impact on children in many communities, particularly where families rely on remittances to support children's education
- Any reductions in aid flows could create problems in countries that rely on such support. Sub-Saharan Africa is most at risk as a relatively large proportion of many national education budgets are supported by international development aid.

The extent to which these factors impact on child labour will largely depend on the policy measures undertaken in response to the crisis.

The Global Jobs Pact and child labour

In June 2009, a Global Jobs Pact¹ was agreed by Governments and Workers' and Employers' Organizations from more than 180 countries at the International Labour Conference (ILC) in Geneva. The Pact outlines strategies to guide a recovery from the current economic and jobs crisis.

The Pact proposes to address the needs of people by putting sustainable livelihood recovery at the forefront of all crisis responses. It calls for supporting job creation and helping people into work, investing in social protection systems, strengthening respect for international labour standards, and promoting social dialogue.

What does the Global Jobs Pact say concerning tackling poverty and promoting development?

"[The]... response [to the crisis]... should contribute to a fair globalization... and development that more effectively creates jobs and sustainable enterprises, respects workers' rights, promotes gender equality, protects vulnerable people, assists countries in the provision of quality public services and enables countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goals."

The root cause of most child labour is poverty and lack of equitable access to education. The key to addressing it is tackling household vulnerability and income insecurity, and promoting access of all children to quality education. The Global Jobs Pact focuses attention on the need to respond to the crisis by promoting fair globalization.

¹ ILO: *Recovering from the Crisis: A Global Jobs Pact*, Geneva, 2009.

It highlights the need to continue the pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals, the key international development targets on poverty reduction, education and health.

At this time of crisis, what is the significance of international standards on child labour?

“In order to prevent a downward spiral in labour conditions and build the recovery, it is especially important... [for]... vigilance to achieve the elimination and prevention of an increase in forms of forced labour, child labour and discrimination at work;...”

Reduced living standards could place pressures on poor families to withdraw children from school. There is a danger of an increase in practices which contravene international labour standards, including the two key ILO Conventions on Child Labour, ILO Convention No. 138 (on minimum age of employment), and Convention No. 182 (on the elimination of the worst forms of child labour). The Jobs Pact highlights the need for vigilance to achieve the elimination and prevention of child labour.

Who should be target groups for support and how does this link with efforts to prevent child labour ?

“...enhancing support to vulnerable women and men hit hard by the crisis including youth at risk, low-wage, low-skilled, informal economy and migrant workers;...”

Children in child labour are generally the children of the most vulnerable families. To the extent that support can be provided to assist such vulnerable families, it is likely that children would also benefit from such support.

Support for youth at risk is also an important part of the response. Even before the crisis young workers were three times more likely to be unemployed as were adults. Unemployed youth can all too easily find themselves drawn into exploitative situations.

In many countries in which the ILO-IPEC programme is operational, it has significant experience of working

with vulnerable families and communities, and can contribute technical expertise to the effective targeting of support to vulnerable families and communities.



Drawing by A.V, 10 years old, Kosovo @ ILO 2009.

Education and skills training

“...Increasing equal access and opportunities for skills development, quality training and education to prepare for recovery;...”

Increasing equal access to and opportunities for education is a key step in tackling child labour. There are presently 75 million children not enrolled in primary education and similar numbers not enrolled in junior secondary schools. Part of the response to the crisis should be a new focus on human capital development, with a priority given to achieving basic education for all children.

Building social protection systems and protecting people

“Sustainable social protection systems to assist the vulnerable can prevent increased poverty, address social hardship, while also helping to stabilize the economy and maintain and promote employability. In developing countries, social protection systems can also alleviate poverty and contribute to national economic and social development. In a crisis situation, short-term measures to assist the most vulnerable may be appropriate. Countries should give consideration, as appropriate, to the following: (i) introducing cash transfer schemes for the poor to meet their immediate needs and to alleviate poverty; (ii) building adequate social protection for all, drawing on a basic social protection floor including:

access to health care, income security for the elderly and persons with disabilities, child benefits and income security combined with public employment guarantee schemes for the unemployed and working poor;...

Social protection programmes that target poor families can play an important role in tackling child labour, and improving childrens prospects of receiving education and health care. Cash transfer schemes have proven particularly successful in the fight against child labour.²

Forging international cooperation

“... the ILO, engaging with other international agencies, international financial institutions and developed countries to strengthen policy coherence and to deepen development assistance and support for least developed, developing and transition countries with restricted fiscal and policy space to respond to the crisis.”

Over the last few years, ILO-IPEC has built up an extensive network of inter-agency partnerships, leveraging partner resources for the elimination of child labour. Discussions are currently underway with the World Bank, UNESCO, UNICEF and the Education for All Fast-Track Initiative to jointly develop tools to assess the impact of the crisis on child labour and education, and to come up with urgent response measures. In this connection inter agency national round table meetings are being held in a number of countries, with involvement of key Government Ministries, social partners and other stakeholders.

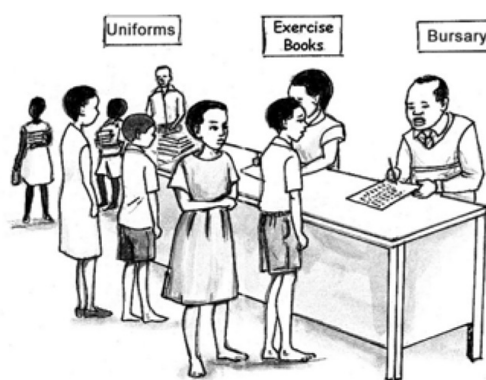
Furthermore, plans are at an advanced stage for an international conference on child labour in May 2010, which will, amongst other issues, review the experience of the crisis and implications for future work.

Development Assistance

“We recognize the need to:... keep commitments to increased aid to prevent a serious setback to the Millennium Development Goals; and urge the international community to provide development assistance, including budgetary support, to build up a basic social protection floor on a national basis.”

Any reductions in aid flows could have a negative impact on child labour and broader development concerns. Sub-Saharan Africa is most at risk since aid averages around 9% of GDP. There are wide variations across the region, but in a number of countries aid as a proportion of GDP is between 10-30%. In many poor countries education is substantially supported by international development aid. Reductions in aid could therefore have a negative impact on education.

Within the international discussions on achievement of Education for All (EFA), there has been a growing consensus that child labour represents a significant barrier to EFA.³ Tackling child labour and promoting Education for All are closely related objectives, and the education related MDGs cannot be achieved without also tackling child labour.



@ILO, 2008.

² For more information see IPEC: Tabatabai, H: *Eliminating child Labour, the promise of conditional cash transfers*. Geneva, ILO, 2006.

Available at: <http://www.ilo.org/ipecinfo/product/view-Product.do?productId=3804>

³ UNESCO, *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2009*, pages 79-80.

Summary

The Jobs Pact, enjoying the support of Governments, employers and workers, can provide a basis for a national dialogue on the economic and social response to the crisis. From the perspective of efforts to eliminate and prevent child labour the key aspects of the Global Jobs Pact summarised here are:

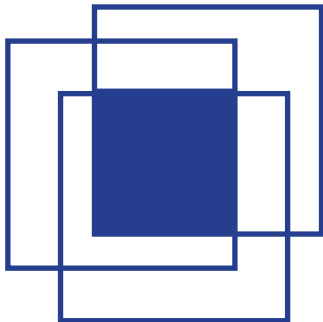
- Vigilance to achieve the elimination and prevention of child labour.
- The call for fair globalisation and development.
- Protection of vulnerable groups.
- Provision of quality public services.
- Enabling countries to achieve the MDGs.
- Increasing equal access and opportunities for education and skills.
- Strengthening social protection systems.
- Forging international cooperation.
- Keeping international commitments to increased international development assistance.



Drawing by H., 15 years old, Indonesia © GenevaWorld association, 2009.

Towards a Global Conference

In May 2010, the Government of the Netherlands, in cooperation with the ILO, will organise a major international conference to assess international progress in tackling child labour, and actions required to achieve the goal of eliminating the worst forms of child labour by 2016. Within the context of that meeting there will be a focus on the impact of the crisis on child labour, and the significance of the Global Jobs Pact and broader international efforts to mitigate the impact of the crisis.



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