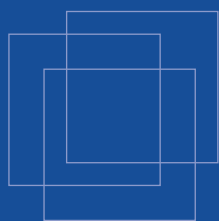




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Accelerating Action Against Child Labour in Africa – Building on experience and results



ILO Regional
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Accelerating Action Against Child Labour in Africa – Building on experience and results

Every child has the right to protection from child labour. Still, 59 million children in Africa¹ –more than one out of every five children aged 5-17 years– are child labourers. They work under circumstances which harm them physically, mentally, and socially, and prevent them from achieving even basic education. A staggering 28.8 million African children are engaged in hazardous labour, which puts them in immediate and very serious danger of irreversible harm and even risk of losing their lives. Without urgent help, these children will never fulfil their potential as human beings, and they will never be able to contribute effectively to the development of their communities, their countries or their continent.

¹ *Marking progress against child labour*. Global estimates and trends 2000-2012. Geneva: International Labour Office, International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), p. 17. For the Report please go to www.ilo.org/childlabour.

Child Labour in Africa

- ▶ **59** million children in child labour (one in four children aged 5 – 17 years)
- ▶ **28.8** million children in hazardous labour (around half of all child labourers)
- ▶ **52** of the 54 countries have ratified ILO Conventions Nos. 138 and 182.

The international community and Africa recognize that child labour violates the human rights of the affected children, while entrapping households in cycles of poverty. Without effective action to combat it, child labour becomes hereditary. Countries with high levels of child labour battle



with an unskilled labour force, low productivity and tremendous pressure on the public health sector. Among other consequences, national goals towards universal basic education cannot be achieved without properly addressing child labour. The elimination of child labour is therefore not just a moral issue, but also a necessity for economic and social development.

International and national responses

International action against child labour is largely mandated through two International Labour Conventions, namely, the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). Both Conventions have seen a rapid pace of ratifications over the last ten years. Child labour is also addressed by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. Both also enjoy high levels of ratification in the region.

Within the framework of the two ILO Conventions, the international community has been pursuing a Global Action Plan aimed at the elimination of the worst forms of child labour by 2016 since 2006, as a follow-up to the ILO Global Report on Child Labour of that year.² The 2006 Global Report indicated encouraging progress in reducing the incidence of child labour in several regions around the world between 2000 and 2004. According to the following report, that of 2010,³ the decline continued over the subsequent four-year period (2004 – 2008), though at a reduced pace. However, the situation in sub-Saharan Africa was markedly different from that of the other developing regions, with the number of child labourers increasing marginally both in nominal terms and as a proportion of the corresponding child population. According to the new global estimates of child labour (2000-2012), the number of child labourers in Africa showed a downward trend but it continues to be the region with the highest incidence of child labour (21 per cent) followed by Asia and the Pacific with 9 per cent.⁴

² *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 of the Director-General. International Labour Conference, 95th Session 2006, Report I(B). Geneva: International Labour Office.

³ *Accelerating action against child labour*. Global Report under the Follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. Report of the Director-General. International Labour Conference, 99th Session 2010, Report I(B). Geneva: International Labour Office. For the Report please go to www.ilo.org/childlabour.

⁴ *Marking progress against child labour*. Global estimates and trends 2000-2012, op.cit.

As part of the *Decent Work Agenda in Africa 2007 – 2015* (DWAA) adopted at the 11th African Regional Meeting of the ILO (Addis Ababa, 24 – 27 April 2007), the ILO's African tripartite constituents (governments, employers' and workers' organizations) called on all countries in the region to implement National Action Plans (NAPs) to eliminate the worst forms of child labour by 2015.⁵ In response, the number of countries designing such NAPs has been increasing steadily. So far, about three-fifths of the countries in the region have put NAPs in place or are in the process of doing so, compared to just a handful in 2006. NAPs are practical, comprehensive and time-bound programmes for dealing with child labour by addressing its causes and direct consequences.

National Action Plans – NAPs

A National Action Plan is a comprehensive, tripartite, multi-sectoral, time-bound programme for scaling up and accelerating action against child labour, with priority emphasis on its worst forms. NAPs are country-owned and country-led strategic frameworks addressing the root causes of child labour, based on broad mobilization of government departments, the social partners, civil society and local communities. They are designed to ensure that all major interventions essential for addressing child labour are in place, but without unnecessary duplication. NAPs seek to capitalize on synergies between sectors and programme partners, strengthening existing interventions, if necessary, with new interventions developed essentially to fill identified policy and programme gaps or to add value to them. They are conceived as integral parts of broader national development programmes.

In 2007, the African region committed itself to develop NAPs by 2008. At present 31 out of 54 African countries have or are in the process of developing NAPs with 16 countries having officially adopted their Action Plan. Twenty-three countries have yet to begin the process towards a NAP.

Many countries in the region are making good progress in tackling child labour and its underlying causes, for example through the expansion of access to schooling under the Millennium Development Goals and Education For All, the updating of national legislation, the extension of social protection measures, and improvements in data collection and analysis for improved policy development and implementation. National efforts

⁵ *The Decent Work Agenda in Africa 2007–2015*. Conclusions of the 11th African Regional Meeting, Addis Ababa 24–27 April 2007, paragraph 25.

have been further galvanized more recently by the ‘Roadmap for Achieving the Eradication of the Worst Forms of Child Labour by 2016’,⁶ which was adopted at the 2010 Global Conference on Child Labour in The Hague, The Netherlands, in May 2010. However, a lot more work needs to be done in terms of policy implementation, law enforcement and service delivery. A key area of need is the development of institutional capacities to ensure the effective implementation of the measures agreed under the various NAPs. The areas of progress outlined above provide opportunities for accelerated action and impact.

ILO action in support of national efforts

ILO technical assistance, provided principally through the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), has been important in the development of country responses to child labour. In Africa, as elsewhere in the developing world, the ILO works closely with government departments, organizations of employers and workers (the social partners) and civil society groups in devising policies targeting the causes and consequences of child labour, strengthening legislation, raising awareness, and mobilizing stakeholders to deal with the problem. Other key areas of collaboration include

the implementation of direct actions to prevent, remove and protect children from the worst forms of child labour, improving the availability and utilization of information, and generally building institutional and technical capacities to increase the effectiveness and impact of interventions. The ILO currently supports activities on child labour in some 40 countries across the continent.

A renewed focus on accelerating progress against child labour in Africa

In the context of the DWAA and the Global Action Plan, the ILO has drawn up a “Focus on Africa” strategy and a regional programme to help accelerate the rate of progress in realizing national goals on child labour. The regional programme, “Support for the Acceleration of Action against Child Labour in Africa”, draws on the experience and lessons learnt from the ILO’s extensive work with African countries in developing and implementing national child labour programmes over the last decade and focuses on key priorities identified for ensuring rapid, sustainable and long-lasting impact. The implementation of the programme commenced in 2012, albeit on a small scale while efforts are being made to mobilize the necessary resources for its full operationalization.

⁶ For the Roadmap, please go to www.ilo.org/childlabour.

Support for the Acceleration of Action against Child Labour in Africa

Key components:

- ▶ Establishment of an ‘Integrated Regional Child Labour Resource Centre’ to facilitate and support national responses to child labour, particularly through the development of knowledge and capacity building tools at the regional level and their use to expand the amount of technical expertise and knowhow available to member States. In addition to the development and dissemination of policy briefs, fact sheets and other materials for advocacy and capacity building purposes as well as supporting NAP design and implementation, this “virtual” technical support facility will serve as a clearing house for knowledge sharing on child labour and related issues.
- ▶ Provision of technical assistance to countries for the formulation of National Action Plans, including ensuring buy-in, support, and mainstreaming into the programmes and budgets of key NAP implementing agencies, and the development and operationalization of standard procedures, protocols and guidelines for the identification, withdrawal, rehabilitation and protection of children from the worst forms of child labour.
- ▶ Development and implementation of strategies for energizing and strengthening key NAP institutions, including structured training programmes for child labour inter-sectoral coordination mechanisms, Child Labour Units, Child Labour Focal Points and national and sub-regional training institutions, and putting resource mobilization strategies in place for key NAP components.

This document provides basic information about the regional programme. It is intended for institutions interested in entering into partnerships with the ILO to implement measures aimed at the rapid elimination of child labour, with particular emphasis on its worst forms.

Why is Africa falling behind in the fight against child labour? Is there political will to combat the problem?

Ratification of ILO Conventions Nos. 138 and 182 is a good indicator of the political will to eradicate child labour. As of January 2013, of the 54 countries in Africa, 52 have already ratified Convention No. 138. Similarly, only two countries have yet to ratify Convention No. 182. This near-universal ratification in the region is very much on a par with Europe and the Americas and well ahead of Asia and the Pacific. So the political will is there! The political consensus for addressing the problem has been further emphasized by the speed with which the African continent has taken to develop NAPs.

Lack of local capacity the main barrier

The commitment and developments described above need to be followed with the scaling up of interventions under the National Action Plans. At the present rate, it is evident that Africa will not achieve the goals agreed in the DWAA and the Roadmap. Besides the fact that 23 nations have yet to begin formulating their NAPs, the vast majority of countries are still at the early stages of programme implementation. The situation calls for an urgent acceleration of efforts.

A key challenge in most African countries is insufficient capacity among government departments, the social partners and civil society to convert good intentions into operational national programmes and ensure their implementation. Most African countries battle with many competing, urgent priorities, and this limits the availability of human and financial resources.

In addition, most African countries lack the technical capacity and practical experience needed for dealing with the complexities of child labour. Without technical expertise being available in Africa when needed, NAP development and implementation will continue to proceed at a

slow pace, and child labour will continue to be a crippling barrier to social, economic and human development on the continent.

Strengthening existing structures and mainstreaming for sustainability and efficiency

The regional programme “Support for the Acceleration of Action against Child Labour in Africa” is focusing on local capacity building and institutional development, thereby addressing the main barriers to sustainable child labour eradication on the continent. Focus is on building and strengthening structures which are already in place and mandated to deal with child labour issues, with the objective of contributing to the realization of effective laws, policies and institutions in the relevant sectors. This approach will ensure that capacity is concentrated and strengthened instead of spread thin in institutions which are already under very serious resource constraints.

Building Momentum for Achieving the DWAA Targets

The regional programme's strategy for taking country interventions to scale can be summarized as follows::

1. Assist in drafting the NAP and getting it validated and approved by the relevant authority.
2. Assist in putting the appropriate institutional framework in place and provide intensive orientation and training..
3. Provide guidance materials, policy briefs, etc.
4. Assist in resource mobilization.
5. Provide technical support for mainstreaming NAP interventions, policy analysis and development, and design and implementation of appropriate measures (sectoral, thematic and institutional levels).
6. Provide continuous follow-up support to ensure momentum.
7. Mentor key agents and partners; empower potential “champions”.
8. Share knowledge (across projects, countries and sub-regions).
9. Carry out regular advocacy to enhance support and growing momentum for NAP implementation and impact.



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Strategies on child labour eradication and poverty reduction cannot be separated. Child labour cannot be eradicated without addressing its underlying causes, including vulnerability of poor households to economic shocks, lack of awareness, inadequate legislation and enforcement, and weaknesses in education systems. Basic education must be accessible and at a quality and relevance which offer a real alternative to child labour. Youth employment programmes must ensure that education and vocational training lead young people into decent work, thereby enticing children to finish school and learn a skill. NAPs do not substitute or duplicate the programmes of the relevant sectors, but rather provide a policy framework or platform for strengthening existing measures to better address child labour issues within the programmes of the relevant institutions, and enhancing collaboration among the latter to achieve greater impact. Most countries in the region have many of the building blocks for addressing child labour in place, through a number of sectoral or departmental programmes, though often these lack coordinated action and sufficient focus on the issues underlying the problem.

With the support of the ILO, NAPs will be used as a tool for addressing child labour issues from the perspectives of institutions in key sectors or departments such as education and training, labour and employment, agriculture, health, social protection, and statistics as integral parts of their regular programmes. This is key to sustainability and impact.

ILO-IPEC: A unique leader in the fight against child labour

The ILO is recognized as the global leader in the fight against child labour.⁷ The Organization has promoted International Labour Standards since its inception in 1919, and the eradication of child labour is one of the four areas covered by the 'Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work' which binds all member States. The International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour was established as a specialized programme in 1992 and has been working in Africa since then. IPEC draws on ILO technical programmes in all areas of the Decent Work Agenda so that interventions are holistic and comprehensive. This enormous advantage is embodied in the ILO's fine-tuned approach on child labour in Africa, upon which the "Focus on Africa" strategy and the regional programme, "Support for the Acceleration of Action against Child Labour in Africa", are based.

Among UN organizations, ILO is unique with its tripartite mandate. ILO works with employers and organized labour as equal partners to Governments, thereby ensuring broad buy-in and commitment in the member States. This is of vital importance to child labour eradication as Governments cannot win this battle without genuine collaboration from the social partners. The regional programme capitalizes on this tripartite relationship to help build strong national networks and partnerships for accelerating action against child labour.

The ILO actively seeks potential partnerships with governments, international (bi-lateral and multi-lateral) agencies, regional organizations, corporate bodies, trade unions and private foundations interested in collaborating on the elimination of child labour in Africa. Such collaboration could cover work targeting the African region as a whole, a group of countries, specific countries or economic sectors, or specific components of the regional programme.

For more information or a discussion on the possibilities for collaboration, please contact: CLIC-Africa@ilo.org

⁷ See for instance para 11.2 in 'Roadmap for Achieving the Eradication of the Worst Forms of Child Labour by 2016'.



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