



International Labour Organization
International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC)

World Day Against Child Labour 2012

“Human rights and social justice ... Let's end child labour!”

This year, the World Day Against Child Labour will provide a spotlight on the right of all children to be protected from child labour and from other violations of fundamental human rights. In 2010 the international community adopted a *Roadmap for achieving the elimination of the worst forms of child labour by 2016*,¹ which stressed that child labour is an impediment to children's rights and a barrier to development. World Day 2012 will highlight the work that needs to be done to make the roadmap a reality.

The ILO's Conventions seek to protect children from exposure to child labour. Together with other international instruments relating to children's, workers' and human rights they provide an important framework for legislation established by national governments. However, the ILO's most recent global estimate is that 215 million children worldwide are involved in child labour, with more than half this number involved in its worst forms.² The children concerned should be at school being educated and acquiring skills that prepare them for decent work as adults. By entering the labour market prematurely, they are deprived of this critical education and training that can help to lift them, their families and communities out of a cycle of poverty. In its worst forms, child labourers may also be exposed to physical, psychological or moral suffering that can cause long term damage to their lives.

On this World Day, the ILO calls for:

- Universal ratification of the ILO's Conventions on child labour and of all ILO core Conventions.
- National policies and programmes to ensure effective progress in the elimination of child labour.
- Action to build the worldwide movement against child labour.

ILO Standards on Rights at Work

The principles and rights established in eight ILO core Conventions are also regarded as human rights which all ILO Member States are required to respect, promote and realise. The “fundamental principles and rights at work” concern freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, the elimination of forced or compulsory labour, the abolition of child labour and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation. The four categories of rights are mutually reinforcing: the elimination of child labour will be achieved much more quickly and efficiently when the other rights are also respected.

Concerning child labour, the ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) requires States to specify in law a minimum age for admission to employment not less than the age of finishing compulsory education, and which in any case, should not be less than 15 years. A member country whose economy and

¹ A copy of the Roadmap adopted by unanimous acclamation can be downloaded from the ILO web site: www.ilo.org/ippecinfo/product/viewProduct.do?productId=13453

² The most recent estimates suggest 127 million boys and 88 million girls are involved in child labour with 74 million boys and 41 million girls in the worst forms.

educational facilities are insufficiently developed may under certain conditions initially specify a minimum age of 14 years.³ In Jordan, the minimum age of employment is 16.

The ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) calls for “immediate and effective measures to secure the prohibition of the worst forms of child labour as a matter of urgency”. The worst forms are defined as:

- All forms of slavery, or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom, as well as forced labour, including forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict.
- The use, procurement or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances.
- The use, procurement or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in relevant international treaties.
- Work which, by its nature or circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children, such harmful work to be determined by national authorities.

Other Key International Standards and Declarations

Over the years, growing awareness of the need to ensure that children receive education and protection has spurred the development of a body of international standards to help guide governments in enacting domestic legislation. The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights features the right to education prominently stating that “Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available...”

There is near universal ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention states that children have the right to be protected from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child’s education, or to be harmful to the child’s health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. It also states that primary education should be compulsory and available free to all and encourages the development of different forms of secondary education available and accessible to every child. The United Nations General Assembly has also adopted two Optional Protocols to the Convention to increase the protection of children from involvement in armed conflicts and from sexual exploitation.⁴

The importance of protecting fundamental principles and rights at work during the ongoing global financial and jobs crisis was reflected in the communiqué of the G20 Summit held in November 2011 which encouraged the ILO to continue promoting ratification and implementation of the core Conventions ensuring fundamental principles and rights at work.

Ratification and Implementation of ILO Conventions on Child Labour

Although the ILO’s child labour Conventions are among the most widely ratified of ILO Conventions there is a need for countries that have not yet ratified the Conventions to do so, and to ensure their effective implementation. While Jordan has ratified both Conventions, the ILO on the occasion of World

³ National laws or regulations may permit the employment of 13-15 year olds in light work which is neither prejudicial to school attendance, nor harmful to a child’s health or development. The ages 12-14 can apply for light work in countries that specify a minimum age of 14.

⁴ The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

Day 2012 is calling on all governments that have not already done so to ratify and implement the Conventions.

National Policies and Programmes

The ILO's Convention No. 182 requires that each Member which ratifies the Convention shall design and implement programmes of action to eliminate as a priority the worst forms of child labour. Many countries have now established National Action Plans that provide a framework for such efforts. Jordan is leading the way among the Arab States having formally adopted the National Framework on Child Labour in August 2011. However, many other countries have yet to do so and countries that have established plans need to monitor and review their effectiveness. If the challenging target of eliminating the worst forms of child labour by 2016 is to be achieved, urgent action along these lines is required now.

The Worldwide Movement Against Child Labour

Although governments must take the lead role in tackling child labour, the ILO standards stress the important role that employers and workers organizations should play in setting and implementing action programmes. Many civil society organisations are also closely involved in efforts to tackle child labour. Building the worldwide movement against child labour at global, national and local level remains a priority.

Join us on 12 June!

The World Day Against Child Labour promotes awareness and action to tackle child labour. Support for the World Day has been growing each year and in 2012 the ILO is looking forward to a World Day that will again be widely supported.

The ILO child labour office in Jordan therefore calls on all concerned organisations and individuals to be part of the 2012 World Day in whatever way possible, including statements of support, press releases, participation in organised activities, distribution of posters and materials, etc. Please let the ILO know of your support activities by contacting the officials below. Materials are also available from the ILO.

Join us and add your voice to the worldwide movement against child labour!

For more information and for promotional materials on World Day Against Child Labour 2012 contact:

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