



Sri Lanka's Road Map to 2016

Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour ILO Support to Preparation of the Road Map



IPEC. WDAFL 2010

Background

Child labour is a worldwide phenomenon, with Asia and the Pacific being home to the largest numbers. Sri Lanka is committed towards the prevention and elimination of child labour and has illustrated this through national and international commitments. The National Survey on Child Labour conducted in 1999 estimated just over 900,000 children to be economically active in Sri Lanka¹. Another survey has been completed with support of the ILO and a report is expected shortly. There are indications that numbers of children in the worst forms of child labour are at a level that could be targeted for elimination by the 2016.

During the last decade the Government of Sri Lanka, employers' and workers' organizations (Social Partners) and the civil society undertook a wide range of concrete activities towards the elimination of child labour with the assistance of ILO-IPEC. Sri Lanka has ratified both ILO Convention on Minimum Age to Employment, 1973 (No.138) and Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999 (No.182). It has identified 49 hazardous forms of child labour for which legislation has been passed. The minimum age for employment has been increased in certain sectors and a new education policy has been formulated that recognises the need for increasing the age of compulsory education to 16 years by the year 2010. In 2007-2008 Sri Lanka implemented preparatory activities for a national Time-Bound Programme with support from ILO-IPEC. The Government signed an Action Plan to ensure that the practice of recruitment and use of children comes to an end and that all children were released and provided with reintegration and other assistance.

¹ Department of Census and Statistics, Ministry of Finance and Planning: *Child Activity Survey* (Sri Lanka, 1999), survey undertaken with the support of the ILO.

Elimination of all forms of child labour, with an urgent focus on the worst forms

While the goal of the ILO remains the prevention and elimination of all forms of child labour, as per Convention on Minimum Age to Employment, 1973 (No. 138), the priority targets for immediate action are the worst forms of child labour, which are defined in the ILO Convention on the worst forms of child labour, 1999 (No. 182) as:

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

Time-bound measures² to eliminate the worst forms of child labour. ILO Convention No. 182 calls for:

- Prevent the engagement of children in the WFCL;
- Provide direct assistance for the removal of children from the worst forms of child labour and for their rehabilitation and social integration;
- Ensure access to free basic education and appropriate vocational training for all children removed from the WFCL;
- Identify and reach out to children at special risk; and
- Take account of the special situation of girls.

The Road Map to 2016

In 2006, following the release of the second Global Report on Child Labour, the ILO urged Member States to commit themselves to eradicate the worst forms of child labour by 2016. To do this, all countries were called to design and put in place appropriate time-bound measures by 2008. The action plan was to be based on three pillars: supporting and mainstreaming national responses to child labour; deepening and strengthening the worldwide movement against child labour; and further integrating child labour concerns in overall ILO strategies to promote decent work for all.

The ILO noted that if the trend observed in the Global Report over the previous four years continued, the worst forms of child labour could be eliminated by 2016. Meeting the UN Millennium Development Goals by 2015 would further help to eliminate child labour.

With support from the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), a number of countries have made an effort to develop action plans. IPEC is the ILO's technical cooperation programme with the overall goal of the progressive elimination of child labour. This it aims to achieve through strengthening the capacity of countries to deal with the problem and promoting a worldwide

² ILO Convention No. 182, Articles 1 and 7

movement to combat child labour. IPEC's work to eliminate child labour is an important facet of the Decent Work Country Programmes.

In 2010, ten years after the coming into force of ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (WFCL), six years ahead of the global target of eliminating the WFCL, the ILO and member States are stepping up efforts to achieve the target. In order to meet that challenge, the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, in close collaboration with the ILO (and in cooperation with UNICEF and the World Bank), is organizing a global conference on child labour to be held in The Hague (The Netherlands) in May 2010, at which participating countries are expected to agree on significantly intensified efforts to reach the 2016 goal laid down in the Global Action Plan, to take immediate and effective measures to end the worst forms of child labour as a matter of urgency.

The Road Map to 2016 is expected to be adopted at the Hague Global Child Labour Conference. It will be a concise document, spelling out how progress against child labour could be accelerated in the aftermath of the global economic crisis, and prior to the target dates for the Millennium Development Goals (2015) and the elimination of worst forms of child labour (2016).

Why a Sri Lanka Road Map to 2016

Sri Lanka has ratified both ILO Conventions No. 138 on Minimum Age to Employment and No. 182 on Worst Forms of Child Labour. In a meeting of the National Steering Committee on 24 February 2010, the Secretary of Labour and other members expressed concern about children in the worst forms and agreed to work towards the target of elimination of the WFCL by 2016. The idea of the 2016 target was endorsed by the National Children's Protection Authority (NCPA) in a subsequent meeting as well. The responsibility for the WFCL as in Convention No. 182 is shared between the NCPA (Articles, 3 a, b, and c) and the Ministry of Labour (Article 3 d), with the Ministry of Labour playing the lead role on child labour issues. The NCPA was established in 1998 and is currently under the Ministry of Women and Children and works closely with the judiciary.

The achievement of the 2016 target is feasible in Sri Lanka for a number of reasons, given the required technical and financial support is provided. There is a new political climate that is more conducive to peace and stability, and the child labour issue is mainstreamed in a number of key policies and frameworks, including the National Development framework – *Mahinda Chintanaya*. This includes child abuse, child labour being a part of it, while, the National Action Plan under the SAARC Social Charter and other policy instruments also include child labour.

Sri Lanka has various inter-related National Plans of Action on children, including the National Plan of Action for Children (2004-2008); the National Plan of Action for Elimination of the Worst Forms (2004); the National Plan of Action to combat trafficking of children for exploitative employment in Sri Lanka (2001) and other sector plans. Elements from the National Plan of Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms (2004) were integrated in the National Plan of Action for Children (2004-2008) and this is likely to be the case for the 2010-2014 NPA for Children, which is under preparation.

ILO's Support to the Preparation of the Sri Lanka Road Map to 2016

Between April and June 2010, the ILO will undertake specific action to support this initiative. Specifically, these will be to:

- Provide technical support to the preparation of the Road Map.
- Facilitate sharing of experiences on the key themes identified, and

- Support the presentation of the SRL Road Map 2016 at a Conference in Colombo in June 2010.

As with the global Road Map, the Sri Lanka 2016 Road Map will cover the following:

- Clarity on who the children in the WFCL, what makes them vulnerable or puts them at risk, and how they can be reached them?
- How WFCL and its effective elimination is embedded in issues of social exclusion and broader policy issues such as (access to) quality education, development and human rights. Therefore, how to mainstream child labour issues and concerns in key policies, programmes and budgets.
- What the various types of organizations (i.e. governments, workers' organizations, employers' organizations, NGOs, international organizations) will do to reach the 2016 target - and how they should work together for maximum effect, including through action plans that include budget allocations and monitoring frameworks.
- How the movement and efforts in the country against child labour can be re-invigorated to contribute most effectively to reaching the 2016 target.
- Means by which broader efforts towards the MDGs and the one-UN approach can be leveraged for child labour elimination.

The Roadmap will draw on the National Plan on the WFCL, the National Plan on Children and other related plans and policies. It will also use mainstreaming as a key strategy to reaching the goal.

Timeline for preparation of SRL Road Map

5 and 6 April	Initial consultation with key constituents/stakeholders, to discuss process, timeline and outcomes
28 April – 3 May	More in-depth consultations in SRL. Concept note prepared.
10 and 11 May	The Hague Conference. SRL could pledge to prepare and embark on the SRL Road Map to 2016
Early June	Finalize Road Map
	Announce the Road Map during a two-day high level Conference in Colombo. There will be experience sharing on key themes

The Road Map will enable the Government to mobilize resources for its implementation and monitoring.

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