

Overview education approach to combat child labour, efforts to mainstream child labour into education policies and programmes

Child labour and education

The elimination of child labour and the achievement of Education for All are interconnected global goals. On the one hand, education is a major means of keeping children out of the labour market. On the other hand, many out-of-school children are engaged in child labour and their work can act as a barrier to accessing education. This connection has become increasingly recognised at the international level.

All children have a right to education. However, many barriers can be placed in the way of exercising that right which can have a discouraging effect on poor parents who want to send their children to school. This is particularly the case for rural communities that account for 82 per cent of all out-of-school children. In general, children work and do not go to school because of a combination of factors. Incentives favour work where schools are not available or are of poor quality; where the direct and indirect costs of schooling are high; where parents consider that to have a child work is more valuable than for the child to go to school; and where cultural factors discourage education, particularly at the secondary level – a situation that commonly affects girls.

IPEC has developed significant experience in using education to combat child labour in both formal and non-formal settings.

Formal education

The most effective way to tackle child labour is to improve access to and the quality of the formal education system so that it attracts and retains children and ensures that children freed from child labour are successfully integrated into schools.

Non formal education

Non-formal education can have an important role to play in meeting the needs of marginalized children that are under-served by the formal education system, but it should be complementary to the formal school system and not competitive with it.

In many countries, IPEC has supported non-formal or transitional education programmes, which have enabled former child labourers to catch up with their peers who began their schooling at an appropriate age.

The school-to-work transition

Pre-vocational training

Pre-vocational training refers to the training arranged primarily to acquaint children with materials, tools and standards relating to a range of occupations that could possibly assist children in choosing a future career path. In formal schools this might typically consist of basic skills in woodwork, cooking and sewing, etc. Pre-vocational training is also sometimes seen as increasing the relevance and interest of the curriculum to older children, which in turn might reduce the chance of them dropping out.

This kind of training has also been provided in a number of IPEC supported non-formal education programmes, in combination with or after functional literacy training, but with more of a focus on potential for livelihoods development when the child is old enough to work. Courses are typically short and provide specific skills, such as silk screen printing, handicraft production, or vegetable growing.

Vocational education and skills training

IPEC's vocational and skills training programmes provide practical skills for older children (14-17 years) who are at or above the legal minimum age of employment. Skills/livelihood training can be an important mechanism in overcoming social exclusion faced by marginalized children – it offers the possibility of greater choice concerning future work opportunities and therefore the hope of a better future. The provision of pre-

vocational, vocational and skills training has also been an important cornerstone of IPEC's efforts to withdraw older children from hazardous labour, by providing older children at or above the minimum age of employment, with marketable skills that will enable them to find decent work opportunities.

In many countries, IPEC has worked with governments to develop the capacity of vocational training centres to implement programmes to assist older children and youth. Where these training facilities do not exist, IPEC has worked with other partners to ensure the better provision of vocational education and skills training.