

What is Child Labour?

Not all work done by children should be classified as child labour. According to the ILO, Child Labour refers to work that deprives children (any person under 18) of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to their physical and/or mental development. It refers to work that is mentally, or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and/or interferes with their schooling by:

- **depriving them of the opportunity to attend school**
- **obliging them to leave school prematurely**
- **requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work.**



Child Labour's consequences

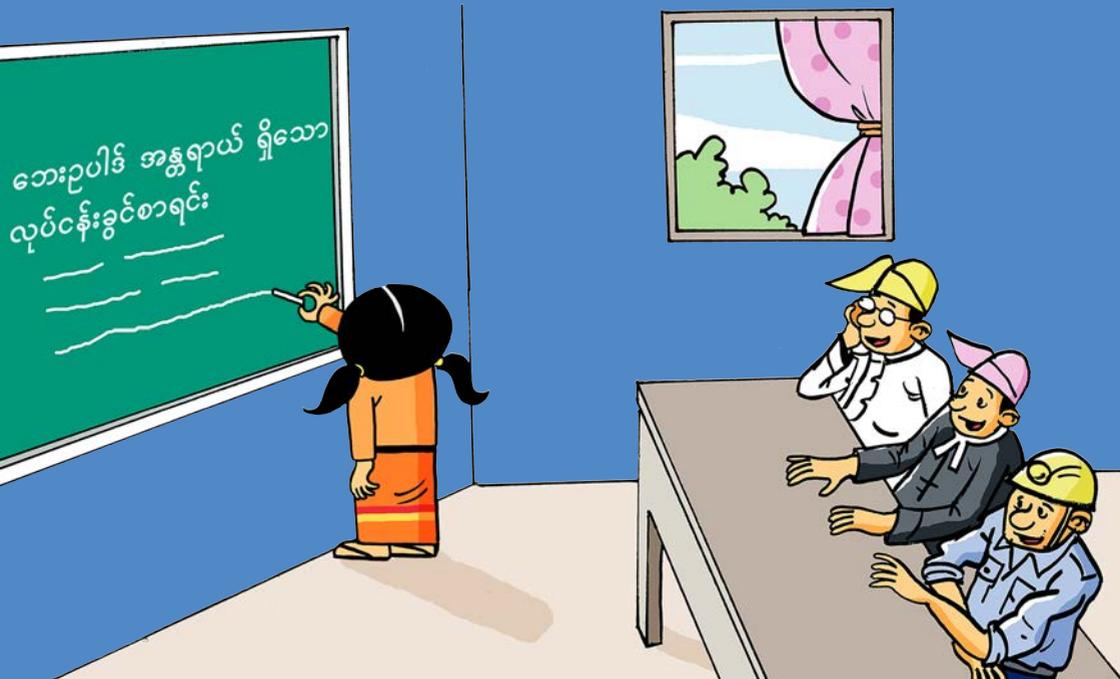
Child labour has a very high human cost and seriously hinders the national development in favor of a poverty reduction, not only for the children but for the whole population. Child labour generates an uneducated and low skills workforce, which may impact the country competitiveness.

Determining hazardous child labour

According to the ILO C. 182, trade unions can play an important role in helping to develop the national list of hazardous child labour. Through its members, a trade union can bring together hazardous work definitions and practices and identify where such types of work exist, to help with the compilation of the national list. The national list of hazardous child labour states what forms of work must not be carried out by children below the age of 18, focusing on work which by its nature, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.

Drawing up the list is only the first step, followed by dissemination of the list and implementation of its requirements.

Similarly, trade unions can help to disseminate information on, and raise awareness of, the national hazardous child labour list and promote its implementation. National trade union centres can distribute information on the list to their sectoral trade union member organizations. Sectoral trade unions can then distribute information to their local members and workplace representatives.





The role of Trade Unions in the fight against Child Labour

Strengthen the social dialogue

The main goal of social dialogue is to promote consensus building and democratic involvement among the main stakeholders in the world of work. In order to eradicate child labour, the Government, Workers' and Employers' organizations, and civil society must continue to strengthen social dialogue, especially through the Technical Working Group on Child Labour. The members of this Working Group will focus on the elaboration of a list of hazardous work prohibited to all children under 18, and on the development of a National Plan of action on Child Labour.

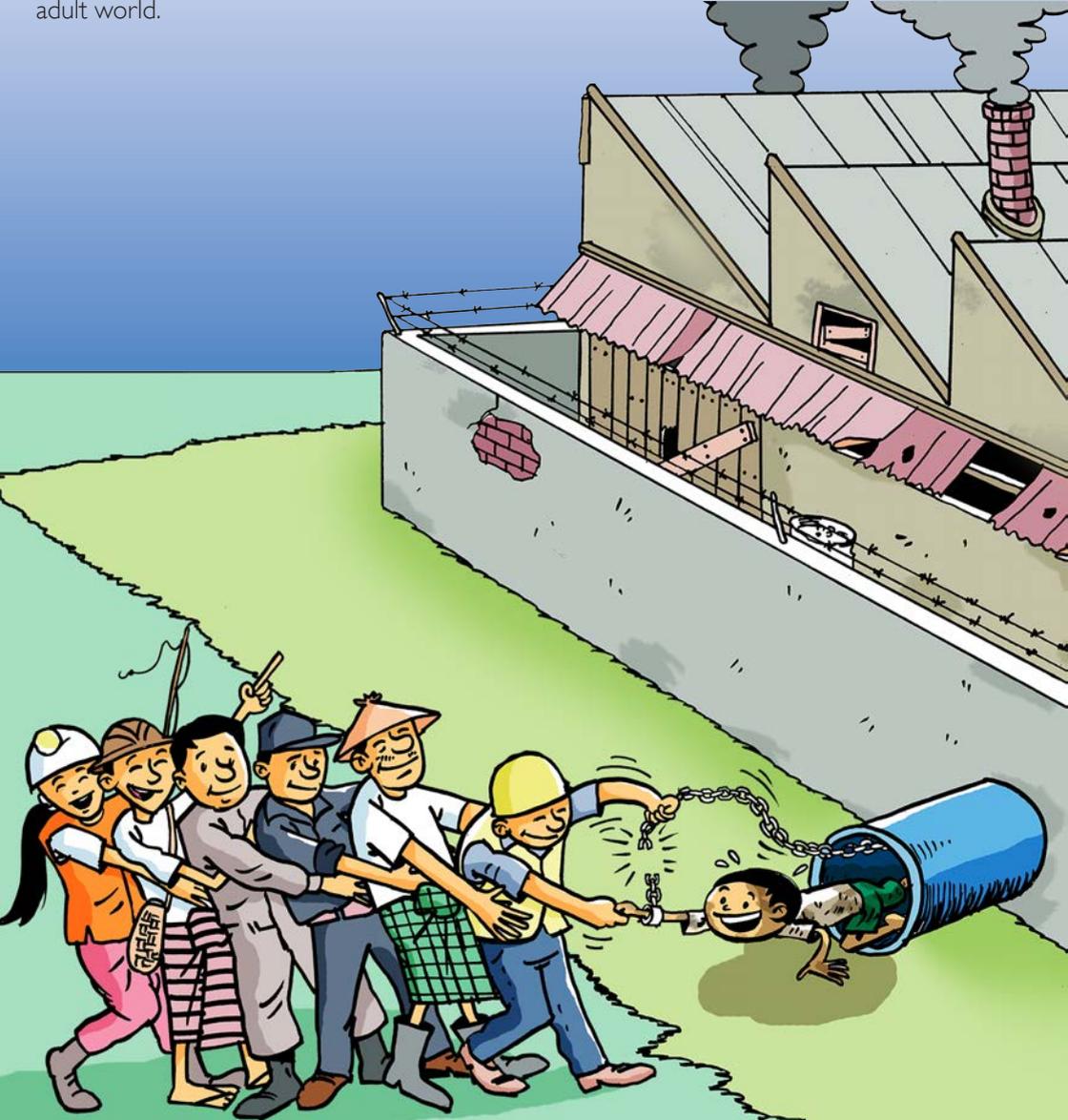


The historical commitment of Trade Unions

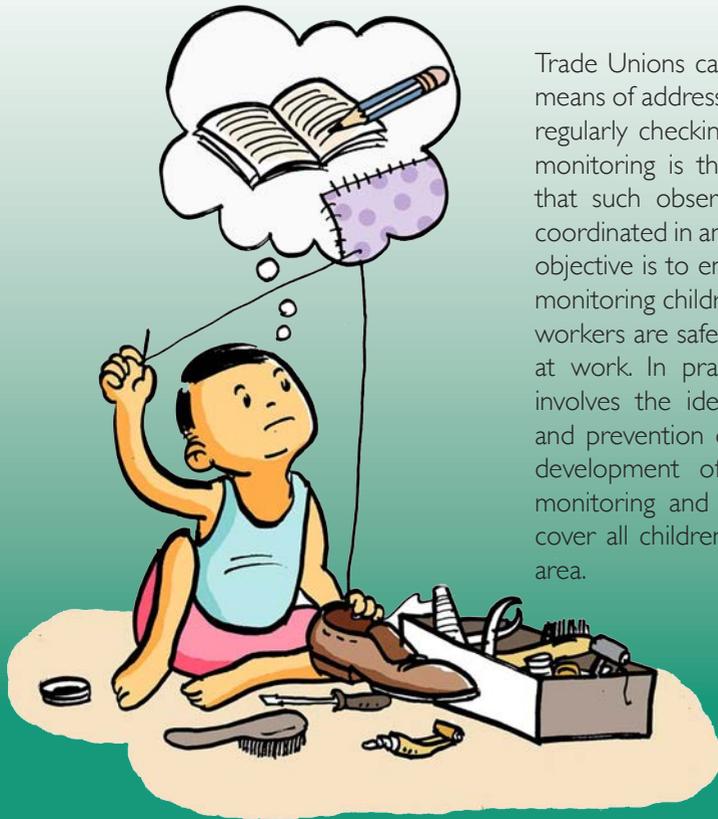
Workers' organizations have been the historic pioneers in promoting international labour standards, including those on the prohibition of child labour. It was workers' organizations in the 1860's that first called for campaigns against child labour. Child labour remains an affront to the objectives of trade unions everywhere and is therefore a key entry point for developing workers' organizations. As mass membership organizations, trade unions bring many strengths to efforts to eliminate child labour. Collective bargaining – as part of social dialogue – is one of the main trade union strategies to combat child labour.

Trade Unions: key actor for fighting Child Labour

Workers' Organizations seek to promote human/labour rights in the work place. Trade unions can disseminate new messages and take direct action to influence labour law and practices. As vertically integrated organizations they provide a unique link between the global and the national level on issues related to social protection and children's rights. Trade unions are well placed to act as watchdogs and to take direct action to prevent child labour and remove children from the workplace and help provide the alternatives of quality education and preparation for the adult world.



Child Labour monitoring



Trade Unions can use one of the most potent means of addressing child labour: monitoring, by regularly checking the workplace. Child labour monitoring is the active process that ensures that such observation is put in place and is coordinated in an appropriate manner. Its overall objective is to ensure that as a consequence of monitoring children and young legally employed workers are safe from exploitation and hazards at work. In practice child labour monitoring involves the identification, referral, protection and prevention of child labourers through the development of a coordinated multi-sector monitoring and referral process that aims to cover all children living in a given geographical area.

Teachers' organizations: Agents of social change

Within the context of their direct interaction with children, parents and communities, teachers and educators could play several major roles in the prevention and elimination of child labour: They can act as frontline monitors and "child watchers" because they are well positioned to identify the school-age children in the community, to encourage parents to enroll them in schools, to provide children with an interesting learning environment and to assist them with their educational problems and needs. Teachers can also act as resource persons who can inform children, parents and communities of the importance of education and the harmful effects of child labour on children and society. Finally, teachers' organizations can collaborate with other organizations to work on curriculum development to strengthen the school management system. It is vital that teachers and their organizations participate in decision-making and in educational planning and reform.