



# ONE HOUR AGAINST CHILD LABOUR

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## On June 12, at your school or union, talk about child labour!

Every 12 June, Education International (EI) and its member organisations worldwide celebrate the World Day against Child Labour. It is an occasion to highlight the global extent of child labour and raise awareness on the situation of millions of children, girls and boys, working across the globe. For EI and its affiliated teacher unions, World Day against Child Labour is also a good time to reiterate that every child has the right to a free quality public education.

Building on the success of its World AIDS Day campaign concept, 'One Hour on AIDS', EI, with the support of the International Labour Organisation's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (ILO-IPEC), suggests that teachers and their unions use this '**One Hour against Child Labour**' Activity Kit with their colleagues and students on Tuesday, 12 June, in schools, classrooms, staff rooms, union offices and union meetings. This kit will enable teachers, education workers, and their unions worldwide to lead a one-hour activity around child labour issues with the help of a simple and adaptable resource.

The Activity Kit includes a brief introduction and background information on child labour as well as an activity, pencils and a poster with ideas on how teachers, their unions and students can contribute to child labour prevention and promote the right to Education For All.

The objective is to sensitise teachers and students to the issue of child labour and to encourage them to take action at various levels throughout the year.

The '**One Hour against Child Labour**' Activity Kit is available in various languages and can be downloaded from the EI website at: <http://go.ei-ie.org/childlabour>.

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## Introduction and background information on child labour

The ILO estimates that 215 million children worldwide are involved in child labour, with more than half involved in the worst forms of child labour.

Child labour has major consequences for the education of children, with many child labourers either not attending school at all, or dropping out of school at an early age, being absent, repeating grades or having low educational achievement.

*Providing access to free and quality education for all children until the minimum age of employment is therefore a key strategy and the first step in tackling all forms of child labour*

Achieving Education For All (EFA) and the elimination of child labour are inextricably linked. On the one hand, free and compulsory quality education is a key element in the prevention of child labour. Children with no access to quality education have little alternative but to enter the labour market, where they are often forced to work in dangerous and exploitative conditions. On the other hand, child labour is one of the main obstacles to education, since children who are working cannot go to school and miss out on the necessary education.

### ILO standards on rights at work

The ILO Conventions on child labour seek to protect children. Together with other international instruments relating to children's rights, they provide an important framework for national legislation and programme implementation by governments.

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 and promote. These standards relate to 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.

The *ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (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.

#### Child labour trends:

- Globally, child labour continues to decline, albeit to a lesser extent than before;
- The number of children in hazardous work, often used for measuring the extent of the worst forms of child labour, is declining, particularly among those below 15 years of age. There are still 115 million children in hazardous work;
- Children's work is declining in the Asia-Pacific region and in Latin America and the Caribbean, but it is increasing in sub-Saharan Africa;
- There is a significant decrease in the number of girls involved in child labour;
- Most child labourers work in agriculture. Only one in five working children is in paid employment. The overwhelming majority are unpaid family workers.

Source: *Accelerating action against child labour*, ILO Global Report 2010



The *ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (182)* calls for 'immediate and effective measures to secure the prohibition of the worst forms of child labour as a matter of urgency'.

There is almost universal ratification of Convention 182 on the worst forms of child labour. However, there are still 14 countries that have ratified Convention 182 and not ratified Convention 138 on the minimum age of employment. These are countries with a significant proportion of the world's children. In those cases, trade unions should still be advocating for ratification as part of their campaign strategies.

## Other key international standards and Declarations

Over the years, with growing awareness of the need to ensure quality education and protection for children, a body of international standards has been developed to help guide governments in setting standards.

The *United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights* features prominently the right to education 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 this Convention.

*The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 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 and development. It also states that primary education should be compulsory and available free to all.*

The *Dakar Framework of Action* 'expresses the international community's collective commitment to pursue a broad-based strategy for ensuring that the basic learning needs of every child, youth and adult are met within a generation and sustained thereafter. It commits governments to achieving quality basic education for all by 2015 or earlier, with particular emphasis on girls' education, and includes a pledge from donor countries and institutions that "no country seriously committed to basic education will be thwarted in the achievement of this goal by lack of resources"'.

The *Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)* comprise eight international development goals that all 193 UN Member States have agreed to achieve by the year 2015. They include the achievement of universal primary education (Goal 2).

## What can you do for the World Day against Child Labour?

There are many ways teachers and their unions can support the World Day against Child Labour. You will find concrete ideas to prevent child labour and promote the right of every child to a free quality public education in the '**One Hour against Child Labour**' activity below and the attached poster. The activity is designed in such a way that you can easily adapt it to your particular target group (colleagues and students) and your local context and culture.

To get wider visibility and publicity on the World Day against Child Labour, we encourage you to collaborate with national ILO offices, civil society organisations, parents' associations, local and national authorities, and the media.



## One Hour against Child Labour Activity

### Leading the Activity

Anyone can lead this activity with students and teachers. You do not need to be an expert on child labour issues. Your main role is to facilitate an open discussion and create an environment in which teachers and students feel free to express their ideas and opinions.

### Guidelines to lead the activity

- Purpose:**
- To engage participants in discussing issues related to child labour
  - To encourage participants to take action in response to child labour
- Target Group:**
- Teachers and students (ages recommended below)
- Time:**
- One hour
- Materials:**
- Copies of the activity worksheet (Page 9), with a statement for discussion written on each one
  - Paper and pencils
  - 'One hour against Child Labour' poster

### Procedure:

#### 1. Introduction (5 minutes)

- Open the session by explaining to participants that June 12 is the World Day against Child Labour and that thousands of teachers and students will be participating in this activity at the same time all around the world.
- Divide participants into groups (4 to 8 people) for the small-group discussion.
- Distribute a worksheet to each group.
- Choose several statements for discussion from the following list:
  - *Child labour will never be eliminated until poverty disappears* (age 10 and above)
  - *Children are better suited for some work than adults* (age 10 and above)
  - *Education is crucial to put an end to child labour* (age 10 and above)
  - *Being a responsible consumer can help end child labour* (age 10 and above)
  - *Children are cheaper and cost less to hire* (age 12 and above)
  - *Child labour is a valuable part of children's early childhood education* (age 14 and above)
  - *It is important that States ratify ILO's fundamental conventions* (adults)
  - *Teachers and their unions are key partners in the fight against child labour* (adults)
- Allocate a different statement for discussion to each group.

#### 2. Small-Group Discussion (20 minutes)

- Tell the small groups that their first task is to choose a person who will take notes and report back to the large group. Ask each group to write their group statement at the top of the worksheet.



- Then ask each member of the group to take a minute to share with their group what the statement means to him or her.
- The group should now discuss their responses to the three questions on the worksheet:
  - Which points does everyone agree with in relation to the statement?
  - What, if anything, do group members disagree with in relation to the statement?
  - What actions should you take to address the issues raised in your discussion?
- The note taker should briefly summarise the main points in readiness to report back on the group discussion.

### 3. Large-Group Work (20 minutes)

- Reconvene the large group, and ask the participants who took notes to provide a brief summary of their group's responses to the three questions.
- Provide a few summarising points about child labour:
  - Child labour is a global issue. Millions of children around the world are deprived of education.
  - Every child has the right to education.
  - In order to successfully respond to child labour, people at all levels need to take action and assume responsibility.
  - Both young people and adults can take action.

### 4. The 'One Hour against Child Labour' Poster (15 minutes)

- Explain that there are many ways we can take action against child labour at the individual, community, network and national levels. The '**One Hour against Child Labour**' poster suggests various actions at different levels:
  - '**Engage yourself**': students and teachers can take action at the individual level. You can, for example, make sure you do not employ children in your home, you act as a responsible consumer and buy products that are produced under fair labour standards, or you can lobby your local politicians through signature campaigns and petitions.
  - '**At the level of your social network**': this applies to many different settings, including your school or workplace. The goal is to help people learn more about child labour. You can increase awareness, for example, by writing an article in your union magazine or local newspapers, by discussing the issue of child labour and encouraging your colleagues to take part in the World Day against Child Labour and by organising Education For All (EFA) events to discuss how quality public EFA can help tackle child labour.
  - '**At the level of your school or workplace**': get your school or workplace to address child labour. Encourage your school or workplace, for example, in organising a meeting on 12 June talking about World Day against Child Labour and the importance of keeping children and especially girls in school, by raising awareness of the importance of education and by including child labour as part of teacher unions' strategic plans.



- **'At the level of your community'**: includes a wide range of activities to be engaged in your community, for example, by working with families and communities in child labour monitoring, by volunteering for an organisation engaged in activities against child labour and by attending or organising rallies.
- **'At the national level'**: includes convincing your government to take action against child labour. You can, for example, take action by meeting with your local authorities to demand policies, measures and programmes to put an end to child labour. You can also urge your government to ratify the ILO's core Conventions on child labour and implement existing legislations concerning the protection of children.

Then encourage participants to pledge to undertake a specific action. Provide a sheet of paper for them to write their name and the action they commit to take. Say that you will ask them to report back to their peers in the following months on their progress in taking action. Alternatively, you could also ask participants to tick the box of the action chosen or write their pledge on the **'One Hour against Child Labour'** poster before hanging it in the classroom. You can then refer to the poster at various occasions during the year.



## Statements for discussion

**Note:** The responses to the Statements below are provided as an example to give you an idea of the issues that could be discussed. You and the participants may add further information and examples according to the age, knowledge level, and interests of the group.

You may also choose other statements which are not included in this list and are more appropriate to your local situation.

Sources: ILO, UNICEF, Global March against Child Labour, Campaign against Child Labour.

### 1. *Child labour will never be eliminated until poverty disappears*

**Disagree:** Hazardous child labour can and must be eliminated independently of poverty reduction. Even if most child labourers come from poor families, poverty is not the only reason why children work. Recent studies examining the role that poverty plays in child labour have found that other factors, such as parents' low regard for the education of children, particularly girls, and failing education systems contribute equally to child labour. Too often, poverty is used as an excuse for child labour. Poverty will never be eradicated until child labourers are sent back to schools. Redirecting child labourers to school is better for families in the long run than letting them continue to work. Child labourers suffer the psychological and physical consequences of hard work and end up as unemployed adults relying on their own children to provide income.

### 2. *Children are better suited for some work than adults*

**Disagree:** This is commonly used as an excuse for using child labour in the carpet weaving industry. Yet, evidence negates the idea that children make better workers than adults because they are endowed with special attributes that are superior to adults for particular work. Research carried out by the International Labour Organisation has proved that this claim is often indefensible. The 'nimble fingers' argument is entirely wrong in several hazardous industries, including carpet-making, glass manufacturing, mining, and gem polishing. Even in hand-knotting of carpets, which calls for considerable dexterity, an empirical study of over 2,000 weavers found that children were no more likely than adults to make the finest knots. Some of the best carpets, with the greatest density of small knots, are woven by adults. If a child's 'nimble fingers' are not essential in such demanding work, it is difficult to imagine in which trades this claim might be valid.

### 3. *Education is crucial to put an end to child labour*

**Agree:** The achievement of Education for All goals and the elimination of child labour are linked. On the one hand, education is a key element in the prevention of child labour. Children with no access to quality education have little alternative but to enter the labour market, where they are often forced to work in dangerous and exploitative conditions. On the other hand, child labour is one of the main obstacles to EFA, since children who are working cannot go to school and miss out the necessary education.

The prevention and elimination of child labour should be an integral part of education policy worldwide. Providing access to free, compulsory and quality education for all children is a key strategy and the first



step in tackling all forms of child labour.

#### 4. *Being a responsible consumer can help to end child labour*

**Agree:** It is important to be a responsible social consumer. This means that you are a person who thinks before you buy. You can always check companies' labour policies and know if they use child labour, if they implement labour rights standards, if they have specific codes of ethics or labels by visiting websites of consumer organisations' networks such as the Clean Clothes Campaign, Make IT Fair, PlayFair, Asia Floor Wage, achAct, etc.

While no universal certification exists for 'child labour free' products, there are also groups that monitor specific industries (e.g. Rugmark Foundation) certifying that manufacturers adhere to strict labour standards.

You can also choose not to buy certain products by participating in boycotts or product labelling campaigns against products with child labour content.

#### 5. *Children are cheaper and cost less to hire*

**Disagree:** The economic argument that it costs much less to employ children than adults collapses under close scrutiny. Children are usually paid less than adults. Yet, the International Labour Organisation has found that the labour-cost savings from the use of child labour is very small: less than 5% compared to the final foreign retail price of bangles; and less than 5-10% compared to the final foreign retail price of carpets. Foreign retailers typically mark up carpets approximately 200%. Carpets can easily cost four times as much to the consumer as the Indian export price.

#### 6. *Child labour is a valuable part of children's early childhood education*

**Disagree:** Millions of child labourers miss a critical time in their physical and mental development to work day and night. Primary and secondary education imparts not only the knowledge and skills children need to obtain adequate employment as adults, but also provides children with an opportunity to relate to people in social settings. Moreover, education empowers children by enabling them to gain knowledge of their basic rights and realise their potential.

With little or no education, children grow up to be less healthy and less productive than adults who did not work until they reached adulthood.

#### 7. *It is important that States ratify ILO's fundamental conventions*

**Agree:** The ILO's Conventions on child labour seek to protect children. There are two major conventions: The *ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973* (No. 138) which 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; and the *ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999* (No. 182) which calls for '*immediate and effective measures to secure the prohibition of the worst forms of child labour as a matter of urgency*'.

The Convention No. 138 has been ratified by 80% of ILO member States while the ratification of Convention No. 182 has been the fastest ever in the history of the ILO (ratified by 171 out of 183 member States). Ratifying a Convention is an important step, but putting that commitment into action is



a greater challenge. The application of Conventions is monitored by the ILO's supervisory mechanism, namely, the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR) and the Committee on the Application of Standards of the International Labour Conference, where child labour is frequently discussed so as to bring about progress in the countries concerned.

#### **8. *Teachers and their unions are key partners in the fight against child labour***

**Agree:** Teachers and their unions are best placed to help prevent child labour, particularly in the areas of awareness-raising and the monitoring of child labour as they interact daily with child workers and vulnerable children. They can contribute to the prevention of child labour both by taking action in schools and by reaching out to the community. This allows them to identify children not attending school regularly or at all. Teacher unions can lobby their governments to ratify and implement ILO core conventions on child labour. Teachers and their unions are also the best advocates for free and quality Education for All.

