

CHILD LABOUR AND EDUCATION

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS



International
Labour
Organization

What is the World Day Against Child Labour?

The International Labour Organization (ILO) launched the World Day Against Child Labour in 2002 as a platform for highlighting the global extent of child labour and focusing new attention on global action to eliminate child labour. Each year the World Day Against Child Labour, celebrated on 12 June, links governments, employers' and workers' organizations, as well as civil society and others – such as schools and the media – in the campaign against child labour, through advocacy and solidarity.

Why is this year's World Day highlighting the role of education?

Expanding access to free and compulsory education is crucial to reducing child labour. Put simply, if a child is attending school regularly, the possibility of involvement in child labour is limited. The most recent ILO Global Report on child labour noted that the establishment of universal schooling for children up to age 14 contributed to the effective end of child labour in a number of countries. Experience in Latin America and in East and South-East Asia has shown that political commitment to tackling poverty and expanding education has an important bearing on the elimination of child labour.

How many children work? How many are not in school?

The most recent ILO estimates indicate that there are 165 million child labourers worldwide between the ages of 5 and 14. Of these, 74 million are exposed to hazardous work.¹ The most recent international data on education enrolment shows that 72 million children of primary school age are not enrolled in school, and girls are less likely to be in school than boys.² However, many children who are enrolled do not attend regularly and often begin to work at an early age. Lack of access to education is even more pronounced among children at the post-primary age level. In many countries there is little schooling available for children over 12, so they become particularly vulnerable and may soon drift into the labour force.

What can governments do?

Some of the main education related policy options to tackle child labour include:

- Reducing direct and indirect costs of schooling - poor families often cannot afford to pay school fees and other related costs.
- Creating financial incentives and offsetting household costs to encourage families to send their children to school.
- Tackling the barriers in education policies and programmes which result in girls being underrepresented in education.
- Improving the quality of education - this encourages parents to send children to school and can reduce the level of drop out.
- Providing education opportunities for youths and adults who have missed out on formal schooling.
- Providing relevant vocational skills training for older children and youth so that young people acquire skills that assist the transition from school to work.

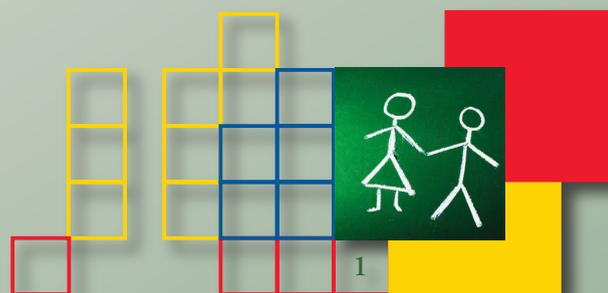
Is this affordable?

Investing in education is a sound economic decision. An ILO study found that eliminating child labour and replacing it with universal education would yield major economic benefits in addition to social benefits. Globally, benefits exceed costs by a ratio of more than 6 to 1, with each extra year of schooling to the age of 14 generating an additional 11 per cent of future earnings per year.³

¹ ILO: *The end of child labour: Within reach. Global Report under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work* (Geneva, 2006).

² UNESCO: *Education for All Global Monitoring Report – Education for All by 2015, Will we make it?* (Paris, 2008).

³ IPEC: *Investing in every child. An economic study of the costs and benefits of eliminating child labour* (ILO, Geneva, 2003).



What else can be done?

Education is vital but cannot address child labour alone. **Family poverty, social safety nets for poor families, enforcement of laws on child labour and education, and providing adults with opportunities for decent work and income** all contribute to overcoming child labour. Recent experience in Latin America suggests that cash transfer programmes to poor families have significantly boosted the number of children in school.

How can we encourage families to send children to school if the quality of education offered is poor?

Whilst improving access to free education is vital to increasing participation, the education provided must be of sufficient quality to keep children in school and ensure positive learning outcomes. All too often lessons take place in crowded and dilapidated classrooms with insufficient resources and unqualified teachers. Parents who do not feel education is worthwhile are less likely to send their children to school, leaving them no choice but to enter the labour market at an early age.

How important are teachers in the process?

Very. A recent report from a prestigious monitoring group on Education for All noted that 18 million new primary school teachers are needed worldwide if we are to reach universal primary education by 2015. **Governments need to train, hire and deploy quality teachers** – especially female teachers – at all levels of education and improve the socio-economic status of the teaching profession in order to ensure that universal primary education and quality learning can be achieved by 2015.

How is the ILO helping child labourers?

The ILO works at multiple levels. It works with governments, social partners and national structures established to tackle child labour to develop legal frameworks in line with ILO Conventions concerning child labour and to build national capacity to tackle child labour. The ILO also works at the local level to help child labourers and communities. This involves supporting various partners who seek to protect children from the worst forms of child labour as well as the development of strategies to prevent children from entering child labour. In both instances, providing children with access to education and training is crucial.

In the past two years the ILO's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) has worked in 88 countries and provided services directly assisting almost 430.000 children who are either involved in or vulnerable to child labour. Of these children, some 203.000 children were withdrawn from child labour. The large majority of the working children were involved in the worst forms of child labour.⁴

How does the ILO work with other international agencies on this issue?

In the UN Millennium Development Goals, the international community has set itself targets to ensure that by 2015 all children receive complete primary education and that there is gender parity in education. However, recent progress reports have highlighted the fact that child labour presents a significant obstacle to these goals.

The ILO is part of an international Global Task Force on Child Labour and Education for All. This brings together the ILO, UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank and UNDP together with the global federation of teachers' unions, Education International, and the Global March against Child Labour. The Governments of Norway and Brazil are also involved in this partnership which aims to support efforts to ensure education policies are responsive to the situation of child labourers.

For more information, visit: www.ilo.org/ippec.

⁴ IPEC: *IPEC action against child labour 2006-2007: Progress and future priorities* (Geneva, ILO, 2008).

