

Reaching
the **unreached**
- our common
challenge



**The Global
Task Force
on Child Labour
and Education
for All**

The Millennium Development Goals and Education for All – Child labour is a major obstacle

Recent progress reports on the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and Education for All (EFA) have drawn attention to the challenge that remains if targets on education in the MDGs and the Dakar Framework of Action on Education for All are to be met. Recent reports on both these development targets have also identified child labour as an obstacle to progress on education.

The 2006 MDG Report reviewed progress on MDG 2 which seeks to ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling by 2015. It stated that whilst progress was being made in improving access to primary education, there were disparities in progress, and that the poorest, often those in rural areas, are being left behind. The report stated that “High rates of poverty in rural areas limit educational opportunities because of demands for children’s labour, low levels of parental education and lack of access to good quality schooling”¹.

The Dakar Framework of Action on Education for All calls for free and compulsory education of good quality by 2015 with elimination of gender disparities by 2005 and gender equality in education by 2015. However, the 2007 EFA Global Monitoring report indi-

Statistics tell their own story

The 2007 EFA Global Monitoring report indicated that some 77 million primary aged children are not enrolled in school.

For every 100 boys in school, there are only 94 girls.

The ILO’s most recent Global report has estimated that in the 5-14 age group more than 165 million children are involved in child labour.

In secondary education gross enrolment rates remain low in many regions, in Sub Saharan Africa 30%, and in South and West Asia 51%.

82% of out of school children are in rural areas.

Household surveys suggest many children who are enrolled in school do not attend regularly.

cated that 77 million primary-age children are still not enrolled. On gender goals (also a target of MDG 3) only two-thirds of countries have achieved gender parity in primary education, and only one-third have achieved it in secondary education. The Global Monitoring Report stated “Education for All...requires an inclusive approach that emphasizes the need to reach groups that might not otherwise have access to education and learning”². It calls for policies aimed at “reaching the unreached”, including policies to overcome the need for child labour.³

¹ Millennium Development Goals Report, 2006, p.7

² EFA Global Monitoring Report 2007, p.67

³ EFA Global Monitoring Report 2007, p.69

The persistence of child labour is a major challenge and is an indicator of the impact of poverty and lack of access to quality education in any country.

The Global Task Force on Child Labour and Education for All is an international partnership which has the objective of contributing to the achievement of EFA goals through the elimination of child labour. Endorsed and launched at the EFA

High-Level Group meeting in Beijing during November 2005, the members of the partnership are the ILO, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP, the World Bank, Education International and the Global March against Child Labour. A number of donor countries and countries which are making progress on the EFA goals are also represented in the GTF.

Causes of child labour

Child labour can stem from one or more causes in any given country, including:

- poverty and the need for all family members to contribute economically to their survival;
- limited access to education institutions or programmes
- direct or indirect costs of education preventing children accessing school
- poor quality education leading to households placing more value on work than schooling
- discriminatory practices in society and in education, for example, against girls or certain population groups, such as indigenous peoples;
- cultural and/or traditional practices in certain geographical locations or among certain peoples, for example, migrant workers, indigenous populations and lower castes;
- employment practices where small businesses may prefer to employ children because they can pay them less than adults
- the death of parents or guardians from HIV/AIDS, creating a new generation of child-headed households. Many children are being withdrawn from school to help in the home or to begin to work;
- armed conflict and children being forced to take up arms or give support in other forms of labour;
- lack of acknowledgement of the problem of child labour by some governments, other socio-economic and political actors and even the public at large



Education: a powerful tool in the fight against child labour

The right to education occupies a central place in human rights and is essential for the exercise of all other human rights and for development. As an empowerment right, education is a key vehicle through which economically and socially marginalized children, youth and adults can lift themselves out of poverty and obtain the means to participate fully in their communities.

There is a close link between education access and child labour. Free and compulsory education of good quality up to the minimum age for entering into employment is a key tool in preventing child labour. Attendance at school removes children, in part at least, from the labour market. Education also lays the basis for the acquisition of employable skills needed for gainful employment. The skills acquired at school may lead directly to the sort of gainful employment that will help children rise above the poverty into which they were born. Furthermore, when children who have had the benefits of an education – particularly girls – grow up, they are more likely to make the choice of education for their own children, thus helping to reduce the future ranks of child labourers.

Good quality transitional education programmes can also be important in the rehabilitation and social reintegration of child labourers enabling them to “catch up” with their peers and can help

reintegrate child labourers into formal education. Such programmes can also provide former child labourers with literacy and numeric skills, building their confidence and self-esteem. Many programmes targeting child labourers include life skills components and often provide older children with skills training. For many of these children, the education and training they receive can be a lifeline enabling them to become fulfilled and productive adults and can help break the cycle of poverty.

Quality education needs to recognize the needs of child labourers

The physical and psychosocial consequences of child labour can be numerous and damaging to young minds and bodies. Providing education for children who have been removed from child labour can present many difficult challenges to education systems. However if systems and programmes do not take these challenging characteristics into account within the broader aim of providing education for all children, there is a risk they will either not reach these children or will fail to retain them in the classroom.

Governments and education authorities also need to find ways of reaching out to the parents of the children and convincing them of the necessity and advantage of sending their children, particularly girls, to school and supporting them in this effort.

The Policy framework

The **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**, spells out the basic human rights of all children and seeks to protect these rights by setting standards. It requires State Parties to make primary education compulsory and available free to all, and encourages the development of secondary education, including general and vocational education, available and accessible to every child.

The Convention recognizes the rights of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous, to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's development. It requires states to provide a minimum age or ages for admission to employment.

The **ILO Minimum Age Convention, No. 138 (1973)** states that the minimum age of employment should not be less than the age of completion of compulsory schooling and, in any case, shall not be less than 15 years. A member country whose economy and educational facilities are insufficiently developed may initially specify a minimum age of 14 years. National laws or regulations may permit the employment or work of persons 13 to 15 years of age on limited light work which is not likely to be harmful to their health or development; or to prejudice their attendance at school, (The ages of 12-14 can apply for light work in countries which have specified a minimum age of 14).

In 1999, the **ILO adopted the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, No. 182**. This requires countries to implement time bound measures for eliminating the most dangerous forms of child labour.

These definitions exclude work undertaken by young people that is considered to be appropriate for their age and level of maturity. For example activities such as helping parents or family businesses with small jobs after schoolwork is over, are not regarded as child labour.

Promoting policies to tackle barriers to education

In the 2007 EFA Global Monitoring Report, the UNESCO Director-General informs the international community that “Policies must address the barriers to education”. There is increasing international focus on the nature of policies required to reach those who are presently unreached, and more detailed analysis is required of those who remain excluded from education and the reasons they remain excluded.

A crucial target group for inclusive education strategies should be the millions of child labourers worldwide who have never attended school, have dropped out of school or combine school and work. Child labour is a significant part of the multi-dimensional “barrier network” which also involves issues of poverty, gender, quality, access, the impact of HIV/AIDS and disability.

The 2007 Global Monitoring Report highlighted the need for policies to tackle exclusion, including steps to overcome the need for child labour. Some of the policy options to tackle exclusion listed in the report and particularly relevant in the context of tackling child labour are

- reducing direct costs of schooling
- creating financial incentives, offsetting household costs, to stimulate demand for schooling
- creating incentives to overcome the need for child labour
- providing non-formal education opportunities for youths and adults

who have missed out on formal schooling

Interventions in education need to be accompanied by interventions that aim at changing policies, attitudes in society and addressing the survival needs of families. Such initiatives are likely to require strategies for poverty reduction, legal reform, regulation and enforcement, income generation, employment promotion for adults, and social safety nets for poor families.

Building our knowledge base

In order to ensure that policies and programmes can reach out to children who are outside the school system, it is important to understand the reasons for child labour, and the relationship between child labour and education. In recent years, there has been an increasing focus on strengthening the knowledge base on the range of inter-related factors that can affect school attendance, child labour and learning achievement. An improved understanding of these factors can help in the design of interventions aimed at bringing child labourers back into education, and ensure that they remain in school once re-enrolled. Improved understanding of these issues can also help in the design of interventions aimed at preventing other at risk children from dropping out of school.

Mainstreaming child labour in Education Sector Plans and Development Frameworks

In recent years a large number of countries have developed Education Sector Plans which set out the national objectives for education. Whilst some of these directly address the issue of child labour, this is not always the case. More attention therefore needs to be given to the child labour dimension when developing such Plans.

There are also other important policy frameworks which should address the issue of child labour. Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) are prepared by governments in low-income countries through a participatory process involving domestic stakeholders and external development partners, including the IMF and the World Bank. A PRSP describes the macroeconomic, structural and social policies and programmes that a country will pursue over several years to promote broad-based growth and reduce poverty, as well as external financing needs. Whilst education figures prominently in most PRSPs, there is often no reference to the child labour challenge, or how this might present an obstacle to education goals.

Many other development initiatives require the formulation of National Action Plans, including National Action Plans to Tackle the Worst Forms of Child Labour. It is important to ensure an integrated approach to national policy development, so that various policies and plans are coherent with one another and that the links between them are reinforced through joint strategies and activities.

Promoting partnership and inter-sectoral co-operation

It is clear to those involved in efforts to combat child labour, reduce poverty and ensure access to quality education for all children that none of these aims can be achieved in isolation. At the national level developing linkages and cooperation between Ministries is increasingly important.

Most UN agencies are linked to a particular government department and many funding sources are similarly linked to different areas of development. For example, the ILO works primarily with Ministries of Labour, UNESCO with Ministries of Education, UNICEF with Ministries of Health, Education, Social Affairs or Women and Children, and so on. Improved coherence requires closer co-ordination throughout the funding and development support structures in each country, and between UN agencies and others.



Global Task Force on Child Labour and Education for All

In November 2003 the first Inter-Agency Round Table on Child Labour and Education was organized during the annual meeting of the UNESCO High-Level Group on EFA in New Delhi. The Round Table issued a joint statement, the New Delhi Declaration, calling for greater co-ordination between initiatives and resources directed towards providing quality education for all children and eliminating child labour. In order to promote this enhanced co-ordination and to move the agenda forward in terms of linking work on child labour and education, a number of organizations proposed the formation of a Global Task Force on Child Labour and Education for All. The Global Task Force on Child Labour and Education for All (GTF) was subsequently endorsed and launched during the Education for All High-Level Group meeting held in Beijing in November 2005.

The establishment of the GTF reflects international concern that child labour is an obstacle to the achievement of the EFA goals. The international community's efforts to achieve EFA and the elimination of child labour are inextricably linked. As long as child labour continues to prevail in many developing countries, the international com-

munity will find it difficult to achieve the education-related Millennium Development Goals and the EFA goals.

The overall objective of the GTF is to contribute to the achievement of the EFA goals through the elimination of child labour. The GTF is a partnership to assist developing countries in this endeavour. Its main strategy is to mobilize political will and momentum towards mainstreaming the issue of child labour in national and international policy frameworks contributing to the EFA objectives. This strategy will be pursued through:

- strengthening the knowledge base on child labour and education linkages
- advocacy and social mobilization
- programme support
- promoting policy coherence
- developing partnerships

The Global Task Force on Child Labour and Education for All is now taking forward work in these areas, building a network of interested partners and joint activities. The new partnership aims to be an effective catalyst to ensure that the obvious linkages between tackling child labour and promoting access to education are identified and acted on.

Global Task Force on Child Labour and Education for All

International Labour Organization (ILO)

UNESCO

UNICEF

The World Bank

UNDP

Education International

Global March Against Child Labour

www.ilo.org

www.unesco.org

www.unicef.org

www.worldbank.org

www.undp.org

www.ei-ie.org

www.globalmarch.org

The ILO provides the Secretariat for the Global Task Force. For more information contact ipcc@ilo.org