

Tackling Child Labour – A key to progress on the Millennium Development Goals

Summary of a side event organised by the Global Task Force on Child Labour and Education for All and the Government of The Netherlands

New York, September 21, 2010

Opening and welcome

On behalf of the organisers, the Global Task Force on Child Labour and Education for All and the Government of The Netherlands, Ms. Constance Thomas, Director of ILO-IPEC welcomed participants. In setting the background for the discussion, she said that in May 2010 the Government of The Netherlands had hosted in The Hague a major global Conference on child labour. The discussions during The Hague Conference had taken place against the background of a new ILO global report on child labour which had estimated that there were still some 215 million children worldwide involved in child labour, with some 115 million in the worst forms of child labour.

The Hague Conference had adopted a Roadmap for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour which identified child labour as a significant impediment to attainment of MDGs concerning poverty, education, health and gender. The Roadmap also called for effective partnerships across the United Nations and the multilateral system to address child labour, and mainstreaming attention to child labour into international policy and development frameworks and indicators. It had also stated the intention of the Government of The Netherlands to bring the Roadmap to the attention of the Review Conference on the UN Millennium Development Goals.

The Global Task Force and the Government of The Netherlands had taken the initiative to convene the side event, to ensure visibility for the child labour issue during the period of the MDG review. The international community had demonstrated that when there is sufficient concern with an issue, and when resources are mobilised to tackle the issue, progress can be made. Progress on girls' education was an example of this. It was necessary to try to generate such concern on the issue of child labour.

Ms. Thomas said it was very welcome that the MDG Review outcome document contained an explicit reference to tackling the worst forms of child labour. This was the first time the link between child labour and the MDGs had been made explicit. In the context of MDG 1 the Outcome Document called for "...appropriate steps to assist one another in the elimination of the worst forms of child labour, strengthening child protection systems and combating trafficking in children through, inter alia, enhanced international cooperation and assistance, including support for social and economic development, poverty eradication programmes and universal education". The Outcome Document's recommendations on MDG 2 were also very relevant to the efforts to tackle child labour.

The members of the Panel were then introduced as follows:

- Mr. Ad Melkert, Rapporteur of The Hague Child Labour Conference
- Ms. Marta Santos Pais, Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence against Children
- Minister Marcia Lopes, Minister of Social Development , Brazil
- Ms Yoka Brandt, Director-General, Directorate-General for International Cooperation, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Mr. Olav Seim, Director of Education for All Coordination, UNESCO
- Ms. Toni Cortese, Education International
- Mr. Kailash Satyarthi, Global March against Child Labour

Panel contributions and discussion

During an interactive discussion, some of the main points made were as follows:

Mr Ad Melkert said that it was very important that the issue of child labour had now been addressed in the MDG review outcome document. For a long time it had been difficult to convince the development community of the need to consider specific issues relating to child labour, but it was now clear that tackling child labour could indeed be a driver of change and lead to progress on the MDGs.

He said that the Roadmap adopted in The Hague sought to identify ways and means to accelerate progress in tackling child labour. First and foremost it made clear that the prime responsibility rests with governments. Where governments had shown political commitment and implemented the right policies, there had been progress. To make a real and lasting a difference it was necessary to deliver systemic change in key areas, in particular ensuring access to education, social protection and employment of adults.

He said there were a number of specific suggestions in the Roadmap, which in his view could help advance the discussion and accelerate progress. In particular these included:

- The need for national follow up mechanisms , additional to obligations under ILO Convention No. 182, including annual tripartite meetings to review progress and action
- The proposal for a Global leaders initiative-giving the global movement against child labour a recognised public face
- The production of an annual report on child labour led by the Global Leaders Initiative

Ms Yoka Brandt said that in line with the intentions signalled in the Roadmap, the Roadmap had been drawn to the attention of the International Labour Conference and now the MDG Review Conference. It was encouraging that the Review Conference had integrated attention to tackling the worst forms of child labour in the Outcome statement.

It was very clear that there was a high degree of interdependence within the MDGs, and tackling child labour could be supported by action and progress across the MDGs. For example if we can make progress in tackling poverty, we can help ensure children access school instead of working. If we make progress on HIV/AIDS we reduce the number of orphaned children who are forced to work to sustain family incomes.

Whilst all the MDGs were important and highly relevant, it was clear that education and child labour were particularly closely connected. There was a need to improve the quality of education as well as to tackle particular barriers to education, including costs.

Ms. Brandt also referred to the importance of having the European Union on board in taking forward work on child labour. It had already been agreed that Member States would work together to help implement National Action Plans to tackle child labour, and the EU would need to continue to monitor progress, including encouraging countries to ensure child labour is not used in product supply chains.

Mr. Olav Seim said it was very clear that the issues of tackling child labour and promoting education for all children were very closely related. Child labour represents a barrier to children entering school, but the availability of and access to a system providing quality education can be a major part of the solution to child labour.

During the MDG review process the progress which had been made on MDG 2, achieving universal primary education had been widely quoted as an example of an MDG on which good progress had been made. However there were still 69 million children not enrolled in primary education, and it was apparent that on present trends the MDG will not be achieved.

There are still major challenges in ensuring that children in child labour and other excluded groups can access primary education. This will require an up scaling of action and additional resources, which will not be easy at a time when many governments are reducing budgets.

Minister Marcia Lopes said that the progress which had been made in Brazil in reducing child labour pointed to the importance of strong political commitment, and putting in place a positive policy environment. The issue had been identified as a national priority, with certain specific programmes aimed at children in child labour, along with wider social protection programmes aimed at tackling poverty.

It was important to have an integrated approach as child labour was closely related to broader development concerns. It could not be seen as a stand alone issue. Among the important measures taken in Brazil had been the establishment of some 7,000 centres charged with monitoring the situation of families, identifying vulnerable children and seeking to ensure their access to basic services such as education and health. Despite the progress in Brazil there were still more than 1 million children involved in child labour and among initiatives to tackle the problem, partnerships with the private sector could play an important role. Minister Lopes also said that the next football World Cup will be held in Brazil and that the Government would be using that event to highlight the “Red card to child labour” campaign, helping to build public awareness on the subject.

Ms. Marta Santos Pais also said that the reference in the Outcome Document to tackling the worst forms of child labour was important, and in that context the development of effective child protection systems should be a priority. As highlighted by the data on the worst forms of child labour, too many children remain trapped in dangerous working conditions, and many are subject to exploitation in illicit activities.

There was a need for agencies to build effective partnerships and work together on the basis of common principles. The Roadmap adopted in The Hague provided a framework upon which partnerships could be developed and strengthened. There was a need to work towards universal ratification of ILO Convention No. 182 and the protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). It was good that the activities were coinciding with the 20th anniversary of the CRC and in developing activities it was important to remember that children themselves can be agents of change.

Ms. Toni Cortese said that Education International represented more than 400 member organisations in more than 170 countries and as such had a direct involvement and concern on issues of access to education and the quality of education. It was clear that providing a quality education was vital to keep children in school. Untrained teachers, teaching in poor conditions, would inevitably lead to children dropping out or families choosing not to enrol children.

It was important that all the barriers to education were addressed and support provided to ensure that all children can access education. The message should be “child labour for none-education for all”. Expanding global resources for education was a part of this and national governments must commit themselves to supporting education.

Mr. Kailash Satyarthi said that whilst there had been some reduction in child labour and progress in increasing enrolment in primary education, it was clear that much more needed to be done and the linkage between the two issues needed to be more widely understood. Out of school children were not standing idle. They were working in the streets and in the fields. Yet very often the issues of child labour and education were treated separately, handled by different Ministries, and too often with little connection between them.

The leadership of the Dutch Government and their initiative to host the Global Child Labour Conference, provided a good basis for up scaling action on child labour. It was necessary to find practical ways to bring together the various Ministries and partners involved with a view to building more effective action.

In discussion, **Susan Bissell, UNICEF** said that at present within the development community there was a robust discussion taking place about equity and child protection, and this issue was important for progress on the MDGs. Ensuring equitable access to basic service provision needed to be a cornerstone of efforts to tackle poverty. Whilst the MDG review had heard of progress on MDG 1, much of this was a result of progress in the BRIC countries, many other countries had seen much less progress.

UNICEF welcomed the focus of the Roadmap on social exclusion and how to reach the hardest to reach. It was important to build a protective environment for all children, and an integrated policy response linking employment promotion, access to basic services for the vulnerable, and child protection. There were clear linkages between child labour and economic and social development. Child labour impacted negatively on human capital development and economic growth.

Bob Prouty, EFA Fast Track Initiative (FTI) said that as yet the discussion around ensuring education for all had not taken sufficient account of the child labour dimension, and it was important that the partnerships developed to bring together work on these issues find ways to develop work to have maximum impact.

In relation to the comments made by Minister Lopes, he said that FTI was interested in Brazil’s experience in ensuring that vulnerable children and families identified through data collection, were linked with provision of basic services and further discussion of this experience could be useful.

In general discussion other participants raised issues on the importance of strong political commitment, and the need to involve children and youth in discussion on strategies, recognising connections between tackling child labour and promoting gainful youth employment.

Concluding remarks

Ms. Marcia Lopes concluded her remarks by saying that during the Global Conference in The Hague, the Government of Brazil had offered to host an international conference in 2013 to review progress towards the 2016 goal. This had now been further discussed in Brazil and there was a political commitment to support such an event. The Government was beginning to take preparatory steps and would be discussing further with the ILO and other UN agencies concerning plans.

The Government was also planning to have discussions with the Government of The Netherlands to learn of their practical experience in delivering The Hague Conference. It would also be putting in place mechanisms to consult widely as plans for the 2013 Conference progressed.

Mr. Ad Melkert concluded by saying that the importance of an integrated approach had been stressed by many speakers, and this should be kept in mind as we move forward. He referred to the recent ILO/IMF Oslo Conference “The challenge of growth, employment and social cohesion” which had highlighted the mutually reinforcing roles of employment and social protection. Addressing child labour within the context of a broad approach aimed at promoting equitable economic and social development could have much to offer.

In closing the side event **Ms. Constance Thomas** thanked all participants for their participation and contributions. The involvement in the side event of participants from government delegations, missions, social partners and civil society indicated the wide commitment to action on child labour. This provided a good basis on which to move forward in following up on the Roadmap and the new commitment reflected in the MDG Review Outcome Document.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

(based on attendance list completed during the side event)

Mr. Ad MELKERT	Rapporteur, Hague Global Child Labour Conference
Mr Tamer MORRIS	Australian Mission
Dr Frysal ALZAYANI	Permanent Mission, Bahrain
Ms Marcia LOPES	Minister of Social Development, Mission of Brazil
Ms Tatiana SEGOVIA TOBIAS MICHEL	Head, International Advisory, MoL & Employment, Brazil
Ms Maria DAS GRAÇAS PARENTE PINTO	General Coordinator of Labor Statistics, MoL & Development, Brazil
Ms Glaucia GAUCH	Ministry of External Relations, Brazil
Mr Valdomiro SOUSA	Ministry of Social Development, Brazil
Ms Gabriela BASTOS	Ministry of Social Development, Brazil
Ms Orokia TIENDREBEDGO	Mission of Burkina Faso
Ms Tatiana ROMERO	Technical Advisor, Education, Save the Children
Ms Malina ABRAHAMSSON	Save the Children
Ms Camia URBINA ESCOBAR	Permanent Mission of Colombia
Ms Mari PITKÄNEN	Attaché, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dept. Finland
Mr Ibrahim CEESAY	Children for Children Organisation, Gambia

Mr Jörg TRITSCHLER	Permanent Mission of Germany
Mr. Kailash SATYARTHI	Global March
Ms Alexandra PESCH	Luxembourg Mission
Ms Adelheid M. AWASES	Ministry of Education, Namibia
Mr Abraham IYAMBO	Ministry of Education, Namibia
Mr Charles KABAJAM	Ministry of Education, Namibia
Mr F. FILLIPUS	Ministry of Education, Namibia
Mr Peter LAURENS	Permanent Mission of the Netherlands
Mr Hj MIJNARENDS	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Mission in New York), Netherlands
Ms. Yoka BRANDT	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Netherlands
Mr Imad SABI	Oxfam Novib / Global Campaign for Education
Ms Natasha LEWIS	New Zealand Mission
Mr Michael TWASIKAKATA	Ministry of Labour , Malawi
Mr Eric NINGANGA	Government of Malawi
Dr Donya AZIZ	MP (Pakistan), PGA Executive Board Member
Mr Sirad ABDIRAHMAN	Mission to the UN for Health & Education Association for Development
Ms Sabine MEITZEL	International Trade Centre, Switzerland
Ms Christina HOOSON	Permanent Mission, Switzerland

Ms Constance Thomas	International Labour Organization
Mr Patrick Quinn	International Labour Organization
Ms Toomsawascli LASAPAN	Permanent Mission, Thailand
Ms Kay FIRTH BUTTERFIELD	Consortium for Street Children, UK
Ms Rahma MSHANGAMA	Permanent Secretary, Permanent Mission of the United Rep. of Tanzania
Ms Dora MSECHU	Assistant Director, Multilateral Dept., MoFA & Int. Cooperation
Ms Elena Gastaldo	International Labour Organization
Mr Elie JOUEN	Global March / Global Campaign for Education
Dr Camelia TEPELUS	Secretariat Coordinator, Code of Conduct (ECPAT/UNICEF/UNWTO)
Mr Bob PROUTY	Head, Education for All (EFA) Fast Track Initiative (FTI)
Ms Angela BEKKERS	Communications Specialist, EFA FTI
Ms Antonia CORTESE	Secretary-Treasurer, American Federation of Teachers (AFT)
Ms Patricia KEEFER	International Department, AFT
Ms Joanna KUEBLER	Director, Global Campaign for Education - U.S. (GSE-US)
Mr Michael SPANGLER	Office of International Relations, USDOL
Ms. Joan MACKIN BARRETT	Office of International Relations, USDOL
Ms Doyin IDOWU	Programme Officer, Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy
Ms Ann SCHOLZ	School Sisters of Notre Dame, United Nations NGO Office

Ms Roxanne SCHARES	School Sisters of Notre Dame, United Nations NGO Office
Ms Susan BISSELL	UNICEF
Mr Joost KOOIJMANS	Office of Special Rep. on Violence Against Children, UNICEF
Min-Whee KANG	UNICEF, OSRSG on VAC
Ms Theresa KILBANE	UNICEF, Child Protection
Ms Clarice DA SILVA E PAULA	UNICEF, Child Protection
Ms Dina CRAISSATI	UNICEF
Ms Corina VILLACORTA	World Vision International
Mr Falaq DULLOO	Office of SRSG on Violence Against Children
Ms Ronnie GOLDBERG	USCIB
Ms Kathryn SHAFFNER	US Mission
Ms Marta SANTOS PAIS	SRSG, Violence Against Children
Ms Lisa SWAHOOVER	National Education Association, US
Ms Mary-Rose ENGLE	TRIPURLA Foundation
Ms Assibi NAPOE	Education International (EI)
Ms Anna GRIMADI COLOMER	Pride/Pacific Rim Institute for Education & Development
Ms Cheryl GREGORY	UN Girls Education Initiative
Ms Ann-Lis SVENSSON	Rio Monte

Ms. Yogesh VARHADE

Centre for Justice and Peace

Mr Olav SEIM

UNESCO

Ms Marianne BAUER

UN, Protection of Children in Armed Conflict

Mr Yengwe KAKUSA

Ministry of Community Development, Zambia

Mr Noel MULOPA

Ministry of Education, Zambia