

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.

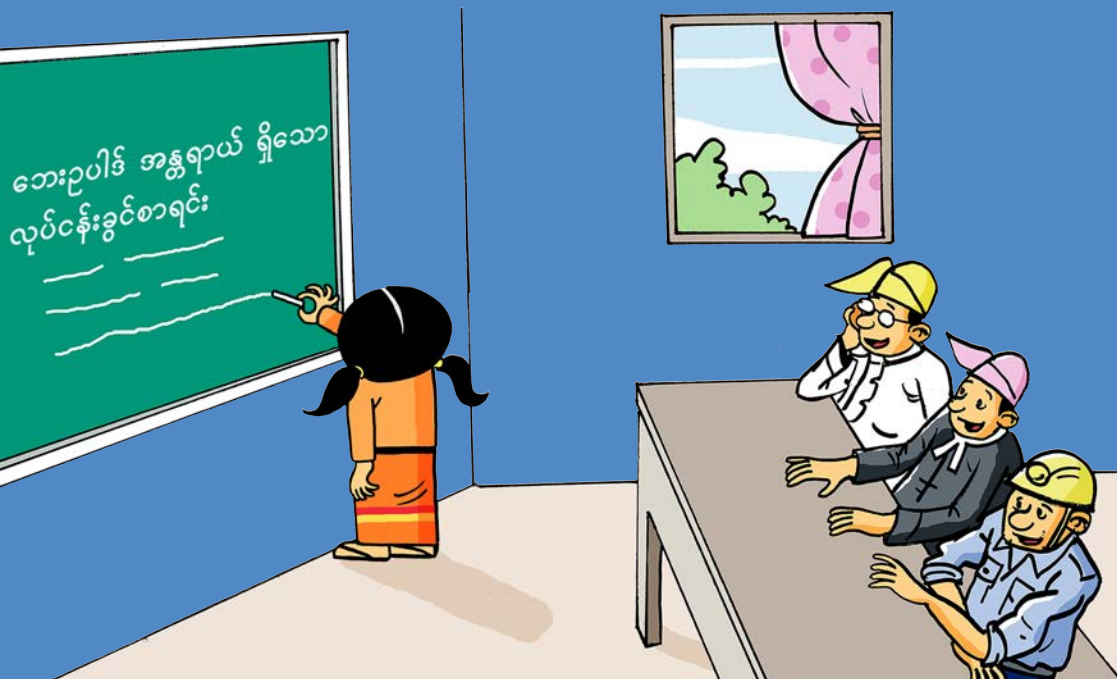
Determining hazardous child labour

Under the ILO C. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, employers organizations can play an important role in helping to develop the national list of hazardous child labour, which 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 morale of children. The employers' organizations, including sectorial associations, can bring together hazardous work definitions for various sectors.

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

Employers' organizations can help to:

- 1 disseminate information to their members' and sectoral associations on what is in the list and what steps they may need to take to achieve compliance with its requirements;
- 2 encourage their members to be more aware of the hiring policies of their suppliers, particularly those in the informal economy;
- 3 ensure that suppliers are aware of the existence of the hazardous child labour list and of their potential obligations in respect of its requirements.





The role of Employers' in the fight against Child Labour

Strengthen the Social Dialogue

The main goal of social dialogue is to promote consensus building and democratic involvement of the main stakeholders in the world of work.

In order to eradicate child labour, the Government, Workers' and Employers' organizations, and civil society must joint their efforts and work together. Through effective social dialogue the elaboration the list of hazardous work prohibited to all children under 18, and the development of a National Plan of Action on child labour can be achieved and implemented.



Facing child labour: Employers' reactions and interrogations

Child labour could be a confusing issue for a typical business owner. He or she may not know the legal age of work or how hazardous work is defined for workers below the age of 18. For a business that is aware that it is employing children, the options of what to do with current workers may also be a concern. Should the enterprise simply let them go? Does it have a responsibility to them? Is there an organization helping to ensure the welfare of children who are laid off? An employers' organization can be a first point of contact and information for its members on these questions.

Action by Employers' Organizations

Employers and their organizations have an indispensable role to play in the fight against child labour. Obviously, the best way for individual enterprises to contribute is to adhere strictly to national laws and regulations which restrict conditions under which children can be employed. Where the employment of children is not proscribed, they should ensure that children are kept away from any dangerous substance or machinery and ensure that their school attendance is not prejudiced.

Employers realize that, apart from obvious humanitarian and social concerns, combating child labour makes good business sense. Children who are left uneducated or are damaged physically or emotionally by early and hazardous work have little chance of becoming productive adult workers. They realize increasingly, too, that public exposure to the use of child labour can cause immeasurable damage to the company image. The most effective role that major companies can play is in setting high standards on workers' rights and on the use of child labour in their own operations and to seek to extend those standards generally among the business community, including subcontractors. Several leading corporations have taken this step by voluntarily establishing their own codes of practice.

Employers' organizations face a particular challenge in carrying the message to small enterprises in the informal sector, where most children in paid work are found and where labour law enforcement is frequently weak.



Advocacy, a weapon against Child Labour

As one of the main roles of an employers' organization is advocacy, it can advocate for the effective elimination of child labour. In doing so, it can engage in tripartite dialogue on the issue, provide advice on legislation and encourage the Government to ratify ILO child labour conventions.

Three reasons for employers' organizations to combat child labour!

1

It is illegal!

The first reason to stop child labour is that it is against the law, and an employers' organization cannot encourage its members to operate outside of the law.

2

The international market

International buyers and brands wish to meet accepted international labour standards and also to avoid bad publicity and potential boycotts.

3

A capable adult workforce / improving productivity

Enterprises, especially informal ones, often hire children because they think that it improves their profitability. This is usually a short-term perspective.

Child labour detracts from long-term enterprise success because it inhibits the development of a trained and productive workforce of adult workers.

