



## FACTS ON *Child domestic labour*

Throughout the world, having children work as domestic helpers continues to be culturally accepted and commonly practiced. The performing of household chores in someone else's house is often considered as part the child's socialization and development. As in most cases children of very poor families are placed with better-off ones, child domestic work is frequently viewed by parents and rationalized by employers as an improvement in the child's situation.

While not all domestic work that children perform for others is child labour, the line between the two is easily and far too often crossed. Child domestic labour is almost exclusively carried out in private homes, and thus it is hidden from public view and eludes inspection. This makes child domestic workers (CDWs) particularly vulnerable to exploitation, including excessively long hours with little or no pay, and physical, emotional and sexual abuse. They may also be prevented from going to school.

Any one or combination of the following circumstances makes child domestic labour a worst form of child labour that must be eliminated without delay according to ILO Convention No. 182 on the worst forms of child labour.

The child:

- is sold or trafficked,
- is bonded to repay family debt,
- works without pay,
- works excessive hours,
- works in isolation or during the night,
- is exposed to safety or health hazards,
- is unreasonably confined to the employer's premises,
- suffers physical violence or sexual harassment,
- is very young.

### ***Examples of IPEC's programmes to combat child domestic labour (CDL).***

Since 1992, IPEC has been working towards the effective elimination of CDL. IPEC conducts research on CDL and supports the efforts of governments, workers' and employers' organizations and non-governmental organizations in the prevention, rescue and reintegration of victims of CDL as well as in awareness raising and policy advocacy.

### ***CDWs: key facts and statistics***

- Child domestic work often has links to other worst forms of child labour. In Tanzania, 25 per cent of girls in prostitution started out as CDWs.
- In Francophone Africa, a trend of rural-urban migration involving younger and younger girls (below the age of 15) has been observed, apparently the result of increasing rural poverty and rising number of urban women working outside the home.
- In Central America and the Dominican Republic, an estimated 70,000 children are child domestic workers; 87 per cent of them are girls.
- In Haiti, perhaps as much as 10 per cent of the child population are "restaveks", live-in CDWs. Some 75 per cent are girls.
- The majority of CDWs in South America are girls under the age of 16. Employers' preferences for girls and parents' willingness to send their daughters to become CDWs are linked to cultural values that determine gender roles.
- In Nepal, 53 per cent of CDWs in Kathmandu do not receive any pay, 45 per cent work long hours, and 79 per cent work at night.



**East Africa:** IPEC has undertaken programmes to eliminate CDL in Kenya and Tanzania for several years. This work has now extended to Uganda and Zambia. In addition to withdrawal and rehabilitation, the children are provided with education and pre-vocational alternatives. The programme also aims to strengthen the capacity of partner organizations to sustain action through training, information sharing and networking.

**West Africa:** Since 1998, some 20 action programmes targeting CDL have been implemented in the region. Attacking the root causes of CDL is an important aspect of these. For example, an IPEC-supported programme in Senegal implemented by the NGO Centre Emmanuel in 1999-2000 focused on prevention of CDL in rural villages through alternatives for potential CDWs and assistance for their parents, including developing women's groups, supplying micro-credits and communal grain storage and milling facilities, and finding sponsors for the education and vocational training for at-risk children. Awareness raising on the risks of CDL was also undertaken.

**Central America:** In September 2001, IPEC launched the first phase of a programme to combat CDL in Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama. As part of this programme, eight research studies have been undertaken, 1,600 profiles of CDWs have been documented in a database and 540 CDWs and their families have received direct assistance. Phase II, now underway aims at prevention the increasing of institutional capacity, in addition to two pilot direct action projects in Guatemala and Nicaragua.

**South America:** IPEC currently has a three-year programme underway in four countries: Brazil, Colombia, Paraguay and Peru. Like most IPEC programmes, it takes an integrated approach to the problem, including data collection, legislation reform, prevention, withdrawal, reintegration, and capacity building for public and private institutions. In collaboration with UNICEF and Save the Children, UK, the programme is leading efforts in the sub-region to fight against exploitative situations of CDWs.

**Asia:** The Philippines has been at the forefront of action against CDL in Asia. Based on seven years of experience there, IPEC has mobilized other Asian countries to combat the problem. As part of an inter-regional programme to combat exploitation of CDWs, country programmes were launched in Cambodia and Sri Lanka in early 2002. Other countries that have included CDL in their overall country programmes include Indonesia, Nepal and Pakistan.

Child domestic labour is a serious problem worldwide involving tens of millions of children, in vast majority girls. Prevailing gender roles help to explain the prevalence of girls as CDWs. Most societies consider domestic labour women's work having little value. Girls often carry the additional burden of lower social status than boys, which can reduce their opportunities for education and access to services.

As with other forms of child labour, poverty, domestic violence, the breakdown of the family and negative attitudes towards education on the part of parents contribute to the supply of CDWs. In some countries demand for child domestic labour has increased to replace the growing number of women, including heads of households, who enter the labour market.

Thus, the CDL issue is both culturally sensitive and complex in scope. Its root causes, symptoms and implications for children, their families and societies have to be addressed simultaneously. All aspects of a society's attitudes about gender differences and how they affect child domestic labour must be considered.

### ***Role of the ILO***

The ILO has for many years addressed some situations of child domestic labour through its Forced Labour Convention (No. 29) that aims to eradicate "all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily". In addition, ILO Convention No. 138 sets a minimum age for admission to employment; however, CDL tends to be regarded as a permissible exception from national minimum age legislation.

ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No. 182), which has been ratified by more than 130 countries, has a number of important provisions applicable to CDL, although CDL is not explicitly defined as a worst form of child labour in it. It also requires member States to implement time-bound measures to eliminate the worst forms of child labour where they occur with special attention to the problem of working girls, which is particularly relevant to CDL.

### ***Relevant ILO Conventions***

Convention No. 29 (1930) on forced labour

Convention No. 138 (1973) on the minimum age for admission to employment and associated Recommendation No. 146

Convention No. 182 (1999) on the worst forms of child labour and associated Recommendation No. 190