



FACTS ON *Education's role in combating child labour*

IPEC's experience in combating child labour has clearly demonstrated that the availability of free, quality education is one of the most important ways to keep children out of the workforce and to break the vicious circle of poverty and child labour over the long run.

Children from poor families who lack access to education may have little alternative but to enter the labour market where they are often forced to work in dangerous and exploitative conditions. For those children who do have access and attempt to combine long hours of work with school, educational achievement almost invariably suffers. Many working children eventually abandon school altogether.

Thus, the progressive elimination of child labour and the international community's efforts to achieve "education for all" (EFA) with universal primary education by 2015¹ are inextricably linked. The prevention and elimination of child labour should be an objective for education policy worldwide with free, compulsory education up to the minimum age for entering employment as defined by the ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138).

Examples of IPEC supported projects

El Salvador: Combating child labour through education

This education initiative is a complementary project for El Salvador's current Time-Bound Programme (TBP) and aims to ensure the lasting transfer of children from work to school. It covers the 18 municipalities and 26,080 children (9,300 working and 16,780 at-risk children) targeted in the TBP. Within the TBP framework, the initiative is bringing range of national and local level actors into the process by coordinating with the TBP National Steering Committee, forming a Special Unit on Child Labour with the Ministry of Education, and creating joint committees of NGOs, teacher organizations, financial institutions and community-based organizations. It includes teacher training on child labour and the preparation of education modules on child labour for

¹ The Education for All movement took off at the World Conference on Education for all in 1990. The Dakar Framework for Action (outcome of the World Education Forum in Dakar, April 2000) calls for universal primary education by 2015 and is coordinated by UNE SCO.

Addressing the education needs of former child labourers and other at-risk children

Non-formal education

Non-formal or transitional educational interventions enable former child workers to "catch up" with their peers who began their schooling at the appropriate age. There should always be a strong link between the formal school system and rehabilitation programmes since basic education is key over the long-term. Forging close linkages between interventions for rehabilitation and interventions for prevention are central to IPEC's strategy on education.

Vocational education and training

In preparation for entry into gainful, skilled employment, vocational education and training in IPEC programmes provide practical skills for older children who have already acquired functional literacy and numeric skills. Since many school systems tend to create an army of young people trained for employment in very limited number of available white collar jobs, the incorporation of vocational education better meets the requirements of the labour market in many of IPEC's participating countries. IPEC is working with the ILO's InFocus Programme on Skills to develop skills training modules for 14 - 18 year old adolescents as well as for parents.

Formal education

Providing basic literacy and numeric skills through non-formal education does not ensure that children are permanently withdrawn from work, which is why mainstreaming these children into formal systems is important. Furthermore, it is often the case that investments in basic education reach the more privileged groups rather than focussing on children at risk. Social exclusion mechanisms are another strong factor that keep children out of school. In many cases, children in the worst forms of child labour also belong to the lowest strata of society in terms of ethnicity and culture.



incorporation into school curricula. It also provides for educational research into curriculum and data-collection needs and the evaluation of existing programs and policies. A national awareness raising campaign is also underway.

India: The MV Foundation

IPEC has supported this foundation's programmes that seek to eliminate child labour through the universalization of quality education. The MVF model involves three phases: 1) surveys carried out to identify children out of school by literate young people who also try to motivate parents to enrol their children in non-formal education; 2) three-month summer camps in the schools for the children during the summer holiday; and 3) transition from the camp to a hostel and full-time formal education.

Nepal: Food for education initiative

In cooperation with the World Food Programme, IPEC is helping to provide at-risk children with school meals and their mothers with direct food contributions (i.e. cooking oil). The WFP and IPEC are jointly producing social mobilization materials to increase community involvement in the initiative and community awareness on child labour.

IPEC has acquired a great deal of expertise with both formal and non-formal educational interventions. Such interventions have proved to be critical in the prevention of child labour and the rehabilitation of former child workers. Non-formal, or transitional education, plays an instrumental role in the rehabilitation of former child labourers. Vocational education and training provide the employable skills needed for gainful employment, which in turn contribute to local and national development. IPEC has also been providing policy advice and technical assistance to governments to ensure that educational policies pay special attention children at risk for child labour.

To encourage poverty-stricken families to send their children to school rather than work, additional services and income support may be necessary. These include programmes like school meals, school-based health care and stipends for parents. In IPEC's experience, these types of services provide strong incentives for parents and children.

Considering that 60 per cent of the children who are not in school worldwide are girls, concerted efforts must be made to address their problems. Many types of child labour that involve girls are largely hidden, uncounted and unvalued. These include household chores, domestic servitude, agricultural work and home-based work. Also, faced with limited resources, parents may prefer to invest in the education of their sons while maintaining their daughters' critical contribution to the household economy. In certain cultures, a girl's chances of going to school may depend on the availability of separate school facilities for girls or the presence of a female teacher.

In cooperation with ILO Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV), Education International and the World Conference of Teachers, educators around the world are being mobilized to prevent child labour. For example, innovative partnerships have been formed between the Tanzania Teachers' Union and the Forum for African Women Educationalists to lower the drop-out rates of girls. IPEC is also an active member of the *UN Girls' Education Initiative* led by UNICEF, which is working to accelerate progress towards maintaining gender parity in primary and secondary education by 2005 and gender equality and education for all by 2015.

IPEC also works with *INDISCO* (ILO's Interregional Programme to Support Self-Reliance of Indigenous and Tribal Communities through Cooperatives and other Self-Help Organizations) to better understand how exclusion mechanisms affect the education of indigenous and tribal peoples. Together, they are developing models to counteract these.

Role of the ILO

The ILO has joined the international community promoting EFA. It does so within the context of the Decent Work Agenda. This concerns not only child labour, but also its work on developing vocational and skills training, promoting the status of teachers, and upholding the rights of teachers' organizations.

By forging alliances with key social actors on education, the ILO aims to contribute to a new vision in education policy worldwide where the prevention of child labour is seen as one of the objectives of the education system itself, and the barriers between education programmes and social protection programmes are broken down. IPEC works with other civil society organizations, like the *Global Campaign for Education* and the *Global March against Child Labour*, at the national, regional, and international levels to gather broad support for EFA and the progressive elimination of child labour.

Relevant ILO Conventions

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