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CH 4.12CHILD LABOUR IS STILL A FACT

Our world of children includes some one and a half billion under 15 years of age. Over 52 million children between 7 and 15 are working.

29 million are in South Asia, 10 million in Africa, 9 million in East Asia, 3 million in Latin America, 1 million in developed countries.

Earnest efforts are being made by governments and employers' and workers' organisations around the world to reduce and eradicate child labour... but in many places it still persists.

MILLIONS OF THE WORLD'S CHILDREN STILL DO NOT ENJOY:- the right to the satisfaction of their basic needs, the right to adequate nutrition, the right to primary health care, the right to develop their abilities, the right to learn an employable skill, the right to be protected from exploitation of their labour.

Why children work, Survival is the motivation, Poverty is the cause
Income from child workers-small as it may be-contributes to the primary needs of the family. For many children, too, the absence of educational opportunity, or lack of access to it, makes work the only alternative.

WHERE THEY WORK

On the land and in the village, in and around the home, or on the streets, in crafts and trading, on plantations, in mines and factories.

Often they are unpaid family workers. Those who are in employment are vulnerable to exploitation-casually hired, just as casually fired. They are not even figures in official labour force statistics: when they reach that stage, the chances are they will be counted among the unemployed.

CHILD LABOUR: WHERE THE ILO STANDS

Labour is not a commodity-and least of all, child labour. The ILO Constitution goes on to name the protection of children as a basic prerequisite for the improvement of over-all conditions of work for all workers.

The Declaration of Philadelphia makes it obligatory for the ILO to promote child welfare among the nations of the world.

THE CHILD is not a "small adult" but a fragile personality to be nurtured into the mature citizen and worker of tomorrow, needs the protection of a statutory minimum age for admission to employment; needs schooling, training and guidance-gateways to personal fulfilment in adult life.

THE YOUNG WORKER needs a fair wage and strict limitation of working hours, needs improved working and living conditions and environment, and to be shielded from exposure to arduous, unhealthy and dangerous work; needs fair and effective apprenticeship systems.

LAW AND SOCIAL POLICY:

ILO INSTRUMENTS FOR CHANGE

Since its origin in 1919 the ILO has encouraged countries to achieve progress through law and social policy. International Labour Conventions and Recommendations, supported by action to help create the conditions in which they can be effectively put into national practice, are the ILO's instruments for stimulating this progress.

Conventions and Recommendations are aimed at the elimination of child labour, the provision of medical safeguards and of vocational guidance and training, as well as the outlawing of night work by young persons.

The ILO Convention and Recommendation adopted in 1973 on Minimum Age for Admission to Employment call for adoption of a national policy to abolish child labour and for progressive raising of the minimum age for work. They allow for gradual entry into working life, distinguishing between

light work under conditions safeguarding health, schooling and training; generally not to be allowed before 13 years, in developing countries not before 12 years;

work not dangerous to health, safety or morals; normally not before 15 years, in developing countries not before 14 years; hazardous work; generally not before 18 years, in certain cases as from 16 years.

The Convention and Recommendation require effective enforcement of minimum age legislation. The Recommendation sets out a series of social policies to attack the economic causes of child labour. The Minimum Age Convention has so far been ratified by 18 of the ILO's 140 member States.

~~the~~ THE ILO's CONTINUING ACTION

The ILO's over-all programme helps improve economic and social conditions, and thus eliminate the need for child labour. Action advocated includes: enforcement of existing legislation including strengthening of labour inspection; social and economic assistance to families to enable children to go to school; measures to strengthen social institutions for the family and to protect those without family; general compulsory education and training adapted to local conditions; promoting awareness of the physical, mental and moral dangers to child development provoked by child labour; transforming economic,

social and cultural structures in order to remove the need for children to work.

This action will continue throughout the International Year of the Child and beyond, until there is no more child labour.