

Anti-Slavery International and Trócaire's Statement to the 95th Session of the International Labour Conference on the Global Report, *The End of Child Labour: Within reach*, under the follow-up to the ILO International Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, Geneva, 9 June 2006.

Anti-Slavery International and Trócaire congratulate the International Labour Organization (ILO) on their report and are encouraged by the overall reduction in the level of child labour worldwide. This is testimony in great part to the efforts of the ILO's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) and its social partners, along with NGOs and other members of the worldwide movement.

Going forward, the report also highlights various important issues, which must be tackled and which we too are keen to promote, including: poverty reduction, access to good quality education, provision of youth employment and the need for emphasis on child labour to be included in country Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and the achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), particularly as children and youth make up 50 per cent of the population in many PRSP countries.

Unconditional worst forms of child labour

However, the number of children in slavery and forced labour remains of serious concern. These are where the worst human rights violations occur and must be the priority of us all to address. For this reason we would particularly welcome greater emphasis on the unconditional worst forms of child labour, including an update of the figures provided in the 2002 report, *A Future Without Child Labour*. The unconditional worst forms of child labour include forced and bonded labour, the use of children in armed conflict, child prostitution, trafficking in children for labour and sexual purposes, and the use of children in illicit activities such as the drug trade.

Our concern is that figures, along with our understanding in this area, may not have improved so much. The report itself notes that tackling unconditional worst forms of child labour, aside from some forms of trafficking, have by and large been neglected. For example, although it reports that legislative prohibitions on prostitution and trafficking are among the most common action that States have taken under ILO Conventions 138 and 182, few have paid much attention to children most at risk and prohibiting slavery, illicit activities, forced labour, child bonded labour and child soldiers, many of which also involve trafficking. This is despite the fact that last years' *Global Report on Forced Labour* estimated that children account for 40-50 per cent of the 12,300,000 total of people in forced labour situations.¹

Collaborative approach

International advocacy on child labour has been hugely successful in gaining ratifications of both Conventions 182 and 138, and we would certainly agree that advocacy must be continued. However, the key now is for implementation of these conventions on the ground. We would urge more joint work between the ILO, its social partners and "other concerned groups"², notably NGOs, community

¹ ILO, *A Global Alliance Against Forced Labour*, 2005, p.15.

² See Article 6, ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour and Paragraph 2 of the accompanying Recommendation 190, which states that certain groups committed to the aims of the instruments must, where appropriate, have their views taken into consideration in the design and implementation of national programmes of action.

groups, families and children themselves. These groups are more likely to be present where less visible or illicit cases of worst forms of child labour occur, and at local levels where these initiatives need to reach to be truly effective in tackling child labour. Children above all must be made aware of their rights under child labour conventions and consulted on finding effective solutions to become true holders of these rights.

Africa

Like everyone, we are concerned by lack of progress in Africa, although there are great dangers in any suggestion that there is a one size fits all solution for child labour in Africa. The report recognises this and also the need for balance between removing young children from work and regulating working conditions for older children, as well as the results of child labour monitoring to be used for legal enforcement and promoting awareness and attitudinal change. The emphasis for achieving this must be on supporting regional, sub-regional, national and local initiatives. This includes recognising local realities and the vulnerabilities of the children themselves, and strengthening technical expertise and capacity within Africa, combined with targeted and sustained funding.

In conclusion, Anti-Slavery International and Trócaire are pleased at the progress already being made to eliminate child labour, but recognise that serious challenges lie ahead. We welcome the opportunity to highlight the need for these to be tackled in a more integrated and unified movement.

Recommendations

Anti-Slavery International and Trócaire call on governments, employers, trade unions and ILO/IPEC:

- to increase, through research, legislation, policies and funding, the emphasis on the unconditional worst forms of child labour.
- to pay attention to child labour and associated issues, such as youth employment and quality education, in PRSPs, the achievement of the MDGs and donor approaches.
- to increase collaboration with “other concerned groups” especially at national and local levels for more effective implementation of ILO Conventions 182 and 138 on the ground.
- to support the strengthening of an Africa-wide movement, including regional, sub-regional and national institutions, ongoing initiatives against child labour and alternatives for children and their families.

For more information on Anti-Slavery International and Trócaire, see: www.antislavery.org and www.trocaire.org