



CHILD LABOUR

Children often play an important part in the economy of poor families, but this role should not entail excessive, exploitative or hazardous labour. A child's right to education, health and recreation must be respected through keeping these work obligations to a minimum. Plan is committed to defending children's rights, and we do this in collaboration with families and communities. We focus on preventative measures such as improvements in the household economy in order to eradicate the need for child labour.

Background

The majority of the world's children do some work every day, usually in the form of household chores or an after school job, which develop skills and a sense of responsibility. However, according to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) the harsh reality is that 390 million child-workers worldwide are involved in activities that are either hazardous, excessive or where their employers exploit them.

Inevitably, the emotional, physical and psychological effects for these children can be extremely damaging and such work leaves little or no time for play or school.

Plan's Response

Plan has a hands-on approach to protecting children's rights and preventing economic exploitation. This involves working closely with families and whole communities to ensure that there is an awareness of child labour issues and that girls and boys have equal rights to education and recreation.

Viet Nam

Plan is working with communities in Thanh Hoa and Hung Yen, Viet Nam, on income-generation activities and has provided family counselling and extended basic primary education services. Before such programs were implemented, children travelled to Hanoi in search of work to financially support their families.

Togo

Due to extreme poverty in some parts of Togo, middlemen have found it relatively easy to entice families to send their children abroad for offers of paid work and a good education. Such promises are often false, and children find themselves working long hours for little money on agricultural plantations or in domestic service. Child trafficking is a big problem in Togo and stems from poverty. Plan supports income generation schemes in these communities to improve household earnings and prevent child exploitation.

There are times, particularly with older children, when there is no other option but to go out to work, and where there is little prospect of a return to full time schooling. For example, the HIV/AIDS pandemic in sub-Saharan Africa has resulted in a dramatic increase in the numbers of children who have become the family provider. Where children do work, we try to ensure that they have access to health and education facilities until they can return to formal schooling or their family income improves.

Uganda

Plan has been working with partner organisations to support vocational training centres for children who are fourteen or older so that they can gain the necessary skills that will help them avoid the underpaid, exploitative work that is often undertaken by children. The centres have a counselling component so that the children can identify the future they would like and work with the staff to achieve this goal.

Ecuador

Plan supports the work of Fundación Niñez y Vida in Quito which assists families with working children through formal, vocational and non-formal education, recreational facilities, medical services and micro-finance activities.

The International Context

The Convention on the Rights of the Child obliges governments to protect those aged under 18 from economic exploitation, from performing any hazardous work, or any work likely to interfere with a child's education. The International Labour Organisation has also passed two Conventions on child labour:

- **Convention 138:** no child below the age of 15 can be employed in any economic sector
- **Convention 182:** dangerous or harmful employment such as prostitution, combat, mining or pornography is banned to all under 18s.

Summary

Plan works to raise awareness of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, give poor people opportunities to get themselves out of poverty, and prevent and stop all types of exploitation of children. We support:

- Awareness raising activities so that people are informed about children's rights to education and leisure
- Microfinance programs so that families have sufficient income and can keep their children out of paid work
- Provision of health and educational services for working children
- Ensuring that children orphaned by AIDS are still accorded their rights and are equipped with skills that will help them as adults

Plan is a humanitarian child-centred organisation working in 45 developing countries with families and their communities to help children realise their full potential in life.

ⁱ International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour *Every Child Counts: New Global Estimates on Child Labour* (International Labour Office, Geneva) April 2002