Child labour is a short-sighted practice that jeopardizes the well-being of future generations. It is detrimental to individual children, depriving them of their childhood, hampering their development and sometimes causing lifelong physical or psychological damage. It is tantamount to treating children as an expendable resource and is a gross violation of their human rights.

Being both a result and cause of poverty, child labour perpetuates disadvantage and social exclusion. Programmes to alleviate poverty therefore must include the elimination of child labour as one of their objectives.

Socially sustainable development is largely dependent on achieving education for all, and child labour is a major obstacle to this. Children who work full time from an early age are deprived of basic education, and those who combine education and full time work are more prone to failure and drop-out. This compromises children's opportunities for securing decent work as adults, and in so doing undermines national development by diminishing their ability to contribute to economic growth and prosperity. As long as child labour continues, the goal of decent work for all will not be achieved.

### Key Statistics

- 246 million children — one child out of every six in the world — are engaged in work that is detrimental to his/her development.
- 73 million working children are less than 10 years old.
- Boys make up a slight majority of working children.
- An alarming 73% of child labourers are exploited in the worst forms of child labour.
- 171 million children are exposed to work that is hazardous to their health.
- 8.4 million children are trapped in slavery, trafficking, debt bondage, prostitution, pornography and illicit activities. Of these:
  - 5.7 million are bonded;
  - 1.8 million are used for prostitution and pornography;
  - 1.2 million are trafficked;
  - 300,000 are forcibly recruited for armed conflict;
  - 600,000 are involved in illicit activities.

### Combating Child Labour — Four Examples of IPEC and Partners in Action

Zambia: A National Plan of Action to combat Child Labour was developed and followed by the ratification of ILO Convention 182 in 2001. The government has revised the Employment of Young Persons and Children’s Act and has taken policy measures to improve access to education by abolishing school fees from 2002. The IPEC programme has contributed to strengthening networking among implementing agencies through information sharing, research studies, visits to other projects and the creation of referral systems. It has recently published studies on Good Practices in eliminating Commercial Sexual Exploitation and has examined the relationship between child labour and HIV/AIDS at sub-

(continued overleaf)
Role of the ILO

The 175 member States of the ILO have adopted two major conventions on child labour. Convention No. 138 links the minimum age for employment to the completion of compulsory schooling. Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour calls for immediate action to eliminate slavery, trafficking, debt bondage, forced recruitment of children for use in armed conflict, prostitution, pornography and illicit activities and work that jeopardizes the physical, mental or moral well-being of children. More than two-thirds of member States have ratified these two conventions so far.

In 1992, the ILO set up the International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC). IPEC offers financial and technical assistance to governments in designing and implementing programmes aimed at eradicating child labour. It has helped establish such programmes in 75 countries with support from 25 donor countries. Action to eliminate child labour is multi-pronged. It includes the assessment of the situation, capacity building, legal reform, awareness raising and social mobilisation, the removal of hazards from work-sites, the creation of alternatives for the families of child labourers and the withdrawal and rehabilitation of children. A great deal of emphasis is placed on providing access to quality education and vocational training and on catering to the special needs of very young children and girls.

Relevant ILO Conventions

Convention No. 138 on minimum age
Convention No. 182 on worst forms of child labour

Bangladesh: More than 340 multi-purpose education centres have been set up to cater to the needs of the 30,000 children working in domestic work, bidi rolling, match manufacturing, construction and leather industries. Some 16,000 children are now receiving non-formal education, 10,000 are being counselled and more than 12,000 have been given medical care. About 9,400 families are participating in a programme of economic empowerment. Twenty-eight grass-root level Community Watch Groups are active in preventing child labour, particularly in domestic service. A computerized tracking system is being set up to monitor the progress of each child and family associated with the programme.

Guatemala: Since April 2000, IPEC has been working with the government, employers and NGOs to prevent children from entering the fireworks industry. A national study on child labour in this industry was completed, and has improved awareness of the problem at municipal, departmental and national levels. Key members of the National Assembly have come out in support of new regulations for the fireworks industry. More than 3,000 boys and girls have received scholarships and the families of 453 working children now enrolled in formal education are participating in alternative income generation. Workshops have been organized to help producers modernize their business, improve management and incorporate occupational safety measures.

Ukraine: In June 2000, the Ukrainian Institute of Social Research carried out a national study on child labour, which led to the launch of a programme to withdraw and rehabilitate at least 100 child victims of prostitution, 600 working children in rural areas, and 500 working street children. The government has recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with IPEC for the elimination of child labour. A nationwide awareness-raising campaign has provided 2,500 children between the ages of 6-10 and their parents with information about children’s rights and the hazards of early employment. Books in Ukrainian on this theme have been published and disseminated. National TV and newspapers covered the issue on the occasion of the World Day against Child Labour. The project is enhancing the capacity of Trade Unions to combat child labour and has trained 40 representatives from eight All-Ukrainian Trade Unions. In addition, 32 social inspectors have been equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to respond to the worst forms of child labour.