The Commemoration of World Day Against Child Labour 2004
Report from IPEC Nepal

1. The planning and preparation phase
IPEC Nepal started its internal planning process in the beginning of April. The first meeting with stakeholders in Kathmandu was held on 28 April. A working committee was formed. The committee consisted of 14 members, representing the employers’ organisation, trade unions, NGOs and government in addition to ILO/IPEC. Altogether the committee had six meetings.

From the initiation of the planning process it was decided among the members of the working team that the commemoration would take place on 12 June itself and not 11 June as in many other countries. It was conceived that it would be easier for child domestic workers to participate on a Saturday.

Early in the process a long range of activities were proposed. At the time of the third meeting 33 activities were planned only among organisations based in Kathmandu. In addition activities were being planned in other parts of the country. Several of the activities were to be implemented in the week of 6-12 June. On 26 June we received a discouraging message – the Maoists had called for a general strike the whole week. Through discussions in the working committee we decided to move many of the events to the week following 12 June. Luckily on 4 June the Maoists announced that the strike was called off and we returned to our original plans. All this was quite challenging though!

2. The week preceding 12 June
Kathmandu: Several media activities took place in the week preceding 12 June. They were initiated by a press conference on Friday 4 June. There was a rolling banner on a programme called “Business Hour” on Nepal TV. On Wednesday 9 June there was an interview with a representative from IPEC followed by an interaction session among representatives from trade unions, employers’ associations and government. Kathmandu Metropolitan City Office (KMC) used its channel Metro FM for regular transmission of jingles focusing on child domestic labour. KMC also transmitted its own message against child labour. Concern Nepal used the same radio channel to broadcast interviews with working children. Legal Aid and Consultancy Centre (LACC) published articles on three legal cases involving child domestic workers. In addition several other “investigative” articles and interviews were printed in different newspapers. Speech and art contests were also organised. The Employers’ Organisation FNCCI contributed snacks for 1,000 people.

Central Child Welfare Board (CCWB) took on the assignment of drafting a code of conduct (CoC) for ILO/IPEC and its partners focusing on child domestic labour. The CoC was developed in Nepali but time did not permit translation into English. Therefore the CoC was
not shared with the public on 12 June. The intention is that all partner organisations will implement the CoC after translation and approval from Headquarters.

**The country as a whole:** All over the country several organisations contributed to the launch of the Red Card Campaign. Press conferences were held and local radio stations and newspapers reported on the issue of child domestic labour.

### 3. 12 June

**Kathmandu:** In the morning of 12 June, 700 working children and accompanying adults met in the centre of the city and marched for 15 minutes to the exhibition ground. At the exhibition ground a formal programme consisting of three short speeches (only five minutes each) and distribution of prizes for the different competitions that had been organised earlier in the week took place followed by entertainment of two famous singers, a man and a woman. The scene was filled with children as these artists started singing.

Before and after the formal programme the public could study photographs taken by private school students for a competition in 2003, sign red card pledges and observe street dramas. There had already been an exhibition with the same photos but since the theme of many of them was child domestic labour it was decided to exhibit them again. The main attraction after the formal programme was the fair ground, which lies in connection to the exhibition ground. Each participating child was given two tickets for fair ground attractions.

On 12 June several newspapers published articles on child domestic labour. In the aftermath the events of 12 June were covered by major newspapers and TV channels.

**Other districts:** In several towns, especially in the Western, Mid- and Far-Western Regions rallies, speech programmes, street dramas and various kinds of creative events (poems, art etc.) took place. The teachers’ association, NNTA published a book on the importance of education and distributed it in all 75 districts.

In Narayangarh a new implementing partner of ILO/IPEC, Diyalo Pariwar organised a full day health check-up programme for rag pickers and child domestic workers. Doctors, medicines and logistic support was provided free of cost by the District Public Health Office, Balkumari College and Time Pharmaceuticals Pvt. Ltd. Most of the treatments carried out were related to skin diseases/wounds. Diarrhoea and cold/fever were other common diagnoses. Further consultations and treatments have been scheduled for the involved children.

### 4. Following 12 June

In the period leading up to 12 June FNCCI developed a code of conduct against child labour for its members. The code of conduct was launched on 14 June. On the same day FNCCI declared a national network of employers against child labour.
The media organisation Society of Environmental Journalists (SEJ) organised a seminar on child labour and the press as a follow-up to 12 June. The seminar was attended by representatives from media, government, the social partners and NGOs. The aim of the seminar was to focus on the role of the media with regard to combating child labour, by using this 12 June as the starting point. A main objective was to give a boost to the implementation of the code of conduct for media, which was developed by ILO and Nepal Journalist Federation. The seminar will be followed by additional workshops among journalists.

5. Concluding Remarks
For IPEC Nepal the main aim of the commemoration this year was to organise a programme with and for working children. This lead to a more child-friendly programme than earlier years.

Next year we might choose to concentrate on fewer activities, especially in Kathmandu. The large number of activities this year required a lot of administration and logistics. It all went very well though, and the commemoration was highly visible.
News Reports

Child labor still rampant
The Kathmandu Post – 12 June 2004

KATHMANDU, June 12 - Leyla Tegmo-Reddy, director of the International Labor Organization (ILO), said that broader part of the community needed to be involved in eliminating child labor from domestic activities in Nepal. She was speaking at a program organized to mark the third International Child Labor Day here today.

"The main problem is that most child laborers don’t have access to education, health care, legal protection and identity," she added. She also appealed to everyone to get involved in Red Card Campaign to reduce the number of laborers under the age of 14. This campaign is an attempt to put an end to child labor by using a red card having a football - the most mobilizing sports in the world.

The participants of the program pointed out that about 260,000 children in Nepal were involved in minor form of child labor and about 127,000 of them were the victims of intense exploitation.

A survey of 2,237 households in the eight wards of Kathmandu Metropolitan City, conducted by Children at Risk Network Group (CAR-NWG), showed that 420 children were working as child laborers. According to CAR-NWG, around 56,000 juveniles are working as domestic workers alone while others were engaged as porters, rag pickers, carpet weavers and stone crushers.

Earlier today, a rally was taken out in the capital. The event was organized by the ILO and its partners from the government with this year's theme 'Eradicating Child Domestic Labor'.

Line of Control
The Himalayan Times - 12 June 2004
eev Satgainya

Kathmandu:

Hari, 12, works in a local teashop. He hails from eastern Nepal, and has never heard of child rights. His days are spent trying to keep body and soul together. “What is it?” he asks with innocence. Dilli, 13, has been in Kathmandu for the last seven years. He came here with his father’s acquaintances hoping to have a better life than in his village. His father's hard-earned money was hardly enough to sustan a family of eight and so he was sent to Kathmandu as a “domestic help”. He has been going to school and is studying in class seven now. Kale, a 11-year-old boy from far-western Nepal, spends his day washing dishes, sweeping, taking the landlord’s kids to school, carrying their bags and assisting the lady of the house. These stories tell the same tale. Even lower middle-class families have either a girl or boy helping them in household chores. This is a growing global phenomenon trapping around 10 million children — mostly girls — in hidden forms of exploitation — verbal, physical and sexual abuse.
In the last eight years, insurgency and conflict has made it worse for children from rural areas. Vulnerable to conflict, they escape their villages to find the city is also ready to prey on them. Families have fled villages in terror only find starvation and poverty following them to the city. They are compelled to send their children to domestic labourers. Leyla Tegmo Reddy, director, International Labour Organisation, Nepal shares, “We believe that finding a solution for a better-designed programme for livelihood of children is today’s need. Access to education, basic health and recreational right are prime concerns. We don’t have the data yet of those children who have been working as domestic worker due to conflict, the general data shows that a lot has to be done in the country.” During ILO’s survey and studies, some astonishing and disheartening anecdotes have emerged. Peter Dalglish, ILO advisor, shares, “Invisibility is a major cause. Cultural and traditional forms of domestic labour has turned into commercialisation. Children lack support, miss their families and communities and their peer groups to play with.”

The number of child domestic workers is growing due to many factors: conflict and displacement is one major cause. Gauri Pradhan, president, CWIN, says, “Conflict has added salt to an old wound. We in partnership with ILO and other organisations are carrying out joint programmes. We believe children are a symbol of peace. We try to provide these children proper access to school, health care, recreation and other basic rights.” CWIN currently has 103 children in its centre.

At the age of innocence
The Himalayan Times - 12 June 2004-07-09

Prasanna Chitrakar
Kathmandu

Many look back at childhood as the best years of their lives. But for thousands of children working as domestics, it is one of the most difficult and trying times when they are subjected to various forms of exploitations and abuses. In this regard, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) has decided to highlight the plight of child domestics on the World Day Against Child Labour, which is to being observed today. Child domestic labour refers to situations where children are engaged to perform domestic tasks in the home of a third party or employer. Working in a private home, the overwhelming majority are often grossly exploited and abused. A wall of acceptance surrounds the practice, often considered a better alternative for children from poor families.

Bishnu Giri, resident of Udaypur district, is currently working as a domestic in Kuleshwor. After his father passed away at a tender age, he was forced to leave home to support his mother, seven brothers and three sisters. Luckily, his employers are kind hearted and allow the 15-year-old to attend the non-formal education classes provided by a non-governmental organisation. “When I hear about the kind of problems other child domestics are facing, I feel extremely lucky,” says Giri. “But time and again, I wonder where my life is headed and what will I do in the future.” Bishnu’s is one of the few ‘successful’ stories, child activists working with domestics state most children are deprived of educational opportunities. Those attending schools have highly irregular attendance and are rarely on time for classes.

“Our studies have revealed that majority of the children have to work over 14 hours everyday and are subjected to physical, verbal and even sexual harassment at times,” says Yuvraj Ghimire from Children-Women In Social Service and Human Rights (CWISH). A study
conducted by CWISH revealed that from those privileged to attend schools, 88 per cent did not receive salaries. The study further revealed that 54 per cent of domestic workers complained of not being able to have their meals on time. Seventy-two per cent were able to devote less than two hours to studies, 28 per cent were not even able to study for one hour at home. Of them, 65 per cent stated they got to study at night only after finishing the household work. While two per cent of the respondents said they even availed tuition facility.

“We have been trying to emphasise that children should be allowed to complete their school work before having to do household chores,” says Ghimire. According to an investigation by Centre for Women and Development, a great majority of children working as domestics, are born of illiterate parents, mostly depend upon agriculture and seasonal work as means of survival. In most cases, according to the analysis, household workers have to choose between salary and education. However, some are devoid of both.

A steady increase in the number of school going domestic child workers indicate people's positive attitude towards child workers. A study by CWISH also revealed that 83 per cent of the domestics attending school were admitted by employers. “Even so, there are incidences where even educated employers have forced the children working in their homes to drop out from school,” says Jiyam Shrestha, programme manager at Concern for Children and Environment-Nepal (CONCERN). “You see, it is really difficult to say what goes on behind closed doors.” Since elimination of child labour is not possible without eliminating poverty from the country, the idea of pulling out children from work and rehabilitating them into child centres alone is not a reasonable solution argue activists. “Perhaps the best way to help abolish exploitation of domestic child labour is to develop ways and means of improving their work situation through awareness programmes for employers and creation of career development opportunities for the target group,” said Shrestha. ILO, along with other child rights organisations, is organising a rally starting from Ratna Park to mark this day. The rally will conclude at Bhrikuti Mandap, where a formal programme will take place. Around 500 children, mostly domestic workers, will be participating in the rally. ILO launched a World Day Against Child Labour in 2002 to raise visibility of the problem highlighting the global movement to eliminate child labour, particularly its worst forms. The theme for last year was trafficking.