

[Chile]

*"You have to work. You can't say no.
It's not work, it's our culture."*

Children who work in the mountains

[3]



Preamble

"In Exchange for My Childhood"

Series on Child Labour and Exploitation in Latin America and the Caribbean

Article 32 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes "the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development." At the same time, Article 36 states the need to protect "the child against all other forms of exploitation prejudicial to any aspects of the child's welfare." It has been more than 15 years since the Convention's adoption; however, the issue of child labour¹ continues to affect more than 200 million² children around the world. These children work under conditions that breach and put at risk the enjoyment of their fundamental rights, such as, their health, education and protection against any forms of exploitation and violence.

With this publication, World Vision wants to make a contribution in tackling child labor by making proposals and inviting the reader to know closely the life, family, feelings, experiences and context of the children who work in 13 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. We will have close relationships with such children through a country context analysis, interviews, adult testimonies and portraits of the daily lives of working children and their families.

The stories are about different countries, with different protagonists who are devoted to different activities. Nevertheless, will realize that the children who have allowed us to get into their lives have almost identical problems, aspirations and dreams:

- They work for the same reasons: Their families are in need, and they wish to contribute to family subsistence.
- They have the same dreams: To be able to study, help their families, make something useful and positive with their lives³.
- They experience the same physical and emotional pain, as a result of the work performed.
- They share the same fear: Adults – Once contact is established with adults, they maltreat, abuse and humiliate⁴ them.
- They come from very poor families that have been suffering from exploitation through at least two or three generations.
- They have been abandoned by their country⁵ social assistance.
- It is common for families to be numerous⁶, as well as for women to be the heads of the households because of the father⁷ abandonment.
- They would love to study or attend school regularly, but they cannot do that because they have to work, or they have actually lost their interest in school because of the maltreatment suffered⁸. Besides all that, their school agenda is not adapted to their needs as working⁹ children and adolescents.
- Girls should add the housework to their work, which is why their workload is heavier.
- In addition, girls are vulnerable to sexual abuse.

"In Exchange for My Childhood" opens doors to the private lives of working children, urging us to commit – as organization and personally – to the transformation of our society, so that life in all its fullness may finally be a reality for every child in Latin America and the Caribbean.

1 It should be clarified that not all the work performed by children infringes their rights, but only that work which does not allow them to enjoy their rights. See "Definitions and basic concepts" at the end of the booklet.

2 The United Nations Secretary General's Study on Violence against Children: Chapter 6, page 233; at: <http://www.violencestudy.org/r25>

3 The fact that there are many boys who want to be policemen and girls who want to be teachers attracts our attention here.

4 See the situation described by children in all booklets. Complementary reading: The United Nations Secretary General's Study on Violence against Children: Chapter 6; at: <http://www.violencestudy.org/r25>

5 See Brazil's booklet, situation described by Rafael

6 Example: Colombia's booklet, Alicia Bastos' testimony

7 Example: Bolivia's booklet, Margarita's testimony

8 Example: Guatemala's booklet, Rafael's testimony

9 Example: See the situation described in the Chile's booklet on children who work in the mountains and the influence of the seasons of the year on their educational process.

Interview

Luis: We are Pehuenches. This is our world and our culture, and we won't leave it because God gave it to us. That's why we live here and not somewhere else.

Karina: The most important thing in our culture is the kultrun (an indigenous drum used for important ceremony/representing the four cardinal points).

Luis: No!... The most important part is the pehuén (a tree regarded as sacred by Pehuenchean culture)...it's the tree that gives us the piñón nuts. The pehuén is far up in the mountains.

Karina: We gather the pine nuts in summer so we'll have food in the winter.

Ramón: The veranada is up there, where the snow starts. We made a house of wood. It's pretty there – all green, all green grass.

Pedro: When it's the veranada time, that's when we all go up the mountain. We're there from December to April. We take our animals with us so that they can eat.

Joselyn: I also go to the veranada. I take care of the animals. I like the cows the best.

Luis: We use a club to get the pine nuts. One of the big kids climbs up the pehuén and hits the branches where the piñón nuts are growing together. A bunch of 'em get knocked loose and other kids pick 'em up from the ground. Sometimes the big kids lasso the branches with a rope and knock the nuts loose that way. The pehuén is a huge tree, you know.

Ramón: Yeah, a pehuén is really tall – like 30 or 40 metres. I've climbed one almost all the way up. But you gotta be really careful, 'cuz if you fall, you die.

Karina: We pick up tonnes of nuts... huge bagfuls. We take 'em home and they last us all winter. The piñón nut is our food, it's the food of our culture... and it's really good.

Luis: I like to gather the piñón nuts. It's not work, it's our culture. It's the culture of the Pehuenches.

Joselyn: The mountain is pretty...it's green during the veranada it's green...but later it's all snow...all white.

Luis: Yeah, in the winter there's lots of snow. It gets this high, up to my waist. Me and my family go to the veranada. There are ten of us. We all go, my grandparents, my mum, my father, my brothers and sisters...a lot of people. We get there by walking and by riding the horses.

Claudia: We also go with the animals to the veranada.

Luis: We go with everything, with clothing, food, with the animals. We have eighteen animals, they're all sheep. It takes about a day to get there. We go to Laguna Negra [Black Lake]...that's where we have a place ...it's a ranchito [a small shelter] where we sleep.

Luis: It's my job to take care of the sheep. I take them to graze. There are 18 of them altogether.

Pedro: I get up really early [and] take care of the animals all day. We almost never get to play.

Karina: I have sheep too. My job is to take them out from the corral and up the mountain. They stay there all day. Then I have to go and look for them. I go with my sister. I throw rocks at the sheep and then they obey me.

Luis: I send the dog after them so they'll obey me.

Karina: It usually takes me about hour of walking to find the sheep. Sometimes it takes more time, though. I started taking care of the sheep this year. Before that, I was too young. I like taking care of them.

Luis: I started when I was eight.

Pedro: I started working with the animals two years ago. I learned on my own and now I take care of a lot of goats.

Ramón: I started four years ago.

Luis: I like to take care of the sheep so they don't get lost and eaten by the foxes. One time a [mountain] lion ate a goat. The lion doesn't scare me, though.

Ramón: I'm scared when the lion eats the goats. The lion is huge!

Pedro: It was raining once and the lion came and ate the goats.

Karina: The lion doesn't scare me 'cuz the sheep have a bell on their collars and it scares the lion so he doesn't come closer.

Luis: It makes me scared. That's why I always go with my dog 'cuz he takes care of me. The lion is huge, like a big dog!

Karina: No!... It's bigger... like a horse!

Pedro: No!... It's big... but not as big as a horse. But the most dangerous lions are the hungry ones, the mothers with cubs. They can attack a child.

Ramón: There are other dangerous animals, like a bull or a bad cow. They can attack you... I'm afraid in the mountains 'cuz that's where you can meet the lion.

Pedro: What scares me are the monsters. They come out at night. They're like aliens. Once I stayed on the mountain, taking care of my goats, until late at night. It was dark and I got scared. Luis: I take care of my animals from eight in the morning until noon. Then I leave home again at five to find them, and I usually return around eight.

Karina: On Saturdays I get up at seven. I take the sheep to eat and get back to the house at noon. Usually I go by myself but sometimes my sisters come too. They're still too little to take care of the animals. When they're five they'll be able to go out more.

Luis: Sometimes we can't go to school because we gotta take care of the animals. We go to the veranada in December and come back down in April.

Pedro: Yeah, and the classes start in March so we end up missing them. I'd rather be in class. I'm sad about missing classes.

Luis: I like school better too. I'm sad when I can't go...

Ramón: We kids have to work at everything – cutting firewood, getting the piñones, taking care of the animals. To get the wood, I gotta go up the mountain. It takes me an hour to get up there and then I have to look for it and throw it down the mountain. Then I pick it up and drag it home... But without it there's no fire, no food, and it's really cold.

Luis: It's my job to get water from the spring...I put it in a chuica (bottle) that's this big...like 10 litres. Then I haul it home. It's pretty heavy. I walk about an hour... I like taking care of the animals more than hauling water. I like taking care of them so they don't get lost.

Pedro: Me too. I like the animals. But once one of them died and was eaten by a lion.

Luis: I lost one on the mountain. It escaped and they blamed me. I got in trouble 'cuz they sent me to find water and I didn't want to go. My dad got mad so I had to go immediately.

Karina: I'm gonna work even if I don't get ordered to. I like working. I'll still work, even if they don't ask me.

Ramón: You have to work. You can't say no.

Pedro: If someone says no, they scold you.

Karina: I like school, but I also like to plant seeds. I don't like to till the land, though. My uncle does that.

Luis: I till the land. It's hard, your arms hurt, but not too much.

Karina: It's my job to plant and water the potatoes. I water them every day.

Luis: I also help with the potatoes. Sometimes I like playing better, but you have to work anyway. At school I can play, that's why I like school.

Pedro: We work because we have to help our parents. Later, when we're grown up, our children will work to help us out.

Luis: I want to be a soldier and go to war.

Karina: I wanna be a police officer and stop people from fighting.

Ramón: I want to be a businessman so I can earn money.

Pedro: I want to be a mechanic and fix cars.

Joselyn: I want to be a teacher, and teach children.



Portrait

It's late afternoon, and a strong Andean wind is whipping a freezing rain into the face of twelve-year-old Pedro Rosales. The temperature is dropping along with the sun. The hardening ground crackles under Pedro's feet as he herds his family's 65 goats across the boulders-strewn slopes of the lower cordillera of southern Chile. Pedro shivers and pulls his heavy wool jumper more tightly around his neck and chest. He has been saving his small thermos of hot maté [national drink] tea for precisely this moment. He pours it out, savouring the sweet vapor and the heat of the tea in the plastic cup between his hands. He gulps the milky liquid and revitalized for the trek ahead, whistles to his faithful dogs. They promptly spring back into action, circling the goats and barking at stragglers to rejoin the herd.

Today, Pedro has led his goats to a mountain valley well beyond their previous grazing areas. Once a deep, verdant green, they are now blanketed in white by accumulating snowfalls of the past few days. As the weak sun dips lower, Pedro quickens his steps. Lacking a watch and a torch, he knows exactly how much time he has to get his herd off the mountain before nightfall, when mountain lions and smaller predators begin their hunts. Pedro knows his goats won't be safe until they reach camp.

The days are shortening, and only a few are left until the arrival of the *invernada* season, when Pedro will migrate with his family and community back to their humble winter houses in a lower valley near the base of the cordillera, and miles away from this now-uninviting mountain.

Pedro may or may not try to go back to school, he's not really sure. Either way his work will continue, albeit of a different kind.

Twelve-year-old brother Ramón, Pedro's brother, is ready if not anxious for winter's arrival and the return to his other home. His expertise at gathering piñón nuts – the favored food of his people, the Pehuenche – has grown considerably over the past few months. The work has been perilous, but the rewards have been commensurately great. Ramon has gathered more than enough nuts to feed his family during the cold months ahead.

Ramon rolls up his sleeves and extends both arms. He displays various cuts and scars with obvious pride. They are thin red badges that attest to his courage, and they were acquired from daily and dangerous missions of scaling and descending the towering *araucaria* tree⁷ that grows to a height of 40 metres or more.

The best pinions are near the top of the tree, grouped within its treacherous branches, with their razor-sharp bristles. Ramon ascends towards them with sure steps and a firm grip, moving from branch to branch while swinging and thrusting a long and heavy stick to dislodge the nuts. He has collected enough nuts to fill a large canvas bag and return home, rest briefly, before embarking on another long climb and death-defying ascent to the top of the next *araucaria* tree.

On some days, Claudia Rosales, age 11, joins brothers Ramon and Pedro on the mountain, herding goats and sheep. She also fetches water, washes clothes, helps with household chores, and looks after the family's youngest children, and an older brother, 11, who has been disabled by a brain injury. Claudia tenderly feeds and washes him, and attends to other his needs like a doting mother.

One more brother, Fernando Rosales, is an expert with the axe. His work is exhausting and monotonous, but essential if the Rosales family is going to make it through the long winter with sufficient firewood to cook and heat their home.

Fernando knows intuitively how to angle his axe and position the cut to ensure that almost any tree will fall in a very specific direction. He is the strongest of the Rosales boys, and proud like them that he is doing a man's job, and that his family needs him, even though he's still a child.

The Rosales children head home from different directions, their figures silhouetted against the moonless twilight. Pedro arrives there just after dark. They are all weary and quiet, nearly ready for sleep. The air in their home is acrid with woodsmoke and their mother is cooking rice and beans in the *fogón* [fire pit]. There's no electricity, no music, no television, but that's not important. They eat, drink mate, and exchange stories about the day. Warmth and calm permeate their bodies. By nine o'clock, they're all asleep.

⁷ Native conifer of southern Chile, sacred to the Pehuenches who call the trees *Pehuén*. In English, it is known as the monkey-puzzle tree. This tree bears a fruit called the pine nut, which is the basis of their meals.

Context

In Chile, nearly 200,000 children below age 18 – just over one in 20 – work in jobs to support themselves and their families.¹ While this statistic does not indicate an extensive presence of children in the labour sector, it should be noted that more than half of all these working are younger than 15, the minimum legal working age. The majority do not attend school regularly, and they are also likely to work more hours than the legal limit of 40 hours per week.

Some 25,000 children and adolescents work in the farming sector, primarily in the more fertile areas of central and southern Chile. They cultivate and sell produce, and tend livestock.² Nearly twice as many boys as girls are doing this work.

The same ratio applies to the worst (ie. most hazardous and exploitive) forms of child labour, in which an estimated 4% of Chilean boys under age 18 are engaged, compared to fewer than 2% of all girls under 18.

According to the national Ministry of Labour, the main factors contributing to child labour in Chile are subsistence-level family incomes, parents lacking formal education, school absenteeism, and single parent-headed households.³

According to a 2003 study by the national Ministry of Labour, about 10% of school-age children do not attend classes.⁴ Of these children, more than one in four do some kind of paid work. About 19% engage in domestic labour, while 54% hold no job.

The same study revealed that 93% of Chilean workers earning less than the legal minimum monthly wage [*115,648 Chilean pesos, equivalent to US\$220.93*] had failed to complete their secondary education. No doubt many of these workers were once child labourers themselves.

Chile has signed several international agreements for combating child labour. They include the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, ratified in 1976; and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified in 1990.

Chile has also established and modified various laws to protect children from harmful work and exploitation. These include Law No. 19.684 of the Labour Code⁵, which was modified to raise the legal minimum working age from 14 to 15 years. In May 2002, the Minors Law No. 19.806 was modified to strengthen protections of working children.

Nearly 5% of Chile's population is indigenous. Among the country's eight different indigenous groups, the Mapuches are the largest, numbering nearly 900,000. Other indigenous groups are the Aymarás, Atacameños, Collas, Rapanuis, Huilliches, Kawaskars, and Yaganes.

The continued marginalisation of these groups by and within Chilean society has contributed to their higher rates of

poverty, lower education levels, and generalised lack of access to public services. One such group, the Pehuenches, occupy the Alto Biobio region of southern Chile.

Pehuenche families do not have access to the formal labour market. Numbering nearly 5,000, they live and work as pastoralists and subsistence farmers. Their working cycle is divided into two seasons: the veranada [summer pastoral farming, and the invernada [winter farming].⁶ Nearly 90% of Pehuenche families live in conditions of extreme poverty, and their business transactions primarily involve the exchange of products and services, rather than money.

During the summer season, Pehuenche families migrate to higher elevations where winter snows have melted and the piñón nut – a dietary staple – is plentiful. Pehuenche children leave school for up to six months, dedicating much of their time to the arduous harvesting of piñón nuts from the high limbs of the towering araucaria tree.

Most younger Pehuenche children return to school during the winter season. Unfortunately, their long absences from school during every summer season result in major educational gaps and setbacks that ultimately lead a large number to abandon their studies for good.

According to a 2002 study by the National School Assistance and Scholarship Board, nearly 72% of all children who drop out of school are from rural areas. While there is nothing inherently wrong with much of the work that children do, the question remains: How much work is too much?

**according to the conversion rate for DATE*

1 *First National Survey of Activities of Children and Adolescents, done by the Ministry of Labour, 2003.*

2 *Idem.*

3 *Trabajo infanto-juvenil y educación: Diagnóstico de la realidad chilena [Child/Youth Labour and Education: Analysis of the Chilean Reality]. Mariana Schkolnik and Francisca del Río, Ministry of Labour and Welfare, Chile, June 2002.*

4 *First National Survey of Activities of Children and Adolescents, done by the Ministry of Labour, 2003.*

5 *The modification of Law 19.684 occurred in 2000.*

6 *Ambiente y Desarrollo [Environment and Development], Vol. XVIII, No. 2-3-4, 2002.*

Social Indicators Chile

Human Development Index	38/177
Gender-focused Development Index	37/177
Life expectancy	78,1
Per capita GDP	10,874
Total population in millions	16,1
% Urban population	87,3
% Population under 15	25,5
% Consumption by the poorest 20%	3,3
% Consumption by the wealthiest 20%	62,2
% of population living under the poverty line	17
% of population living on less than US\$1/day	2
% of GDP spent by the State on education	3,7
% of GDP spent by the State on health	3
% of population w/access to essential drugs	95-100
% Illiterate (over age 15)	4,3

** The World Health Organisation (WHO) specifies this percentage range as "optimal access".*

Source: 2006 Human Development Report, United Nations.



Conclusion

Children born into extreme poverty are likely to begin working at a very early age. This is clearly the case, with few exceptions, in rural indigenous communities where traditional family culture and established norms of childrearing come strongly into play.

In the Pehuenche culture, many different types of manual labour are considered to be an acceptable if not integral part of children's development. They are expected to work, under the unquestioned authority of their parents, as responsible and productive members of their families.

While the work undertaken by Pehuenche children isn't exploitive or hazardous by and large, it law, it does present some serious labour protection for children and their families

or of a physically or morally threatening nature, it nevertheless exerts a direct and strong influence on their school attendance, or lack thereof. This contributes in turn to the high illiteracy rates that perpetuate poverty, in combination with other factors.

Efforts to combat child labour in indigenous communities like those of the Alto Bio must include a strong focus on income-generation activities that can help lift families out of deep poverty and foster the conditions for keeping children in school.

Educational systems must also orient courses of study towards children from poorest communities, ensuring they aren't left behind and equipping them with coping skills and knowledge.

Although public schooling in Chile is available at no cost, special fees are commonly added which are, in effect, an exclusionary measure. Government and civil society organizations have a role to play in addressing this situation by ensuring the provision of special grants and other measures to ensure that every child has equal access to basic education.

Finally, the gradual elimination of child labour requires a stronger emphasis on educating parents to understand that child labour, contrary to their beliefs and perceptions, is actually the least viable option for escaping from the poverty. Job training and technical skills programs can also allow the parents to obtain new sources of work and decrease their dependency on their own children for income.

Viewpoints



MARCELO ESPEJO

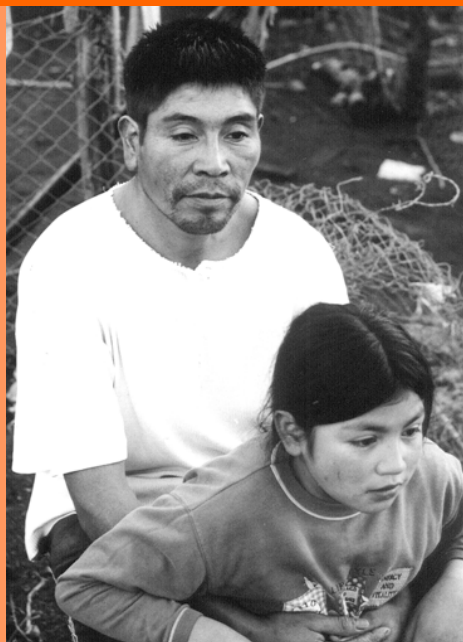
Director of the "Kepuca" school in Ralco, Alto Biobío

"In the Alto Biobío region, the families go to the veranadas in summer and return in April, but school begins in March so the boys and girls miss a lot of classes... The people raise animals so they can eat and live, and the children work so they can contribute to their families' incomes. They do the work that the parents don't want to do, and that's why the families have several children. They know the children will help them with the work. But they're not taking into account that the children need to be in school, more than they need to be working."

BERNARDO ROSALES

Father of Ramón and Claudia Rosales

"My children cut firewood, gather piñón nuts, herd the animals, build fences, work in the garden, take care of the goats, and help their mother with house chores. They start working with the animals when they're five years old because we need their help... They don't have the right to say no to doing work. They only have to do it. They have to understand that they can't do whatever they want to do. My children always obey me when I send them to work. If they don't, then they have to be punished... by not allowing them to play, or to go horseback riding."



OSVALDO ANDRADE LARA

Minister for Employment and Social Security

The eradication of child and adolescent labour is the strategic objective that we would like to achieve through Law 20,189 which modified the Work Code. However, since this is related to a process, we understand that we must comply with previous stages such as the eradication of its worst forms and establish a protective regulation which is mentioned in the corresponding law.

Thus the following is established: if for economic reasons a family has insufficient income and it is, therefore, necessary for a child to work, this must occur under a strictly regulated framework and humane work conditions that allow the child to receive an education in order to develop his or her potential capacities.

Retaining children and adolescents in a school system that guarantees their physical and mental health even if they have to enter the job force is one of the most profitable investments that we can make for them as well as for the future of Chile.

Definitions and Basic Concepts

For the purposes of this publication, "child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier."¹

- Worst forms of Child Labour according to ILO Convention 182:²
 - a) all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict;
 - b) the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances;
 - c) the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties;
 - d) work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.
- Child Labour
Children's participation in economic activity that negatively affect their health and development or interfere with education. This means all children below 12 years of age working in any economic activities, those aged 12 to 14 years engaged in harmful work, and all children engaged in the worst forms of child labour.³
Occupation that denies children or adolescents their childhood, potential and dignity, and is damaging to their physical and mental development⁴
- Commercial Sexual Exploitation
The commercial sexual exploitation of children is a fundamental violation of children's rights. It comprises sexual abuse by the adult and remuneration in cash or kind to the child or a third person or persons. The child is treated as a sexual object and as a commercial object. The commercial sexual exploitation of children constitutes a form of coercion and violence against children, and amounts to forced labour and a contemporary form of slavery.⁵
- Work
Human activities, paid or unpaid, that produce the goods or services in an economy, or supply the needs of a community, or provide a person's accustomed means of livelihood.⁶

About Child Labour⁷

- Some Characteristics:
 - a) Children start working at an earlier age in rural areas rather than in cities
 - b) 80% of children work in an informal economy
 - c) Work prevents children from attending school or limits their academic performance
- Conditions:
 - a) Working hours are longer than the maximum limits established by many national laws for an adult worker
 - b) Low Income: 90% of child workers between the ages of 10 and 14, earn wages that are equal to or below the minimum wage, approximately 20% lower than the income of an adult with a 7th grade school level. Children are paid an even lower salary than that or are paid in kind.
 - c) Children do not have labour rights
 - d) Jobs are precarious
- Causes:
 - a) Poverty
 - b) Family violence
 - c) Social and cultural patterns
- Consequences of child labour at all levels:
Social and Moral:
 - a) Encourages inequality
 - b) Violates the fundamental human rights of children and adolescents
 - c) Leads to a loss of self-esteem, problems of social adaptation and trauma

1 Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 1

2 ILO Convention No. 182: Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999, article 3

3 As opposed to Child Labour: Child work: Children's participation in economic activity - that does not negatively affect their health and development or interfere with education, can be positive. Work that does not interfere with education (light work) is permitted from the age of 12 years under the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 138. http://www.unicef.org/protection/index_childlabour.html

4 Extracted from: Guía Práctica para Parlamentarios, Número 3-2002, Erradicar las peores formas de Trabajo Infantil, Guía para implementar el convenio núm. 182 de la OIT

5 The Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action, First World Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, Stockholm, Sweden, 1996, http://www.ecpat.net/eng/A4A02-03_online/ENG_A4A/Appendices_1_Stockholm.pdf

6 <http://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ILO-Thesaurus/english/tr2454.htm>

7 ILO, <http://www.oit.org.pe/ipece/pagina.php?pagina=156>

Physical and Psychic:
d) Chronic diseases
e) Dependence on medicines
f) Physical and Psychic abuse

Economic:

- g) Working children fall behind in school by an average of 2 grades or 2 school years in the long-term which means a salary that is 20% lower during their adult lives
- h) Loss of buying power in the national market
- i) The lack of an education (loss of school years) translates into an lower quality of human capital in society

The Position of World Vision on the Issue of Child Labour⁸

The experience of World Vision, given its work in developing countries among the most marginalized people, indicates that children will continue to work until there are feasible and sustainable alternatives for the family and communities. By ignoring this, we endanger the lives of children. In a world characterized by poverty and inequality among the rich and the poor, work is a reality and a need for many children.

Based on this perception, World Vision, is making efforts to abolish the most extreme and dangerous forms of child labour (exploitation), such as child prostitution, slavery, any form of work that involves very small children and any job that represents a danger for a child's physical, emotional or spiritual health.

World Vision has been a firsthand witness of the devastating results of attempting to eradicate all child labour immediately. In addition to recognizing the obvious problem represented by exploitative child labour, non-governmental organizations, governments and the corporate sector must avoid the automatic, though, comprehensible, temptation of demanding that child labour be immediately abolished. This may be a well-intentioned measure but may have disastrous consequences. For this reason, World Vision does not support punitive intervention, or boycotts of consumers or sanctions. Instead, World Vision defends a multi-disciplinary approach:

- To quickly eradicate the worst forms of child labour
- Convince the employer in the formal sector to improve conditions and shorten the number of work hours
- Establish alternate ways of generating income for families
- Improve access to good quality and adequate education
- Confront structural impediments that generate and aggravate poverty

These changes are possible only if long-term structural changes are introduced

The underlying causes of child labour are basically structural: generalized poverty, great inequality, deficient or inadequate education, malnutrition, the structure of the country's economy, consumption patterns and macroeconomic policy frameworks.

This does not mean that poverty automatically cause children to enter the workforce. However, it creates the conditions for this phenomenon to be more likely. In reality, the reasons for which child workers are preferred are not economic. Children are not as aware of their rights as adult workers are. Children are, therefore, easier to exploit.

When children are forced to work in order to survive, their interests may be better protected if employers are encouraged to cease exploitative practices. This type of transition focus requires the application of adequate health and safety conditions within the workplace, reasonable hours, meals, education and skills training.

Prevention, elimination and rehabilitation comprise the three columns of any strategy for eliminating exploitative child labour. Of these, prevention is the most difficult since it covers long-term solutions based on the family and the community in both a national and international environment.

Is education the answer?

One of the keys for preventing and resolving child labour is education. Although, education alone is not enough to end child abuse, it is key to a larger program that seeks to diminish poverty and other pressures that push children into the workforce.

In order for education to be an effective weapon in the fight against child labour, it must be mandatory and allow equal access for both boys and girls. It must be high quality, pertinent, free of charge and realistically flexible, for example, taking into account the agricultural harvest seasons and related needs for families who work in agriculture.

In areas where there is a high index of child labour as well as elevated high school drop-out rates, it is often discovered that the education offered is low level. An inadequate education inadvertently pushes children into the workforce, since by working they can learn a trade and learn skills to earn income.

It is possible to eradicate child labour. In the short-term, we must force ourselves to eradicate the most extreme forms of child labour. In the medium and long-terms, governments, consumers, children's rights groups should combine efforts in order to guarantee that children have the opportunity to develop their potential and satisfy their needs and fundamental rights as human beings.

⁸ By Melanie Gow- Policy and Advocacy- Word Vision Australia, 2000.



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