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# The face of child labour...

## from Africa to Asia and the Americas

**S**ome important progress has been made in tackling child labour but it's still here and has the power to haunt. Globally, there are now 30 million fewer working children than 10 years ago. However there are still an estimated 215 million girls and boys trapped in child labour.

In 2006, the pace of progress was such that the international community set an ambitious goal: to eliminate the worst forms of child labour within ten years. But in more recent years progress toward this goal has slowed. And many of the children now

remaining in child labour are among the hardest to reach.

Between March and May 2010, Elaine Moore, a Phnom Penh-based journalist, and ILO photographer Marcel Crozet, visited three countries on three continents. The examples that follow show that there can be progress when there is determined action to tackle child labour. However there is a need to scale up such actions. The key to this is renewing and strengthening political commitment and developing integrated policies and programmes to fight child labour.





All photos pp. 8-9: © A. Dow/ILO

# Child labour in Cambodia: A new direction

**A**lthough Cambodia is emerging as one of the brightest economic growth stories of South-East Asia, over 313,000 children are trapped in the worst forms of exploitation such as drug trafficking and prostitution. But the end of all worst forms of child labour in the country could be within reach, and the Cambo-

dian Government has committed itself to take on the challenge as have the social partners. But in order to stay the course it will require continued support of those inside the country as well as a continued financial commitment from donors to ensure that every child in Cambodia is given the start in life they deserve.



On a hot afternoon in Cambodia's capital city Phnom Penh, 10-year-old Leap beckons to tourists riding by on the back of a lumbering elephant. Struggling to carry her basket of snacks she runs along a dusty road next to the golden Royal Palace offering rice cakes and sweets from a container too big for her small arms.

Leap has already been working for five hours and, most likely, will still be out here at midnight. Working alone, Leap is a small vulnerable girl who has never been to school and who will be lucky if she earns two dollars today. Leap says she has no choice. If she were to stop working, her mother and younger brothers would go hungry.

In another part of the city, seven-year-old Doung Paeakra crouches down near a riverbank sifting through a pile of rubbish. He's looking for plastic he can sell to a recycler. With his father dead and his mother at home nursing a new baby, Doung is the sole provider for his family.

Access to education has improved in Cambodia but child labour persists – Leap and Doung are two of the children still left behind. While primary school enrolment has risen from 75 per cent in 1997 to 91 per cent in 2005 most of the children attending school are combining their studies with work.

One of the ILO's responses has been to pioneer a livelihood scheme to help decrease, and eventually eliminate, a family's reliance on its children for income. This IPEC programme encourages parents and other adults from the country's poorest families to work together to create savings groups.

In a small village in southern Cambodia, local women explain how their savings group has helped them set up small businesses and supplemented that with training in finance and administration. "Before the group things were very difficult and the children had to work," says 60-year-old Pan Phen. "If I had problems I would have to go to the money-lender who charges 20 per cent interest monthly. Now I make more money and in our group the interest rate is just 3 per cent." Pan Phen borrowed 40,000 riel (US\$10) from the group and now makes sweets which she sells outside a local factory each day. "All (six) of the children I look after are now in school," she adds proudly.

In many cases families of child labourers want to send their children to school but they find it hard to survive when the money the child earns stops, especially if there is an emergency at home such as a new baby or a death in the family.





# Eliminating child labour in Bolivia: The role of education

All photos pp. 10-11: © M. Crozet/ILO



**E**ducation is often cited as the key to eliminating child labour. But by itself, education isn't enough. This report from Bolivia shows how adding decent work for adults to education of children, together, with a quotient of political will, can make the equation work.

When 11-year-old Juanita Aivillo Ari and her six brothers and sisters arrived at the foot of a mine in this southern Bolivian city seven years ago, she and her family were in dire straits.

Juanita and her family had exhausted the capacity of their small plot of agricultural land in a rural community to feed them, let alone make a living. Like hundreds of other families, they wound up at a mine at the Cerro Rico mountain, where her father found work as a miner and her mother as a guard. The long working hours meant that Juanita and her siblings were often left alone in a precarious hut at the camp. When her older brothers left to start families of their own, life for Juanita and her two other siblings became lonelier and even more precarious. They would have suffered the same fate as many other children in the mining camps who are exposed to hazardous child labour, navigating narrow tunnels, if her parents hadn't been approached by the CEPROMIN (Centro de Promoción Minera) non-governmental organization.

CEPROMIN runs a project on improving the living conditions of children and mining families living in the mining camps of Potosí. Juanita and her brothers are among some 450 children now enrolled in the project.

The project makes sure they are properly fed and





looked after and, most importantly, that they receive a quality education. In addition, the project addresses the needs of adults, improving the socio-economic environment. This combined approach can make a big difference.

Juanita had never attended school but since joining the project she has proven to be one of the smartest students in the class. She dreams of continuing her studies and of a better life. However, Juanita is one of the fortunate children.







All photos pp. 12-13: © M. Crozet/ILO

## Fixing the future of Mali's child workers

**In Mali, approximately two out of three children aged 5 to 17 work. This represents over 3 million children. Few of them go to school and 40 per cent of children aged 5 to 14 perform hazardous tasks. The situation of migrant girls is of particular concern.**

“When I met Mouna for the first time I could hardly believe that she was only nine-years-old... if her frail body was indeed the one of a girl, her face already looked like the one of an old woman” says ILO photographer Marcel Crozet. From 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Mouna works as a maid for a family in the village of Douentza.

For 2,000 francs CFA (3.05 euros) per month, she takes care of the children, prepares the meals, draws heavy buckets of water from a well, washes the dishes and cleans the house. Tonight she has come to seek help at a centre run by the NGO AVES (Avenir Enfance Sahel) because she has not been paid for four months and is not able to eat every day... A representative of the NGO will accompany her tomorrow to meet and discuss the matter with the family that employs her. This kind of intervention is usually very effective.







The next day at six o'clock in the morning, during a visit to a "landlady", we meet 15-year-old Awa, another domestic worker. In a windowless room of 12 square metres the landlady houses 15 young girls from the same village she used to live in. They sleep on mats on the floor and all their belongings fit into a plastic bag.

Awa is alone – the other girls have already left for work. For three days, she had suffered from a severe attack of malaria. It is time for the doctor employed by AVES to intervene with the appropriate treatment...

AVES, one of the ILO's partner organizations in Mali, aims at curbing the rural exodus of girls and at protecting them from dangers, including sexual exploitation.

Its activities include education, health promotion, vocational training and support for income-generating activities. ILO-IPEC is working closely with government, employers' and workers' organizations to identify ways of scaling up such programmes.

In Mali, more than 50,000 children, over 35,000 of whom are girls, have benefited from ILO action programmes. Free schooling systems have been put in place for children working in agricultural areas, thereby removing them from a dangerous work environment without adding an unbearable financial burden to their parents.







## Breaking the cycle of poverty and child labour

Child labour, especially its worst forms, is still too common. Take a few minutes to reflect on these photographs and consider how, together, we can accelerate action to end it. Quality education for children and decent work for adults, including social protection for families, are essential parts of the solution to tackle this scourge.

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