

ELIMINATING CHILD LABOUR THROUGH EDUCATION

The Role of Bilateral Donors



*Report on the expert seminar
convened by
the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands
The Hague, 5 November 2009*

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Summary

The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs convened the expert seminar *Eliminating Child Labour through Education: the role of bilateral donors* on 5 November 2009 in The Hague. The main discussion topic of the seminar was the (potential) role of bilateral donors in the elimination of child labour through the mainstreaming of child labour in education policies.

By organising this expert seminar Dutch Minister for Development Cooperation Bert Koenders followed up on the policy framework to combat child labour defined in the *Human Rights Strategy Human Dignity for All* (2008), which states that the Netherlands, in its development cooperation, works to make education available and to raise living standards in order to create the conditions necessary for child labour to be eliminated. Thus education policies are an integral part of the comprehensive strategy against child labour pursued by the Netherlands government and strongly supported by Parliament. The meeting also responds to a request from Parliament (Motion of member Voordewind, 31700 V51, 2008) to mainstream child labour issues in education programmes supported by the Netherlands

The objective of the meeting was to identify recommendations for bilateral and multilateral donors on how they can assist governments' efforts to improve access to education, the availability and quality of education and other preconditions which would prevent children slipping into child labour, and, further, to consider how to rehabilitate children who quit work and help them integrate into the school system.

In the past years there has been progress in the readiness to cooperate globally on the child labour issue (Global Task Force on Child Labour and Education, Understanding Children's Work, UN agencies, High Level Group). The next step, in the view of Patrick Quinn from ILO's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), is to move from the global to the national level, promote closer cooperation between the ministries concerned and improve national coordination among development partners. Donors should encourage discussion among key ministries and other stakeholders, influence the FTI (Fast Track Initiative) appraisal process and find ways to help guide education interventions on the basis of the available knowledge and data and develop joint programming.

In many developing countries and in international media ongoing *advocacy* is necessary to ensure that the issue of child labour does not drop off the agenda. Developing countries need to mobilise a broad range of partners (from social partners to media) to be strong national advocates. Donors can play an important role in supporting those social partners and civil society advocacy and in acting as 'champions' for the cause of tackling child labour at the international and national level.

Donors can also help to promote policies that tackle barriers to education, which include strategies to improve quality and to get the hardest-to-reach children in school. They can help to draw attention to child labour issues within country-level education planning and among other development partners. Locally and internationally produced knowledge on child labour and good practices can be used to help education planning and encourage scaling up and mainstreaming of child labour in other development frameworks.

Much of this can be illustrated by the case of Zambia, where an estimated 47 percent of children (7-14 years) are economically active. The Joint Assistance Strategy for Zambia has led to well-developed coordination and policy dialogue mechanisms and procedures for education, in which international NGOs are actively involved. In this context it is possible to provide quality support to the Zambian government through priority setting. It is harder to introduce new issues like child labour. Not only national stakeholders but also development partners and international NGOs must buy in, according to Birgitte Poulsen (ILO Zambia). In her view donors can help to break the country's downward spiral of child labour and poor education by addressing deficiencies in the education system that push children out of school and by promoting inclusive education that allows all children to benefit from education and help them stay in school.

In Bangladesh (7.4 million children economically active) there are many ongoing efforts by the government to address the problem, including international and national legal commitments, policies, the creation of a child labour unit and specific programmes. There are however still many challenges, according to ILO/IPEC's Ronald Berghuys, like bridging the gap between the age of compulsory education and the minimum age for work, addressing the role of non-formal education and its relation to formal education, reforming the system of technical and vocational education, creating linkages between child labour programmes on education, youth employment and occupational safety and health, as well as creating linkages between informal and formal sectors (supply chains).

To better understand the interrelationship between child labour and education it is necessary to consider the interaction between push and pull factors. On the one hand, children are pulled into work as a result of household poverty, socioeconomic shocks, social and cultural norms that favour children's contribution to household economies, discrimination against girls, minorities and other marginalised groups, or the economic advantages employers gain through the recruitment of cheap child labour instead of adult labour. Countering these factors requires solutions that go beyond the education sector.

On the other hand, children are pushed out of school because they cannot access education or because education is of a poor quality, inaccessible or irrelevant. Another major *push* factor is social exclusion. Greater attention to several aspects of education can help address the *push* factors, like the availability of water at school, sanitation for girls in school, the accessibility of education, the provision of quality education, the quality and relevance of the

curriculum to the local context, providing flexibility in schooling procedures and arrangements to overcome any barriers which may prevent children's enrolment and retention in formal schools, and supporting programmes for transitional second-chance education that enable former child workers to reintegrate into the formal school system and distance learning.

After much plenary debate as well as workshops, the meeting came up with a list of recommendations for action based on the commitment of the Netherlands government and parliament to take leadership in combating all forms of child labour beginning with the worst forms. There was general agreement that an integrated approach is needed, based on the three priorities of Dutch education policy: improving the quality and relevance of education, reaching hard-to-reach children and expanding vocational training.

Recommendations:

1. Dutch embassies in all thirteen education partner countries will be requested to lobby for the mainstreaming of hard-to-reach children and child labour issues in national education plans.
2. Embassies will also identify opportunities for assisting national and local civil society, private sector and trade unions to lobby and monitor government, parliament and the media on child labour.
3. Part of the funding of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the ILO will be earmarked for child labour. In addition, the Ministry will provide additional funding to ILO/IPEC to support comprehensive child labour elimination programmes through education.
4. Cooperation with civil society organisations, private sector and the academic community in the Netherlands and elsewhere involved in education and child labour issues will be strengthened.
5. Cooperation between international organisations through interagency initiatives such as the Global Task Force on Child Labour, Education for All and Understanding Children's Work will be supported.
6. The Dutch Government will report to other donors on the outcomes of the expert meeting. The concluding statement will also serve as an important contribution to the Global Conference on Child Labour in The Hague in May 2010 and the ongoing Education for All process.
7. The Dutch Government should maintain spending at 15 percent of its ODA to education to ensure that the remaining part of the out of school children are reached.

Introduction

The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs convened the expert seminar *Eliminating Child Labour through Education: the role of bilateral donors* on 5 November 2009 in The Hague. The main discussion topic of the seminar was the (potential) role of bilateral donors in the elimination of child labour through the mainstreaming of child labour in education policies.

At the seminar there was a general agreement that embedding child labour in education policies needs to be accompanied by interventions aimed at changing attitudes in society and addressing the survival needs of families. From evidence and good practices it has been learned that improving access to education and quality of education will significantly reduce child labour and better addresses the needs of children who are still working or are reintegrating into the school system. However, the education tool must be supported by other strategies and interventions concerning poverty reduction, awareness raising, legal reform, regulation and enforcement, income generation and employment promotion for adults and safety nets for families prone to resort to child labour.

By organising this expert seminar Dutch Minister for Development Cooperation Bert Koenders was following up on the policy framework defined in the *Human Rights Strategy Human Dignity for All (2008)* which states that the Netherlands, in its development cooperation efforts, works to make education available and to raise living standards in order to create the conditions necessary for child labour to be eliminated. The meeting also responds to a request from Parliament (Motion of member Voordewind, 31700 V51, 2008) to mainstream child labour issues in education programmes supported by the Netherlands.

To accelerate the progress of child labour elimination, joint action is needed at all levels: local, national, regional and international. Moreover, it is important that all parties involved understand the interconnected causes and consequences of child labour. This issue is too complex to be dealt with by a single government ministry or a few organisations and agencies. Ministries of Finance, Economic Affairs, Education, Labour, Health, Social Welfare, Women and Gender all deal with aspects of child labour and often have difficulty working out a coordinated response. Progress in this field also requires closer cooperation on funding and support structures at country level, between donor countries, international organisations and NGOs. More and better coordination between donor and recipient countries is also required: how can the aid available for social services¹ be used more effectively to support the implementation of national action plans for development and Education for All (EFA) strategies? And are child labour strategies included in these plans?

¹ The 2005 UN MDG report has pointed out that the increase in aid budgets in the first half of this decade has been used to cancel debts and meet humanitarian and reconstruction needs, and that debt and emergency relief do not necessarily contribute to social services, poverty reduction and sustainable development.

Nearly four years after the launch of the *Global Task Force on Child Labour and EFA (2006)* and less than a year before the *Global Conference on Child Labour 2010* in The Hague, the time had come for The Netherlands as the conference-host, to examine the role donors can play and to review recent developments in joint donor action on education and child labour. What strategies have been developed and what (pilot) countries received support? What were the results of these efforts? What were the constraints at local, national and international levels? We hope the outcome of the expert seminar will provide a useful and practical contribution to the Global Conference in 2010.

The objective of the meeting was to identify recommendations for bilateral and multilateral donors on how they can assist governments' efforts to improve access to education, availability and quality of education and other preconditions to prevent children from slipping into child labour and to rehabilitate children who quit work and help them integrate into the school system. More specifically, the aims were to define:

- *guidelines* for improved embedding of child labour issues in national and international EFA strategies, including the non-formal education sector (what can donors do?);
- *concrete donor action* to ensure that the policy dialogue on education at country level includes child labour strategies aimed at eliminating the worst forms of child labour (short and medium term) and all child labour (long term);
- *action to develop capacity* of government agencies, NGOs and other stakeholders, including embassies and business, to ensure they are equipped with the tools and knowledge they need to deal with child labour issues in relation to education and vice versa;
- what is needed in terms of *statistical data* and making suggestions on how to acquire better statistical data on the effects of improved access to education and higher quality education (better data will improve monitoring and evaluation of progress towards eliminating child labour);
- any other *policy recommendations* resulting from the two case studies on Bangladesh and Zambia.

Child Labour and Education

Patrick Quinn, ILO-IPEC

75 Million primary aged children are not enrolled in school. 165 Million aged 5-14 are engaged in child labour. This implies that reaching the Education for All and Millennium Development Goals targets requires the elimination of child labour. Education and skills play a major role in development and economic growth.

Significant knowledge of the causes of child labour, its impact on school entry, retention and achievement and possible solutions, has been gathered over the years, thanks to the work of SIMPOC (Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour), the statistical arm of IPEC (the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour) and the inter-agency research project Understanding Children's Work (UCW).

This **knowledge and analysis** must be used to influence policies and programmes and to tackle the problem on different fronts:

- targeting the hardest to reach by initiatives to support transition from work to school;
- tackling barriers to education (direct and indirect costs, remoteness, social and cultural barriers, discrimination);
- improving education quality (curricula, trained teachers, infrastructure);
- providing incentives to keep children in school (cash transfer and school feeding programmes).

In the work on child labour there has been a significant focus on non-formal education, because many children could not be reached by the formal system. Non-formal education may provide a way to reach children quickly and provide an effective transition to school. But only through the formal system can we reach the scale required to effectively tackle child labour, which means that a greater focus on **formal education** interventions is necessary. All parties involved should share and use the available knowledge, data and experiences to help remove barriers to education and to improve education planning.

ILO-IPEC lists a number of challenges in the field of **policy coherence** on both international and national levels:

- financial institutions and donors are often daunted by the perceived difficulty of the issue;
- many countries do not act on the linkages between education and child labour and don't include the subject in discussions of education plans;
- cooperation between the ministries is limited;
- EFA champions are needed to create more political support for the elimination of child labour.

Donors should encourage discussion among key ministries and other stakeholders, influence the FTI (Fast Track Initiative) appraisal process; find ways to help guide education interventions on the basis of the available knowledge and data and develop joint programming.

In recent years there has been improved readiness to cooperate globally on the child labour issue (Global Task Force on Child Labour and Education, UCW, UN agencies, High Level Group). The next step is to move **from the global to the national level**, promote closer working between the concerned ministries and improve national coordination among development partners.

Although child labour is still a significant issue in the industrialised world, in many developing countries and in the international media, ongoing **advocacy** is necessary to keep it high on the agenda. Developing countries need to mobilise a broad range of partners (from social partners to media) to be strong national advocates.

Donors can help to promote policies that tackle barriers to education, which include strategies to improve quality and to get the hardest-to-reach children in school. They also can help draw attention to child labour issues within country-level education planning and among other development partners. Locally- and internationally-produced knowledge on child labour and good practices can be used to help education planning and encourage scaling up and mainstreaming of child labour in other development frameworks. Donors can also play an important role in supporting social partners and civil society advocacy and in acting as ‘champions’ for the cause of tackling child labour at the international and national level.

Comments

Afke de Groot, Foundation for International Research on Working Children (IREWOC), Amsterdam

One of the most important child labour issues is the need for **awareness programmes**. People – also the ones living in remote areas – are aware of the importance of education, but often ignorant of the dangers of working. Some poor parents do send their children to school, others send them to work. Also children and young people moving to **urban areas** in pursuit of a better life, should get more attention. They leave their villages, quit school and lose their interest in education.

For IREWOC three important angles from which child labour should be approached are:

- *Combating poverty*: school-drop-out and beginning working at an early age are caused by extremely low family incomes. Education cannot solve this problem alone; additional measures (including incentives, safety nets, and income generation) are needed;
- *Quality of education*: many parents consider schooling for their children to be an investment and not a right. When quality and learning performance are lagging behind, parents tend to lose interest in education.
- *Early Childhood Development (ECD)*: by organising ECD children do not automatically join their parents in their daily work at an early age. With ECD children have more chances to complete basic education and attend secondary education or vocational training.

Jo Boyden, Young Lives, United Kingdom

Families and children generally recognise the importance of education, but lose interest when quality and relevance are low. Children often do not attend school full-time because they perform work as well. Although they should be in school full time, it is not very helpful to condemn every type of work that children perform (unless they are engaged in hazardous work); at work they also acquire life skills. But education systems are very inflexible, not equipped to support part-time working children and to absorb children that have quit work.

In the absence of enough and good formal education many non-formal education organisations perform good work; eventually non-formal education must lead to official certificates and flexible solutions allowing the integration of children into the formal school system.

Besides better school facilities, flexible school programmes and quality education social protection measures, such as the provision of mid-day school meals, have to be put in place to keep children in school or prevent them from moving into work. Parents are ready to invest in education if they see good returns.

Janice Eastman, Education International, Brussels

Quality education is a human right and an investment in children and their parents. The children of educated women have better health and educational opportunities and have less chance of getting involved in child labour and suffering from raising large families.

In combating child labour it is important that there is a smooth transition from non-formal to formal education, that schools are child-friendly and have access to well-trained teachers who earn a decent salary. The focus should be on the hardest-to-reach children, higher teacher quality and the reduction of drop-out rates.

Donors must move from global partnerships on the child labour issue to the national levels and become involved in the social dialogue.

Mainstreaming Child Labour Issues in Education Sector programmes – Experiences from Zambia

Birgitte Poulsen (ILO Zambia)

Children's involvement in work is widespread in Zambia. An estimated 47 percent of children aged 7-14 years, over 1.2 million children in absolute terms, were economically active in the 2005 reference year. Seventy-five percent of working children are also in school, about four percentage points less than the school attendance of non-working children. Children's work is concentrated overwhelmingly in family agriculture. At least 169,000 children are engaged in hazardous forms of work or are working excessive hours. An estimated 57 percent of 7-14 year-olds was engaged in housekeeping activities or household chores in their own parents' or guardians' home. Calculating children's total work by simply combining involvement in economic and non-economic activity yields an estimate of total work involvement of 74 percent of Zambian 7-14 year-olds, 1.91 million children in absolute terms. Girls' work involvement using this combined measure exceeds that of boys at almost every age. These figures are included in the 2009 Understanding Children's Work (UCW) Zambia country report.

The causes of child labour in Zambia are manifold: poverty, especially in rural areas, vulnerability to economic shocks such as job loss or death of an adult family member, orphaning (mainly HIV/AIDS related), poor delivery of social services, cultural traditions and in some communities, the lower priority attached to education than to income earning activities.

There are also education-related causes. There is a direct correlation between children's work and the education level of the head of the household. 'Free' education in practice involves costs for uniforms, books etc. and parents can not be compelled to send their children to school. Access is limited, due to distance or shortage of class room. Quality concern is a key issue: education lacks relevance; learning methods are not effective etc.

As a consequence of these combined root causes, a vicious cycle is created where work and education compete. This results in absenteeism, high drop-out rates, children falling behind and generally low levels of literacy and educational attainment. UCW research showed that in Zambia levels of educational attainment and literacy are very low, owing at least in part to the exigencies of children's work. While 91 percent of children attended school at some point only 33 percent completed 3-6 grades and can read and write.

The education sector in Zambia faces a multitude of challenges, including poor school infrastructure, teacher recruitment and retention problems, an out-dated and sometimes non-relevant curriculum, high pupil teacher ratios, short school days and shortages of teaching materials. Although enrolment rates have increased very significantly since 2002, drop-out and repeat rates remain high. School attendance varies widely with season and

socio-economic circumstances. Problems in the education sector interact with socio-economic and cultural factors to create a downward spiral of child labour and poor education.

The development aid environment in the education sector can be briefly summarized. The education sector plan as part of the Fifth National Development Plan lacks detailed priorities, although there is more detail in the National Implementation Framework. The Joint Assistance Strategy for Zambia (JASZ) has led to well-developed coordination and policy dialogue mechanisms and procedures for education, in which international NGOs are actively involved. In this context it is possible to provide quality support to the Zambian government to priority setting. It is harder to introduce new issues like child labour. Not only national stakeholders but also development partners and international NGOs must buy in.

Donors can help to break the downward spiral of child labour and poor education by addressing two priority areas.

1. Education system deficiencies that push children out of school need to be addressed. Vital aspects are to ensure safe and adequate **infrastructure** and support a strong **knowledge base** for planning and implementation in the education sector and ensure that it is put to use.
2. Inclusive education that allows all children to benefit from education and help them stay in school should be promoted. Crucial elements are: **training of teachers, revising the curriculum and teaching materials** to ensure the relevance of education, promoting access to quality education for all children by targeting hard to reach groups through flexible transitional education, and, finally, making school days longer.

In order to achieve progress in tackling the priority problems of infrastructure, knowledge base, curriculum and teacher training, wider issues need to be addressed. Firstly, the policy dialogue should be linked to the low delivery capacity in the public sector in general. Secondly, there is a need to highlight issues that are at play outside the classroom, especially the specific problems faced by the group of hard to reach children who may be burdened by work, household chores creating a threefold burden. Finally, active support is needed to change attitudes and behaviour in families.

Comments

Theo Oltheten, Netherlands Embassy in Dhaka, Bangladesh

Are we making real progress? Coordination and policy dialogue are important indeed, but this should not prevent us from taking a critical look at the evolution of the problem of child labour. Is there a trend towards improvement or are things getting worse?

It is doubtful whether we should wait until the government has gained the capacity to improve education. In Bangladesh civil society can deliver education as an alternative for weak government performance. Could the church play a similar role in Zambia? We are missing a real opportunity to help the group of child labourers working in the worst form of child labour now, if we have to wait for strengthened government capacity.

Which groups of child labourers should get the first priority? How do we ensure that these groups benefit for the better in the long term? Policy dialogue is not sufficient; we need to have a more creative approach in the education sector to focus our interventions.

Impact of Child Labour on Education and Vice Versa — Experiences from the ILO/IPEC Urban Informal Economy Project in Bangladesh

Ronald Berghuys (ILO/IPEC)

In Bangladesh 7.4 million children aged 5-17 years are economically active (National Child Labour Survey, BBS 2003). 3.2 Million of them are considered to be child labourers, of which 1.3 million are involved in hazardous work. This number is however based only on the criterion of a high number of working hours (more than 43 per week). Of these children, 90 % are found in the informal sector. An estimated 100,000 children are involved in hazardous child labour in Dhaka.

The causes of child labour are:

- poverty (including high under- and unemployment rates of parents);
- inadequacies in policy, labour and education law and enforcement mechanisms;
- low level of awareness on child rights and of causes and effects of child labour;
- social and cultural traditions and perceptions, including social exclusion and gender;
- deficiencies in the education system.

The following deficiencies in the education in particular are considered as important causes to child labour:

- direct and indirect costs related to education (in particular for poor people);
- lack of resources and poor management;
- rigidity and inadequacy of curricula (non-inclusiveness);
- inadequate quality of facilities;
- inadequate quality of teachers' training;
- lack of resources and poor management;
- incompatible transition from formal basic education to technical and vocational education (TVE);
- inadequate quality and quantity of TVE.

Despite many ongoing efforts by the government of Bangladesh including international and national legal commitments, policies, the creation of a child labour unit and specific programmes (National Time Bound Programme on the elimination of the worst forms of child labour, 'hard to reach project' and PEDP II), the following challenges could be identified:

- bridging the gap between the age of compulsory education and the minimum age for work;
- addressing the role of (temporary) non-formal education and its relation to formal education;
- reforming the TVE system;
- creating linkages between child labour programmes on education, youth employment and occupational safety and health;
- creating linkages between informal and formal sectors (supply chains).

Comments

Aftab Uddin Akmal, Under-privileged Children Education Programme (UCEP)

UCEP is a human resource development organisation in providing cost-effective non-formal education, marketable skills training and employment promotion for urban working children in Bangladesh. It can be considered as one of the solutions to the above-mentioned problems.

UCEP currently operates 48 integrated general & vocational schools (IGVE) in urban slums. UCEP feeder schools follow the curriculum and textbooks prescribed by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB), incorporating basic elements of technical education and provide basic education up to Grade VIII. The prime objective of the IGVE curriculum is to prepare the students to follow a high quality of technical education. A total of 30,695 students – of whom 50 percent are girls – attend the UCEP non-formal basic education.

The service of UCEP is meant for the poor working children living in urban slums. The major categories of such children are domestic servants, hawkers, factory workers, shop-assistants, rag pickers, porters and day labourers.

To provide appropriate skills and thereby improve the employment prospects of General School graduates, UCEP-Bangladesh provides Technical Education through its nine Technical Schools. Technical Schools are running training programs in seventeen trades. Types of trades taught in the Technical Schools correspond to the demand of the employment market in the area where the school is located. General schools graduates seeking admission in the Technical Schools have the option, in principle to follow courses in their own trades.

Technical schools run two shifts per day, each of 4.2 hours duration, so that working children can continue in their jobs while they acquire skills in the Technical Schools. Total enrolment

in the technical schools is 4,406 (boys 2,701 and girls 1,705). The innovativeness of the Technical Schools approach is well demonstrated in the data: attendance and dropout rates are over 96 percent and below 2 percent respectively.

UCEP provides adequate support services to the graduates passing out from its Technical Schools for apprenticeship/on the job training & appropriate employment through its Employment & Field Services (EFS) Component.

Reports from the Working Groups

Working Group 1

(Chair: Arjan Schuthof)

The discussion in the working group was structured around the six recommendations in the draft concluding statement (see next chapter: Conclusions and Recommendations). Most of the time was spent on Recommendation 1, as well as the overall message that the meeting should come up with.

The group supported the idea of looking for the **main political hook/message** on the relation between child labour and education. This is also needed to increase political will and pressure on this issue. It was felt that so far too much emphasis has been put on the relation between poverty and child labour, thereby obscuring the many other reasons why children work. There was some frustration that things are going too slowly because a sense of urgency is lacking. Is the Dutch government willing to take leadership on this? No clear choices have been made yet.

It was emphasised by the ILO expert from Bangladesh – and supported by the group – that we need both **conventions against child labour**, especially Convention 138 on the Minimum Age for Work, as a solid basis for developing policies on this issue. A ‘Zero Tolerance Approach’ to child labour was suggested in that context.

Transition of child workers to formal education was identified as a main issue. It was stressed that the flexibility needed should not mean setting children apart in a separate (part-time) system adjusting school to work. On the contrary: it means the flexibility of the formal school system to deal with situations of giving access to children who have been working. The standards for the right to education of every child should be the same. Quality standards should be part of the national education plan.

Positive experiences were described of working with **bridge courses** outside the school and bridge classes in schools in order to prepare older children for a class appropriate to their

own age. This means e.g. that a girl of 10 can go to a bridge course/class first and then still finish her education at the age of 14 or 15 years. To reach all children a mapping of all out-of-school children should be done in order to identify them for bridge or transitional education.

Another important issue in this context is **school governance** in relation to working children. Sometimes there are a number of bureaucratic barriers (like filling in forms, the obligation to have a birth certificate, rules about admission at certain time of the year etc.) which make it difficult for illiterate parents to send children to school or keep them there (e.g. if a medical certificate is demanded after illness and re-entry). The school should actively take on these responsibilities itself and at least make sure that they do not lead to non-admission or drop-outs.

All of this, combined with a need to mobilise the local population and reinforce the norm that every child should be in school, amounts to what one can call an **area-based approach** (or 'Child Labour Free Zone'), where all relevant actors (teachers, local authorities, employers, and parents) work as much as possible in tandem to remove all children from work and get them into formal education.

It was suggested that **compulsory education** be made a pre-condition for funding of education. Otherwise the programmes funded will be undermined by all kinds of societal pressures.

Emphasis was also put on the integration of **vocational training** in and follow-up after primary education at the appropriate age, which, according to Convention 138 is 12/13 years and above. While vocational training in schools is important, apprenticeships should not be misused to so that children work for free or a pittance while learning little.

The increasingly important role of **private education** was noted. However, concern was raised about its quality and consistency with national standards. Although these initiatives were welcomed, it cannot be an alternative to the responsibility of governments to provide education for every child. Co-operation with the private sector might be useful, but this should always be linked to (pressure on) governments to fulfil their responsibility. Or as some put it: always link the efforts of both companies and NGOs to formal education and training and do not start a parallel system, but instead try to strengthen and improve this system when necessary.

Several participants, including the representative from **C&A** – a large Netherlands-based garment retailer – said that children are found in the formal sector of the economy only infrequently, but many children can be found in the informal economy. For C&A this also relates to the cotton that is used for making their garments. C&A works with 13,000 farms in

India to increase farmers' incomes and tackle child labour. It intends to target '99 percent' of the cotton it uses in this way. The company is also co-operating with other retailers on this. C&A also supports vocational training centres.

It was stressed that we need better **monitoring mechanisms** on both education and child labour. It is imperative that employers and unions be involved in this. Compliance issues regarding child labour go beyond the factory gate: it also involves suppliers and even communities to see if a child is actually going to school. In this context it was also mentioned that the Dutch Minister for Development Co-operation is stressing anti-corruption measures as corruption often undermines efforts to get a clear picture of the reality and frustrates measures needed to tackle the problem.

The **quality of teachers** in schools is also of great importance. We cannot provide quality education and tackle child labour with underpaid and un(der)qualified teachers who often see teaching as a temporary occupation until a better job comes along.

The issue of linking the eradication of child labour to **decent work for adults** came up repeatedly. Less child labour creates more jobs and a better bargaining position for adults; education gives children when they grow up a tool to assert their rights as workers while their increased capacities and skills also help to get better paid jobs. Also the issue of prevention of migration and how to reach migrant children came up as an important condition to get every child to school.

On draft **Recommendation 2** it was suggested that embassies can play an important role in bringing together donors and other actors to co-ordinate work and create more concerted action. It was noted that there are often separate and stand-alone projects that are not related. The participants asked the Dutch government to play an active role to bring the several actors together.

Draft **Recommendation 3** was supported in so far as it was reaffirmed that funding to ILO-IPEC should be on comprehensive programmes on the issue of child labour and education based on both Conventions. The objective of these programmes should include Child Labour Free Zones. Also UNICEF and UNESCO should play a role and be involved in furthering this approach.

Draft **Recommendation 4** on the co-operation of the government between civil society organisations and the academic community led to the suggestion — well-received by Minister Koenders — to establish a National Task Force on this issue with a view to having a real impact. The mandate and targeted results of such a Task Force should be further discussed at the country level.

Regarding draft **Recommendation 5** it was proposed that the Global Task Force on Child Labour and Education would be more effective if it were to help bring relevant ministries and other actors (NGOs, unions, employers etc.) together for more concerted efforts on this issue.

In relation to draft **Recommendation 6** it was recommended that the recommendations should also go to Dutch parliament as they also initiated this meeting with their motion on child labour and education. Also the statement is not intended merely as a 'technical' contribution to the Global Conference in May 2010 but as an important experience-based and political contribution to that Conference.

Working Group 2

(Chair: Bram van Ojik)

Discussions in the working group focused on the draft recommendations, in which specific aspects regarding the role of donors in promoting the fight against child labour through education were highlighted. Particular attention was paid to the role of donors in promoting public-private partnerships.

It was recognised that the role of the private sector is growing and that promising experiments merit donor's attention, especially regarding secondary education and bridging schools. Particular added value of **private sector involvement** lies in adapting curricula to new technology.

The representative of garments concern C&A stated that companies should work with Codes of Conduct and offer job guarantees to children that had been taken out of work and finished school. He stressed his interest in and preference for working with NGOs in the field of child labour, because they are 'practical' (donors in general are 'more slow' and 'less result minded').

Another topic was the question whether the working group should prioritise specific areas where donors should undertake **advocacy and support activities**. Some participants felt that a list of recommended areas would be more illustrative than indicating priorities. In the view of one participant it was critical to work with country-specific models that could include the elements listed in the recommendation. These models should have a holistic approach, based on the principle that children should learn and be educated through multiple pathways. Donors should base their advocacy and support strategies on independent reviews and assessments of existing practices and needs. One participant commented that it was pertinent to consider the political will of a partner country, expressed in political decisions by the government on how much a country would spend on education.

A number of participants stressed the need for raising the **quality and relevance of education** in order to get the hardest-to-reach children included in the education system. A Dutch education expert stated that it is important to specify what we intend to accomplish in the quality discussion, since education quality as such does not lead to reaching the last 10 percent of hard-to-reach-children.

In the report of the working group discussions the following **recommendations** were made by the group.

- Donors should encourage multi-stakeholders responses and focus on long-term, systemic and sustainable solutions.
- It is imperative that these solutions are anchored in the government, because providing education remains primarily the government's responsibility. Investing in education requires that governments give political priority to this.
- Donors should use the policy dialogue to advocate the political prioritisation of children and youth. Donors should stipulate that policies are coordinated across sectors and lead to a comprehensive youth policy. Donors should also encourage more specific national priority setting, for instance regarding National Action Plans to combat Child Labour, or time bound programmes to eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labour. In supporting policy prioritisation and planning special attention should be paid to decentralised (local) levels. Donor support should include strengthening of institutional capacity at this level.
- Donors should encourage more private sector involvement as they have a key role in improving the relevance and quality of education. E.g. the establishment of a Code of Conduct with integration of child labour in the supply chain and promoting access to education and training. The auditing of the parameters of a Code of Conduct is important.
- Change norms, attitudes and values regarding child labour (social mobilisation).
- More prominence should be given to so-called continuous learning: everyone should have access to learning.
- Donors should promote hard knowledge on the impact of programmes – what works and what not – that can be used in planning. Independent review and policy research are vital for shaping donor policies.
- Finally, the point was made that the current 15 percent ODA allocation to education should be maintained in order to ensure that we can indeed reach the 10 percent of children that are not reached yet.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Child labour is a major obstacle to achieving Millennium Development Goals 2 and 3 and the Education for All goals, because it generally harms children's ability to attend, benefit from and complete school. Of the 75 million children currently not attending school, many – including a large number of girls – go to work. Many other children are enrolled in school but do not attend regularly, partly owing to work and household-related chores. Child labour and education policy should be harmonised on the basis of the ILO Conventions against Child Labour², the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Dakar Framework for Action (EFA, 2000).

The interrelationship between child labour and education depends on the interaction of **push** and **pull** factors. On the one hand, children are *pulled* school and into work as a result of household poverty, socioeconomic shocks, social and cultural norms that favour children's contribution to household economies, discrimination against girls, minorities and other marginalised groups, or the economic advantages employers gain through the recruitment of cheap child labour instead of adult labour. On the other hand, children are *pushed* out of school because they cannot access education or because education is of a poor quality, inaccessible or irrelevant.

The *pull* factors relate to household poverty and are often influenced by social norms and attitudes that assume that children's work is beneficial for both their learning and household maintenance. Countering these factors requires solutions that go beyond the education sector. Key measures involve:

- reducing household vulnerability and improving household income, e.g. through social protection measures such as cash transfers or child grants;
- improving access to basic services (water, health and childcare facilities);
- improving household income (income-generating activities for parents);
- enforcing legal protection against child labour, and
- mobilising, sensitising and raising awareness among parents, teachers, employers, traditional/religious leaders and local authorities about child labour and its worst forms.

The *push* factors relate especially to the availability, relevance and quality of education. If schooling is unavailable, irrelevant or of a poor quality children will be pushed more easily out of school into the labour market. In economic terms, the expected returns to education must exceed the more direct returns on child labour. Schooling should increase the life chances of children; it should enable them to attend school up to the minimum age for employment, to find work, and to lead a healthier life. Another major *push* factor is social

² The Minimum Age Convention (ILO, 138/1973) sets a minimum age limit for children to be admitted into employment or work; the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (ILO, 182/1999) calls on all governments to take 'immediate and effective measures to secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour as a matter of urgency'.

exclusion. It should be an established social norm that children do not work but attend school.

Research has shown that greater attention to the following aspects of education can help address the *push* factors:

- the **availability** of water in school, and in particular sanitation facilities for girls in school; childcare facilities; enough well-trained and motivated (female) teachers willing to work in remote areas;
- the **accessibility** of education, which can be increased by:
 - o providing free education, school materials and transport;
 - o providing pre-primary education and care;
 - o creating a safe environment; and
 - o introducing incentives such as cash transfer schemes and school meals, especially for the most vulnerable children and families.

Increasing accessibility also involves tackling discrimination and exclusion on the basis of gender, race, caste, culture, language or faith. Increasing access to adult literacy programmes has a positive effect on parental decisions concerning education;

- the provision of **quality education**: trained quality teachers providing education in a safe child-friendly environment; the quality and relevance of the curriculum to the local context can convince parents of the benefits of education;
- whilst respecting child labour law, providing flexibility in **schooling procedures** (such as enrolment in writing and birth and medical certificates, which some parents are unable to obtain) and **arrangements** to overcome any barriers which may prevent children's enrolment and retention in formal schools. The school management structure should aim to reach all out-of-school children by such means as monitoring and providing transitional arrangements;
- supporting programmes for **transitional second-chance education** that enable former child workers to reintegrate into the formal school system and distance learning.

Recommendations for Action

Preamble

As mentioned in the Human Rights Strategy, the Netherlands government and parliament are fully committed to taking leadership in combating all forms of child labour including its worst forms. This will be only possible if we take an integrated approach involving a number of government ministries, in which education is absolutely central. In its development cooperation efforts, the Netherlands works to make

education available and to raise living standards in order to create the conditions necessary for child labour to be eliminated. This is fully in line with the three priorities of Dutch education policy:

- improving the quality and relevance of education;
- reaching hard-to-reach children (with targeted school expansion), and
- expanding vocational training.

1. In consultation with other donors and national partners, Dutch embassies in all thirteen education partner countries will be requested, on the basis of the above analyses, **to lobby for the mainstreaming of hard-to-reach children and child labour issues in national education plans**. They will also be requested to record, in their annual reports, specific actions undertaken by the responsible authorities and local donor communities to promote the mainstreaming of child labour in education and to describe relevant developments and results.

These might include:

- the abolition of (in)direct costs for education for the most vulnerable families by the abolition of school fees for all children, introduction of social protection measures;
- improvement of the quality and relevance of education and (vocational) training (improving the connection to the labour market and adaptation to the local cultural context);
- promotion of construction of schools in poorest regions with high incidence of child labour;
- ensuring water and sanitation facilities especially for girls at schools;
- ensuring sufficient well-trained and motivated (female) teachers and ensuring safe and good working conditions;
- supporting flexible formal school systems and programmes for transitional second chance education which promote the inclusion of all children;
- supporting early childhood development initiatives which encourage an emphasis on education from a very early age;
- building capacity, developing and implementing closer working relationships between partners in the areas of child labour, education and related areas;
- gaining an overview of child labour and education initiatives by the private sector outside the formal education system, with a view to possible mainstreaming of such initiatives in the formal education system;
- scaling up of pilots that have been found effective based on solid impact assessments.

2. In consultation with other stakeholders, in education partner countries, embassies will identify **opportunities for assisting national and local civil society**, private sector and trade unions to lobby and monitor government, parliament

and the media on child labour issues as referred to in point 1. Such lobbying should strengthen government's accountability in the area.

The concept of an area-based approach to child labour or a Child Labour Free Zone – be it a neighbourhood, village, region or nation – could be promoted because it aims at mobilising all actors in a particular area to eradicate child labour and get all children to school.

3. Part of the funding of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the ILO will be earmarked for child labour. In addition, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will provide **additional funding to ILO/IPEC** to support their decent work agenda and comprehensive child labour programmes focussed on tackling child labour through education.
4. **Cooperation with civil society organisations, private sector and the academic community in the Netherlands and elsewhere involved in education and child labour** issues will be strengthened. This could be made visible if government, CSOs and the academic community developed a Millennium Agreement focussing on child labour and education.
5. Cooperation between international organisations through interagency initiatives such as the **Global Task Force on Child Labour, Education for All** and **Understanding Children's Work** will be supported.
6. The Dutch Government will report to other donors, including the World Bank, EU member states, UNESCO and the ILO, on the outcomes of this expert meeting. This concluding statement will also serve as an important contribution to the Global Conference on Child Labour in The Hague in May 2010 and the ongoing Education for All process.
7. The Dutch Government should maintain spending 15 percent of its ODA on education to ensure that the remaining part of the out of school children will be reached.

Final remarks by Minister Bert Koenders

The minister considers the elimination of child labour as a major priority. He judged the recommendations as very valuable. Regarding the first recommendation – which aims to mainstream the hard-to-reach children, in particular child labourers, in national education plans – he mentioned that this has been high on the Dutch agenda for many years. The minister suggested therefore that we should not reinvent the wheel, but rather concentrate on:

- cooperating with existing organisations (no new structures);
- identifying practical solutions within the current education programmes, and
- ensuring the availability of sufficient school materials.

Minister Koenders also pointed out that transitional second chance education needs to be further developed and he also stressed the importance of vocational training. He recognised that it is hard to take many specific measures at the same time and warned against overloading policy dialogues, ministries and partners. The best approach would be to achieve results in pilot projects and scale up from there.

Regarding the involvement of civil society and social partners, the minister suggested launching a campaign at country level on the elimination of child labour. As a first step, a similar expert meeting could be organised in relevant countries with a view to sharing best practises on the mainstreaming of child labour in education.

The minister supported the idea to promote the mainstreaming of the elimination of child labour in education sector plans. He asked that the possibilities for UN-organisations like the ILO to work with funds that are specially earmarked for child labour interventions be explored. He further welcomed the idea that the issue of child labour and education could be addressed in a Millennium Agreement.

Annex 1
Programme Expert-Meeting, 5 November 2009

Time	Subject	Resource person	Objective	Chairperson
8:30-9:00	Registration and Coffee			
9:00-9:10	Welcome	Bram van Ojik (Director, Department for Social Development)		
9:10-9:30	Introduction to the Conference	Arjan Schuthof (Head, Education and Research Division)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explanation of conference objectives and expected results. - Introduction of the programme - Introduction of participants - Introduction to Netherlands bilateral education policy 	Bram van Ojik
9:30-10:15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 9:30-9:50 Presentation on latest developments on relation between education and child labour - 9:50-10:15: Sharing views of three panellists followed by discussion 	Patrick Quinn, Education Expert, ILO/IPEC Panellists: Afke de Groot, Jo Boyden and Jan Eastman	<p>The objective of this session is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to provide insight on the effects of child labour on education - to provide insight how education could play a role to eliminate child labour 	Bram van Ojik
10:15-10:30	Coffee break			
10:30-11:15	Presentation Zambia Case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brigitte Poulsen, Child Labour expert, ILO/IPEC Zambia - Commenter: Theo Oltheten, Netherlands Embassy Dhaka 	<p>The objective of this session is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to provide insight in the child labour situation in Zambia: the characteristics of child labour, its causes and consequences, its impact on education and the current response - to provide insight in the education situation (policies and achievements) , donor support and its impact on child labour 	Bram van Ojik
11:15-12:00	Presentation Bangladesh Case	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ronald Berghuys, IPEC Programme Manager - Commenter: Mr. Aftab Uddin Ahmab, Under-privileged Children Education Programme and Theo Oltheten 	<p>The objective of this session is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to provide insight in the child labour situation in the urban informal economy of Dhaka: the characteristics of child labour, its causes and consequences, its impact on education and the current response - to provide insight in the education situation at the micro-level for under-privileged children. 	Bram van Ojik
12:00-13:15	Working Group Session	participants	Based on the presentation of the country cases Zambia and Bangladesh, the objective of this session is to come up with	Bram van Ojik and Arjan Schuthof

			concrete policy recommendations for the donor community to improve the impact of education on the elimination of child labour in the context of a limited capacity within government and civil society and within an aid architecture with a strong harmonisation agenda (Accra and Paris)	
13:15-14:00	Lunch			
14:00-15:00	Reporting back to plenary			Bram van Ojik
15:00-15:30	Drafting of recommendations for the Minister	Drafting committee		Bram van Ojik
15:30-16:00	Coffee/Tea			
16:00-17:00	Presentation of the recommendations to the Netherlands Minister for Development Cooperation, followed by a panel discussion		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Presentation of the recommendations to the Minister for Development Cooperation - Reaction of panellists: Furio Rosati (UCW), Gerard Oonk (LIW), Brigitte Poulsen (ILO/IPEC), Cream Wright (UNICEF) - Reaction of the Minister 	Bea ten Tusscher (Director, Human Rights, Good Governance and Humanitarian Aid Department)
17:00-18:00	Cocktails			

Annex 2

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