
An Introduction to the Child Labour in Third World Countries

Child labour is the employment of children as money earners. It became a serious social problem in the Industrial Revolution in Britain during the 1700's, and the problem spread to other countries as they became industrialized. The problem arose when children, many below the age of 10, were employed by factories and mines. The youths were forced to work long hours under dangerous and unhealthy conditions, and their wages were very small. Child workers were often deprived of the chance to attend school. Uneducated, the only work they were capable of doing was unskilled labor. Thus, they had little chance to improve themselves.

Adults and children under 16 years under 5 years

Whole world 5000 million 2000 million 600 million

Developing

Countries 4000 million 1500 million

500 million

Developed

Countries 1200 million 277 million 86 million

Ennew, Judith. Exploitation of Children(1996)

Not only are there over 300 million child workers between the age of 5 to 15 in the third world countries but there are about twice as many that work as a secondary activity. 61 percent of these are found in Asia, 32 percent in Africa, and 7 percent in Latin America. (International Labour Office, Geneva. "Child Labour: Targeting the Intolerable").

There are studies that prove that child labour is the cause of many dangers and hazards. Some of the consequences of child labour are as follows:

- Working children suffer growth deficits.

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- Child workers are exposed to hazardous conditions that expose them to chemical and biological hazards.

Poverty is the main reason for child labour. Poor households need the money, which their children can earn. Children contribute to 20/25 % of family income. It is obvious that the survival of certain families depends on the children's earnings.

The reason for which children are hired for labour is because of their low wage cost and their great work in return.

In developed countries children have to go to school to learn skills for the future. Children learn at an early age to run errands, help to cook, and clean the house. The children often work by choice, in order to have extra pocket money for themselves and for the family. Most children work because in third world countries the money is not for extra leisure but for survival. Children have a better chance being less exploited when they work in a family business. The danger rests when the work is outside of the family.

The children work long hours and under strain. The children are usually too young to work but do anyway. Most children work on the streets and for very little pay (approximately 3 dollars a day). The working children work with no motivation usually and must take it upon themselves at a very young age to deal with the stress of work.

We focused in child labour in the third world countries since it is easy to grasp the dilemma. Child labour occurs all around the world but we are sometimes blinded by what surrounds us. Children in the developing countries work in order for their families to make less than what we consider "ends meet". The sadness in this issue is what we have demonstrated in our display. We often observe the awful cases where a child will work and the father for example will waste this money in order to get drunk instead of supporting the family. We have also learned about the cases where a family will sell their child to an extremely poor family. This action creates a set barricade for the child that will only allow him to work through his life to support his new family. This in my opinion is the most shocking provoking. We have studied the low wages and the low ages and the statistics are unbearable.

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