

WORLD DAY AGAINST CHILD LABOUR EDUCATION: THE RIGHT RESPONSE TO CHILD LABOUR

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Press Release

As another school year opens, the International Labour Organization (ILO) highlighted the need to keep children in school and out of child labour.

Recent Department of Education (DepEd) data show a decline in the participation rate or net enrolment rate in schools, the lowest in seven years, from 96.77 per cent in 2000-01 to 83.22 per cent in 2006-07.

Parents living in poverty often must choose whether to educate their children or send them to work to help support the family. In some cases, children attending schools must walk long distances, face inadequate quality education, poor physical facilities or lack of study material. Teachers may receive little support, training or poor salaries, while parents cannot afford to pay school fees, textbooks and uniforms.

“When families have limited resources, children as young as 5 are forced to work at the cost of dropping out of school, risking their health or even their lives,” said Keiko Niimi, Deputy Director of the ILO Subregional Office based in Manila. “More than ever, children need good quality education and training to get better and decent jobs in the future or help them start their own business.”

Throughout the world, girls are more vulnerable than boys, often suffering discrimination when it comes to education. Failure to educate girls costs developing countries US\$92 billion a year. Educated girls are more likely than their uneducated sisters to have better income as adults, marry later, and have fewer and healthier children and stronger decision-making power. They are also more likely to ensure that their own children are educated, avoiding future child labour. In the Philippines, however, more girls appear to be in school compared to boys.

“It is the opportunities and experiences during the most formative stages of life as children that shape their future. A young boy carrying heavy boxes, scavenging or harvesting in the field may earn 40 or 50 pesos a day - enough to keep a family from falling apart. Still, a few pesos cannot change their world the way an education can,” said Niimi.

The ILO, together with its partners, helps child labourers and their families. Children, often working long hours and in dangerous conditions, are withdrawn from the worst forms of child labour, resulting in declining numbers of working children aged 5-14, as observed in the quarterly Labor Force Survey by the National Statistics Office. The number of working children aged 5-14 years old went down from 913,000 in October 2003 to 774,000 in October 2005. The decline was more pronounced among younger children aged 5-9 - from 135,000 in October 2003 to 98,000 in October 2005.

“Despite all efforts, the fight against child labour remains a challenge. The most effective way is to improve access and the quality of education. We need to attract and retain children. We have to ensure that child labourers are successfully integrated in schools and that they do not return to work until they grow up and acquire education and training,” said Niimi.



June 12 each year marks the World Day Against Child Labour and serves as a rallying point for the worldwide movement against child labour. It draws attention to dangers that many children face and policies necessary to tackle child labour. In the Philippines, the World Day Against Child Labour will be highlighted at Bulacan State University on June 13 through raising awareness on education as the right response to child labour. The Federation of Free Workers (FFW) who implemented a programme for children in mining communities will take the lead, calling on children to stay in school, helping kids perform better and bringing schools to children through Alternative Learning Systems.

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