



International
Labour
Organization

Eliminating Child Labour **Guides for Employers**



Guide Three **The role of employers’ organizations in combating child labour**



Guide Three

The role of employers' organizations in combating child labour

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Bureau for Employers' Activities, International Labour Office
and the
International Organisation of Employers (IOE)

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Foreword

Child labour is normally concentrated in the informal economy, in the rural sector and in other industries hidden from public view. Children who are engaged in child labour, either because they are below the legal work age or because they work in hazardous, illegal or degrading conditions, are unable to develop to their full potential. Employers and employers' organizations can play a role in the global fight against child labour. Employers can take responsible action to remove child labour from their workplaces, they can reduce the risk from hazards for adolescents and they can refuse to hire children. Employers and employers' organizations can lobby for effective schooling and for remedial programmes, and they can help to raise public awareness and change attitudes.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Organisation of Employers (IOE) worked closely together to develop this set of Guides. The Guides are unique in that they consider child labour from the perspective of employers and their organizations, while keeping the welfare of children and their families at the centre of the analysis. In addition, the Guides offer practical ideas and advice. They draw on the experiences of staff at a number of national employers' organizations that have worked with the ILO over the past several years on child labour projects. Numerous examples of the positive actions taken by employers and their organizations are included. These examples provide evidence not only of what *can* be done but of what *has been* done.

The Guides have benefited from the inputs of a wide range of experts. They were first reviewed at an interregional workshop for employers' organizations held at the International Training Centre of the ILO in Turin, Italy, in July 2006. Ideas and suggestions were also received from experts at the IOE, the ILO's Bureau for Employers' Activities and the ILO's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC). The Guides are fully consistent with, and indeed support the ILO's Minimum Age Convention (C. 138) and the ILO's Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (C. 182).

We hope that these Guides can help you and your organization or business make a difference in your country.

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Introduction

Helping its members

Each enterprise is responsible for complying with the law regarding the employment of children. However, an enterprise may not know the details of the law. For example, it may not know the minimum age of employment or how “light” work is defined. It may not know what constitutes hazardous work or the worst forms of child labour. In most countries, the answers to these questions can be found in national legislation. (See the section ‘What is child labour?’ in Guide One for the definitions found in ILO Conventions.) Furthermore, an enterprise may not know what to do about the child labourers it currently employs. Should it just stop employing them? Should it try to get them into school? What organizations can help? For all of these questions – and many others – an employers’ organization may be able to provide answers or may know where to direct its members for help.

The appropriate response

As the main role of an employers’ organization is lobbying, it can lobby for the effective elimination of child labour. In doing so, it can engage in tripartite dialogue on the issue, provide advice on legislation and encourage the government to ratify ILO child labour Conventions. In addition to lobbying other actors, an employers’ organization can encourage its hesitant members to do the right thing and stop employing child labourers. It can encourage members to be more aware of the hiring policies of their suppliers, notably those in the informal economy.

A problem with suppliers



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Dialogue and working with others

In addition, an employers' organization can participate in projects with NGOs and donors. In short, employers' organizations can participate in collective action to eliminate child labour among its members in a region or sector, or indeed throughout the country.

Rationale for employers' organizations : Why get involved in child labour?

The reasons why an employers' organization might get involved in the child labour issue are similar to those for individual enterprises (see Guide One). Those reasons can be briefly summarized as:

It's illegal

a. Complying with the law: Most countries have laws against employing persons of a certain age in specific activities. Thus the first reason to stop child labour is that in most countries it is against the law. An employers' organization can encourage its members to operate within the law.

International buyers and foreign consumers

b. Expanding market access: International buyers and brands wish to meet accepted international labour standards and also to avoid bad publicity and potential boycotts. These buyers seek producers in developing countries that are certified as being free of child labour and that have worked hard to ensure that child labour is not used in the suppliers they source from. An employers' organization that promotes the elimination of child labour assists its members in accessing markets. It is good for individual businesses but also for entire sectors and the economy as a whole. A country gains a positive image among investors and consumers.

Level playing field

c. Improving productivity: Enterprises, especially informal ones, often hire children because they think that it improves their profitability. This is usually a short-term perspective, however. Child labour detracts from long-term enterprise success because it inhibits the development of a trained and productive workforce of adult workers. Children have short attention spans, less appreciation of quality control and less capacity to use machinery efficiently. They are not as strong physically as adults. An employers' organization can encourage the elimination of child labour to improve the business performance of its members.

A capable adult workforce

d. Ethics – Doing the right thing: An employers' organization can contribute to society by encouraging hiring decisions that allow children to get an education. In turn, these children will earn more in the future, will be part of a more educated workforce and will contribute to a more productive economy. But the decision to avoid hiring children does not need to be based strictly on the future economic benefits it brings to children and society. Sparing children the misery of hard and hazardous work is desirable in itself. It allows children, immediately and as children, to have a happier life (if they live in households with adequate income). In such a situation, not hiring child labour is simply the right thing to do.

Benefits to children and society

What this guide provides

Collective response

This guide provides advice and guidance to employers' organizations on how they can address the issue and what they can do to help their members. As collective organizations, they can organize advice, support dialogue, collaborate with donors and work collectively, saving the time and efforts of their members. Becoming centres of advice and knowledge and know-how on the issue can reduce the information gathering costs of their members. Dialoguing with government, workers' organizations and, as appropriate, non-government organizations allows for individual enterprises to reduce their exposure. And liaising with donors can result in projects that have greater impact.

Intended users

Membership based business organizations

This guide is specifically designed for national employers' organizations. An employers' organization's board members, senior managers and staff can use this guide to develop a strategy or otherwise take concrete actions aimed at eliminating child labour. Other membership-based business associations may also find this guide useful. Such associations can include: chambers of commerce, manufacturers' associations, farmers' groups and sectoral associations (e.g. garment manufacturers, agro-processing enterprises, mining companies, etc.). Many of these associations will be constituent members of the employers' organization and thus cooperation between the employers' organization and these associations may be an important part of the strategy to help enterprises.

How to use this guide

Surveying

This guide is comprised of two main sections. The first section provides information about how to develop a strategy or plan of action for the employers' organization. The guide suggests that the employers' organization should begin by "Surveying the landscape" or, in other words, it should start by building its knowledge base about the issue, about the other organizations working on child labour and about the needs of enterprises.

Strategizing

With this knowledge, the employers' organization can then proceed on to "Mapping a strategy". The guide does not tell an employers' organization what strategy to adopt – that is for it to decide based on its objectives, the existing landscape and the needs of its members. The guide does, however, provide three short scenarios that might be faced by an employers' organization and then how the organization might respond.



Three 'Options for Action'

Information and advice

The second section of the guide provides three Options of Action. As options, they are three possible areas of involvement for an employers' organization. An organization may decide to undertake all three and to map them together in an integrated strategy. Conversely, the employers' organization might decide on only two of the options or decide to take two options now and add a third in the future. The first option, "Providing information and advice", is the minimalist option as it involves the employers' organization in only a limited engagement on the issue. Nonetheless, the information and advice it provides can be very valuable for its members, especially for those enterprises that lack basic knowledge about the issue and the possible actions they might undertake.

Dialogue and awareness

The second option, "Facilitating dialogue and raising awareness", combines the traditional role of engaging with governments and trade unions on key labour issues with more public awareness activities. As part of its strategy, an employers' organization may commission research which defines the nature and extent of children labour. Such research can provide support for knowledgeable tripartite discussions, for lobbying governments on legal reforms and remedial programmes and for raising public awareness. Employers' organizations can also advocate for free basic education as a means of reducing child labour.



Programmes

The third option requires considerable involvement in that the employers' organization undertakes programmes that can remove children from child labour, support schools for them or assist in other ways. There are often financial implications to this involvement, and the employers' organization will most likely engage with local groups and schools, international agencies and donors and other organizations.

The power of examples

If your organization is not convinced that employers' organizations can play an important role in the child labour problem, then consider the boxed examples. They provide cases in which employers' organizations have taken an active role in child labour and found ways to collaborate with others.

An integrated set of guides

Part of a series of guides

Finally, this guide is part of a set of three guides. The set provides an integrated view of the child labour issue, including the child labour conventions, causes and consequences (Guide One), the actions that can be taken by enterprises (Guide Two) and the role of employers' organizations (Guide Three).

Surveying the landscape (Situation analysis)

Key issues and key actors

Understanding the environment of child labour is an important first step for an employers' organization wishing to design a child labour strategy. We call this environment the existing 'landscape' of enterprises and child labour. The employers' organization will want to understand this landscape. It will want to know what issues need to be tackled, what legislation is in place, what other actors are currently engaged in the issue and other issues.

Not an enterprise questionnaire

The survey of the landscape does not involve a questionnaire-based survey of enterprises (although it may). What we mean here is getting a sense of the nature of institutions and actors that are involved in child labour. Just as an enterprise needs to understand its markets and the institutions under which it operates before mapping a product or business strategy, so too an employers' organization must understand the nature of child labour and its prevalence before designing a strategy.

The main aspects of the landscape are:

- Labour market landscape
- Legal landscape
- Organizational landscape
- Consumer or buyer landscape

A non-linear process

'Surveying the landscape', and the next step, 'Designing the strategy', should probably not be considered in isolation. Instead, they can be thought of as two interactive and reinforcing components. For example, basic information gathering may be followed by the drafting of a preliminary strategy. More information may then be needed – requiring more 'surveying' – before the strategy can be designed in more detail and eventually finalized.

1. Labour market landscape

Child labour market

Your employers' organization will already be knowledgeable about the general labour market. However, it may not have a detailed understanding of the child labour situation. Getting to know that market, which is illegal and thus often hidden, is not easy. In most countries, the bulk of the enterprises that employ children are not members of the employers' organization or are members only indirectly through constituent business associations. The employers' organization will need to build up its knowledge. The key questions it may seek to address may include the following:

- Is child labour a major problem in the country?
- Does it affect only certain sectors?
- Is it an urban or a rural problem, or both?
- Do children work mostly in informal enterprises or also in formal ones?
- Is the major problem with workers under the legal age or with those over the legal age but undertaking hazardous work?

Information can be obtained from the ILO's country office and, more specifically, from those officials who are part of the ILO's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) and its projects. On its website, IPEC provides considerable information on ratification, data and country reports. The website can be a useful place to start (www.ilo.org/ipec).

Info from IPEC, UNICEF and appropriate ministry



ILO officials may also be able to provide knowledge and information on the extent and nature of child labour in the country and the key players and activities. Other important sources are UNICEF and the national ministry that is responsible for the child labour issue (often the Ministry of Labour).

2. Legal landscape

Conventions and laws

A key aspect of the landscape is the legal framework that sets out what types of work are classified as child labour. Providing informed advice to its member enterprises will require that the employers' organization itself understand the legal requirements. Key aspects include:

- are there national child labour and related laws that define permissible and non-permissible work for children?
- has the country ratified the ILO's Minimum Age Convention (C. 138)?
- has the country ratified the ILO's Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (C. 182)?
- has a list of what constitutes 'hazardous work' been agreed by the social partners?

Regarding international conventions, the employers' organization will need to understand how national laws differ from the general provision of these conventions. This will be especially important when handling discussions with foreign firms and international buyers.

3. Organizational landscape

A third issue is the nature of the organizational landscape. You will want to know what other bodies are active in this area. The types of organizations will probably break down into four groups.

- **Government:** Is the government active in enforcing child labour laws? What ministries or agencies are active? Is the education ministry an important player? Are local authorities or community leaders involved?
- **NGOs:** What local, national and international non-governmental organizations are active in your area in the field of child labour? Are there pressure groups that are monitoring the issue, or groups that can help enterprises and employers' organizations remove children from work and help their parents raise income?
- **International agencies:** Is the UN active in your country, including the ILO, UNICEF and International Office of Migration? If there is an ILO-IPEC programme active in the country, it may be eager to collaborate with an employers' organization.

- **Business associations:** What other business groups, including sectoral associations, are active in the country? Are they constituent members of the employers' organization? Do good working relations exist between your organization and these associations? Are there local associations of foreign companies/investors that are involved in the child labour issue?

Local actors, including teachers' associations

While these are the main actors, each country and each local area has its own specific set of organizations. For example, an ILO anti-child labour project in the Indonesian footwear sector found that a local teachers' association was interested in helping out. Children who were performing poorly in school and were at risk of dropping out were identified. The teachers then gave these pupils extra tuition to improve their performance and keep them in school. In addition, children who had already dropped out were given remedial lessons so that they could catch up and get back into the formal education system. The educational support was one part of the multi-faceted project that involved several organizations.

4. Consumer and buyer landscape

Buyer standards may be higher than legislation

Another key element of the environment is the nature of the demands of domestic and international buyers and consumers of the products produced by the enterprises that are members of your employers' organization. We consider buyers and consumers together because buyers respond to or anticipate the pressures placed on them by consumers. There are two reasons why an employers' organization and its members need to be aware of the standards of buyers and consumers. Firstly, while national legislation provides the minimum standard regarding child labour, buyers may have set standards that are higher than national law. In particular, many large firms require that no one under the age of 18 is working in their supplier factories or plantations, regardless of whether the work is considered hazardous or not.

Multitude of buyers' standards

The second reason to be conscious of buyers' standards is that, unfortunately, they often each have their own standards. For example, some buyers do not allow anyone under the age of 18 to be employed by their suppliers. Other buyers follow the standards contained in the ILO Minimum Age Convention (No. 138). Still others will accept the national law where the producer is based. Buyers may also have different definitions for hazardous work (e.g. with chemicals or machinery). This variety of standards can make life complicated for producers. An employers' organization needs to gain a sense of the variety of standards and how they apply to different sectors. This knowledge may help employers' organizations to decide whether to generate a general strategy or one which is more sector specific and can support enterprises dealing with a range of buyers.



Some key questions in this regard may include:

- Are the requirements of buyers and consumers more stringent than national laws?
- Do the requirements of buyers vary by sector? Are textile buyers stricter than coffee buyers, for example?
- Have producers complained about the multiplicity of demands from buyers?
- Have attempts been made to coordinate buyers so that they agree on a common set of standards?

More concrete discussion with producers and buyers can take place once the employers' organization's strategy is implemented. At this stage it is important to anticipate whether higher standards (than national laws) will be an issue. As well, an employers' organization may wish to decide whether it can play a coordinating role between producers (or sector associations) and buyers.

Are higher standards an issue?

Learning by doing

Keep learning

The initial survey of issues and actors will allow the employers' organization to map out a strategy to move forward. However, it will probably not be possible for the employers' organization to learn everything it needs to know through its initial 'survey of the landscape'. Much will be learned in the process of beginning to implement the strategy and engaging with member enterprises, with government and with the range of other stakeholders. Indeed, really understanding the landscape will take several years and the employers' organization should also be ready to incorporate new knowledge and understanding into the strategy. 'Learning by doing' is not only a valuable principle that is used to guide workers and enterprises in increasing productivity. It is also a principle to be followed by employers' organizations in the process of supporting the elimination of child labour.

Box 1

Checklist: Key 'Landscape' Questions

Labour market

- Is child labour a major problem in the country?
- Does it affect only certain sectors?
- Do children work mostly in informal or formal enterprises?
- Is the major problem with workers under the legal age or with those over the legal age but undertaking hazardous work?

Legal

- What national child labour laws exist that define permissible and non-permissible work for children? What are the provisions and definitions?
- Has the ILO's Minimum Age Convention (C. 138) been ratified?
- Has the country ratified the ILO's Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (C. 182)?
- Has a list of what constitutes 'hazardous work' been agreed by the social partners?

Organizations

- Is the government active in enforcing laws? What ministries or agencies are active? Is the education ministry an important player? How about local boards or councils?
- What local, national and international non-governmental organizations are active in your area in the field of child labour? Are there pressure/lobby groups that are monitoring the issue, or groups that can help enterprises and employers' organizations remove children from work and help their parents raise income?
- Is the UN active in your country, including the ILO, UNICEF and International Office of Migration?
- What other business groups, including sectoral associations, are active in the country? Are they constituent members of the employers' organization?

Buyers and consumers

- Are the requirements of buyers and consumers more stringent than national laws?
- Do the requirements of buyers vary by sector? Are textile buyers stricter than coffee buyers, for example?
- Have producers complained about the multiplicity of demands from buyers?
- Have attempts been made to coordinate buyers so that they agree on a common set of standards?

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Choosing an objective and mapping a strategy

Consider other actors

With a sketch of the landscape regarding child labour, your organization can then decide on an objective and map out a strategy. The objective chosen and the particular nature of the strategy will, of course, depend on the nature of the child labour problem in the country. In addition, it will be affected by the resources of the employers' organization and by the nature of the cooperation it can establish with local groups, donors and international organizations. The employers' organization does not need to do it all by itself, and indeed it is best that it work with others to draw on their support and expertise.

Is it to be a comprehensive document?

The strategy does not have to be a fully comprehensive and detailed document. What is more important is that it give the employers' organization some direction in what role it will play, what problems it will tackle and what partnerships it will rely on. The actions that the employers' organization undertakes are important, and the strategy document is a support to that action.

The process

Clarify the objectives

Most employers' organizations do not need advice on how to set an objective and develop a strategy. The process is similar to that used for other issues, notably social ones. A group of people within the organization sits down to consider the information obtained from the surveying done in the last step. An objective is formulated and discussed. The discussion expands to other officers of the employers' organization and possibly to one or more Board members. Operational components are added and the objective is further clarified. The draft starts to take shape and wider consultation occurs, both among members and with outside actors. The cost implications in terms staff time, financial resources and possible recruitment are estimated. A fuller strategy is developed and reviewed both internally and with key outside collaborators. For example, a respected local non-governmental organization may be asked to comment and provide input. The ILO, UNICEF or the IOE may be asked for its views.

Add operational elements

Budget and staff allocation

Getting buy-in

Eventually the strategy is presented to the Board. It can include an operational plan and an assessment of resource and staffing implications. The members of the Board may ask for modifications and finally give their approval. From the strategy, the implementation stage then starts. At some point in the future, possibly after six months or a year, the objective and strategy are reviewed. Successes and failures are considered and the strategy is further modified and continued.

Strategy process vs. strategy content

This is the process. The content or components of the strategy is the aspect with which the employers' organization will need more help, notably if staff are not familiar with the issue. Suggestions for the content are provided in the three subsequent chapters of the guide. These are called the Options for Action.

Custom designing your strategy**Relevance**

It is not possible to set out here a strategy for your employers' organization; that you must do yourself. The strategy will depend on the objective, on the nature of the issue in your country and on the actions currently taken individually by your members and other actors. In addition, the strategy will depend on the resources, capacity and objectives of your employers' organization. A number of the general *Do's and Don't's* of developing a strategy are provided in Box 2.

Box 2**Designing your strategy****— What to do – What *not* to do —**

- **Do** consult widely before setting down the strategy.
- **Do** build on best practices of individual enterprises.
- **Do** assess realistically the time and costs of the strategy.
- **Do** designate a child labour focal point in your organization.
- **Do** consider your role vis-à-vis workers and government.

- **Don't** fix the strategy too early; let it evolve; modify it.
- **Don't** publicly deny that the problem exists.
- **Don't** ignore the importance of international buyers.
- **Don't** lecture your members – instead persuade and assist.
- **Don't** work alone – find partners, including NGOs.

More than one scenario

In addition, we can consider four situations or scenarios and what type of strategy an employers' organization would develop to respond to these situations. An employers' organization may need to respond to several of these scenarios at the same time. Furthermore, some employers' organizations have proactively developed comprehensive, national strategies. A good example is Colombia's employers' organization which has a four-part strategy based on: i) institutional development, ii) research, iii) awareness-raising and iv) direct action. The contours of this strategy are provided in Box 3.

Box 3

A four-pillar strategy, Colombia

The national employers' organization of Colombia has taken a systematic approach to the elimination of child labour. The Asociación Nacional de Empresarios de Colombia (ANDI) bases the approach on four pillars:

Institutional development

- adoption of a code of conduct that all members must comply with; it includes the requirement to eliminate the worst forms of child labour and to protect children who work
- participation in the national inter-institutional committee on this issue
- support for social institutions that provide training and improve the working conditions of young workers
- dissemination of best practices in the business community

Research

- creation of a national and international statistics database
- collection of documentation, including best practices, legislation and international standards
- provision of information on institutions and foundations that enterprises cooperate with in their social endeavours

Awareness-raising

- creation of a logo that signifies ANDI's commitment as well as that of its members to eliminating child labour
- use of the media to disseminate information on the rights of the child and on international and national commitments

Direct action

- identification and cooperation with groups of child labourers and young workers whose social and work characteristics lend themselves to a national demonstration effect
- formation of alliances with international organizations and NGOs involved in the design and implementation of a national strategy
- collaboration with universities to include the theme of child labour as a part of university studies
- participation in a project executed by ILO on the worst forms of child labour in garbage collection, coal mining, street children and port workers

Source: Asociación Nacional de Empresarios de Colombia, www.andi.com.co

Four scenarios

1. Assistance to individual enterprises

In the first scenario, an employers' organization realizes that it has limited internal resources to dedicate to the issue and little in-house expertise. The organization may be busy fulfilling its many other roles. In this case, it can decide to play a responsive role by providing information and advice to individual enterprises. This is basic information about the requirements of the national law, the major international conventions on child labour, what to look out for when removing children from work and possibly linking that enterprise up with local and international organizations that can help it reduce its child labour problem and get certified as free of child labour.

2. Responding to sectoral problems

In the second scenario, the members of the employers' organization are confronted with a problem of child labour. These members may be concentrated in the same export sector. They have been criticized and are losing market share as a result. To a great extent, children are not working at member enterprises but for their suppliers. In this scenario, the employers' organization can work directly with the enterprises of that sector to design a programme to resolve problems. This might involve the removal of many children from work which, in turn, would require cooperation with local authorities, schools and with others. A labelling and certification programme might be established and might include suppliers.

3. Engaging in social dialogue and legislative change

The employers' organization of a country that has not enacted child labour laws will have a very different role to play. In this scenario, it will represent business in tripartite dialogue with government and with workers' organizations to design a child labour policy and legal framework. This can revolve around the wish of the government or other actors to ratify the ILO's Minimum Age Convention (C. 138) or the ILO's Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (C. 182). An employers' organization may also find that the country has ratified these Conventions but needs to decide, with the other social partners, on the list of what constitutes "hazardous work" for workers up to the age of 18, as required by C. 182.

4. Proactive projects

The employers' organization might also operate on a less reactive and more proactive basis. The impetus for action might come from the employers' organization itself, or be co-generated with donors and international agencies. Instead of trying to satisfy buyers in a specific sector, the effort would be made to reduce child labour generally, including in the informal economy, where it tends to be concentrated. Lobbying activities and public campaigns to raise awareness may also be part of these efforts. There is a greater planning element required for these activities, along with a need to secure adequate funding.



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Options for Action

- **Option 1: Providing information and offering advice**
- **Option 2: Facilitating dialogue and raising awareness**
- **Option 3: Delivering programmes**

Option 1: Providing information and offering advice

Many questions

Child labour can be a confusing issue for a typical business owner. He or she may not know the legal age of work or how hazardous work is defined for workers below the age of 18. For a business that knows it is employing children, the options of what to do with current workers may also be a concern. Should the enterprise simply let them go or does it have some responsibility to them? What organization can help to ensure the welfare of children who are laid off?

First point of contact

An employers' organization can be the first point of contact and information for its members on these questions. It is with an employers' organization that an enterprise can get confidential help from a business perspective. An enterprise may eventually develop collaboration with other organizations but the employers' organization can advise on which organizations to contact and what type of actions might be included in a strategy.

Marketing the employers' organization

While enterprises may turn to their employers' organization for assistance, there is no guarantee that they will do so naturally. Members may not readily associate their employers' organization with the child labour issue. If this is the case, the employers' organization may want to consider raising its profile – marketing itself – on this non-traditional issue among its members, but also more broadly.

A centre of expertise

As a collective body, an employers' organization can play an efficient role in gathering information and building a body of experience and expertise. This may ultimately be the only role that an employers' organization plays in the child labour issue. On the other hand, it might be part of a larger, more integrated role.

This section provides basic advice on how to build the informational and advisory roles of the employers' organization. The section is structured along the following activities:

- Preliminary: Establishing a Focal Point
- Providing information
 - Information on laws
 - Information related to international buyers
 - Information on certification
- Offering advice
 - Basic advice from the employers' organization focal point
 - Sharing good practice
 - Help with choosing partners
 - Assisting with the formulation of codes of conduct

1. Preliminary: Establishing a Focal Point

Build expertise in EO personnel

As part of its strategy, an employers' organization can designate a staff person as Focal Point within the organization to handle child labour issues. Ideally, this person should have some past experience related to the issue but, in any event, designating one person will allow that person to build expertise. Whether the Focal Point dedicates his or her time to child labour full-time, or whether it is one of several responsibilities will depend on the staff size of the employers' organization and on the nature of demand for assistance from members. For example, the Ghana Employers' Association has established a Child Labour Desk and appointed one of its staff officers to act as Focal Point. Along with responding to individual questions raised by members, a Focal Point may



also be part of the more proactive activities of the employers' organization on child labour and can work with other staff. The various staff engaged in the issue may comprise a Child Labour Elimination Team.

2. Providing information

a. Information on laws

Spelling out clearly what the law requires

At a basic level, your members will need to know the relevant provisions of laws relating to children and work. Having copies of the law and, where the law is not easy to read, a summary of it can be very useful for members. The legal age is usually the simple part, the more complex part is with definitions of how much work an under-aged person can do (light work as a part-time or after-school job). In addition, depending on the national legislation, there may be a question of the definition of hazardous work, notably for those above the legal work age but below age 18. The employers' organization, which may include sectoral associations as its members, can bring together hazardous work definitions for the various sectors or direct members to the sectoral associations.

Text of the law

One way to provide information on national laws is to include the text of the national law (or an accurate summary of it) at the back of copies of Guide Two of the this set of Guides.

b. Information related to international buyers

Policies of buyers

Your employers' organization may have a larger role to play in informing members of the changing attitudes toward child labour. In the past, buyers – large domestic ones and international ones – may not have been aware of, or may have turned a blind eye to child labour practices in their supply chains. Attention has increased greatly in the past decade and over the past five years. Requirements are stricter. Your employers' organization has a role to play in talking to buyers, being informed of the changing attitudes and informing members of these changes. Sectoral associations can have a particularly important role to play in this regard as child labour tends to get attention from a sectoral perspective. Your members also need to know that the requirements of international buyers are often stricter than the national law.

Pressure on commodity producers

In some cases employers' organizations may be responding to the demands of members who understand the pressures emanating from international buyers. For example, the Federation of Ugandan Employers has developed projects in coffee- and tea-growing areas to eliminate child labour. Producers of these commodities are under pressure because foreign buyers require products to be free of child labour.

c. Information on certification

How can businesses certify?

Your members may be interested in having their products certified as having been produced without child labour. This will assist producers seeking to supply international buyers. The employers' organization may have a role to play in making firms aware of what types of certification are possible in their sector – both nationally and internationally – and the benefits and drawbacks of each of these. (See Guide Two for a review of various types of certification.) Some organizations go a step further and develop their own labelling programme. This is what has occurred in Franca, Brazil, a large shoe manufacturing cluster, where the local employers' association created a label that was used on shoe packaging for producers certified as being free of child labour. The full case is provided in a box in a latter section, Option 3: Delivering Programmes.

3. Offering advice

Providing direction

Beyond simply providing information, an employers' organization can offer advice to its members on the child labour issue. Advice can be provided person-to-person; that is, by a staff member of the employers' organization to the owner or manager of an enterprise. But the employers' organization can also play a facilitating role in which advice flows between members, notably between members that have successfully removed children from their operations and those that still need to do so. Advice can be divided into three main categories, as suggested below.

a. Basic advice from the EO focal point

Focal point

Along with providing information, the child labour Focal Point can also provide basic advice. Such advice can include the tips provided in Guide Two of this set of guides, such as: stop the recruitment of new child workers; suggest strategies for verifying age before hiring; remove child workers from hazardous tasks; encourage activities that can raise family income; determine whether school fees are a hindrance; and find groups that can help to support family income.

The Focal Point will not be able to solve the problems of every enterprise and more detailed strategies may have to be developed. However, the Focal Point can provide some direction and offer solutions used by other enterprises.

b. Sharing good practice: enterprise-to-enterprise

Document good practice

Enterprises can learn a great deal from the examples offered by other enterprises. It allows them to learn about what really works and how others have tackled similar problems. As a result, the employers' organization can play an important role in documenting examples of good practice among its members and disseminating these examples among the membership. This can be done in printed form but also on the website.



Members talking to each other

In addition, members can be encouraged to talk to each other about the issue. Such direct member-to-member advice can be extremely important and can allow a 'good practice' enterprise to respond to the concerns and problems of an enterprise that wants to do the right thing but that is concerned about cost implications and negative publicity. Member-to-member meetings can take place as side activities to other employers' organization events, or as designated seminars and events. 'Good practice' enterprises may present their programmes and strategies at such seminars and allow networking opportunities for enterprises that wish to know more.

c. Managing disagreement among members

Varying points of view

One or more members may not agree with the employers' organization's policy on child labour. Some members may feel that their compliance puts them at a disadvantage relative to competitors. Other disagreements may also arise. Some members may not agree that the organization should dedicate resources to the problem. Others may disagree with its policy stance regarding the minimum age of employment, the amount of permissible seasonal or part-time employment or the definition of hazardous work. Such disagreement might be expected. Members will disagree on any number of issues.

Allowing debate

Part of the solution is to ensure that there is adequate debate and dialogue within the organization. From time to time, it may be necessary to solicit the views of the membership to determine the organization's position. A vote at an annual meeting may also be required to approve (or reject) the organization's position or strategy. What is not debatable, however, is the need for members to comply with the law.

Persuasion

If a member refuses to comply and continues to employ child labour, the matter will likely require action. The employers' organization's staff and members can try to persuade a dissident member by using the arguments outlined in the Introduction (legality, access to markets, productivity and doing the right thing). In addition, another member might act as a mentor in helping the enterprise to reduce its reliance on child labour. A broader strategy might involve working to reduce child labour more generally in the sector of that enterprise.

d. Help with choosing partners

Finding good partners

The third area of advice involves directing member enterprises to respected and reliable partners for collaboration in joint activities to reduce child labour. In many cases, these will be NGOs that can provide advice to enterprises and support for the removal of children from work. Enterprises may also want advice on finding partners for monitoring and accreditation. (See Guide Two, Step 8, 'Auditing, monitoring and certification' for greater detail on these issues.) Other partners may include school boards and associations that can help to keep children in school, various media outlets that can help in raising awareness, and international agencies and donors, notably those that may have projects near where the enterprise is located.

Reducing the search costs of partnering

The employers' organization can share its experiences – and those of its members – regarding these partners. This can save an enterprise considerable time and energy – what we might call the 'partnering search costs' involved in effective collaboration. Advice from the employers' organization in this manner can allow an enterprise to become engaged more quickly and implement a strategy more effectively because it has an appropriate partner.

A note on publicity and confidentiality

Safe initial point of contact

Large international firms often want to let the public know that they source from companies that are free of child labour. However, domestic firms, notably smaller ones, often wish to be more discreet. They want simply to ensure that they are operating within the law and possibly within the standards set internationally by their sector or their particular buyers. Furthermore, enterprises that do, in fact, employ children will seek solutions while avoiding any publicity. They will turn to the employers' organization because it is their organization and understands the concerns of business. Thus, in providing advice, an employers' organization can develop a reputation for expertise and confidentiality that will ensure that it is trusted by members on the issue of child labour.

Option 2: Lobbying, facilitating dialogue and raising awareness

Key role in social dialogue

The key role of an employers' organization is lobbying and influencing government policy. It also represents its members in dialogue with other actors such as workers' organizations (trade unions), non-governmental organizations, educational institutions and the media. As such, an employers' organization can contribute to the elimination of child labour through lobbying, dialogue and awareness raising.

Tripartism

Multiple levels of interaction

The purpose of engagement with government and workers' organizations is to come to a joint agreement on defining what constitutes child labour, including what types of work and work situations are considered hazardous. Such agreement is often enshrined in national legislation at some stage, but it may be open for review and modification. For example, in 2006 India added domestic service and work in the hospitality sector to the list of activities that are considered hazardous for children. In addition to legislation, dialogue will likely focus on the actions that can be taken to eliminate child labour in a manner that is in the best interests of children, their families and society.



If children are to be taken from work, there needs to be alternatives and this can be an important matter for discussion between employers and other actors. On these various matters, the purpose of the employers' organization is to represent and provide the views of enterprises.

Multi-stakeholder and 'bilateral' engagement

In many cases, an employers' organization will engage in forums of dialogue on child labour that include a range of actors. In other cases, dialogue may occur on a more 'bilateral' basis between the employers' organization and one other actor. These bilateral discussions will, no doubt, often support the larger multi-stakeholder dialogue.

Three types of actors

Whether on a bilateral or multi-stakeholder basis, an employers' organization will likely engage in dialogue with three distinct types of actors. To this list we can add awareness-raising which occurs through the media or public advertisement and sensitization campaigns.

The four 'Dialogue roles' are thus the following:

- Role 1: Engaging with the government(s)
- Role 2: Working with workers' organizations
- Role 3: Cooperating with NGOs
- Role 4: Raising awareness

Role 1: Engaging with government(s)

Passing laws

Government is a key player in the elimination of child labour due to its involvement in setting child labour laws, in enforcing those laws and in providing universal and affordable (or free) education. A cooperative relationship with government will therefore allow the employers' organization to lobby effectively in these three areas of public policy.

Listing hazardous work

As a first key step, the employers' organization should be a part of negotiations to ratify the ILO and UN Conventions on the minimum age of work, the worst forms of child labour and the rights of the child. In most countries, these Conventions are adapted to national circumstances in the ratification process and when national laws are set down. The employers' organization engages with government and workers to present the enterprise perspective. Under the ILO's Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (C. 182), the employers' organization plays an important role in listing, with the other partners, what forms of work are considered hazardous and thus should not be done by those below the age of 18. The employers' organization, with detailed knowledge of work situations that is derived from its members and sector associations, is well-placed to provide advice on this matter.



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Providing education

While national governments are responsible for setting laws related to child labour, governments at the provincial and local levels often set education policy and manage the school system. Thus, an employers' organization may encourage governments at these levels to reduce or eliminate the financial barriers for children to go to school. In addition, employers' organizations can discuss with local school authorities programmes or special tutoring that can be provided for children who have missed out on education and need to catch up with children in their age group.

Labour inspection

An employers' organization can also engage in dialogue with government on labour inspection as it relates to child labour. An employers' organization will need to develop a cooperative relationship with government in this area. A key factor inhibiting effective labour inspection in many developing countries is the lack of resources and personnel. The labour inspection department may be hard-pressed to regularly visit the thousands upon thousands of individual enterprises that exist in the country. This is why much of the monitoring of child labour takes place by NGOs, buyers and other non-state entities.

Frequency of inspection

Nonetheless, an employers' organization may engage in dialogue to determine the appropriate level (frequency) of inspection, the scale of fines and other penalties and the use of alternative control methods. Employers' organizations can also work with governments to design remedial programmes for offenders. Sector-based business associations may undertake these roles on a sector basis. The employers' organization may recognize that child labour is concentrated in distinct sectors and use its representative role to agree with government on a phased and responsible process of eliminating this form of labour.

Consortium of business associations

Regardless of the manner in which an employers' organization decides to support the elimination of child labour, an effective relationship with government can be highly beneficial. In the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, for example, 22 associations of employers have formed a consortium on child labour which has built good relations with government as part of its wider strategy. (See Box 4 for details of the consortium's activities.) In another example, the Mongolian Employers' Federation took the lead in a wider alliance focusing on the problem of child labour in informal gold mining. It has successfully lobbied the government to provide education and training for children. The case is outlined in Box 5.

Role 2: Working with workers' organizations**Key counterpart in social dialogue**

Child labour is a labour issue and thus workers' organizations will be a key participant in dialogue on the issue. An employers' organization is likely to work with its workers' organization counterpart on the fundamental aspects discussed in the section above on government, namely, the ratification of conventions, the adoption of laws, agreement on the list of hazardous work and the operation of labour inspection. In this dialogue, the employers' organization and the workers' organization will be in a similar position from a representational point of view. That is, these organizations represent the formal economy, while child labour exists predominately in the informal economy.

Collective agreements

In export sectors, producers are under pressure from international buyers to ensure that child labour is eliminated. This has prompted some enterprises and unions to include a ban on child labour in collective agreements. The work in Andhra Pradesh, outlined previously in Box 4, has resulted in such clauses being adopted.

Sectoral trade unions

Other employers' and workers' organizations have taken a broad approach by working at the sectoral level. For example, the national employers' organization in Uganda is working with the national workers' union and the union representing plantation and agricultural workers on the elimination of child labour. These activities are outlined in Box 6.

Role 3: Cooperating with NGOs**NGOs are a varied group**

Non-governmental organizations are an important group of actors campaigning for and supporting the elimination of child labour. They are also a varied group; some are global organizations while others operate primarily within a single country. Some have named-and-shamed multinational enterprises, whereas many others have played a constructive role in working with enterprises to find solutions for issues such as improving labour conditions in their factories and those of their suppliers. Along with campaigning and raising awareness, NGOs, notably at the local level, have helped to move children from work to school.

Box 4

Employers working with government, India

The state government of Andhra Pradesh has put in place several educational programmes for the children of the poorest sections of society. These programmes have focused on alleviating poverty, improving health and creating better-paid job opportunities for adults. The government has raised awareness and gained the active cooperation of society in eliminating child labour. Among the principal partners in this endeavour have been enterprises and employers' organizations.

In this Indian state, a group of 22 employers' associations, representing key sectors employing child labour, have formed a Consortium of Employers' Associations for the Elimination of Child Labour (CEASE). It has conducted surveys, organized awareness campaigns and implemented direct activities. The activities have created understanding and helped to build good relations with government departments, political leaders, trade unions, non-governmental organizations and the communities where they do business. Activities have included:

- withdrawing children from work, placing them in schools and monitoring their continued presence
- operating residential transitional ('bridge') schools
- removing girls from cotton-seed work and replacing them by adult workers from the same locality
- supporting a dental camp for children at one 'bridge school'
- organizing pledges by enterprises not to engage child labourers at work or at home
- including anti-child labour clauses in collective agreements
- supporting free medical care for children withdrawn from child labour
- providing cash contributions to parents as an incentive to send their children to school and providing stipends for former child labourers
- providing in-kind contributions to supplement midday meals for schools and rebuilding one tribal school
- publishing and distributing to Consortium members of a good practice guide on child labour.

According to the ILO, the support provided by senior members of the state government for the implementation of the Consortium's programme has had a significant impact on the commitment of enterprises and employers' organizations to eliminate child labour.

Source: 'CEASE child labour: employers state their case in Andhra Pradesh', International Programme for the Elimination Child Labour, ILO, 2004.

Box 5

Children in informal gold mining, Mongolia

Informal gold mining is an important source of income for formerly nomadic families in Mongolia who lost their livestock during extremely cold winters. Formal mining companies give permission to informal miners to work those areas that cannot be mined with hard technology. A total of 100,000 people are engaged in this activity. Some 10-15 per cent of informal gold miners are children. Children do most of the jobs also undertaken by adults and face hazardous working and climatic conditions. They often work without protective equipment on unstable ground and are exposed to rock dust. They handle explosives and toxic chemicals such as mercury. Injuries are frequent, severe and often fatal.

The Mongolia Employers' Federation (MONEF) has taken the lead in a wider alliance to address the most pressing problems of child labour in this sector. It is negotiating with the government on a long-term policy and legislation to give formal status to informal miners. In addition, cooperation contracts are being drawn up between formal mining enterprises and informal gold miners. Informal miners often work in areas previously mined (and still controlled) by formal companies.

Begun in 2004, the project has trained teachers in non-formal educational methodologies which are used to teach children in classes at areas close to the mining sites. Those who graduate are transferred to formal high schools. Children between the ages of 15 and 18 are trained at a technical mining college or are provided with other types of skills training (not related to mining). For those who graduate from the various types of vocational training, MONEF endeavours to place them in safe working environments with member companies.

Source: ILO Bureau for Employers' Activities, Geneva.

Cutting edge of issues and effective solutions

NGOs are often at the cutting edge of child labour issues. They are familiar with public perceptions, with the attitudes of buyers and with evolving standards. A dialogue with NGOs can help an employers' organization tap into that knowledge and network base. Furthermore, NGOs can help in the constructive role of offering solutions to sectors and enterprises that have a child labour problem. Nonetheless, employers' organizations are advised to be clear about the relationships they enter into with these organizations and to treat joint activities as a business partnership. At the end of this section, 'A note on alliances with NGOs' explains how the relationship might be structured.

Box 6

Working with unions in farming and fishing, Uganda

The Federation of Ugandan Employers (FUE) has worked actively for several years with the ILO to reduce child labour. As part of these efforts, FUE signed a joint statement in 2004 with the National Organization of Trade Unions (NOTU) and the National Union of Plantation and Agricultural Workers Uganda, in which they agreed to develop joint programmes to fight child labour in the agricultural sector.

In addition, FUE and NOTU organized a joint workshop in 2005, supported by the ILO, at which they agreed to target the fishing sector where a great deal of hazardous child labour exists. A survey of the sector was conducted the following year and an action programme is being implemented.

Source: Bureau for Employers' Activities, ILO.

Role 4: Raising awareness

A dialogue with the public

The three dialogue roles discussed above deal with specific actors or groups of actors. The fourth role is broader, dealing not with a specific actor but with society in general. In effect, the employers' organization and its partners undertake a 'dialogue' with the public which includes parents but also further sensitizes the actors noted above. Public campaigns also help to reach enterprises that are not members of the employers' organization and that may operate in the informal economy where much of the child labour problem exists. The goal is to raise public understanding of the problem and the reasons why it generates negative long-term consequences for children, their families and for society. This helps to strengthen a social consensus against child labour.

Raising awareness as part of taking action

Establishing the reputation of the employers' organization will help it to gain credibility and market its services. For example, a child labour project in the Ugandan coffee sector involving the ILO's Bureau for Employers' Activities and the Federation of Ugandan Employers (FUE) led to several large companies becoming aware of the FUE and its services. As a result of the project, one of the largest coffee companies in Uganda, the Kaweeri Coffee Plantation, which employs over 2,000 workers, became a member of FUE in 2005.

Social consensus as a basis for change

For many employers' organizations that are proactive on the issue, raising awareness is not a single activity but a broader part of taking concrete action. The projects highlighted in the next section often include an awareness-raising component. Other employers' organizations focus on awareness-raising as a central strategy. For example, in Azerbaijan the

national employers' organization, ASK, recently conducted a survey in the cotton sector where child labour is widespread. It developed training and advocacy materials in the Azeri language and created a pool of trainers to conduct awareness-raising programmes in cotton-growing regions. ASK's key strategy to eliminate child labour is to draw public attention to the issue through the media.

Society-wide rejection of child labour

Some employers' organizations underline their commitment and raise awareness by featuring reports or events about child labour on their website. For example, the National Federation of Employers in Agriculture and the Food Industry in Moldova displays its child labour efforts on its homepage (www.fnpaia.org). Links are provided to reports, assessment surveys and the federation's policy statement on combating the worst forms of child labour.

Awareness-raising is also one of the stronger elements of the anti-child labour programmes in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, noted in an earlier example. The 22-member Consortium of Employers' Associations for the Elimination of Child Labour worked with other actors on an intense and sustained campaign. It was felt that such a campaign was needed to generate a society-wide rejection of child labour. As part of the effort, large corporations showcased the positive aspects of the fight against child labour. The ILO helped to launch the initiative, but enterprises and employers' organizations have expressed an interest in financing its continuation.

Dialogue, consensus and action

Relating dialogue to action

Dialogue is about discussing issues, building a relationship and fostering mutual understanding. It leads to consensus which is an important achievement in itself. But dialogue with various partners is also very much the first step in taking action. Dialogue between the ILO, UNICEF and the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association helped to reduce the negative impacts of an effort to reduce child labour in the garment sector in the 1990s. (See Box 7 for details.)

A note on alliances with NGOs

NGOs are often well connected

Non-governmental organizations, or NGOs, can be important partners for both employers' organizations and individual enterprises. Specialized NGOs are highly dedicated to eliminating child labour and have developed a wealth of knowledge and expertise on the issue. In addition, they are often well connected with the local community, local governments and education systems.

At the same time, however, employers' organizations and enterprises must be clear about their objectives and their responsibilities when building alliances with these organizations. Here are a number of points to consider when entering into such alliances.

Box 7**Child labour and the garment sector, Bangladesh**

The well-known case of efforts to eliminate child labour from the garment sector in Bangladesh provides examples of both bad and good practices. The main sectoral business association, the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA), was involved in both types of practices.

In 1992, the garment sector employed 750,000 workers. Most of them were female and about 10 per cent were under the legal minimum age for work of 14 years. About 50% of the sector's revenue was derived from the US market. In that year, a bill banning imports made with child labour was tabled in the US Senate. Although the bill was never passed, it threatened to severely damage the viability of the Bangladeshi garment sector.

Producers panicked and began large-scale dismissals of under-aged workers. BMGEA contributed to the lay-offs by setting a deadline of 31 October 1994 for the complete elimination of child labour. In the process, about 40,000 to 50,000 children were laid off. ILO and UNICEF, concerned with the welfare of the dismissed children, advised caution and persuaded BMGEA to set aside the deadline in favour of a broad approach that included education and income support (the responsibility of UNICEF) along with enterprise monitoring and verification (handled by the ILO). A Memorandum of Understanding was signed by BMGEA, the ILO and UNICEF and endorsed by the government in mid-1995.

A total of 336 schools were established and provided education to 8,509 children, representing about 30% of the children still working in the garment sector at that time that the MOU was signed. Skills training was provided for the slightly older children and those who had spent two years at one of the schools. By the end of 2003, about 4,000 children had undertaken this training, and about half were subsequently either pursuing education or had found jobs related to their skills training.

Income compensation was also provided. Children were given TK 300, although this represented only about one third of what many of them had been earning at the factory. In addition, an effort was made to replace the children with older family members, but this proved unsuccessful. Family members were unwilling to take on the tasks which were low skilled and poorly paid. The programme also provided microcredit and entrepreneurship training for families. While subsequent evaluation indicated that families did benefit, only 451 families received microcredit and the duration of the project (two years) was too short to generate sustained results.

The monitoring and verification system was a success. By 2003, the level of children labour was about one per cent of the sector's total workforce. BGMEA acknowledged that the credibility provided by the system prevented the entire industry from collapse.

Source: ILO and UNICEF (2004). "Addressing Child Labour in the Bangladesh Garment Industry 1995-2001" (New York and Geneva).

**Critical for
successful
collaboration**

Key issue: Choose a good partner

The choice of partner is critical to successful collaboration. The partner should have a solid reputation, good connections, a clear idea of its role, talented personnel and an ability to understand the issue of child labour from the perspective of enterprises and employers' organizations.

Supporting issues

Along with a good partner, an employers' organization might consider the following aspects in structuring the collaboration:

- Deal with the alliance in the same rigorous way as if it were a business partnership.
- Be clear on the objectives of the enterprise/employers' organization.
- Be clear on the objectives of the partner NGO. Ensure that the NGO's objectives are compatible with those of the enterprise or employers' organization. If they are not, then reconsider the partnership.
- Make sure the partnership is of mutual benefit.
- Do not enter an alliance if the main reason for it is public relations (for example, to pacify the media), without a real commitment to change.
- Ensure that the alliance has the full support of the leadership of the enterprise/employers' organization.
- Be aware of cultural aspects.
- Be aware of the risk of heightened media attention that such alliances attract.

Put it in writing

Some elements of an alliance with an NGO are best set out in writing. Key aspects of a written understanding can include:

- The goals of the alliance – clearly set out and quantified.
- The activities and responsibilities of both parties.
- A budget.
- A realistic timetable.
- An exit strategy for the enterprise/employers' organization, to ensure the sustainability of the activity beyond the end of the partnership.
- If the activities are new to the enterprise/employers' organization, set a trial period.
- A clause on confidentiality.

Option 3: Delivering programmes

Moving beyond information and dialogue

In two previous steps, the employers' organization provided information and advice, engaged in dialogue and worked to raise awareness. These are important activities. An employers' organization may, however, want to go one step further and combine those activities with concrete programmes that ensure that children are being removed from work, that they are provided with educational opportunities and that enterprises adhere to a policy of not hiring child labour.

Partners and funding

In most cases, these concrete programmes are not likely to be delivered solely by the employers' organization and they will often require outside funding. The employers' organization may still take an important lead role, may design the programme and may be integrally involved with its implementation. However, it will do so with partners such as national and international NGOs, agencies of the United Nations, schools, governments, workers' organizations and skills training institutes.

Demands from sectors

A programme approach is particularly warranted when the employers' organization and its members are keen to eliminate the problem in a particular sector. The benefits are designed not just for one or two particular firms, but for the reputation of the sector as a whole so that its buyers will accept that the sector is free of child labour.



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For example, coffee and tea growers, and textile and garment enterprises are particularly interested in a joint response for their respective sectors.

An employers' organization can be involved in programmes at several levels. In this section we categorize them based on the extent to which the initiative for the programme comes from the employers' organization or from others.

The four categories are:

- Taking the initiative
- Joining an initiative
- Supporting the initiative of a constituent association
- Evolving a programme over time

In all these cases, the employers' organization will work with other organizations but the issue of who takes the leadership role will vary.

1. Taking the initiative

EO as the main initiator

An employers' organization that takes the initiative has decided that child labour is a problem from a legal, a moral or a business perspective (or all three). The employers' organization's board or staff may raise the issue, although the impetus may also come from members. In either respect, the initiative is generated from within the business community and the employers' organization agrees that a programme is required. As an example, the employers' confederation in Turkey (TISK) has taken the initiative to improve the health and skills of children working in an industrial area of Istanbul. (See Box 8 for details.)

EO as catalyst

Even though it takes the initiative, the employers' organization does not act alone. Part of what it means to take the initiative is to seek out partners. It may look for a bilateral donor or UN agency to provide funding or technical expertise; it may contact school officials to devise a plan to reintegrate working children; and it may choose an NGO that can help to design a public awareness and business sensitization programme. The employers' organization is the catalyst that makes it happen.

2. Joining an initiative

Projects are often initiated by the ILO

Many programmes designed to reduce child labour are initiated by the ILO. The ILO is structured on a tripartite basis, meaning that its activities focus on cooperation between employers' and workers' organizations and government. Thus, ILO projects will seek the involvement of employers' and workers' organizations even though in many cases the main counterpart will be the government. In these cases, the employers' organization is joining an initiative launched by others.

Box 8

Tackling health problems, Turkey

The Turkish Confederation of Employers' Associations (TISK) operates a Bureau for Working Children to deal with issues faced by young workers. Among other activities, the Bureau has identified the metal sector in Pendik, an industrial site in Istanbul, as one of the most risky sectors for children.

Many of the working children, between the ages of 13 and 17, also attend the Pendik Vocational Training Centre. The Bureau supported more than 8,000 of these children to undergo medical examinations. Some 85% were diagnosed with health problems, although not all the problems were work-related. Hearing, vision and respiratory problems were particularly common. Care was provided for children and enterprises on these common ailments. In addition, training on prevention, occupational safety and health, and nutrition were also provided. Owners of small workplaces can also obtain health services provided that children employed by them undergo medical check-ups.

TISK is replicating this work across Turkey to both improve health and provide awareness training to working children and to their employers, families and others. The employers' confederation advocates a gradual solution to the problem by providing investments and services, rather than through coercive and punitive measures.

Source: International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), ILO, Geneva.

Get in at the design stage

Have a specific role

ILO as partner in Malawi and Ghana

When joining such an initiative, there are three key points that an employers' organization should keep in mind. First, it should seek, as much as possible, to be involved at the design stage of the programme. Providing its token approval to a nearly completed draft of the programme document will likely mean that the employers' organization will have little role to play and little influence on the activities. Second, the employers' organization should consider how it can have a clearly designed role in the programme so that it is not just a member of a project steering committee but that it has activities to carry out. And third, the employers' organization should use its status to act as an intermediary between the project on the one hand, and local or sectoral business associations on the other. Thus, if the employers' organization is aware that a new programme is being developed for a particular region or is likely to affect a particular sector, it should inform its constituent associations of these plans and, where appropriate, seek to get them involved.

For example, the Employers' Consultative Association of Malawi (ECAM) was able to include the Tea Association of Malawi in a donor-supported project to reduce child labour in the tea sector. (See the boxed example

in Step 4 of Guide Two.) In another example, the Ghana Employers' Association (GEA) and the ILO have worked together to reduce child labour in the rubber and oil palm sectors since 2004. A Rapid Assessment Survey revealed that child labour is prevalent not on the main plantations in Ghana but among out-growers and contractors. The GEA-ILO project, which was funded by the Norwegian Government, focused on strengthening farmers' associations and sensitizing their leaders to the problems of child labour. The major producers and exporters are concerned that international publicity regarding the use of child labour may reduce demand from overseas markets.

3. Supporting the initiative of a constituent association

A sector may be desperate to present a clean image to buyers

A business association that is a member of an employers' organization may take the initiative itself in designing a programme. This tends to occur when a sector is under threat from buyers and consumers because children are employed. Its members are concerned about the loss of demand and potential business and turn to its association for help. The shoemaking cluster in Franca, Brazil, provides an example of this situation. The district shoe manufacturers' association took the initiative to design a broad programme that included monitoring and accreditation, training programmes for children and social labelling. (See Box 9 for details.)

Helping a constituent partner

An employers' organization, notably one with expertise on the issue, may assist a constituent association with advice and techniques, and also with connections to donors or other partners. The employers' organization may also be able to pass on good practices used by another constituent association that has faced similar problems.

4. Evolving a programme over time

A gradual approach

It is not necessary that an employers' organization establish a large programme through one initiative. Indeed, it may wish to develop its expertise, knowledge and connections over time. It can start with information and dialogue activities and then build more concrete activities in key sectors and in conjunction with constituent associations.

Hard to manage large projects initially

A gradual approach has two key benefits. First, a large, multi-faceted initiative with several partners may be difficult to manage for an employers' organization not familiar with child labour and with limited experience in managing projects that involve more than just their members. A big initiative can be a big success, but it can also be a big failure.

Solutions are not pre-determined

Second, the field of child labour eradication is a constantly evolving one. There is still considerable discussion about what works and what does not. New ideas and techniques are continuously being introduced into

Box 9

Transforming the 'capital of child labour', Brazil

The shoe manufacturing cluster in Franca was called the "capital of child labour" in an international press article in 1995. In response, the district's shoe manufacturing organization created the *Pro-Child Institute* with the goal of eliminating child labour in the footwear industry. Other key participants included representative business organizations at the local and district levels. The new Institute worked closely with a similar organization, the ABRINQ Foundation, which operates nationally.

The Institute developed a programme in which certified manufacturers could attach the label "No child labour was used in the manufacture of this product". By 1997, most direct subcontractors of the manufacturers had joined the initiative, although this was not true of many second-tier subcontractors. Manufacturers pay a fee of US\$17 to US\$23 per month, depending on size; suppliers' pay US\$3.

In 1998, a monitoring system was established. For a second offence, the enterprise loses membership in the Institute and the right to use the label. To use the label, an enterprise must:

- not employ children under 16 years of age (the legal work age in Brazil as of 1998);
- not enter into contract with suppliers who employ children;
- be a member of the Institute;
- use only subcontractors who have the Institute's card;
- accept inspections twice a year and carry out inspections on at least 10% of its suppliers twice a year;
- provide the inspectors with contact details of its suppliers;
- raise awareness on the prevention and elimination of child labour among its employees and suppliers.

The Institute also worked with local enterprises and public agencies to expand educational and recreational facilities for children. Education is only compulsory until the age of 14, but the legal work age is 16. Those in between often get into trouble. The institute has thus established two-year apprenticeships and scholarships for a wide range of educational opportunities.

Problems do remain, notably in financing quality education and ensuring that work is not subcontracted to parents and children working at home.

Source: 'Pro-Child Institute: Combating child labour through collaborative partnerships in the Brazilian shoe industry', J. Lawrence French, *et al.* in, *Rising Above Sweatshops: Innovative approaches to global labor challenges*, 2003, p.321-342. All figures in US dollars.

new projects. The employers' organization should be open to learning from its activities and from other projects as it designs new phases and initiatives. As an example, the Federation of Ugandan Employers has run a number of successive initiatives in key farm sectors. From tea, it has moved to rice and sugar, and now to coffee and the inland fisheries sector. (See the example in Box 10.)

Box 10

Employers' organization fights child labour in the farm sector, Uganda

The Federation of Ugandan Employers (FUE) has been actively involved in combating child labour since 2001. It has collaborated in most cases with the ILO and received financial support from the Norwegian Government as well as the ILO.

In the tea sector, FUE has conducted awareness raising and training workshops for 160 top managers and 495 middle managers from tea plantations. Training and advocacy materials were also produced, and 660 change agents were trained to continue sensitizing the local communities after the project phased out. As a result, child labour has been greatly reduced while the productivity of enterprises has increased.

FUE has also worked in the rice and sugar sectors, setting up child labour monitoring committees at the local level, supporting the adoption of by-laws on child labour in the rice schemes at Doho and the withdrawal of 418 children, who have since been supported with scholastic materials. Community and school-based income-generating projects for needy families have also been set up to help the children continue at school. In both sectors, agricultural enterprises have incorporated clauses on child labour into collective bargaining agreements.

Since 2004, FUE has worked with the coffee sector. It assisted with a survey that revealed the high incidence of child labour and hazardous working conditions for children. Poverty was identified as the main cause of child labour, and is exacerbated by AIDS and a large number of orphans. FUE has created awareness of the consequences of hazardous child labour in this sector. Trainers have been trained and training and information materials developed. Change agents will be trained to continue the work of creating awareness of the worst forms of child labour. FUE's work has attracted the interest of the larger coffee producers and has resulted in new members joining the employers' organization.

Source: Bureau for Employers' Activities, ILO.

5. Funding and staff time

Budget the programme

Programme initiatives cost money and staff time. The funding required will, of course, depend on the nature of the programme and whether the employers' organization is taking the initiative or joining the efforts of other partners. There are three main sources of resources:

- use of existing, internal funds
- reallocation of staff time
- outside funding, notably bilateral donors and UN agencies.

Combine funding sources

Preparatory activities may be funded from internal sources, while larger components may be supported later by outsiders. Funding should be a key element of strategy design. Employers' organizations should also try to develop a sustainable funding schedule so that it does not become dependent on donors and need to close down good initiatives when donors have completed their involvement.

ILO activities with EOs

The ILO is a leader both in the effort to eliminate child labour and in efforts to support employers' organizations and social dialogue. As a result, the ILO has provided assistance to employers' organizations in the area of child labour through its Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP). The Government of Norway has been particularly involved in funding this work which has involved more than 10 countries across the globe.



Eliminating Child Labour

Guide One **Introduction to the issue
of child labour**

Guide Two **How employers can eliminate
child labour**

Guide Three **The role of employers' organizations
in combating child labour**

Employers and Child Labour is designed to help businesses and their organizations understand and take action against child labour. The three practical guides provide ideas, advice and examples for the prevention of child labour, the withdrawal of children from work and the protection of young workers from hazardous conditions.

The package will be a key resource for the executives, directors and managers of employers' organizations and other business associations that wish to engage on this important and sensitive issue.

The guides focus on developing countries and provide examples of enterprises and employers' organizations that have taken concrete action, either by themselves or in cooperation with the International Labour Organization, donors and other local, national and international organizations.

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