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Focus on Children

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International Child Labor Program - Bureau of International Affairs (ILAB)



U.S. Department of Labor
Bureau of International Labor Affairs
International Child Labor Program

September 2002



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Focus on Children

The U.S. Department of Labor funds projects in over 50 countries that aim to eliminate hazardous and exploitative forms of child labor, rehabilitate former child workers, and promote education.

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Elaine L. Chao
United States Secretary of Labor

Thomas B. Moorhead
Deputy Under Secretary, International Affairs



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Bargaining recruitment conditions of a domestic child worker.

Child Trafficking

"One day when I was 17, I went to my cousin's wedding party. He said he could offer me a good job. I went with him to a hotel and there he raped me in front of a dozen people. For 15 days he kept me at this hotel in Hetquda [Nepal]. Then we left for India. In Rakswal, India, my cousin gave me some tea with pop rice, which made me very drowsy and he told the Indian police that I was his sick wife and he was taking me to India for treatment. He also tortured me with a knife and burnt me with cigarette butts and threatened me saying that I should not talk to anybody on the way. When we reached Pilas, I was taken to a building where I saw many other ladies in vulgar clothes with short skirts. I was amazed. From the other girls I came to know that I had been trafficked."

- ◆ In 2001, between 700,000 and 4 million women and children were trafficked and held against their will in slave-like conditions. (Source: US State Department)
- ◆ Trafficking occurs between countries AND within countries.
- ◆ Children are trafficked for a variety of purposes:
 - Commercial Sexual Exploitation
 - Domestic service
 - Armed Conflict
 - Camel Jockeys
 - Hazardous work in agriculture, construction, or other sectors

This is the testimony of Thuli, a young girl from Nepal who was trafficked to India and sold into prostitution for Rs 35,000, the equivalent of \$720. Thuli's blacksmith family is considered low-caste, and their poverty kept her from attending school as a young child. Intrigued by the promise of good pay, Thuli's desire to improve her economic situation led to a period of forced labor in an Indian brothel where she worked 18 hours a day for no pay, having unprotected sex with up to 15 clients a day. She describes being physically, sexually, and emotionally abused by her brothel owner and the clients she was forced to serve. On one occasion, her identity was hidden from Nepalese police who were conducting an inspection of the facility, and later, it was only after the help of a health worker that Thuli was removed from the brothel and taken home to her family in Nepal. Although she is free today, Thuli deals with remnants of the experience on a daily basis. The betrayal caused her to lose trust in Nepalese men, including her father and brother, and worse, the exploitation left her HIV-positive and suffering from tuberculosis. Thuli's testimony was collected through the USDOL-funded South Asia Trafficking Project.

Thuli's story is one that can be repeated by many children in virtually any corner of the world. Child trafficking is a rampant and horrific practice affecting both boys and girls and involving a seemingly endless string of actors, facilitators, and beneficiaries. USDOL currently funds a number of projects in West and Central Africa and South Asia that aim to assist government agencies and nongovernmental organizations in effectively preventing and abolishing child trafficking. Through the USDOL projects, thousands of children will be assisted, through a combination of targeted measures, including rescue and withdrawal from exploitative work, trauma counseling, reintegration into school or vocational training, and awareness-raising.

USDOL-Funded Child Trafficking Projects

TOTAL US Contribution approximately \$9.5 million

- ◆ West and Central Africa: Trafficking for Labor Exploitation (Phases 1 and 2/Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Gabon, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Mali, Nigeria, Togo)
- ◆ South Asia: Trafficking for Exploitative Employment (Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka)
- ◆ Nepal: Setting National Strategies to Combat Girls' Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC)
- ◆ Timebound Program in Nepal (budget not included in above figure).

Child Soldiers



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Children in a Philippine shantytown with militia presence.

"At the age of 13, I joined the student movement. I had a dream to contribute to make things change, so that children would not be hungry....Later I joined the armed struggle. I had all the inexperience and the fears of a little girl. I found out that girls were obliged to have sexual relations to alleviate the sadness of the combatants. And who alleviated our sadness after going with someone we hardly knew?... There is a great pain in my being when I recall all these things....In spite of my commitment, they abused me, they trampled my human dignity. And above all, they did not understand that I was a child and that I had rights."

-From a Honduras case study, cited in United Nations, Impact of Armed Conflict on Children: Special Concerns, 1998



A drawing by a former child soldier in Sierra Leone.

This drawing is one in a set collected by Amnesty International, and available online at www.amnestyinternational.org/soldiers/children/.

At the recent United Nations Special Session on Children, 17-year old Eliza from Bosnia-Herzegovina said, "War and politics have always been an adult's game, but children have always been the losers." Her words are particularly true in the case of child soldiers. In dozens of countries around the world, approximately 300,000 children work as soldiers, toting rifles, serving on the front lines, and participating in armed conflict alongside trained adult militia and military personnel. Many children willingly seek refuge with armed groups due to poverty or separation from family members, while others are forced to conscript or are kidnapped from their homes and taken to camps to be trained. The atrocities these children witness as participants in war would be enough to traumatize any grown adult, but additionally, child soldiers may be victim to other abuses, including drugging, branding, or sexual exploitation. Child soldiers suffer higher casualty rates than adults. And for those who do survive, the end of the conflict brings the onset of severe psychological trauma, difficulty readjusting to formal educational settings, and often rejection by family members if and when they return home.

For these reasons, demobilization of child soldiers and their rehabilitation is a difficult task, and the need for sound strategies to prevent children from ever entering this type of work is evident. With this need in mind, USDOL is currently funding the first phase of a project intended to contribute to the effective abolition of forced recruitment of children in armed conflicts in Burundi, the Republic of Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Rwanda. Current project activities focus on information gathering and preparatory work to develop a comprehensive strategy, to be implemented in Phase 2 of the project.

USDOL-Funded Child Soldiers Project
TOTAL US Contribution approximately \$313,000

- ◆ Central Africa: Prevention and Rehabilitation of Children in Armed Conflict (Phase 1 – Phase 2 pending completion of Phase 1)

Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC)



These Northern Thai girls at risk of commercial sexual exploitation were provided with non-formal education, thanks to support from a DOL-funded ILO-IPEC project.

"As they say in this dingy border junction with Panama, everything has a price. Sex with children, for example, starts at \$14.41. 'Just take a look around,' said Nautilio Sanchez, a furniture store and pharmacy owner who is president of the local Council for Social Development. 'There is no playground, no swimming pool, the children have nothing and so they turn to sex. Probably 60 percent of our prostitutes here are children, and what we're facing now is a critical problem in search of a solution...So is all of Costa Rica'"

-Sikaola, Costa Rica: James Varney, The Times Picayune (New Orleans)

The commercial sexual exploitation of children is a billion-dollar industry. Children are targeted for sex or the production of pornography at enormous profit to adults who facilitate the process, including school teachers, businessmen, and even members of a child's family. In many cases, it is also a lucrative trade for the children, which serves as an incentive for their involvement, particularly among the world's poorest populations. But poverty is only one factor that contributes to sexual exploitation. According to UNICEF, in poor communities, high illiteracy and a low level of marketable skills make it easier for procurement agents to obtain children. But family breakdown, local culture, the low status of women, and weak law enforcement also contribute. The exploitation occurs at great risk to the

Approximately 1 million children enter the sex trade every year.

-UNICEF, Profiting from Abuse

children, who are in danger of early pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, and exposure to HIV/AIDS. USDOL funds several projects to address the problem of CSEC through various targeted measures. For example, two pilot projects, in Costa Rica and Nicaragua, led to

the development of awareness raising materials for journalists and police on the sexual exploitation of children, as well as an award-winning public service announcement. These materials were the first of their kind in the region and highly praised in the countries where they were used. Through the ILO, USDOL also funds a Timebound Program in Tanzania, which includes the goal of removing 5,000 children from prostitution, and providing them with rehabilitative services and educational opportunities. Two other Timebound Programs in the Dominican Republic and El Salvador also target the removal of children from sexual exploitation.

USDOL-Funded CSEC Projects

TOTAL US Contribution approximately \$10 million

- ◆ Thailand: Prevention of Child Labor and Forced Child Prostitution (Phases 1 and 2)
- ◆ Timebound Preparatory Program in the Dominican Republic
- ◆ Timebound Programs in El Salvador, Dominican Republic (to be funded FY 2002) and Tanzania (budgets not included in above figure).



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Child Labor

The words "child labor" often evoke images of young children toiling for pennies in sweatshops – producing clothes or sporting goods that are exported for consumption in Western markets. And while this frequent association may be accurate, child labor – and in particular, the worst forms of child labor – encompasses a far more complex and varied set of activities. According to international standards, the worst forms of child labor include: forced or bonded labor, trafficking in children, children in armed conflict (child soldiers), the commercial sexual exploitation of children for prostitution or pornography, the utilization of children for drug trafficking, and any other work that is harmful to the "health, safety and morals of children." The testimonials of former child laborers are haunting. Children as young as five are subject to physical, sexual and emotional abuse; they are kidnapped, sold, or tricked into forced labor, sometimes by friends or family; they work with harmful chemicals, equipment, or in life-threatening conditions, resulting in long-term health consequences; they are extremely susceptible to HIV/AIDS; and in many cases, they lose the opportunity to access one of the most basic rights of all children: education.

- ◆ The International Labor Organization estimates that in 2000, 211 million children between the ages of 5 and 14 were working.
- ◆ Of that total, 73 million were under the age of 10.



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About the International Child Labor Program

The International Child Labor Program (ICLP) was created in 1993 in response to a direct request from Congress to investigate and report on child labor around the world. Since then, increasing domestic and international concern about child labor has prompted the expansion of ICLP programs and activities. Today, these activities include continued research and reporting on international child labor and support for technical assistance programs to address the problem and raise public awareness and understanding of child labor issues worldwide.

ICLP has published a number of reports on international child labor since 1994. These reports, mandated by Congress, explore various aspects of international child labor issues and have been widely distributed in the United States and abroad. The reports are available online, or by phone inquiry.

Between 1995 and 2002, ICLP has contributed approximately \$157 million to the International Labor Organization to provide technical assistance in order to combat child labor around the world. ILAB also received an additional \$74 million in 2001 and 2002 through Congressional appropriations for a new international initiative to improve access to quality basic education for children in areas with a high incidence of child labor. Of this amount, \$37 million has been awarded through competitive bidding.

ICLP has also awarded five domestic grants and contracts to domestic organizations to conduct research and raise awareness regarding international child labor issues.



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International Child Labor Program Focus on Children

"We must all recommit ourselves to the fight against exploitative child labor. At the same time we must seek to ensure that all children, particularly young girls, are given equal access to education and training."

Secretary of Labor, Elaine L. Chao,
International Labor Conference,
June 11, 2002

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<http://www.dol.gov/ilab/programs/iclp/main.htm>

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