

The Weekly

Information Resource Bulletin

FOCUS: Child Labor

Research, conducted by several organizations, suggests that 120 million children around the world (between the ages of 5 and 14) are involved in child labor, with boys and girls in this age group almost equally affected.

Malawi, together with the rest of the world, commemorated the World Day against child labor on Friday June 12.

This year the focus was on the importance of quality education as a key step in tackling child labor.

In Malawi, child labor exists, and districts such as Thyolo, Mulanje, Chiradzulu, Lilongwe, Kasungu and Mzimba are among the areas where child labor is rampant.

The goals of the Weekly Bulletin are:

- To educate listeners about the effects of child labor
- To advocate for children who are in child labor to go back to school
- To promote discussion and dialogue between listeners and other community members about the consequences of child labor

The Problem: Child Labor often means No Education

The Malawi Child Labour Survey (MCLS), conducted by the National Statistics Office (NSO) in 2002 indicates that over 23 percent (nearly 1 million) of all children between the ages of 5 and 14 work.

Children who are involved in labour in the country often work on tea, tobacco, and subsistence farms.

Children also work in domestic service in both urban and rural areas.

Boys work in herding, animal husbandry, and

informal labor such as street vending -- while most girls are often employed as house maids. The MCL survey indicates that these children rarely receive wages.

The survey found that "a high percentage of working children are employed as unpaid family workers (94 percent of boys and 90 percent of girls). Fewer working boys (6 percent) than girls (10 percent) between the ages of 5 and 14 are salaried or self-employed".

The report says children who work often don't attend school.

Activities for Journalists

Use your radio station to help your community know and understand the dangers of child labor.

Let listeners know that:

The law in Malawi sets the minimum age for employment at 14 years and exceptions are made for certain work in vocational technical schools, other training institutions, and in homes.

The law also doesn't allow children between 14 and 18 years old from being employed in work that could harm their health, safety, development, education, or morals, or in work that could interfere with their attendance at school or any vocational or training program.

Violations of any of these laws can result in a fine and five years of imprisonment. The Ministry of Labor and the Malawi police are responsible for the enforcement of child labor laws and policies.

Poverty is obviously a leading factor in the use of child labour. Most families that are poor often force their children into work to supplement their household's meagre income.

An interview with a 15 year old girl who stays in Lilongwe, but comes from Mulanje district, reveals that she dropped out of school in grade seven.

She says her mother (a single parent) could not afford to provide school necessities so she decided to get a job as a house maid in Lilongwe.

She gets 10,000 Kwacha, which is equivalent to about 22 U.S. dollars.

There are so many consequences of child labour which include; pregnancy, abortion, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and HIV/AIDS.

It can also lead to physical abuse that includes corporal punishment, emotional mis-treatment such as blaming, belittling, verbal attacks, rejection and humiliation.

Do a vox pop with children from 9-18 years and ask them why they think child labour is rampant in Malawi.

Do you know a child who is working? They might be a house maid or herding livestock. Interview them. Ask them why they are working. Are they still in school? What challenges are they facing?

Talk to the Minister responsible for labor, and find out what strategies government has put in place to curb child labor. Are the strategies working? If not, why not?

- Sandra Mapemba -Population Reference Bureau-PRB- Contact person+265-99-921-9789
- Honourable Joseph Mwanamveka; Minister of labor; +2651772428
- Honourable Patricia Kaliati, Minister of Gender and Children's welfare; +265999969955
- Malawi Child Labor Survey 2002 – Report of Analysis, ILO-IPEC, 2000



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