

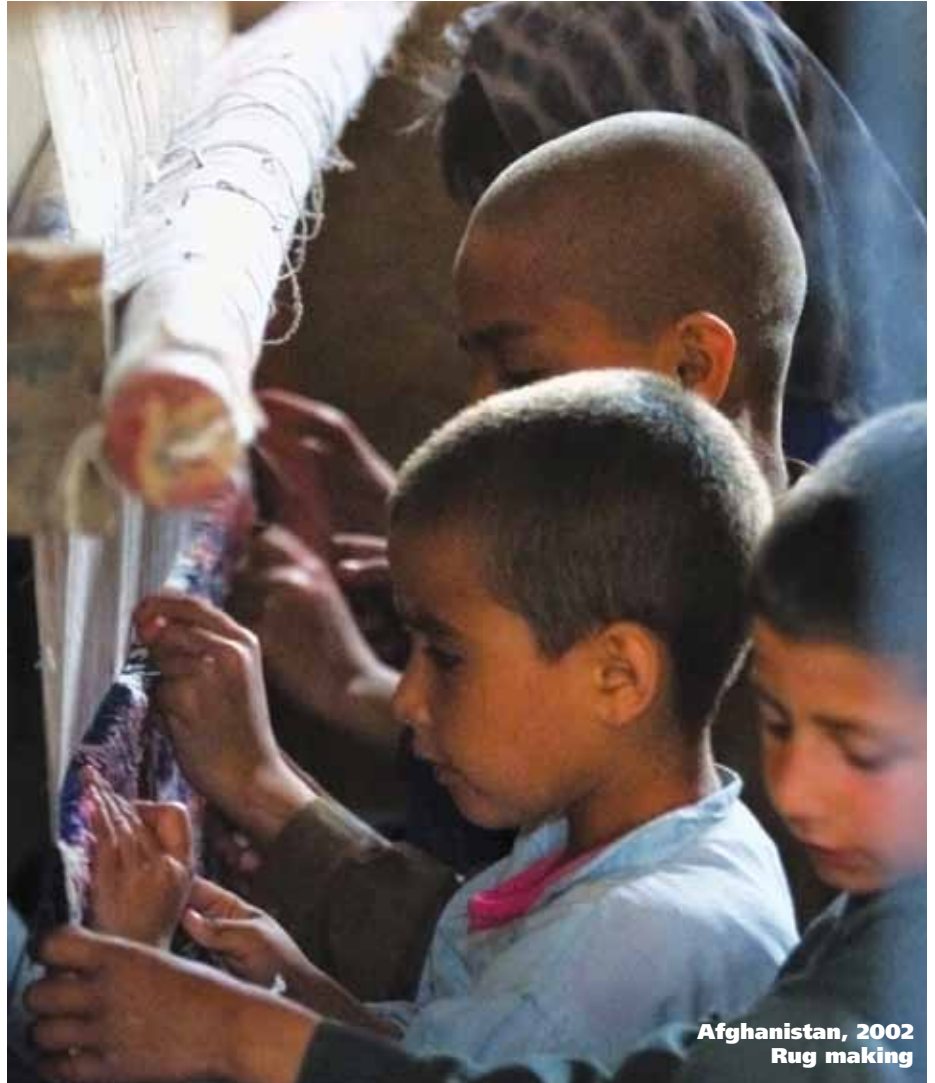
Education for All

Child Labor for None

This fall, as more than 50 million American children return to school, we'd like to call attention to the world's 215 million child laborers, especially the millions of child laborers who have never been to school.

Education, both in the United States and around the world, is the key to ending child labor. In the United States, educating students, teachers, and the public about child labor is essential because the more aware of the problem citizens become, the more we can collectively call on our elected representatives to act. Tougher laws, and tougher enforcement of existing laws, are needed. Around the world, educating all children is essential because high-quality schooling is the single best way to prevent child labor among current and future generations. As the International Labour Organization (ILO) recently wrote, "Education is not the sole solution, but when it is free, full time, compulsory and of quality, it is the most important part of the sum.... We will not eliminate child labour without universal education and, conversely, we will not ensure every child is in school unless we bring an end to child labour, in particular its worst forms."¹

In learning that there are 215 million child laborers, one may hope that this enormous number includes adolescents who legally work part time or children doing just a little more than the usual helping out at home. It does not. Child laborers are those



Afghanistan, 2002
Rug making



United States, 1997
Crop harvesting



India, 2010
Shoe polishing

Child Labor Is Declining, but Progress Has Slowed

Collecting accurate data on child labor is difficult; these data represent the ILO's best efforts to estimate the extent of the problem.* Since 1998, the ILO has supported over 300 surveys of child labor. Sadly, the worst forms of child labor—such as child soldiering, prostitution, and forced or bonded labor—are the ones we know the least about. Although the ILO estimates that children in these types of work make up less than 10 percent of the 115 million children currently engaged in hazardous work, they are almost always the hardest children to reach.

While the numbers are staggering, the charts on the right reveal some good news. Between 2000 and 2008, the number of child laborers ages 5–14 dropped by 33 million. Even better, the number of children ages 5–14 engaged in hazardous work dropped by 58 million.

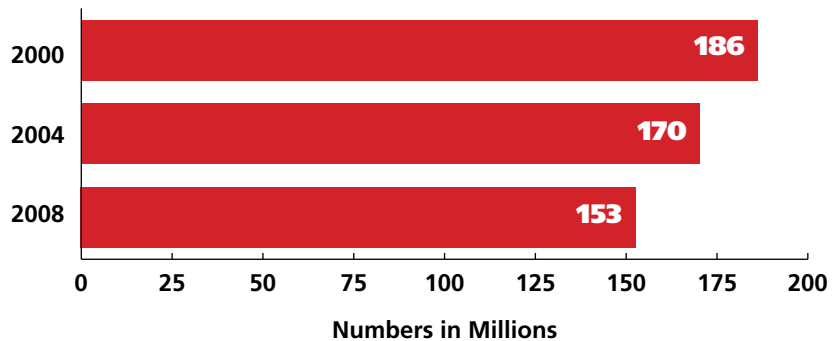
Among the older group, child laborers ages 15–17, there is no good news. Youth in this age group are only considered child laborers if they are engaged in hazardous work (i.e., jobs with very long hours and/or dangerous conditions like mining, or the worst forms of work like drug trafficking, prostitution, and forced labor). Some progress was made between 2000 and 2004, but all of it was lost between 2004 and 2008. From 2000 to 2008, the number of 15- to 17-year-olds engaged in hazardous work actually increased by 3 million.

So, where are these child laborers? Although child laborers are found all over the world, about half of the world's 215 million child laborers are in the Asia-Pacific region. But since the population of that region is so large, only about 13 percent of children there are child laborers. The most problematic region is sub-Saharan Africa. It has 30 percent of the world's 215 million child laborers, and 25 percent of children in the region are child laborers.

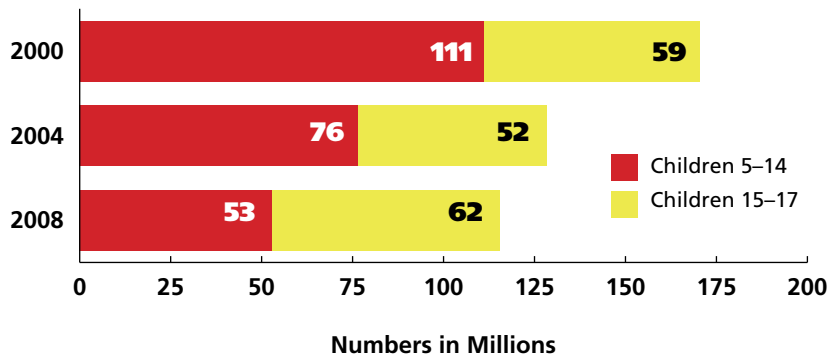
—EDITORS

*These data and more are available at www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_126752.pdf.

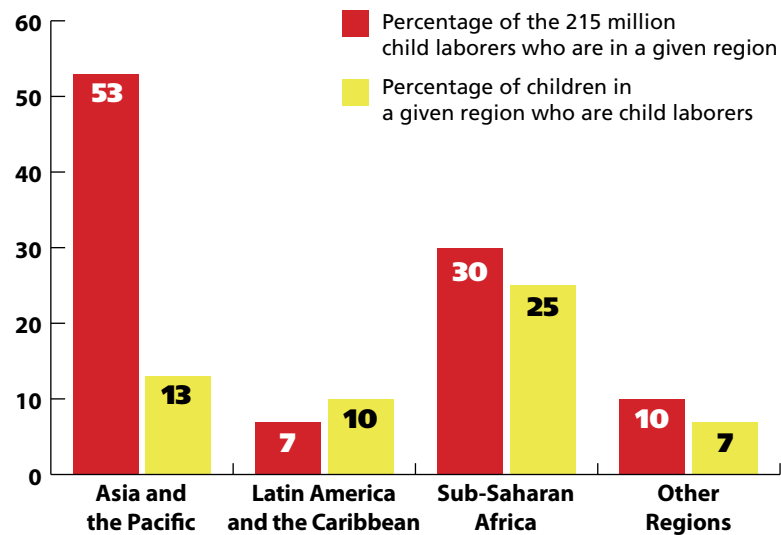
1. Child Laborers Ages 5 to 14, Including Children in Hazardous Work: 2000–2008



2. Children Ages 5 to 17 in Hazardous Work: 2000–2008



3. Child Laborers Ages 5 to 17 by Region: 2008



youth ages 5 to 17 who are below established minimum ages for various jobs and/or are enduring hazardous work that, according to the ILO, “poses a threat to their health, safety, or morals.” Long hours, physical abuse, dangerous chemicals or machinery, sexual exploitation, and forced

labor are far too common.

To call attention to the children who so desperately need our help, we have brought together the ILO's most recent statistics on child labor, photos of child laborers around the world, and a resource box with suggestions for how each of us can help. In the

print version of the magazine, we also have a brief excerpt from a new book that explores the connections between child labor, education, and health. Please contact us at amered@aft.org to receive a print or electronic copy.

—EDITORS



Afghanistan, 2002
Metal work



United States, 1997
Crop harvesting



Nepal, 2006
Soldiering



Ecuador, 2002
Gold extraction



South Africa, 2007
Cattle herding



Burma, 2007
Road repair



India, 2008
Glass making



Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2007
Prostitution



Ghana, 2006
Quarry work



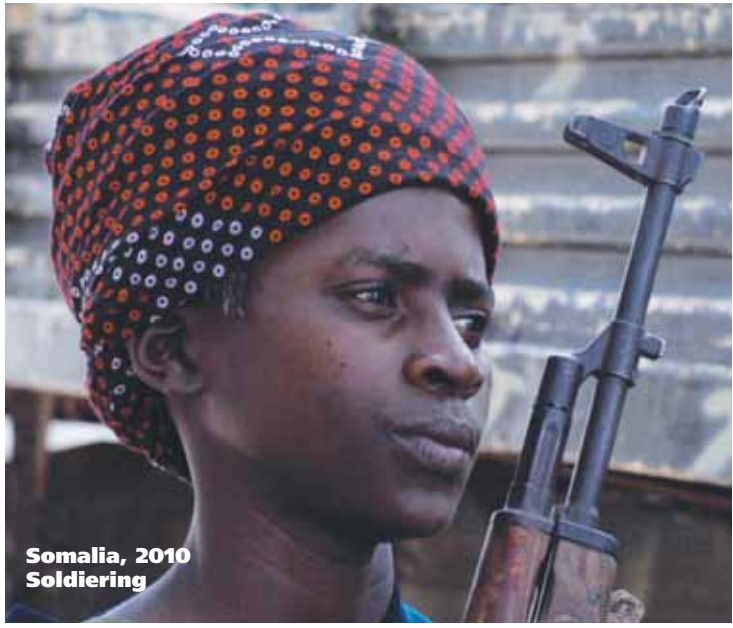
United States, 1997
Crop harvesting



Indonesia, 2009
Garbage scavenging



Nicaragua, 2004
Brick making



Somalia, 2010
Soldiering



Cambodia, 2001
Prostitution



Guatemala, 2003
Pyrotechnics assembly



Bangladesh, 2007
Chicken slaughtering



United States, 1997
Crop harvesting



Chad, 2006
Soldiering



Burma, 2000
Soldiering

The print version of the magazine included an essay, titled “Good Schools, Great Results: Education Is the Key to Ending Child Labor and Improving Children’s Health,” by David Post, and ran from pages 30-39. To request a print or electronic copy that includes the essay, please contact us at amered@aft.org.

Endnotes

From the editors’ note:

1. International Labour Organization, *Accelerating Action against Child Labour* (Geneva: International Labour Office, 2010), page xiv, www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_126752.pdf.

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Take Action

1. Learn more about child labor, and teach your students about it too:

- *Child Labour: A Public Health Perspective*, the book from which David Post's article was drawn, provides a thorough, expert look at child labor around the world and its impact on child, family, and community health: www.oup.com/us/catalog/general/subject/Medicine/PublicHealth/?view=usa&sf=toc&ci=9780199558582.
- In *Our Own Backyard*, developed by the AFT, is an instructional website for middle and high school teachers on the hidden problem of child farm workers in the United States: www.ourownbackyard.org.
- *Before Their Time: The World of Child Labor*, a book by occupational physician and photographer David L. Parker, contains 134 images of child laborers as well as brief essays that provide overviews of several types of child labor: www.childlaborphotographs.com.
- SCREAM (Supporting Children's Rights through Education, the Arts and the Media) is a program developed by the ILO that offers a variety of ways to learn about and promote human rights: www.ilo.org/ipecc/Campaignandadvocacy/Scream/SCREAMresources/lang--en/index.htm.
- The International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), run by the ILO, publishes data pertaining to child labor and the international laws and standards that govern it: www.ilo.org/ipecc/lang--en/index.htm.
- Young Workers is a website with guidance for young workers, employers, parents, and educators in the United States: www.osha.gov/SLTC/teenworkers/index.html.

2. Tell your members of Congress to support the Education for All Act, the Children's Act for Responsible Employment (CARE Act), and the Convention on the Rights of the Child:

- The Education for All Act of 2010 will ensure access to quality basic education for the 72 million children around the world who are now denied access to schooling: www.unionvoice.org/campaign/education4all.
- The CARE Act will strengthen child-labor law in the United States and address the problems with child farm workers: www.unionvoice.org/campaign/CARE101909.
- The 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child is an important symbolic step toward protecting all children in the world: www.unicef.org/crc.



3. Support decent work for all adults: Decent work for adults is essential to ending child labor. When parents make living wages and are able to support their children, they are much more likely to send their children to school. Learn about the ILO's decent work campaign here: www.ilo.org/global/About_the_ILO/Mainpillars/WhatisDecentWork/lang--en/index.htm.

4. Be a conscientious consumer: Ethical purchasing is another significant part of the fight against child labor. Refusing to buy goods produced by children limits the demand for their labor. Learn more on the Responsible Shopper website: www.greenamericatoday.org/programs/sweatshops/index.cfm.

5. Contact your elected representatives: Ask them to support legislation that takes a stand against child labor. Make your voice heard by contacting President Obama, Vice President Biden, members of Congress, governors, and state legislators: www.usa.gov/Contact/Elected.shtml.

6. Understand what safe work means for American teens: Talking Safety is a curriculum developed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; this and many other resources are available at www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/youth. Work Safe, Work Smart is a curriculum developed by the Minnesota Department of Health for students and teachers in rural communities: www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hpcd/cdee/occhealth/wsws.html.

7. Raise awareness: Talking with family and friends, distributing posters and pamphlets, circulating petitions, and writing to local newspapers all help to increase public knowledge about child labor and the need for all children to be in school.

—EDITORS