CHILD LABOUR:
Costly at Any Price
CAUSES • CONSEQUENCES • SOLUTIONS

2004 edition

Written by Ginette Dubé
with additional information by
Maryann Abbs and
Tammy Tupechka

CoDevelopment Canada
Acknowledgements

This curriculum unit is a project of CoDevelopment Canada.

Assistant writers Lee Bensted and Kristen Patten were provided by the Students Commission.

Funding:
Canadian International Development Agency
British Columbia Teachers’ Federation

UNICEF British Columbia provided permission to copy the videos included in this unit.

Special Thanks to:
Senator Landon Pearson, Advisor on Children’s Rights to the Minister of Foreign Affairs
Yolande Arsenault and Eric Ward, Senator Pearson’s Office, Advisor on Children’s Rights
Julia Goulden
Kathleen Ruff, Anti-Slavery International
UNICEF British Columbia
Meredith Thompson and the students at Pearson College Seminar on Youth Leadership
Tania Campbell and the Cloverdale Youth Drop-in Centre
Sandy Ockenden, VIDEA
National Labor Committee, New York
Catherine Angus, Pueblito
Joshua Berson
Kathleen MacKinnon, B.C. Teacher’s Federation
Tom Sanborn, B.C. Ethical Purchasing Group
Table of Contents

Dear Student ................................................................. v
Extracted from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child ...................... vi
The Convention of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (No. 182) ...................... vii
Message from CoDevelopment Canada ............................................... viii

Introduction ................................................................. 1
Overview ........................................................................... 2
   Flow of the Lessons ...................................................... 2
   Organization of the Lessons ........................................... 3
   Use of Videos and the Internet ........................................ 3
Exploring the Internet in the Classroom ............................................... 4
Links to Social Studies Curriculum Topics and Ministry-Prescribed Learning Outcomes ................................................................. 5

Lesson One: An Introduction to Child Labour ........................................ 7
   Background Information ................................................ 8
   Overview: Information for the Teacher .............................. 16
   Child Labour Spectrum: Information for the Teacher .......... 18
      Child Worker Profiles: Information for Students ............. 19
   Optional Activities: Information for the Teacher ............... 22

Lesson Two: Causes of Child Labour ............................................ 23
   Background Information ................................................ 24
   Overview: Information for the Teacher .............................. 29
   A Struggling Family Simulation: Information for the Teacher ........ 31
      A Struggling Family: Information for Students ............. 33
   Student Worksheet: Family Budget .................................. 36
   Life’s Circumstances: Information for Students ................. 37
   Web of Circumstances: Information for the Teacher ............. 38
      Child Worker Profiles: Information for Students ............. 40
   Child Labour: The Poverty Cycle: Information for the Teacher ........ 46
      Child Labour: The Poverty Cycle: Information for Students ........ 47

Lesson Three: Global Economics and Child Labour .............................. 49
   Background Information ................................................ 50
   Overview: Information for the Teacher .............................. 54
   Funky Shoes Ltd.: You Run It: Information for the Teacher ........ 56
      Funky Shoes Ltd.: Information for Students .................... 57
Dear Student:

I welcome this curriculum unit on child labour and I invite you to make it your own. Question each other and your teachers; dig deeply into the documents in libraries and online. Use your imagination to enter into the lives of children in different situations; put yourself in the shoes of politicians, employers, aid workers, and parents. Find out what is already being done and what remains to be achieved (tons!).

It is in the hope that you will take up the challenge of participating in solutions that I invite you to learn about child labour in Canada and abroad. What you find out may be shocking. Millions of children grow up working in conditions that clearly violate their rights as recognized in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). These conditions threaten children’s survival and development. Moreover, exploitative child labour robs societies of the world’s most precious resource: healthy, educated, capable and creative citizens.

By learning as much as you can through this curriculum unit, you are already doing something to rid the world of the worst forms of child labour. And if you work yourself, make sure you know your rights as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and in Canadian law. Working can be a positive experience if it is for a few hours a week under safe and healthy conditions for a non-exploiting employer. However, if work interferes with your education, puts you in danger or leaves you feeling belittled or exploited, you can assert your rights and change the situation. You should expect your community, youth advocates and governments to support you in this. I have attached some important articles of the UNCRC for you to use.

Sincerely,

Landon Pearson, Senator
Advisor on Children’s Rights to the Minister of Foreign Affairs
Article 1
For the purposes of the present Convention, a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

Article 42
States Parties undertake to make the principles and provisions of the Convention widely known, by appropriate and active means, to adults and children alike.

Article 32
1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child’s education, or to be harmful to the child’s health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.

2. States Parties shall take legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to ensure the implementation of the present article. To this end, and having regard to the relevant provisions of other international instruments, States Parties shall in particular:
   (a) Provide for a minimum age or minimum ages for admission to employment;
   (b) Provide for appropriate regulation of the hours and conditions of employment;
   (c) Provide for appropriate penalties or other sanctions to ensure the effective enforcement of the present article.

Article 12
1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

Article 34
States Parties undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. For these purposes, States Parties shall in particular take all appropriate national, bilateral and multilateral measures to prevent:
   (a) The inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity;
   (b) The exploitative use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices;
   (c) The exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials.

Article 36
States Parties shall protect the child against all other forms of exploitation prejudicial to any aspects of the child’s welfare.

Article 39
States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of: any form of neglect, exploitation, or abuse; torture or any other form of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; or armed conflicts. Such recovery and reintegration shall take place in an environment which fosters the health, self-respect and dignity of the child.
The Convention of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (No. 182)

Adopted in June 1999, the International Labour Organization Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour sets an international legal standard to protect children from some of the most extreme forms of exploitation.

It defines the worst forms of child labour to include:

- Child slavery (including the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage, and forced recruitment for armed conflict)
- Child prostitution and pornography
- The use of children for illicit activities (such as drug trafficking)
- Any hazardous work which is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children

**Hazardous Situations:**

- Mines or in the sea
- Machinery in motion
- Bearing heavy loads
- Extreme temperatures
- Agriculture
- Tanning
- Glass
- Pesticides, herbicides
- Chemicals
- Silica dust

**The Core Elements of Convention 182:**

1. Government must act immediately to end the worst forms of child labour
2. All children under the age of 18 must be protected from the worst form of child labour
3. Governments must consult with employers and workers to identify what work is harmful for children
4. Governments must develop a way to monitor the implementation of this Convention
5. After consulting with employers, workers, and other concerned groups, governments must start programs of action to end the worst forms of child labour
6. Governments must do everything necessary to implement the Convention, including penalizing offenders. Recognizing how important education is for ending child labour, governments must:
   - Prevent children from starting harmful work
   - Help educate children leaving harmful work
   - Reach out to children at risk
   - Make special efforts for girl child labourers
7. Countries must help each other to end the worst forms of child labour

We are pleased to provide you with a resource that will enable you to teach about child labour issues in your Grade 9, 10, and 11 classrooms. Exercises are designed to encourage discussion and to highlight the complexity of this issue.

During the last few years, many articles, books, and videos have been produced about child labour. Child labour has a local and global profile and as such can be linked to a variety of subject areas and learning outcomes. With that flexibility in mind, Child Labour – Costly at Any Price was created with the following objectives:

- to encourage students to empathize with children and families forced to engage in exploitative child labour
- to explore causes of child labour – especially the links to poverty and global trade
- to empower students to identify solutions, voice their concerns, and take action

Feedback and Resources – CoDev needs you!

It is very important for us to know what you think about our resources. We encourage you to send us your comments by phone, fax or email. Your feedback will help us improve the resources we produce.
INTRODUCTION

Child labour has increasingly made the headlines in Canada and throughout the world. The media exposes us to images of modern-day child labour: children chained to carpet looms in India, labouring in sweatshops in Indonesia or Guatemala, or producing shoes and clothing that bear familiar brands such as Nike and Levi’s. The pictures and stories of these children leave us with the perception that child labour is a distant problem in distant countries, and we are left feeling powerless to do anything about this gross violation of children’s rights.

However, the perception of child labour as a primarily distant problem not found in Canada recently changed. In October 2003, the British Columbia government introduced Bill C-37. The Bill changed the Employment Standards Act concerning Child Labour and will allow children that are 12 years old in B.C. to work up to 35 hours a week and be subject to the same employment standards as adults. This legislation means that B.C. has the most lax standards regarding child labour in Canada. The B.C. laws bring child labour home, and represent a step backward in the campaign to protect children’s rights.

Education focusing on child labour is the first step toward doing something about this form of injustice. Awareness of the issue of child labour uncovers the underlying causes of the problem and allows us to imagine solutions and actually take action to eliminate the exploitation of children.

This resource was written to help educators raise the awareness of their students on the issue of child labour. This means exposing child labour as a gross violation of children’s rights that will only be eliminated when there is the political will to stop it. Public awareness and outrage is an important factor in creating political will.

Child labour is a complex issue. It is a violation of children’s human rights and their special rights as children. Yet one of the primary reasons children are violated and exploited is because they are children. They are young, often unaware of their rights and easily manipulated. For those who wish to maximize their profits in an exploitative manner, children are ideal labourers. Children and youth in all parts of the world, exploited or not, are entitled to knowledge of their rights and the means to defend them.

This resource focuses on the underlying causes of exploitative child labour and how child labour is in fact a global problem that has its roots in the economic relationships of rich, developed countries to poorer, less developed countries.

Our ultimate objective is that the activities we have designed in this curriculum unit will empower students to find solutions, voice their concerns and take action on the issue of child labour.
OVERVIEW

This curriculum unit is made up of five lesson plans. The lessons are thematically connected and can be used as a complete unit or as separate lessons. Each lesson contains background information, a variety of classroom activities and follow-up questions for students to discuss in class or reflect upon as homework assignments. There is a selection of classroom activities that are central to the purpose of the lesson, and some lessons have optional activities to provide the teacher with a variety of approaches to further explore themes in each lesson.

We have designed the unit in this flexible way to enable teachers to adapt their lessons to the needs of their classes. We have tried to include activities for each lesson that are “ready to use.”

Flow of the Lessons

Lesson One: An Introduction to Child Labour

The first lesson aims to help students become aware of the cultural values that influence how we think about child labour and to bring to light the different realities of working children in the world.

Lesson Two: Causes of Child Labour
Lesson Three: Global Economics and Child Labour

These two lessons are designed to deepen the students’ analysis and examine the underlying national and international causes of child labour. After each activity in the first three lessons, we suggest that students brainstorm possible solutions for the problems raised in the activity.

Lesson Four: Thinking About Solutions
Lesson Five: Individual and Collective Actions

The last two lessons turn to solutions and actions. They are designed to help students feel capable of finding solutions and gain the skills to take individual or collective actions.
Organization of the Lessons

Each lesson contains the following:

1. **Background Information**: a summary of the central points of the lesson. This can also be useful as a student resource.

2. **Information for the Teacher**: a one- or two-page overview that contains the following information:
   a) Purpose of the lesson.
   b) Overview of the classroom activities (teaching strategies) designed for the lesson.
   c) General Learning Outcomes, incorporating Ministry-Prescribed Learning Outcomes relevant to each lesson.

3. **Classroom activities and assignments**.

4. **Master copies** of articles, handouts and worksheets for each teaching strategy included in the lesson. Teachers only need to make the copies required for their students.

Use of Videos and the Internet

We have designed some classroom activities involving videos.

The UNICEF video *State of the World’s Children 2004: Child Labour* is available on loan from the UNICEF British Columbia office, 536 West Broadway, Vancouver, B.C. V5Z 1E9; phone (604) 874-3666; fax (604) 874-5411.

The Cine Fete Video *No Time for Play* is available at the B.C. Teachers’ Federation Office at 100 – 550 West 6th Avenue, Vancouver, B.C. V5Z 4P2; phone (604) 871-2283 or toll-free 1-800-663-9163.

Most of the lessons have an Internet research or discussion forum component. A child labour discussion forum can be found at the Global March website, www.globalmarch.org.

All the classroom activities were tested with students in the process of designing them.

CoDevelopment Canada is very interested in getting feedback from educators who have used this resource. Please send us your comments.
EXPLORING THE INTERNET IN THE CLASSROOM

The Internet can be a valuable teaching and learning tool for teachers and students exploring the issue of exploitative and hazardous child labour.

There are many new web pages dedicated to informing public opinion about child labour issues; they range from those of international organizations like the International Labour Organization’s International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (ILO/IPEC) and Global March to Canadian organizations like Craig Kielburger’s Free the Children site and the B.C. Federation of Labour site. Students have many options and choices to research child labour.

Also, the Internet is a medium for communication on child labour issues. It is a forum for the exchange of ideas, comments and questions between youth, educators, professionals and the general public in the form of webchats, newsgroups and discussion forums.

The Internet can be used to promote advocacy and awareness-raising on exploitative and hazardous child labour. It is a place to showcase campaigns and initiatives to end this practice, to increase their outreach and scope, and to generate action.

With all of these possibilities in mind, we have included an Internet activity in each lesson of this unit. The activities range from gathering information to a child labour discussion forum.

We encourage teachers to discuss the potential dangers and drawbacks of the Internet as a resource and advocacy tool. Students should be encouraged to question the reliability of Internet sources when they provide no documentation. We also encourage teachers to discuss who makes up the Internet audience. Who has access to the Internet and who can upload their information to a web page? What are the consequences of some people having ready access to such a significant information source and others having none at all?

If students or schools have limited Internet access, many public libraries provide free access.
Grade 9

This unit can be related to studies of the industrial revolution, especially its effects on society and the changing nature of work.

Comparisons can be made between child labourers of the industrial revolution in England and exploited child labourers today. Students need to know that children are still working under conditions similar to those found in England in the eighteenth century.

The activities of this unit address several skills identified in the list of Ministry-Prescribed Learning Outcomes for this grade:

- identify and clarify a problem, issue or inquiry
- select and summarize information from primary and secondary print and non-print sources, including electronic sources
- assess the reliability, currency and objectivity of different interpretations of primary and secondary sources
- defend a position on a controversial issue after considering a variety of perspectives
- plan, revise and deliver a formal oral and written presentation
- co-operatively plan, implement and assess a course of action that addresses the problem, issue or inquiry

Grade 10

This curriculum unit can be related to assessing the changing economic relationships between British Columbia and its major trading partners.

Regional and global trade agreements, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) will have negative effects upon children’s rights around the world. The dynamics of globalization and Canada’s actions on child labour are quite relevant to the Grade 10 social studies program.

The activities of this unit address several skills identified in the list of Ministry-Prescribed Learning Outcomes for this grade:

- identify and clarify a problem, issue or inquiry
- plan and conduct library and community research using primary and secondary print and non-print sources, including electronic sources
- assess and defend a variety of positions on controversial issues
- demonstrate leadership by planning, implementing and assessing a variety of strategies to address the problem, issue or inquiry
Grade 11

There are several places where this curriculum unit relates to topics covered in Grade 11 social studies. In exploring child labour, the unit focuses a great deal on Canada’s position as a rich country in the global economy. It explores the inequalities between rich and poor countries. As well, it emphasizes solutions and actions to eliminate exploitative child labour. The unit describes and assesses Canada’s participation in world affairs and should help create an awareness of disparities in the distribution of wealth in Canada and the world.

The activities of this unit address several skills identified in the list of Ministry-Prescribed Learning Outcomes for this grade:

- identify and use approaches from the social sciences and humanities to examine Canada and the world
- demonstrate the ability to think critically, including the ability to identify an issue or problem
- gather relevant information from appropriate sources
- assess the reliability, currency and objectivity of evidence
- develop and express appropriate responses to issue or problems and reassess responses to issues based on new information
- assess the influence of the mass media on public opinion
- develop, express and defend a position on an issue and explain how to put the ideas into action
- demonstrate skills associated with active citizenship, including the ability to:
  - collaborate and consult with others
  - respect and promote respect for the contributions of other team members
  - interact confidently
- assess the role of values, ethics and beliefs in decision making
- demonstrate appropriate research skills, including the ability to:
  - develop pertinent questions about a topic, issue or situation
  - collect original data
  - use a range of research tools and resources
  - compile and document task-specific information from a wide variety of print and electronic sources
  - evaluate and interpret data for accuracy, reliability, bias and point of view
- recognize connections between events and their causes, consequences and implications
- recognize the importance of both individual and collective action in responsible global citizenship
LESSON ONE

An Introduction to Child Labour
Child labour has drawn increased international attention since the mid 1990s. The 1996 global estimate of 250 million child workers by the International Labour Organization prompted a worldwide mobilization around child labour. It not only had a profound impact on public opinion but it helped to mobilize many governments and civil society groups into action. Images of fires in Thai toy factories, children chained to carpet looms, children doing grueling domestic labour and children caught in the sex trade still create public outrage and evoke anger, but now there is a host of resources and information available for people interested in learning more about this issue and getting involved in the global movement against child labour.

A Violation of Children’s Rights

Article 32 of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child recognizes that children should be protected from work that threatens their health, education or development. The UN requires countries who have signed the declaration to set minimum ages for employment and to regulate working conditions. So far, 192 countries have signed this declaration. In fact, the only two countries that have not ratified this declaration are the United States and Somalia. This means that almost all of the world’s nations have signed this document, yet the United Nations estimates that there are 211 million children working in exploitative or hazardous conditions in the world, possibly 500 million if child domestics are factored into the statistics.

The aim of this lesson is to dispel the many myths surrounding the issue of child labour and to help students understand the difference between child work and exploitative child labour. Students should be able to assess when work can be beneficial for a child and when it becomes harmful and exploitative.

Most countries have laws against child labour

The International Labour Organization’s Minimum Age Convention sets a basic minimum age for employment of 15 years, while allowing light work at 13 and prohibiting hazardous work until 18. But only 70 countries have ratified the convention. Canada has not ratified this convention.
what people really mean when they talk about child labour, it is necessary to ask questions like “What is a child?” “Should children work?” What is child labour? and “Where and how does child labour occur?” We must also examine our own values and assumptions, as these may influence how we answer these questions.

What Is a Child and Should Children Work?

The 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999 (No. 182), define a child as under the age of 18. Yet this is an arbitrary line drawn between childhood and adulthood that reflects to some degree values of the western world. Different cultures have different ways of determining when a child becomes an adult. As well, the question of whether “children” should or should not work is value laden. Our values also define what kind of work children should or should not do.

Many people in industrialized nations have a distinct view of childhood as a period that should be free of work and devoted to education and play. Other cultures may view childhood as a time to gain valuable skills through work; here, the lines between work and education become blurred. Since ideas about childhood and labour are ultimately social concepts, cultural values need to be identified for any productive discussion of child labour. Uncovering cultural assumptions and biases is important because they influence perceptions of work done by children, casting it in either a negative or a positive light.

In wading through the complexities of this issue, it is important to keep some simple facts in the forefront of one’s mind. At the heart of the struggle to end child labour is not the issue of whether children should or should not work. Child labour becomes a problem when it is exploitative and hazardous for a child. This is most often the case when children and their families are so poor that a child must work to survive. Under these precarious circumstances, children are exploited and/or work under conditions that are hazardous to them.

Although the global estimate of child labour appears to have dropped from 250 to 211 million, this is not necessarily indicative of a downward trend. Many children work in areas (such as domestic work) where it is impossible to calculate the number of children involved. The IPEC/ILO Statistical and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour is attempting to document the number of children working worldwide.

---

— IPEC/ILO Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour, 2002
Criteria for Hazardous and Exploitative Child Labour

Public outrage has often condemned all forms of child labour. Yet not all child labourers are being harmed or exploited. Employment that is not exploitative, does not harm children’s development and actually benefits children must not be condemned. Exploitative and hazardous child labour can and must be eliminated. Working children’s organizations emphasize children’s right to work, not under hazardous and exploitative conditions, but under conditions that are beneficial.

What is Child Labour?

Today, because of the increased awareness and mobilization around child labour, there are criteria to help organizations working on the issue of child labour to calculate the estimates of the global magnitude of child labour. Child labour can be best visualized as existing on a continuum, with beneficial work at one end and exploitative or hazardous labour at the other. Work done by children may be beneficial for them or it may be hazardous and exploitative, depending on the nature and conditions of the work that is being done.

Adopted in June 1999, the International Labour Organization Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, along with the ILO Minimum Age Convention adopted in 1973 (No.138), sets an international legal standard to protect children from some of the most extreme forms of exploitation.

---

Children in economic activity

211 million children ages 5 to 14 worked in economic activity in the world in 2000. This is almost one fifth of all the children in this age group (17.6 per cent).

About 73 million working children are less than 10 years old.

Regional Estimates of economically active children ages 5-14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Number of Children (in millions)</th>
<th>Ratio of Workers (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developed economies</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition economies</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia and the Pacific</td>
<td>127.3</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America &amp; the Caribbean</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>48.0</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East &amp; north Africa</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Child labour is a narrower concept than “economically active children”. As a definition, child labour excludes those children 12 years and older who are working only a few hours a week in permitted light work and those 15 years and above whose work is not classified as “hazardous”.

Where and how does child labour occur?

The Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (No. 182)

The Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour ratified in 1999 defines the worst forms of child labour to include:

- Child slavery (including the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage, and forced recruitment for armed conflict)
- Child prostitution and pornography
- The use of children for illicit activities (such as drug trafficking)
- Any hazardous work which is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children

132 countries have ratified the Convention within the first three years, symbolizing the fastest ratified Convention in the ILO’s 82-year history. The involvement of these countries shows that the support for the movement against abusive child labour is gaining momentum worldwide and represents a major step forward in the struggle against child labour. All governments that ratify Convention 182 also make a commitment to act. The ILO’s International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour acts in an advisory role to assist members according to their particular needs and contexts. Child labour’s role in the perpetuation of poverty and its negative effect on long-term economic development are now widely accepted and recognized. Therefore, elimination of the worst forms of child labour is a necessary facet of poverty reduction strategies.

According to the ILO’s Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (No. 182), the two areas of child labour in need of elimination are hazardous work and unconditional worst forms of child labour.

Hazardous work

Under Convention 182, the following work is considered hazardous for children workers and must be eliminated. Work involving:

Who are child labourers?

Usually members of a minority or immigrants


Hours Worked

78% of working children age 10-14 in developing countries work more than 6 days a week

49% work more than nine hours a day


Where does child labour occur?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bhutan</td>
<td>55.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>54.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
<td>51.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burundi</td>
<td>48.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Timor</td>
<td>45.39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>45.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>45.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haiti</td>
<td>25.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal**</td>
<td>1.76%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Statistics for Children Aged 10-14
** highest in the West
• Mines or in the sea
• Machinery in motion
• Bearing heavy loads
• Extreme temperatures
• Agriculture
• Tanning
• Glass
• Pesticides, herbicides
• Chemicals
• Silica dust

Most trafficked children appear to end up in the unconditional worst forms of child labour.

Children in forced and bonded labour
Bonded labour means that labour is forced on the child because of a debt incurred by the child or their family. This could mean that children receive a loan for their family and then they are forced to work under horrible conditions until the debt is repaid. This situation is about poverty and is related to trafficking of

Unconditional Worst Forms of Child Labour

According to Convention No. 182, the following are areas of child labour that must be eliminated:

Trafficking of children

Children are trafficked from all regions of the world. Boys tend to be trafficked for forced labour, commercial farming, petty crime and the drug trade; girls mainly appear to be trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation and domestic service. Trafficking patterns and routes are often highly complex and involve trafficking within one country, cross-border flows between neighbouring countries and intercontinental and globalized trade.

1.2 million children are trafficked into forced labour or prostitution

Traffic of Children

1.2 million children are trafficked into forced labour or prostitution

(UNICEF’s, State of the World’s Children 2004)

The United Nations lists Mexico as the number one centre for the supply of young children to North America. The majority are sent to international pedophile organizations. Most of the children over 12 end up as prostitutes.


Number of Children in the worst forms of child labour

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Worst Forms of Child Labour</th>
<th>Global Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children in hazardous work</td>
<td>171 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children in forced &amp; bonded labour</td>
<td>5.7 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children in armed conflict</td>
<td>.3 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children in prostitution &amp; pornography</td>
<td>1.8 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children in illicit activities</td>
<td>6 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>179 million</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.2 million of the above children are trafficked children.

children. This is the most difficult form of child labour to track and count. It is distinguished from other forms of child labour because it involves a restriction of freedom to move, a degree of control over a child going beyond the normal extent of the law, physical or mental violence and absence of informed consent. The overwhelming majority seems concentrated in the Asia-Pacific region. There is also evidence of forced and bonded labour in the African and Latin American regions as well as some developed countries.

**Children in Armed Conflict**

This is a controversial area because some armed groups believe that involving children is both important and necessary to achieve their goals. There seems to be a concentration of child soldiers in Africa and the Asian-Pacific regions, though most of these child soldiers are reported to be in the 15-17 age bracket. In some cases, child soldiers are clearly forced into service, while in other cases participation is voluntary.

**Children in Prostitution and Pornography**

The commercial sexual exploitation of children is a global issue. It is prevalent in all major world regions. This area also lacks reliable figures. Sometimes commercial sexual exploitation of children is related to tourism and sometimes it is mainly to serve domestic markets.

**Children in Illicit Activities**

Although this data is difficult to come by, most available information is related to drug production and trafficking, including work on poppy plantations.

---

**Children in Prostitution and Pornography**

A local NGO reports that girls from Costa Rica have been transported through Central America and Mexico to work in the sex industry in the United States, Canada, and Europe.


In Canada, 70-80% of those women and men involved in the Canadian sex industry began as children


Child sex tourism is reported to be a problem in Vancouver. It is estimated that there are about 100 offences relating to the child sex trade in Vancouver every day. People also come from other parts of Canada to Vancouver to find prostituted children.

— ECPAT, CSEC Database. 
http://www.ecpat.net/eng/ecpat_inter/project/monitoring/online_database/index.asp

B.C. has the highest incidence of children involved in prostitution in Canada

Areas/Issues in Child Labour
not Included in Convention 182
(The shortcomings of Convention 182)

Although Convention 182 presents a step forward in the struggle to end exploitative child labour, the Convention does have some shortcomings. The Convention does not adequately address the following problems:

Work in the Family

Work for the family is not included in statistics on child labour, nor is it included in child labour legislation. The most common work for the family is in agricultural, family-run business or domestic work. Many children also work in the informal sector making traditional crafts.

Domestic labour

No mention is given to the situation of children in hidden work sectors, such as children working as domestic servants in the homes of others. Domestic workers are very vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse, as many are isolated from the world – separated from families and co-workers. Having a child domestic is very common in many parts of the world.

Child domestic labour has always been widespread practice in Africa and Asia, and it has worsened in recent years due to globalization processes and the resulting growth in income inequalities and rural poverty. These workers are the most vulnerable and exploited of all and they are also the most difficult to protect. Domestic labourers are mostly girl child labourers.

Girl’s Work

“...There is no tool for development more effective than the education of girls”

— Kofi A. Annan, from Introduction to UNICEF - State of the World’s Children, 2004

There is only very general mention of girls in Convention 182 but according to UNICEF’s the State of the World’s Children, 2004 children will only be free from child labour, trafficking and sexual exploitation when:

- Governments make child protection a priority
- Discriminatory attitudes and practices towards children are challenged by the media and civil society
- Laws are in place and reliably enforced
- Teachers, health workers, parents and all those who interact with children know to recognize and respond to child abuse
- Children are given the information and knowledge they need to protect themselves
- Adequate monitoring systems are in place to document or highlight the incidence of abuses
- Gender equality and women’s rights are ensured
nothing specific to address the seriousness of the problem of girls in child labour. If domestic labour is included in the statistics, there are more female child labourers than males. However, in 2004, the United Nation’s recognized that if attention is not paid directly to girl’s experience of child labour, trafficking, sexual exploitation and lack of access to education, then the state of the world’s children will not improve. Gender equality and women’s rights need to be ensured, and that directly means that girls’ human rights must be a focus of the international community. Otherwise any achievement towards later goals of eradicating poverty and human rights violations will not be sustainable.

**Indigenous and Tribal Children**

According to the ILO committee on the rights of the child meeting in September, 2003:

Indigenous and tribal children are at special risk of the worst forms of child labour, linked to extreme poverty, low levels of education and poor health. Racial discriminations and the resulting social exclusion often result in cultural marginalization, increased poverty and worse exploitation. Indigenous children are frequently victims of bonded labour, forced labour as domestic workers, or as parts of family groups subject to compulsory agricultural labour. The International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour are working hard to ensure that the ILO’s Indigenous and Tribal People’s Convention, 1989 (No. 169) is kept in the public realm and child labour is directly linked with this convention.

— from the Committee on the Rights of the Child, “day of discussion on the rights of indigenous children”, 19 September, 2003

---

In Sub-Saharan Africa, 31 percent of children aged 5-14 are engaged in the unconditional worst forms of child labour

— UNICEF’s, *State of the World’s Children* 2004

More girls than boys are found to be engaged in hazardous work because of household chores. As well, more girls are working in the unconditional worst forms of child labour

— UNICEF’s, *State of the World’s Children* 2004
LESSON ONE: An Introduction to Child Labour

INFORMATION FOR THE TEACHER

Purpose:
• To provide the background for further discussion of the issue.
• To critically examine the term *child labour*, demonstrating an awareness of the assumptions and cultural values surrounding this term.
• To challenge the assumption that child labour is only a problem in developing countries.
• To begin to recognize the impact of gender on child labour.

Overview:
This lesson consists of two main activities:

➤ 1. Child Labour Spectrum — class discussion based on the different kinds of work children do in the world.

➤ 2. UNICEF Video: *State of the World’s Children 2004* — video and discussion. Note: At the end of the video, begin to list problems raised in the lesson and brainstorm possible solutions. Write the list of problems and solutions on a large piece of paper and add more ideas in the next two lessons. This collective accumulated list will be useful to review in Lesson Four: Thinking About Solutions.

One Internet activity (see box)

Four optional activities:

➤ 1. Poem — individual writing activity

➤ 2. Gender Research Activity — group or individual research and writing

3. Movie Review, *Salaam Bombay!* or *Pixote* — individual

4. Diary Activity — individual writing

General Learning Outcomes:
By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:
• demonstrate a general awareness of where child labour occurs and the extent of the problem
• describe some different types of work that children do and the different problems and vulnerabilities related to each type
• compare their own experiences with those of children/youth in other countries

**Brainstorming Solutions:**
Students can discuss the problems raised and brainstorm possible solutions after each activity in the lesson.
• identify the assumptions and problems surrounding the term child labour
• identify and clarify a problem, issue or inquiry
• develop hypotheses and supporting arguments
• assess the role of values, ethics and beliefs in decision making
• reassess their response to issues on the basis of new information
• construct, interpret and use graphs, tables, grids and various types of maps
• demonstrate research skills using a range of research tools and resources
• present and interpret data in graphic form

World Map of Child Labour

Students can research statistics on child labour through the many informative and rich research sites on the internet or in the library. They can find answers to the following questions:
• How many children work worldwide?
• How many of these children are considered to be child labourers?
• What percentage of children are engaged in child labour in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe and North America?
• What kinds of work do children do in the world?

Students make a world map or graph of these statistics showing where child labour occurs, the percentage of child labourers in the world.


The four best sources of website information are Global March Against Child Labour website, www.globalmarch.org, the International Labour Organization’s International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour website, www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipec, the Free the Children’s website, www.freethechildren.org and the B.C. Teacher’s Federation Website www.bctf.ca. All these sites have great links to the many websites available.
Purpose:
- To help students distinguish between beneficial child labour and hazardous and exploitative child labour.
- To discuss how different types of work might affect a child, either negatively or positively.
- To examine concepts such as childhood, work and slavery, and whether these concepts are culturally defined rather than absolute.

Time: 45 minutes

Materials:
One copy of the Child Worker Profiles for each group

Description:
There are three parts to this activity:

1. Brainstorming
   As a class, have students quickly brainstorm on these questions: What is child labour? What is a childhood or what does the word childhood mean to you?

2. Developing Criteria
   Have students as a class develop their own criteria for hazardous and exploitative child labour, explaining why they chose to define it the way they did.

3. Spectrum
   Divide the class into groups of five or six students. Give each group the Child Worker Profiles. Have each group draw a line on a piece of paper and write at one end of the paper “Beneficial” and at the other end “Hazardous/Exploitative” (see below). Each group decides where to place each child worker on the spectrum.

Discussion:
Have one of the groups write their spectrum on the chalkboard. Ask other groups whether they agree or disagree with where each child has been placed, discussing the criteria used to make these decisions.

Throughout the discussion, have students take a look back at their earlier brainstorming and criteria to recognize any assumptions or myths about child labour they may have had.
NOTE: Some of these profiles are fictitious, but they all are adapted from real child labour stories.

Brian and Steve: McDonald’s Workers, B.C.

Brian is 17 years old. He’s been working at McDonald’s for two years and has moved up to the position of crew chief, making $9.00 an hour. Brian works 20 to 25 hours a week, after school and on weekends. He would rather work less, but his mom (a single mother) needs his help to support the family.

Steve is 16 years old. Like Brian, he has been working at McDonald’s for two years. Steve works on drive-through and makes $8.50 an hour. He says that his job is “OK”, and he really likes his co-workers. Steve is saving his money to buy a car.

Jessica: Clothing Store Clerk, Chile

Jessica is 17 years old. She works one night a week after school and on weekends at a trendy clothing store in downtown Viña del Mar. Most of her pay cheque is spent on clothes from the store and going out with her friends. Her parents didn’t want her to work, but she insisted, and she keeps her grades up.

Maria and Harwinder: Agricultural Workers, B.C.

Maria is 12 years old. She has started to work on a farm because her father got laid off from his job as a janitor at the local hospital. The family needs her help and so with the consent of one parent, she now will begin work on the farm. She earns about $150 per week and is expected to work up to 35 hours a week.

Hawinder is 14. He recently started work on a farm. He and his family recently moved to Canada from India. Even though he is still young, he uses heavy, dangerous machinery daily in his work. He is not paid any extra money for working overtime hours.

Julekha: Domestic Worker, Bangladesh

Julekha is 10 years old and has been a domestic worker from the age of five. Her father is paralysed and cannot work. She has three sisters and four brothers. Her main duty is to look after her employer’s small child, but she also assists in all household chores. If the family goes out, Julekha is locked in the house. Julekha has never attended school because of her family’s poverty but says she would like to if it were possible.

Amina: Street Worker, Burundi

Amina began working to earn money at the age of seven, when her family fled fighting in their rural village. Amina’s father and older brother were killed in the fighting. Amina and her mom struggle hard to get by in a city already flooded by refugees like themselves. Amina and her mom spend their days breaking bricks into small pieces for construction projects. Amina is very small and cannot break many bricks. She does not know how much she earns, as her mother keeps track of those things. Her hands and fingers get hurt when the bricks break in unexpected ways, or the hammer slips in their hands.

Tenzin: Carpet Factory Worker, Nepal

Tenzin’s parents entered into an agreement with the village moneylender when they couldn’t pay off their loan. Under the agreement, Tenzin, their eight year-old son, was sent to a carpet-mak-
ing factory in Kathmandu; they were told that it would only take five years to pay off the loan.

The conditions in the factory were horrible. The workers were locked in; children as young as five worked from 5 a.m. until midnight knotting carpets. Workers were beaten if they broke the hammers, needles or scissors that they used. At first, Tenzin was not paid, as he was told he had to pay off his transportation to Kathmandu. Later, Tenzin was told that he was not producing enough to pay off his food and accommodation; he would have to work harder if he wanted to earn wages high enough to pay off his debt.

Agustin and Carlos: Agricultural Workers, California

Agustin and Carlos came to California after their family illegally crossed the Mexican-American border in search of work and a better future. They started working at an orchard where work starts at 6 a.m. and goes until 6 p.m. They are given lunch and two short breaks in the morning and afternoon. A few times when they have been working, a plane has flown overhead and sprayed pesticides on the orchard. They have made friends with some of the other working kids, but by the time they get home nobody has the energy to play.

Both Agustin and Carlos would rather be going to school than working, and the family has been told about some services available for undocumented migrant child workers. However, until their mom finds a job and things start getting better, they will have to continue working.

Jaime: Child Miner, Colombia

Jaime is a 10-year-old mine worker in Amaga, a tiny town about an hour from Medellin, one of Colombia’s larger cities. The area is dirt-poor and many families depend on their children’s pay from the mines. Girls work above ground, stitching sacks or preparing food. Jaime, like

Sawai: Garment Worker, Thailand

Sawai had to find work at the age of 13 when her father, a construction worker, suddenly became paralysed. There was no work locally so she had to leave school and get a job far from home in Thailand’s capital, Bangkok, through a cousin who was already working in a small garment factory. She works in the factory from 8 a.m. until midnight and is paid $25 a month. Because she knows little about sewing she does a lot of housework — washing clothes and cleaning the house and kitchen.

“I don’t think the owner is a bad man” says Sawai. “He does not abuse me. He shouts at me only if I yell at his child. Sometimes he lets us watch TV. He is just stingy.”

Paula: Sex Trade Worker, Ontario

Paula is 15 years old and lives in Toronto. She dropped out of school and left home when she was 13. About six months ago she started work as a sex trade worker to support her heroin habit.

Shara: Homeless Child, Ontario

Shara is a 15 year old girl, originally from Vancouver. She earns money by wiping windshields in Toronto. Shara is able to get enough to eat from the money she earns, but she has to live on the street, in shelters, or with friends. Since the Safe Streets Act was passed in 1999, squeegeeing has become illegal. Shara is frequently harassed by the police and by motorists. Shara left home because she was abused by her father.
Purpose:

• To introduce some of the issues regarding child labour, including where child labour occurs, the different types of work children do, why children work, solutions to child labour and the various actors involved in the solutions.

• To increase the impact of discussion about child labour by providing some visual images of working children.

Time: 28 minutes

Materials:


Description:

The video provides a variety of images of exploitative and hazardous child labour around the world. It explores some of the causes and solutions to the problem, emphasizing the importance of putting the children’s needs first. In its conclusion, the video profiles individual and community efforts to eliminate exploitative child labour. In this lesson the teacher can show only the first five minutes of the video. In Lesson Four: Thinking About Solutions, the rest of the video can be shown.

Discussion Questions:

• Did anything about the video surprise you? What did the video show you that you didn’t know before?

• How did the visual images of children working make you feel?

• What kinds of work do children do?

• According to UNICEF, what are some of the things that make work done by children hazardous?

• Where does child labour occur?

• Why do children work?

• What problems are raised in the video?

• What are possible solutions to these problems?

• Who are some of the people taking action on the problem of child labour?

• What can you do about child labour?

• Compare your work experiences with those of the children in the video. What are the differences and what are the similarities?

Brainstorming Solutions:

Have students discuss the problems raised in the video and brainstorm possible solutions. Write the list of problems and solutions on a large piece of paper and add more ideas in the next two lessons. This collective accumulated list will be useful to review in Lesson Four: Thinking About Solutions.
Optional Activities

INFORMATION FOR THE TEACHER

Poem:
Have students create a poem that demonstrates how life for working youth in the developing world may be different from — or similar to — life for the typical North American teen. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>North America</th>
<th>Developing country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am...</td>
<td>I am...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I work...</td>
<td>I work...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In my free time...</td>
<td>In my free time...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I learn...</td>
<td>I learn...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I grow up...</td>
<td>When I grow up...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gender Research Activity:
Have students research gender differences in child labour, for example, wage differences, type of labour performed, vulnerabilities. Students can access information from the Internet sites and publications listed in Other Resources.

Movie Review:
*Salaam Bombay!* or *Pixote.* Have students write a review of the movie. They should outline the plot and explain the point of view of the film with regard to street kids. How does the film make them feel about child labour or kids working on the streets? At the end of the unit, you could ask them to look at the review again. Do they still feel the same way? These films can be rented from most video stores.

Diary Activity:
Have students write a creative piece in the imagined voice of a child labourer. They should include information about their age, their work and the working conditions. They might consider how the work is affecting them physically and emotionally, how they feel about their work and what they do when they are not working. What do they spend their wages on? Do they go to school? What are their aspirations or desires for life and their future?
Causes of Child labour
Poverty and Child Labour

Poverty exists in both the North and the South. In poor countries, poverty is widespread and extreme. It is in these countries that the vast majority of exploitative child labour occurs. Most families must struggle to survive and meet their basic needs. The single biggest cause of child labour is poverty. Most children work because their families are poor and the family depends on the earnings of their children to pay for essential items such as food, water, and shelter. Many families are left destitute because of low wages, unemployment, landlessness, inadequate healthcare, repression, violence and conflict, and limited access to resources or positions of power.

Families are often broken or forced to migrate to shantytowns in large cities when they lose their land. Many small

Poverty and the exploitation of children in Canada

Poverty plays a major role in creating and sustaining exploitative and hazardous child labour in Canada and other “developed” nations. Although Canada is considered a wealthy country, poverty does exist. In Canada, one in five Canadian children lives in poverty. 40% of the people who use food banks are under 18, and 25% of the homeless are children. Poverty in Canada has both a gender and race dimension: if you are an aboriginal person, a person of colour, a recent immigrant, a woman, or an undocumented worker, you are much more likely to be poor. Unfortunately, the gap between rich and poor is growing.

In many cases, single parents who are poor either cannot afford childcare or need their children’s assistance to earn enough money to get by. These parents, usually women, are forced to bring their children to work with them. In the garment industry, many manufacturers contract piece work to women who sew in their homes. This kind of work done in the home is unregulated; the pay per piece can be so low that children may help their mother to increase the amount of money the family can earn. In Canada, 20% of garment workers are children.

Children also work in the service sector, manufacturing, and agricultural industries. Many farms in Canada hire people (including migrant labour) for seasonal agricultural work. Again, the pay is so low that poor families rely on the support of their children’s labour to make a living wage. Many new immigrants and people of colour are forced to take jobs with low wages because these groups of people face a great deal of discrimination in Canada. In this way, poverty and discrimination work together to create the conditions in which children are exploited because they need to help their family to make ends meet.

farmers lose their land when the prices of their cash crops fall dramatically. (Prices for cash crops like coffee have been falling dramatically over the past several decades). When prices fall, farmers must take out loans in order to continue producing. If prices continue to fall, farmers may be forced off their land by the bank.

Foreign debt and the policies of the International Monetary Fund have forced many countries to cut or privatize government services such as health, education and water. When these essential services are eliminated or privatized, families may no longer be able to afford to send their children to schools or to doctors. When essential services like water are privatized, families may be forced to make very difficult choices (like sending their children to work) in order to simply meet their basic survival needs.

Health Care and Child Labour

Inadequate health care services contribute to the cycle of poverty — and contribute directly to the entrance of children into the workforce. Where governments do not provide adequate and affordable health care services for all people, the poor people who cannot afford health care have a greater chance of getting sick, becoming disabled or dying than if adequate health care services were available. It is not uncommon for a child to enter the labour market when a parent becomes ill or dies, in order to support the family or to pay for health care costs not covered by the state.

Education and Child Labour

Many children in developing countries do not have access to education or may not be able to afford expensive school fees, books or required uniforms. Children who are already working may not have the time or freedom to attend school. Finally, cultural values may influence a child’s access to education. Parents may believe that the main duty of girls is domestic chores, and thus education is not necessary.

Where education can be accessed, the quality and relevance of the education system affects decisions to send children to school. Sometimes the schools that do exist are so underfunded that the quality of education is very poor. What is taught at schools may not equip children to get jobs in the future. In these circumstances, parents and children may consider school a waste of time and money and may decide instead to have their children gain practical, employable skills through work. Sometimes school systems that were set up by colonial governments are inappropriate, contradicting the values and goals of the local peoples.

In Bangladesh there is one teacher for every 67 students; in Equatorial Guinea, the ratio is 1:90. Thirty percent of the children in developing countries drop out of primary school.


Almost one-quarter of the world’s children between 6 and 11 (140 million children) never go to school. Roughly the same number drop out before they finish school.

Children denied an appropriate education — whether formal or informal — will grow up illiterate and will lack the skills and training that will enable them to get well-paying jobs as adults. Thus their children will also be forced into working to supplement inadequate wages, creating future generations of child labourers and perpetuating the poverty cycle.

Unrest and Repression
Where there is poverty, there is frequently social unrest. People often respond to the injustice of poverty by trying to organize trade unions, social movements, and other types of groups. Because governments often have an interest in maintaining the status quo, they may respond to unrest with repression and violence. Violence and repression only deepen the levels of poverty by displacing people, forcing farmers to leave their land and migrate to cities, and leaving families broken and children orphaned. When a family is broken, a parent is injured or killed or parents end up landless and unemployed (as is the case for most who migrate to urban shantytowns), the desperate circumstances require children to work so that the family can survive. Or, when both parents must work, girls are taken out of school to look after younger children and perform housekeeping duties.

War and Child Labour
War and military occupation can often cause a worsening of economic conditions, and push children into both the formal and informal labour forces. Even worse, children are often recruited as soldiers, and support staff for military forces. According to the U.S. State Department, an estimated 250,000 children are serving in armed forces around the world. Children are known to serve in the government forces of Burma, Cambodia, Guatemala, Peru and Sudan. Children are also used as porters, messengers and lookouts for military forces.

In some cases, children are forcibly recruited. The very high proportion of children in the armed forces of El Salvador during the 1980-1992 civil war suggests that children were forced to join the military. Of the approximately 60,000 personnel in the Salvadoran military during this period, ex-soldiers estimate that about 80%, 48,000, were under 18 years of age. Armed conflict itself contributes to the increasing number of child soldiers. War disrupts normal economic and social conditions and causes educational opportunities to shrink or disappear. Under these circumstances, recruits tend to get younger and younger and children may be forced by their economic circumstances to join the military.


Poor Labour Standards
Hazardous and exploitative working conditions such as low wages, unsafe working conditions, and long working hours are realities faced by many poor people in countries of both the North and South. The lack of adequate labour standards and/or poor enforcement of standards helps to create the conditions of poverty that lead to child labour. Low wages and insecure employment means that parents are forced to send their children to work in order to survive. The absence of unions (and in many cases the banning or breaking of unions) denies workers the opportunity to demand a living wage.
Child labourers are likely to be even more exploited than adults. Employers of child labourers like to argue that they need the “nimble fingers” of children to make their products. However, the main reason many businesses hire children is because they can be more easily controlled – they are less likely to protest or form unions. Children may not know their labour or safety rights, and are often reluctant to insist on their rights. Employers who hire children can get away with paying them less and forcing them to work longer hours or under poor safety conditions. The safety statistics for children are shocking: in the United States, a child is killed on the job every 5 days. In Canada (2001 statistics) over 62,000 young Canadians between 15-24 were hurt on the job and 60 young Canadians lost their lives. (http://www.bctf.ca/social/ChildLabour/Lukepresentations.html)

Changes to B.C. Labour Standards
New changes to B.C. Employment Standards Act will facilitate the employment of child workers. Bill 37 (passed on November 28, 2003) will allow children as young as 12 to work with the permission of only one parent. The old legislation set the minimum wage for work at 15. Special permission from the Director of Employment Standards was required for children younger than 15 to work. Under the new legislation, there are no prohibited occupations for children. Children can work on construction sites, with hazardous materials, and can be required to work any shift as long as it does not conflict with school hours. These changes are particularly a concern for the health and safety of young workers – more than 50% of work-related accidents in B.C. take place during young workers’ first six months on the job.

Since one in six B.C. children live under the poverty line, poverty may well force children in the labour force at a much earlier age. Children are further disadvantaged in the labour market because employers may pay them a substandard wage ($6/hour) for their first 500 hours worked. As well, there is a concern that children’s education may

---

**Child Labour and Education**

B.C.’s Bill 37 allows children who are 12 years old to work up to 35 hours a week, which will increase the chances of youth dropping out of school.

- 44% of students who work more than 30 hours report dropping out of school
- Students who worked 30 or more hours a week were 2.4 times more likely to drop out of school than those that had moderate work hour (1-20).

— From BCTF website. Statistics Canada report called “Learning, Earning and Leaving”

**The Training Wage**

In 2002, the B.C. Liberal Government introduced the training wage. Employers can now hire first time workers at a reduced rate of $6.00 per hour for the first 500 hours of employment. The government has decided to not monitor the impacts on young people that this new legislation will bring. (http://www.bctf.ca/social/ChildLabour/Lukepresentations.html)
suffer. Studies have shown that there is a strong relationship between the number of hours students work, and the tendency to drop out of high school.

These changes make B.C.’s child labour laws the weakest in Canada. As well, these laws violate International Covenants on minimum age for child labour, and prohibiting children from working in dangerous occupations.

**Family Violence and Instability**

Intolerable family situations are another cause of exploitative and hazardous child labour. Physical, sexual and emotional abuse, instability, parental conflict, neglect and in many cases (but not all) extreme poverty are all forms of violence in society. They force children either onto the streets to survive on their own or into the hands of adults who exploit them in the sex trade. The streets may appeal to these children seeking an “alternative family” or opportunities to make enough money to survive day to day.

According to the Global March Against Child Labour – Canada report, Canada is a transit and destination point for child trafficking for the sex trade. Approximately 12 Asian women and girls aged 16-30 are trafficked into Canada each week and sold into the sex trade.

**Discrimination Against Girls and Minority Groups**

Cultural attitudes and practices that assign girls to domestic work and deny them opportunities and education, or that relegate low castes to low-paid work, bonded labour and slavery are social inequities that, hand in hand with poverty, cause hazardous and exploitative child labour.

The state of the female child is of particular concern. Around the world, girls are over-represented in figures on infant mortality, illiteracy, poor health, etc. These indicators show that girls have a poorer quality of life than boys. Since many, if not most, societies relegate housework and childcare to females, girl children entering the labour force often become domestics. Recent research on child domestics reveals that child domestics could make up half of all child labourers in the world. Denied their right to study, and working for lower pay for longer hours, girl labourers overwhelmingly carry the weight of discrimination in society.

Bonded labour is a cultural practice that is an extreme form of discrimination against low castes in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. It serves to perpetuate the poverty of those who are poor and powerless.

Slavery is a practice that involves children in several countries in the world. As in the case of bonded labour, it is the poorest and most powerless people (often girls) who are enslaved. In several countries, girls are sold to pimps and brothel owners. The selling of Nepali and Burmese girls into the international sex trade in India and Thailand are well-known cases.

These are some of the ways social inequalities lead to exploitation of children. Social inequities heaped on top of poverty, which is at the very root of the problem, create the environment in which child labour flourishes.
LESSON TWO: Causes of Child Labour

INFORMATION FOR THE TEACHER

Purpose:

• To help students understand the multiple economic and cultural factors that lead children into exploitative child labour.

• To help students understand the poverty cycle and how it works in forcing children into hazardous and exploitative labour.

Overview:

This lesson consists of one main activity:

➤ A Struggling Family Simulation — Simulation and class discussion. Student groups form a family with limited-income sources and expenses that change with yearly circumstances. Students must adapt to changing circumstances by making choices about how to make the money they need to survive.

One Internet activity: (see box)

Two optional activities:

➤ 1. Web of Circumstances — group or individual analysis project. Students read testimonies of child labourers and assess the factors that push and pull them into exploitative work.


Brainstorming Solutions:

Again, students can discuss the problems raised and brainstorm possible solutions after each activity in this lesson. These ideas can be added to the list started in Lesson One.
General Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this lesson students should be able to:

- recognize and describe connections between local, national and international events and economic structures, their causes, consequences and implications on the lives of child labourers

- develop empathy for poor families whose children work and understand the circumstances and factors that eliminate options and push or pull children into hazardous and exploitative labour

- assess the role of values, ethics and beliefs in decision making at a personal and family level

Discussion Forum - Causes of Child Labour

http://www.unicef.org/voy/meeting/lab/labhome.html

Students post comments on the causes of exploitative and hazardous child labour on the UNICEF child labour website. They can also read and respond to the comments other students have posted on the website.
A Struggling Family Simulation

INFORMATION FOR THE TEACHER

Purpose:
• To have students understand the various pressures that may force families to send their children to work.

Time: 50 minutes

Materials:
Copies of A Struggling Family (handout) and the Student Worksheet for each group, as well as Life’s Circumstances, to be handed out or read aloud.

Description:
Divide the class into groups of four to five students to form the families. Give each family the Struggling Family handout detailing the family’s income, expenses and options. At the beginning of the simulation, the family budget is balanced — expenses are equal to income. The simulation goes through four years in the life of a poor family; with each year, the family’s income and expenses change.

Each student in the group should be assigned a role as a family member. This is important, to ensure that decisions are made with the family members in mind rather than the more unrealistic goal of simply balancing the budget. For example, in the second year the eldest brother would surely object if the family decided not to rehabilitate him.

After students have read the Struggling Family handout and the simulation has been explained, read out (or hand out) the circumstances for Year One. Students must make decisions as a family as to how they will adjust to the new circumstances, using the different options outlined in the Poor Family handout. The students must make their budgets balance with each change in circumstances, with the goal of survival with the best quality of life possible. After giving students time to re-balance their budgets (five minutes or more, depending on students’ age), read out (or hand out) the next year’s circumstances. Each year will put more pressure on the family’s financial situation, with the most likely end result being that all the children are working.

At the end of the four years, have each group give a brief summary of the condition of their family, explaining what their priorities were. You may want to write these on the board to compare conditions and priorities.
Discussion Questions:

- How do you feel about what happened to your family? Why?
- As a group, brainstorm on the question of why children work, using ideas from the simulation. Also, brainstorm reasons why companies would want to have children working.
- How did you decide who worked? What roles did gender and age play?
- Do you think this simulation is a realistic portrayal of the circumstances that families in developing countries encounter? What elements may not have been realistic? (Note: wages and costs of health care are based on real conditions in developing countries, although these vary among regions.) What other sources of support might a family like this draw on during difficult times (e.g. extended family, neighbours, community, etc.)?
- Your family was relatively privileged: you initially had two parents, shelter and a source of income in your land. How would your situation have changed if you did not have any of these? For example, many families in developing countries are single-parent families (usually headed by women) who possess neither land nor shelter.
- Compare your own life to the life of this family. What would have happened to your own family with the various changes in circumstances? Would this be true for all families in Canada?
- What could a government do to make sure that this family would not become desperate? Why might governments not take such actions? What do countries like Canada do to help other governments take positive actions or to prevent them from doing so?
- What are some options for this family to get out of poverty and not have to send their children to work?
A Struggling Family

INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

You are a family of six children, a mother, a father and a grandmother. Each member of the group must take on the role of a family member, expressing the interests and wants you think that family member might have. In your country, the government does not provide health care and you must pay monthly fees for school to cover books and uniforms. There is no social safety net. You’ve only got each other.

Right now, your budget is balanced: your yearly expenses of $6400 exactly match your yearly income of $6400. You have managed to hold on to your family land, and this is a considerable source of income even though it does not bring in enough to survive. The father is working full-time at a local factory, working 12- to 15-hour days. He lacks a primary education; as a result, his wages are very low. However, in your district you consider yourselves lucky, as many of the men are unemployed.

In spite of the father’s low wages, your family has managed to provide the eldest three children with a Grade 6 education; two of the other children are currently attending primary school (the youngest is still too young). Perhaps most importantly, the eldest boy is currently attending secondary school. This represents an opportunity for your family to break out of the cycle of poverty — if he graduates with a high-school education, the eldest boy’s wages will increase substantially. Once again, you consider yourselves lucky to have a school near enough to send the children to, although classrooms are crowded and often lacking in adequate resources.

The mother works part-time outside the home and spends an additional 10 hours a day doing domestic work (including gathering fuel and water, tending the family vegetable plot, doing childcare and caring for the elderly grandmother). The eldest brother also works part-time after school to bring in some much-needed money.

So far, you’re surviving. However, things do not stay stable forever; you must adapt to the yearly life circumstances of this simulation. As a family, you must make decisions about how to make the money needed to survive — remembering that you want to have the best quality of life possible for your whole family. Every year, you must recalculate your family’s budget so that your income is equal to your expenses by using the various options listed below. Use the worksheet provided to make your calculations.
Income Sources

Sale of small crop $1300
Father (employment) 3600 (full-time)
Oldest brother (after school) 1000 (part-time)
Mother (canteen) 500 (part-time)

Total household income $6400

Expenses

House (electricity included) $1200
Food 2700 (300 per person)
Clothing 200
Household supplies 150
Water 550
Transportation 600 (100 for each child working or going to school, 100 for father)
Education 1000 (200 for each child)

Total household expenses $6400

Options

These are the only options that you have available to you. Expenses like clothing and water are non-negotiable.

Employment:

You may send family members to work, either full-time or part-time. The mother cannot work full-time because of her extensive work around the house. The grandmother is too elderly to work outside the home but helps the mother a bit with her chores.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family member</th>
<th>part-time</th>
<th>full-time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>$1200</td>
<td>$3600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>*1500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oldest brother, 14</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>**3000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oldest sister, 15</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>1500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second sister, 13</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third sister, 11</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth sister, 5</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youngest brother, 3</td>
<td>***100</td>
<td>***300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* if mother works full-time, two of the girls will have to work part-time in the home or one girl full-time
** if he drops out of school; 8000 in 4th year of simulation if he has managed to stay in school
***only in years 3 and 4
**Borrowing:**
Since you do not have a great deal of property and your house is not worth a lot, you can only borrow $2000 — as long as there is a male wage earner in your home and you still own your own property. You are charged a small amount of interest, $300, and you must pay the loan back within one year or at the next stage of the game ($2300 in total). If you do not pay your loan, the bank will take your home. You may not take out a loan in Year Four.

**Other options:**
- Sale value of land: $8500
- Sale value of house: $6500

If you sell your house, you must pay $2200 per year for rental housing. (This would include your regular $1200 for household expenses.)

Food can be reduced to $100 per person — one meal of rice and beans per day. Malnutrition will begin after one year, increasing susceptibility to sickness.

The eldest boy could go to work in the city. The family would no longer pay his expenses (food, transportation, education). He would send home the same amount of money he would earn in the village.
### Student Worksheet: Family Budget

#### Information for Students

**Year One**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenses</th>
<th>Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>house:</td>
<td>crop sales:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>food:</td>
<td>employment:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clothing: 200</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>household supplies: 150</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>water: 550</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transportation:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>education:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>medical:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>loan repayments:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Year Two**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenses</th>
<th>Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>house:</td>
<td>crop sales:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>food:</td>
<td>employment:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clothing: 200</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>household supplies: 150</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>water: 550</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transportation:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>education:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>medical:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>loan repayments:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Year Three**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenses</th>
<th>Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>house:</td>
<td>crop sales:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>food:</td>
<td>employment:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clothing: 200</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>household supplies: 150</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>water: 550</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transportation:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>education:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>medical:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>loan repayments:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Year Four**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenses</th>
<th>Income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>house:</td>
<td>crop sales:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>food:</td>
<td>employment:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clothing: 200</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>household supplies: 150</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>water: 550</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transportation:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>education:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>medical:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>loan repayments:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Life’s Circumstances

INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

(To be read or handed out one year at a time)

Year One
Weather has destroyed the crop that you harvest to eat and to sell at the local market. Because your parcel is very small, you have no crop insurance. Your family loses the income from the crop and you must buy the food you normally grow. Your cost of food increases by $750; you must also come up with $300 for seed and fertilizer to plant next year’s crop. Your youngest sister needs to see a doctor and have some chest X-rays. This will cost $300.

Year Two
Your crops did very well this year and prices on the market were very good. You managed to make a total of $1800 (instead of $1300 in previous years). However, your oldest brother was severely injured by a landmine explosion. Fortunately he did not lose his life or any limbs. Emergency medical-care costs are $250. Treatment over the year to rehabilitate him will be a minimum of $3000 (your family could not afford medical insurance). He will not bring in any income for this year. Without the rehabilitation, he will be an invalid, unable to work for the rest of his life.

Year Three
The father has become involved with a group at his factory calling for improvements in working conditions — better wages, shorter hours, safer working conditions and the replacement of child labourers with currently unemployed adults. This is a considerable risk. Although your government technically allows trade unions, in reality it ignores anti-union activities by factory owners. Your father takes the risk in the hope that the workers’ demands will be fulfilled and your family will break out of the poverty cycle.
Unfortunately, the workers’ group is violently put down by factory owners, with the assistance of government employees. Luckily, the father avoids injury. However, he is implicated in the workers’ group and loses his job as a result. He cannot find other employment.
In other areas, you were more fortunate. There were no medical expenses this year. If you still have land, crop prices were very high this year, making your crop sale profits $2000. The youngest brother should be starting school this year, with potential expenses of $200 a year for school plus $100 transportation.

Year Four
Your father is still unemployed. Your oldest sister married, left home and is having a baby. To help the family, she takes the youngest sister to live with her and pays her expenses. Dental costs this year are $200. Grandmother is ill; her medical costs are $500. If you choose to reduce meals to less than $150 per person, then medical expenses are up an additional $500.
Web of Circumstances

INFORMATION FOR THE TEACHER

Purpose:
• To provide students with information on some of the different forces that may push or pull children into the labour market and to make links between general causes of child labour and their impact on people’s lives at a personal level.

Time: 40 minutes

Materials:
Three or four copies of each of the Child Worker Profiles that follow, i.e.
1. Assane’s Story
2. Sawai’s Story
3. Kumar’s Story
4. Alexis’s Story
5. Susana’s Story

Copies for each group or student of articles on the causes of child labour:
1. Background Information on the Causes of Child Labour
2. Child Labour: The Poverty Cycle

Description:
Divide students into five groups or have them work as individuals. Each group or individual chooses one or more of the profiles (depending on time limits) and each is given a copy of the articles on the causes of child labour. Students read the articles and the profiles. By answering the questions below for each of the profiles they have chosen, students analyse how the causes of poverty and child labour affected one or two children in particular. Discussion or homework questions help the students compare their lives with those of the children they read about. They should understand how economic policies and community projects can change the circumstances in the lives of these exploited children.

Group or Individual Analysis Questions
What forces push this child into the workforce? Is this work exploitative?
What forces pull this child into the workforce?
What obstacles stop this child from getting out of exploitative work?
Discussion or Homework Questions:

• After reading the articles and the personal testimonies of child workers, what do you think are the major causes of child labour? List and describe some of these.

• Who are the people creating the problems that push or pull each of these children into exploitative and hazardous child labour?

• Why would corporations want to employ child labourers?

• How would some of these children’s lives be different if they lived in Canada? What actions does the Canadian government take that would change the lives of these children if they lived in Canada? (One testimony is from a Canadian child. How is her story different from the others?)

• What actions could these children’s governments or communities take that would change the lives of these children? Why do you think governments or communities do not take such actions?

Brainstorming Solutions:

Students can brainstorm solutions to the problems raised in this activity and add them to the list created in Lesson One.
Assane Diallo is a 10-year-old shoeshine boy in Ziguinchor, the capital of Senegal’s southern region. Like hundreds of other children from the north of Senegal, he has fled not war, but a bad agricultural policy. The French government is trying to get the Toucouleur people to grow rice. But their Futa Toro region is too dry and the result is that the Toucouleur, traditionally nomadic cattle herders, are becoming more impoverished.

I come from the village of Bronkagne in the Futa Toro. I used to work for my Uncle Demba cultivating rice, tilling the soil and sowing rice seeds. But we didn’t produce enough and he sent me away. Uncle Demba told me that it would be hard in the city. But it will be good for me whether or not I bring him back money one day. ‘With travel you gain experience,’ he said. It is good for a child to know suffering. Then I will appreciate life when I am older. That is the Toucouleur way.

Of course I was scared to leave but I also wanted to go. I am proud that he has sent me. I hope I make lots of money. I hope I can come back to my village and give all my relatives presents. And I’ll be wearing jeans and sneakers. I already have this nice T-shirt.

In the village I just wore rags. Sometimes there wasn’t enough food to eat. We worked very hard but there was never enough rain. And rice needs lots of rain. Still, we Toucouleur always find a way to survive. If we can’t make money from farming then we go out and become traders. That is what my family wants me to do.

I already did it last year. I went to the town of Bakel for three months between sowing and harvesting seasons. I sold baobab and bissap juice on the street for a market woman. I came back to Bronkagne with new clothes and gave my uncle money. He was very happy with me. That’s why he wanted me to go again this year.

My aim in life is to be a big trader. As my father died when I was a baby, Uncle Demba inherited his land instead. So now his sons will inherit it from him, not me. That is why I must be a trader. I want to travel to Bangkok and bring back textiles and jewellery to sell here. Then with the profits I will open my own store. That is what we Toucouleur do. If yo go to any town in Senegal you will find us with our little stores. My friend’s uncle has a big store in New York.

I am now on the third step to my life goal. The first step was working for my uncle cultivating rice. The second step was selling drinks on the street. Now the third step is being a shoeshine boy. It is not easy. You have to find people who look like they have a little extra cash and convince them that they need their shoes shined.

That’s why I don’t want to do this for long. I want to learn how to repair shoes. Then I can work for the older boys who are shoe traders. They go to Dakar (Senegal’s capital) and bring back broken shoes which we younger boys repair for them. I have already begun helping to repair shoes and my friends are impressed at how fast I am learning.

So my fourth step will be repairing shoes and my fifth step will be to be a shoe trader like the older boys. But when I go to Dakar I won’t just bring back broken shoes. I will bring all sorts of things. That is how I will get rich.

I don’t need to go to school. What can I learn there? I know children who went to school. Their family paid for the fees and the uniforms and now they are educated. But you see them sitting around. Now they are useless to their families. They don’t know anything about farming or trading or making money. Even though I have never been to school, I can count and quickly give the correct change. I also know how to bargain with customers and always make a profit.

The only thing I need to learn is to read and write. But I have started. People from ENDA (a Dakar-based agency) teach me and my friends every Tuesday evening. That’s good because it doesn’t mess up our work schedule.

My friends told me that a white woman came to talk to them once and told them it is bad that children have to work. She said she would put them all in school but she never came back, and I am glad. If anyone tries to put me in school I will run away. I wouldn’t be making any money. Then I would be ashamed ever to go back to my village.

— The New Internationalist, July 1997, p. 14
Sawai Langlah, of Srisaket province in north-east Thailand, had to find work at the age of 13 when her father, a construction worker, suddenly became paralysed. There was no work locally so she had to leave school and get a job far from home in the capital, Bangkok, through a cousin who was already working in a small garment factory.

We think my father’s paralysis was to do with overworking. One day he came home exhausted and fainted. When he woke up again he was paralysed. I was very miserable at leaving home and frightened of going to the city but I also knew it was my only hope to continue with my schooling. Because I knew nothing about sewing I had to learn everything from scratch. My employer said I would have to do domestic work to repay him for the training I would receive.

It was a very small family business — a three-storey house which was also the owner’s home. I was paid very little — 500 baht ($25) a month. Out of that I had to pay back 100 baht for my housing and my food; though they gave us only cooked rice and if we wanted anything with it, we had to buy it.

There were six people working in the factory and we all shared one room. The room we worked in was very narrow with about five machines in it and the lighting was very poor. I worked from eight in the morning to midnight. This was a privilege. My cousin often stayed up sewing until two in the morning.

I was supposed to be an apprentice but I wasn’t really given any training. I had to do a lot of housework. I washed clothes and cleaned the house and kitchen. I could be called to do it at any time. I was lucky to have my cousin there; when my employer was out she would teach me and I would also watch how the others worked. That’s how I got trained. I learned quickly. Usually it takes eight months. Within a couple of months my sewing was in demand.

I don’t think the owner was a bad man. He did not abuse me. He shouted at me only if I yelled at his child. Sometimes he let us watch TV. He was just stingy.

After I was there two-and-a-half months he took a big order from a factory making clothes for little children and needed more labour. He said I was ready to take on bulk work. If I agreed I would make a little more money, but my cousin was worried; I would have to work seven days a week and stay up late, sometimes working right through the night, going without sleep for 48 hours. My cousin feared that the pressure of bulk work would be too great for a child of 13. She advised me to take a job in a bigger factory, where I might also have an opportunity for education on Sundays.

It was a medium-sized factory with 20 machines. From outside you could hardly tell it was a factory — the windows were high up and barred and we were not allowed to open them. It was very closed; no one could see inside. There were 20 workers. Most of the others were between 15 and 17. We worked six days a week. It was a registered factory and so had to meet government regulations. However, the owners had no kindness. They were very stingy, too; the pay was very low and they never raised our salary. They didn’t care.

There were several organizations in Bangkok providing activities for working children but most operated during the day when I couldn’t attend. Then I heard of the Child Labour Club, whose activities are at the weekends. So I started attending non-formal education on Sundays. They also provide shelter and healthcare for children with problems. I’m 16 now and in January I quit my job to work for the club part-time, reaching out to other working children. The club pays me 3,000 baht (about $150) a month and they give me a room without rent which I share with two other girls.

— The New Internationalist, July 1997, p. 23
Kumar Subba left his village home in eastern Nepal at the age of eight. He crept out of his house before dawn and walked 30 kilometres to a small country town. He was escaping a family catastrophe. His father, a peasant farmer, had lost his land to a local moneylender and left for India to look for work. While his mother laboured for a pittance in other people’s fields, Kumar was trapped at home mind-ing younger brothers and sisters.

When I left, my only thought was to escape. I got a job in a hotel. I had to fetch water and wash the dishes. The water was icy. Sometimes I was sent to a nearby forest to collect firewood. I was not paid — just given two meals a day. I slept on the tables after the customers left. I got bad sores on my hands and fell sick. Sick or well, I had to work.

After a year, I left and walked to the next town, where I worked as a street porter, living on the streets. But the older boys would bully and rob us. One day a man told me he could get me a job in Kathmandu. I would be trained to weave carpets and have a chance to go to school. I would be given very good meals. Once trained, I would earn a lot of money. I saved for six months for the bus fare to Kathmandu. But this agent was another cheat. The factory he took me to was very big and full of working children, mostly girls. It was like a prison. We were locked in. I was 10 years old but not the youngest. We worked from 5 a.m. to midnight knotting carpets. We slept among the looms. Many of the children suffered pains in their fingers because of the work. We were given very low-quality rice and thin watery lentils twice a day. Those were the only breaks and no one spoke of paying us.

Supervisors checked that we didn’t fall asleep. They also had informers among us who would report us if we fought or broke the hammers, needles or scissors we used. Then we would be thrashed. There was some bullying though not as bad as on the streets. The older boys in the factory were very bad to the young girls. They would toss (sexually abuse) them.

When others slept some of us would talk about how we had landed up there and the promises that had been made to us. We had all been cheated by the labour contractors.

After six months I was exhausted and had pains in my hands, stomach and chest. One day I spotted a half-broken window in the lavatory. I broke out and ran away.

After that I worked as a ragpicker and slept on the streets. It was better than the factory — at least you could have some fun. Other young children taught me where to collect rags and sell them. There were also older boys who were into pickpocketing and thieving. They ordered me to strip valuable metals from buildings. If I refused I was beaten.

The worst thing on the streets was that nobody treated us well and everyone, police and other adults, all behaved like thieves and cheats. We were often arrested and beaten or tortured for no reason. The police kicked or beat us with special ribbed sticks; sometimes we were bound by ropes and beaten. At first I was very innocent but then I thought: ‘Whether I steal or not, I get arrested and beaten; better to get beaten with thieving than without.’ So I started stealing things as well.

I ended up being jailed for six months and put in a cell with adults, including a monitor chosen by the prison staff. Everyone had to make him happy because if he reported you to the warders you lost your right to parole. The warders also let him beat you up. You had to make tea for the adults and wash their clothes. There was also sexual abuse.

Back on the street, I was the youngest of a group who were getting seriously into thieving. Some would even take on security guards who caught them in the act. One day I had a head injury. My friends took me to the health clinic at Child Workers in Nepal.

There, for the first time, I found adults who cared about me and shared things with me. I stayed on in a night shelter they have and got involved in their activities. That was in 1992, so I was 11. If it wasn’t for that accident I would probably be a big thief by now.

Increasingly recognized as a talented artist, Kumar — now 16 — plans to be both a painter and a street educator so that he can help other working children realize some of their aspirations. He has also been reconciled with his family.

— The New Internationalist, July 1997, p. 26
Causes of Child Labour

LESSON TWO

Alexis grew up in the Lower Mainland of B.C.

I believe that we start our lives with certain hoops that we have to jump through to make it in this society. For some of us those hoops disappear. When most kids in elementary school were learning how to live in the world, I was learning how to escape inside myself. I was learning how to cope with events that most of you could not even begin to imagine. It was not until I became an adult that I began to learn how to live.

I do not remember when it started. I expect that it was before I began my toddler years... before I started learning words... before I took my first step. I was severely physically and sexually abused for the entire length of my childhood. It was not just my father that was the culprit. There were so many offenders I stopped counting long ago.

My father and my first stepfather were into child pornography and the drug trade. I was constantly a victim of both. I experienced such horrendous torture that still to this day I wake violently in the night from my own screams. I was drugged, sometimes to make me compliant and sometimes because the adults thought it funny to see a little girl trembling and terrified from the hallucinations of LSD and other drugs. Sometimes I thought I was going to die from the physical torture they put me through.

I did not learn how to protect myself. I was taught that I was worthless. I believed that. It did not matter what other people told me. I was so ashamed of who I was that I wanted to die. I thought that it was all my fault. I thought that I deserved to be defiled as a human being. I was numb. I was in shock. Someone once told me that I did not feel the agony because I was agony.

By the time I was nine years old, my father was pimping me on the streets and in the rooming houses of Vancouver. I choose not to call this child prostitution, because children cannot be prostitutes. Adults that have sex with children, according to our laws, are child abusers. I look at the fact that money exchanges hands as being one of the most obscene abuses of children. How dare adults degrade children in such a way! I was a little girl!

When I turned 13 I was out there on the street at night of my own accord and going to school during the day. I was often high on drugs; by this point I did not know how to face life without being high. I was suicidal most of the time. I obsessed about death. Often I would get into the cars of men that I was sure would kill me. I could see no other way of ending the pain.

I learned early that people hurt the wounded. Though they were not aware that I was being sexually procured on the streets at night, I was labelled by my peers as a tramp. It did not matter how I behaved. People could see that I was one of the walking wounded and they made me pay for every sin that everyone had ever inflicted upon me. I look back and see how that torment in part led me to completely break from any form of safety in the schools and at home.

At 16 I packed my bags and ran into the night to face the big, bad world. I tried to hold down jobs, but I was a young, wounded girl addicted to drugs trying desperately to keep the inner torture at a tolerable level. I believed myself to be unlovable... unworthy... useless. That is what I was taught. The more abused I was by sick and twisted men, the more lost I became. I wandered the streets most of the time. I was dying.

Six months after I left home, I became involved with a 26-year-old man. A man that ended up being my pimp. We lived in a rat-infested apartment and rarely had food. I thought it was the best thing since sliced bread. It was much warmer than the street at night, and he was so kind and gentle... or so I thought. In no time he became cruel and twisted. He used to assault me with a knife if I did not do what he said. I tried to leave him once and he tied me up, blindfolded me and hung me upside down in the closet for days.

I told him that I would rather be dead than stay with him, and one night when he was out I took every drug in the house. I do not remember much, but I know that someone found me and I was taken to the hospital to have my stomach pumped. Soon after, I left him for good, and he hired a person that lived in our building to rape me.

CHILD WORKER PROFILE: Alexis’s Story

INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

I was physically and sexually abused for the entire length of my childhood.

""
I spent six months in the hospital after that horrible night. I was put into the psychiatric ward and put on several different medications. I had a horrible time with them. Antidepressants did not work on me. They just made me go wonky. Most days I spent in bed. I did not want to see anyone. I just wanted to sleep. I wanted to sleep away any feelings that those people there were trying to make me feel. Looking at how devastating my life was immobilized me. It was too much.

Christmas of my eighteenth year I was moved into a foster home on a farm out in the middle of nowhere. They were in it for the money, and if I was seen I was immediately put to work. I used to walk out to the main road and hitch a ride back into the city on a regular basis. The foster parents did not care as long as they were collecting a pay cheque.

I never did get attached to any given group. I used to move on to different people on a weekly basis. I was so afraid of everybody and everything by then that I used to get so high that I was a walking vegetable. I would head back to the foster home every once in a while for a good sleep and a shower, and then I would be out the door again on the run.

Soon my social worker became aware of the situation at the farm and she made sure that they never had a foster child live there again. I was moved into independent living and I moved my stuff into a little tiny bachelor suite in a small town. The nights I spent there I spent in terror. Without the constant action of the street going on, I was left to face the ugliness of my life. Needless to say, I spent more nights on the street than I spent there.

I decided then that my life was just too much to bear and I got a hold of enough drugs to kill a horse twice over. I figured that if I stayed so high that I could not get out of bed that things would be OK. Fortunately, my social worker popped by for a visit and sent me to detox. It was good that I got clean, but the events that took place in this residential treatment centre were deceitful and cruel.

This was a place where street youths would go to detoxify from drugs and get away from being sexually exploited on the streets. One of the workers there did not get the mandate of Do No Harm. He used his position of power to physically and sexually abuse me. I am sure that I was not the only one. He ended up pouring a pot of boiling water on me, giving me first and second degree burns over half of my body.

I almost died because of what he did to me. I went there to be protected from the street, and he made the only place in the world that I knew to be safe a nightmare. I went back to the street and used as many drugs as I could get a hold of. Men from middle-class neighbourhoods (many who had baby seats in the back of the car) would pick me up. Men who probably had a daughter my age sleeping safely at home. I was often beaten up, thrown out of moving cars...degraded as a human being.

When I finally attempted to get off the drugs this time, it took two months to come down. I remember that last night that I used. I had taken some bad LSD. My body felt as if it was torn into pieces. I saw horrible images that frightened me to death. I was so physically ill that my body was giving up on me. I had known people that had ended up indefinitely locked up in long-term-care psychiatric facilities from bad drugs, and I thought that this was going to be my fate.

I am lucky. It took a long time and a lot of hard work...and I ended up “working” several times before I was finally able to let the street go. It was very difficult to put my trust in anyone for a very long time, but I was able to see a female counsellor, which benefited me greatly. My faith in her ethics was very fragile, my trust would come and go, but she was consistently kind and empathetic.

I am in my early twenties now...a long ways away from that desperately treacherous life. I have a full-time job, a few friends that I can honestly say I trust, and I’m a new mother. We live a very quiet life and for the first time, I can honestly say that I’m truly happy.

This is my story and only my story. Every young person’s story is sacred and their own. I do not represent other street youth nor do I try to speak for them. I just hope that knowing my story will inspire a little more kindness towards others that need understanding instead of judgement. Really, it does not matter how a child ends up on the street. Children need protection...not persecution. The issue is that there are adults sexually procuring children on our streets. That’s child abuse. This is wrong and it needs to stop.

This is a true story. Alexis is not the real name of the young woman who told this story.
CHILD WORKER PROFILE: Susana’s Story

Susana Vasquez was born in Mexico and migrated with her family to the U.S. when she was seven. By the time she was nine, she was working with her parents in the fields of Pennsylvania, picking fruit and vegetables. She dug potatoes, picked apples, peaches, cucumbers, and green peppers. She worked on hot dry days when there was no water available except costly bottled water. She worked on cold rainy days when the fields were muddy. During one season, she worked after school from 4 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., picking twenty huge buckets of tomatoes. On the weekends, she picked sixty buckets between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. She was paid $1 a bucket, which the grower then sold for $12 each.

Susana also picked strawberries. “I liked picking the strawberries because I could eat them if I was hungry,” she says.

At every new place and new job, Susana translated for her father as he negotiated with the farmer over work, pay and living arrangements. Like other migrant farm workers, Susana’s family often stayed in camps with poor cooking and food storage facilities. “There was often no access to drinking water or toilets in the fields. “Talking about all those things scared me,” she remembers. However, she admits that she is stronger and more mature as a result than other kids she knows.

“There was no time for going to movies or to do homework. I often fell asleep in class,” Susana says. She changed school three times a year as her family traveled to find work, and her grades were low. “Just as I adjusted, it was time to move again.”

Susan is now seventeen and in grade ten in Salisbury, Maryland. She has been held back two grades because of the many interruptions in her studies. “How I wish my parents could have gotten other jobs,” she says. “It isn’t easy for me, but it’s certainly not easy for them either… Next time you buy a tomato, think of me as a nine-year-old.”


“&

“It isn’t easy for me, but it’s certainly not easy for them either… Next time you buy a tomato, think of me as a nine-year-old.”

&
Purpose:

• To have students reflect on and identify the causes of child labour, particularly as they relate to poverty.
• To help develop an understanding of how child labour is related or connected to a variety of social problems.

Time: One class period or as a homework assignment

Materials:

Copies of Child Labor: The Poverty Cycle handout for each student

Description:

This is intended as an independent student activity and requires students to write a short composition on the causes of child labour. Teachers may want students to consider these causes as interconnected; students could explain what the “poverty cycle” is and how it contributes to child labour.
The causes of child labour are not easily explained. There is no one reason for child labour; in fact, child labour is best understood as a web of problems or circumstances, all of which can lead to a situation where children must work. Families can fall into a condition of extreme poverty very easily, and it is poverty that is really at the root of child labour. The circumstances that can cause poverty and lead to children being forced to work can be related to illiteracy, poor health care, or any one of a number of other problems.

Imagine that you and your family live in a place where there is no protection or insurance if one of you becomes ill or has an accident. So if your mother or brother becomes sick, the whole family has to pitch in to pay for the hospital or doctor’s charges. If you are going to school, you will likely have to quit and find a job. Suddenly you are a child labourer.

You know how important it is to have an education in order to get a well-paid job. In Canada, education up to Grade 12 is provided by the government. Your family does not pay directly unless you choose to go to a private school. In many parts of the world, especially poorer countries, only primary school is paid for by the government. After a student reaches about age eight, all education must be paid for by the family. This includes books, supplies and often a school uniform. If your family is poor, you almost certainly will not be able to afford this. Indeed, it is much more important for you to work and bring home what little money you earn. Of course, if you are working, you do not have time to learn to read, and this means you will always have a low-paying job — which means you will remain poor. If you eventually have your own children, they will be living in the same poverty your family experienced, they will not be able to go to school and the cycle of poverty will continue.
Sometimes the frustration of constantly living in poverty can lead people to revolt against the government and take violent action. This can cause families to break apart as members are injured, killed or forced to flee from a community. Families broken by such conflict become desperate, and again the children must work to help the family survive.

Situations such as the stress of living in violence can cause family members to take out their frustrations on one another, forcing children to leave home and live on the streets, where they become easy targets for people who want to take advantage of them. Such children often end up in prostitution or in working conditions that are really slavery.

If you are a girl in some countries, you are very likely to have a childhood spent in hard labour. In some places, girls are considered unworthy of education because their main value is as helpers around the house or as housekeepers in other homes, where they will earn a very low wage that is turned over to their parents.

Student assignment:

Using the information provided here and other sources your teacher can help you with, write a short composition (300 to 400 words) on “The Many Causes of Child Labour.”
As the previous lesson illustrated, social inequities heaped on top of poverty create the conditions for exploitative child labour. Before we can begin to find appropriate solutions to ending the worst forms of child labour, we need to step back and consider the global dynamics of poverty. Why are some countries poor while others are wealthy? To answer this question we must evaluate our own role in the global economy, as citizens of a wealthy nation and the nature of our economic relationship with developing countries.

Global Disparities of Wealth and Power

The political and economic relationships between the wealthy and poor nations have led to a world divided between a few wealthy and powerful nations and many impoverished ones.

During the most recent period of rapid growth in global trade and investment, inequality worsened both internationally and within countries.

Transnational corporations (companies that have operations in more than one country) invest and operate in regions of the world where they can take advantage of a wealth of natural resources and/or where labour standards and wages are low (sometimes as low as 28 cents per hour) and environmental standards are scarce. Because many pay few or no taxes at all to the governments of the foreign countries in which they operate, the transnational corporations make large profits, which they reinvest elsewhere or divide amongst their shareholders at home.

Often, when a large transnational invests in another country in industry, agriculture or resource extraction and begins large-scale production and development, small, locally owned producers cannot compete; they are put out of business. The transnational creates new low-paying jobs, but many people are left unemployed and without land.

All of this relates to child labour because poverty often forces children into exploitative labour.

National Disparities of Wealth and Power

To most people, knowledge of the large gap in wealth and power between developed and developing nations is not new. However, the same dynamics that take place at a global level also occur at a national level.

Social inequalities most often create the lines by which wealth and power are distributed nationally and
internationally. Ethnic or religious minorities, low castes, indigenous peoples and women within these groups are generally the ones with the least wealth and power. Along with foreign investors, a powerful, wealthy elite work to maintain the social conditions that allow them to control resources and wealth, while most people in the country remain poor or extremely poor.

Rather than spend money on health and education, many governments commonly spend money on the military, which they use to suppress popular demands for land and resources. It is in the interests of those who own the factories and land to perpetuate social discrimination and ensure that a large portion of the population is very poor and illiterate, in order to keep labour cheap. A cheap labour pool is also used to attract foreign investment. Although poverty creates unrest, unrest can be crushed by a well-funded, heavy-handed military. For those who benefit from foreign investment and the exploitation of cheap labour, the military expense may be worth it.

**Foreign Debt and Free trade and their Relationship to Disparities of Wealth and Power**

The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund are the world financial organizations that are in charge of administrating the foreign debt of most countries in the world. The World Bank makes loans and guarantees credit to its 177 member countries. Most of poor countries’ current debt dates back to the 1970s. The IMF supplies member states with money to help overcome the problems of paying the loans back, but only if the recipients agree to policy reforms such as privatization of public services. This policy reform is called structural adjustment and it has increased poverty in most countries where it has been applied. Structural adjustment contributes to resources being pulled away from eliminating the worst forms of child labour.

**Voting Power in the IMF/WB**

Voting power at the World Bank and IMF is determined by the level of the nation’s financial contribution. The U.S. holds 17% of the vote and the seven largest industrialized countries (G7), which includes Canada, hold 45% of the vote.

*Global Exchange, June, 2003*
Free Trade

World Trade Organization (WTO)

The WTO rules are written by and for corporations and promote the notion of free trade. By its very nature, free trade, which promotes de-regulation in the labour market, is not compatible with labour rights (including child labour). The rules of the WTO encourage a ‘race to the bottom’ in wages by pitting workers against each other, rather than promoting internationally recognized labour standards. Because child labourers are one of the cheapest forms of labour in the world, a country is encouraged by these rules to use exploitative forms of labour to be ‘competitive’ and secure contracts.

Furthermore, the WTO tacitly supports forced child labour, because it has ruled that it is illegal for a government to ban a product based on the way it is produced (for example, with child labour).

Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA)

The most recent push for free trade has come in the form of the FTAA, which would expand the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) to Central America, South America and the Caribbean. If passed, the FTAA would continue the trend of the WTO of eroding basic labour rights. Labour rights are eroded because there is a lack of enforceable labour protections within the agreement and it puts commercial interests above all other values. Following the NAFTA model, corporations would be free to search the hemisphere for the lowest wages, weakest rights, and the most complicit governments.

According to CUPE, the FTAA covertly encourages child labour violations because of the complex rules which govern complaint processes. The ILO fears that even if workers’ rights are incorporated into the FTAA, it would be in a watered down form and would not protect adult or child workers. Many fear that the FTAA will drastically accelerate globalization in the Americas, giving even more power to the multinational corporations.

In Peru, many child workers belong to Manthoc, a worker’s rights groups organized and run by its young members. They believe that debt has locked them and their country into a cycle of poverty. Jovana Cruz Condor, a 16 year old member of the groups says, “every child that is born owes $1200”. Another member of the group, Arturo Francia, who is in charge of the anti-debt campaign, believes a remodeling of Peru’s economic system, beginning with debt-forgiveness, is necessary to improve conditions for child workers and their choice over their jobs and their education.

— New Internationalist Issue 320, January-February 2000
Lack of Political Will

In its 1997 State of the World’s Children report, UNICEF identifies the lack of political will as a major obstacle in overcoming the exploitation of children. One of the central reasons why the world has not made great strides in eradicating extreme poverty and the exploitation of children is that doing so is not a priority for those who control the power and wealth needed to make it happen.

As we have seen, children are the most controllable and most easy to exploit of all workers. Those who benefit do not want child labour to be eliminated. This has been demonstrated by the numerous cases of adults and children who, after challenging the exploitation of child labourers, have been threatened or killed, and by the local authorities who often refuse to carry out inspections of workplaces or stop employers from abusing children.

Where Does Canada Fit into the Picture?

It is important to acknowledge that Canada is implicated in the poverty cycle that creates a demand for and a supply of child labourers. Perhaps the most obvious causal connection comes from the export industry of developing countries, whereby Canadians are the consumers of goods produced using exploitative child labour. While most child labour does not occur in the export sector, educating people about products we consume that are made with child labour opens the door to discussion of the larger problem of the gross social and economic inequalities that allow exploitative child labour to flourish.

Canada also plays a role in world trade and banking bodies like the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization. Canada is also a supporter of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA).

Canadian businesses can also be culprits in the child labour issue. They are often far too eager to make quick profit investments in countries that offer them cheap labour, tax holidays (no taxes on profits) and low environmental standards — all of which, as we have seen, help to create the conditions for child labour.

Globally, there is not enough pressure or enough of an incentive for governments, corporations and individuals to be more responsible with respect to the exploitation of child workers. In a climate such as this, there is little hope that labour standards will improve. Despite the existence of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, or company codes of conduct, lack of enforcement means that the exploitation of children will continue until the international community, governments and corporations take concrete actions to implement them.
LESSON THREE: Global Economics and Child Labour

INFORMATION FOR THE TEACHER

Purpose:

• To help students understand the nature of the global economic systems that create poverty and to apply this understanding to the child labour issue.

Overview:

This lesson consists of two main activities:

► 1. Funky Shoes Ltd: You Run It — students read a short handout on a hypothetical shoe company looking to set up a factory in Asia. They do a “company plan” to show how they would deal with issues such as minimum wages, benefits, working conditions, minimum employment age and unions, among others.

► 2. Cine Fete Video – No Time to Play – a video and class discussion or individual written assignment. No Time to Play is about child workers in Nicaragua.

One Internet activity: (see box)

Two optional activities:

► 1. Transnational Auction — a group activity in which students, divided into groups, form a country or a region of one country. They must make policies regarding labour standards, taxation and the environment in the interests of their people and at the same time attract transnational corporations. The game illustrates how countries or regions compete against one another in lowering standards to attract foreign investment in a globalized economy.

► 2. Products I Buy — individual research, class discussion. Students find 10 products they consume and find out where they were made. Students research economic and social conditions in one of the countries their products were made in and relate these to the possible working conditions of the people who made them.

Brainstorming Solutions:

Again, have students come up with solutions for the problems raised in this activity and add them to or revise the solutions they have listed in previous lessons.
General Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this lesson students should be able to:

- demonstrate awareness of the disparities in the distribution of wealth in the world and how this relates to low labour standards, increasing poverty and child labour
- illustrate the importance of elevating labour standards and economic conditions in countries that trade with Canada and B.C.
- assess Canada’s participation in global economic structures through international trade and Canadian foreign investment
- understand the link between Canadian consumers and producers in developing countries

Global Economics and Child Labour

Option One
Students visit UNICEF’s child labour website discussion forum and post their comments on the relationship between global economics and child labour.

Option Two
Students select one of the products they consume and research the company that produces it on the Internet (e.g., Nike, Levi Strauss, the Gap, Reebok, etc.).

Students should look for the following things:

1. Is the company a transnational? (Does it produce, design, administer in more than one country?)
2. Where are the company’s goods produced?
3. Does the company own the places where goods are produced or does it subcontract production?
4. Does the company have a code of conduct on the Internet?
5. Does the company have some kind of independent monitoring mechanism (someone who checks whether the company is abiding by the code of conduct)?
6. Is there anything to suggest the company may use child labour?

Research resource: www.maquilasolidarity.org
Funky Shoes Ltd.: You Run It

INFORMATION FOR THE TEACHER

Purpose:

• To have students understand and critically think about the concept of “globalization.”
• To have students understand the factors that influence decisions about capital investment and the social consequences of these decisions.
• To encourage students to consider issues of economic growth and capital investment in a context of human rights.

Time: 50 to 60 minutes

Materials:
Copies of Funky Shoes Ltd. and Funky Shoes Ltd.: You Run It handouts

Description:
In this activity, students act as presidents of a transnational corporation, Funky Shoe Ltd. They are given background information on the issues that faced by a “global” corporation. These include the matter of profit margins as well as questions regarding working conditions, wages and union rights. Students are asked to develop a “company plan” that takes into consideration concerns for profitability as well as human rights. Students can work with partners.
Funky Shoes Ltd.

The following example helps to explain why companies are looking to invest in other countries and regions of the world and why these countries and regions are looking to attract investment. By examining a hypothetical company, Funky Shoes Ltd., we can begin to understand just what “globalization” is all about.

**Funky Shoes Ltd.**

Funky Shoes Ltd. is a North American–based company that was established in 1987. Initially, all operations were carried out in North America, however, the company has realized that it would be more profitable to move some of its operations, namely the manufacturing of Funky Shoes, to somewhere where labour is cheaper. This will enable them to spend more money on the development of new products and marketing, and maybe expand sales. Profits are made when the sale price of the product is higher than the cost of making it. For example, the company’s most popular shoe, the “Groovin’ Sneaker,” sells for $60 in North America. The materials cost $2, the company must pay its workers $20 to make each shoe, marketing costs are $5 per shoe, and the cost of transporting the shoes, renting a store and paying salespeople to sell them is $3 per shoe. The profit made off each shoe is then $30 (the sale price, $60, minus the total cost of making the shoe, $30). Last year the company sold 100,000 shoes and made $3,000,000.

Funky Shoes Ltd. knows that the athletic shoe industry is a competitive one and that marketing costs will probably get higher in the future, especially if they want a famous sports star to endorse the Groovin’ Sneaker. In order to maintain and increase profits in the future, Funky Shoes Ltd. needs to cut costs. Its options are to lower the cost of materials, transportation, or labour. Lowering the cost of materials might mean lowering quality, something the company can’t sacrifice. The best way to lower the cost of producing the shoe, even if it might raise transportation costs, is to lower the cost of labour. This means moving to a country that has lower wages and labour standards.

**A Country in Asia**

A country in Asia has heard that Funky Shoes is looking to produce overseas. They see this as a good opportunity to create jobs and the economic spin-offs that often accompany this kind of investment. All the buying and selling that people do with the wages they earn at Funky Shoes Ltd. are called spin-offs. For example, when people have jobs, they have money to spend on food, clothing, houses and, depending on how much they make, they can buy luxuries like cars, TVs, stereos, movies, vacations and restaurants. The more people can earn, the more they can spend. The more people buy, the more goods companies can produce to sell and the more profits they make. Small businesses like restaurants and
Small businesses like restaurants and shops can spring up, which create even more jobs. More businesses means more jobs and more taxes the government can potentially collect. The more the government collects, the more services it can pay for, such as hospitals, schools, universities, research laboratories, etc., which in turn create more jobs for their people. When people make enough to live on and save, and benefit from the services the government provides, their standard of living improves.

On the other side of the coin, if a company doesn’t pay its workers enough to live on, there will be few economic spin-offs. The less people make, the less they buy. The less people earn, the less the government can tax people. The less taxes a government can collect, the fewer hospitals, schools, etc. it can pay for. The standard of living will be low.

If a country or region is poor, it may not have people with enough money to start up businesses. Its government may depend on companies from other areas to build factories in their region, to create jobs and revenue (income). If people are not living off the land, they need jobs to buy food and water. Other basic expenses of families are housing, electricity, clothing, medical care, and school fees or supplies. At the extreme end of the scale, if wages and working conditions are very bad and the people are extremely poor, then they have no choice but to work under such bad conditions. In the short term, the jobs may help them survive. In the long term, by damaging their health and forcing them to send their children to work to supplement their income, these kinds of jobs will keep people in the relentless cycle of poverty.

Sometimes workers will organize into unions. By forming a union, workers can act as a single body, collectively demanding increases in pay and better working conditions. By refusing to work for a period of time (striking), the workers stop producing the company product, so the company loses money for that period of time. This forces the company owners or manager to talk to the workers and negotiate changes that will please the workers enough to get them to go back to work. In this way, unions can play a very important role in industries susceptible to exploitative and hazardous working conditions.
Funky Shoes Ltd.: You Run It

Imagine you are the president of Funky Shoes Ltd. You have to decide whether you are going to set up your company in the Asian country described. What should you do? Should you try to get the lowest wages, cheapest working conditions and lowest standards of employment you can, or are there other considerations?

Working with a partner, develop a “company plan” that describes what Funky Shoes will do to set up production in Asia. Consider the following:

- What will you do about wages? As low as possible or not? Explain your decision.

- What about working conditions? Hours of work, length of work week, vacations, benefits such as health and dental?

- Are you concerned at all about safety? Remember, safety features cost money, but what are the possible consequences if you ignore safety?

- What about taxes? Will you pay any to this country or will you avoid them?

- What is your policy on minimum working age? Will you employ 12-year-olds? Remember, they will often work for a low wage, but at the same time you could be accused of using child labour. This could affect your profits.

- What will you do about unions? Will you work with them or try to discourage them? Think of the consequences of either choice and explain your decision.
Video: No Time for Play

INFORMATION FOR THE TEACHER

Purpose:

• To have students witness the lives of child workers in Nicaragua
• To help students understand how poverty forces families to send their children to work
• To discuss how child workers are organizing for change

Time: 45 minutes for video and discussion
(the video is 30 minutes)

Materials:

The Cine Fete Video No Time for Play is available at the B.C. Teachers’ Federation Office, 100-550 West 6th Avenue, Vancouver, B.C., V5Z 4P2; phone (604) 871-2283 or toll-free at 1-800-663-9163. The video can also be ordered from Cine Fete by calling: 1-800-858-2183.

Description:

No Time for Play focuses on child workers in Nicaragua. The video portrays different types of child work through interviews with the children. A strength of the video is that it shows a diversity of child labour: garbage dump workers, domestic workers, coffee pickers, and children who work in the markets. The video makes a strong link between poverty and child labour. No Time for Play also focuses on the efforts of child workers to organize and secure a better life through education and their child workers’ organization.

This is an excellent video to show either after the Transnational Auction or after the Struggling Family exercise in the previous chapter, because it provides a real-life look at the link between poverty/low labour standards and the most exploitative conditions.
Discussion or Homework Questions:
The italicized questions are the harder ones that are not directly answered in the video. They require more thought and provide more potential for discussion.

- What are some of the conditions of work for the children in the video?
- What conditions of work did you see in the video that are hazardous for children?
- How many hours do the children work?
- Do the working children in the film go to school? When?
- How does the school in the film compare with your school?
- Describe the homes/living conditions of the working children.
- What did the working children in the film want? What are their demands?
- Are you able to produce your own radio (or other media) like the children in the film?
- What are the causes of child labour in the film?
- Do you think that the children in the film wanted to work?
- Why do employers want to hire child labourers?
- What effect does global economics have on child labour in Nicaragua?
- Do you think that the government of Nicaragua can give the children’s parents good jobs? Why or why not?

Brainstorming Solutions: Again, have students come up with solutions for the problems raised in this activity and add them to or revise the solutions they have listed in previous lessons.
Transnational Auction

INFORMATION FOR THE TEACHER

Purpose:
• To have students experience and understand the bidding process that takes place in international trade as countries or regions of countries try to attract corporate investment.
• To help students understand the trade-off a government often faces between attracting corporations that will create jobs and generate revenue, and at the same time maintaining a sustainable standard of living and quality of life for its population.

Time: 50 to 60 minutes

Materials:
A different coloured pen for each group
Three large sheets of paper for each group
Copies of the following handouts for each group:
1. Jobs, Jobs, Jobs: Information for Students
2. Transnational Auction: Points System
3. Funky Shoes Ltd.: Information for Students

Description:
A corporation (represented by the teacher) wants to invest in a country or region (represented by the students). The corporation is looking for a favourable investment climate. A silent auction takes place in which each group, having decided on their own labour, environmental, and corporate policies, tries to encourage the company to invest in their region. They begin to bid for the company’s investment, and the group that acquires the most points wins. There are three rounds of bidding.

Part One (15 minutes):
First, students are divided into groups representing a country or region (maximum of five groups). Each group is given a copy of the Jobs, Jobs, Jobs: Information for Students handout, the Transnational Auction: Points System handout and the Funky Shoes Ltd.: Information for Students handout. After reading these handouts, each group must decide on the labour, taxation, and environmental standards that national and international corporations must abide by when operating in their country. These standards are to be listed on the bidding sheet along with the points that are awarded for each option. High points are given to policies that favour the corporation. When deciding on policies, students should keep in mind the following two questions: What conditions would be favorable to a corporation? What will most benefit the people, especially those who may be employed by the corporation? Questions on the Jobs, Jobs, Jobs handout will help students make their policy decisions.
Once each group has set their standards, they write their policy decisions and the points allotted for each decision on the large pieces of paper. They must put the total points at the bottom of the page. They should not share their policy decisions with other groups. When all the groups are ready, they post their bids on the wall. The group with the highest points wins the first bidding round. A minute can be spent comparing the policy decisions. A longer discussion will take place at the end.

Part Two (5 to 7 minutes):
Before the second round of bidding begins, each group has an opportunity to alter their policies. They may decide to lower their bid to compete with other countries (or regions) or they may decide not to lower their bid to maintain their standards. They should write their policy decisions and points allotted on a second large sheet of paper. The second bids are posted on the wall. While competing for investment, students may need to be reminded that “racing to the bottom” will have consequences for the people of their country and that certain penalties apply.

Part Three (5 minutes):
The groups repeat the bidding process for the last time. They can again adjust their policies and points. At this point the teacher can give penalty points (see penalty points system). The group with the highest points in the final round wins the transnational corporation’s investment.

Note: Depending on the class and the time available, it may be better to do only two rounds of bidding.

Part Four –Discussion (15 minutes):
(italicized questions can be used for homework assignments)
• Did your group make policy changes between the first and third rounds of bidding? How?
• What was it like to make the decisions and compete with other groups?
• How did you feel when you had to lower or compromise your standards?
• As a class, collectively, what could you have done to change the circumstances of the game? How could regions and peoples organize to prevent the lowering of working and living standards?
• Do you think this auction realistically describes the competition between poor countries?
• Look at the winning bid. What would it be like to work for that corporation and live in that country? What would be the long-term consequences of these policies on the people and the country as a whole?
• Looking at the Jobs, Jobs, Jobs handout, how many points would the B.C. government have won? Why is it that we can keep our standards so high?
• How does the Transnational Auction relate to exploitative child labour? Do you think there would be exploitative child labour in the region or country that won the bid? Why or why not?

— This activity was designed based on work done by Bill Bigelow described in Rethinking Schools, Summer, 1997
Transnational Auction: Penalties, Etc.

Penalties

Obviously there are negative consequences for workers and their families when the lowest standards are chosen in each category. Discussion of this exercise is designed to focus on how lowering standards creates poverty and misery. The penalties do not relate to how the policies affect workers; rather, they relate to some of the drawbacks the lowest standards may have in the eyes of a corporation.

No Minimum Wage: - 20 point penalty. The quality of production may be lowered if wages are extremely low. This will have an impact on the company’s profits. When wages are very low, people will live in poverty. Their health will be poor. This affects production capacity because workers may have to stay home or may not work as efficiently if they are sick.

No Unions or Strikes: - 20 point penalty. If working conditions are really poor and workers are not allowed to organize and pressure the company to improve wages or conditions, there may be unrest. Organizations may form to demand human rights. Some foreign corporations do not like to operate in countries where there is unrest because this may jeopardize the safety of their investments. This is especially true if the foreign corporation builds infrastructure (buildings, roads) for their operation; once they have invested they will want to stay put for a long time.

High Corruption and No Willingness to Enforce Laws: - 40 point penalty. If a government is very corrupt (officials will not enforce laws or standards), all the laws and standards put in place have little meaning. Police can break up unions, allow people to work for less than minimum wage, allow factories to hire children, allow corporations to ignore environmental codes, etc. This will have large benefits to the corporation in the short term. However, in the longer term, such government practices will result in popular unrest. This will create an unstable and unfavourable environment for corporate investment.

Other Things To Consider

As students determine what their country’s or region’s policies will be regarding the different categories listed in the Transnational Auction: Points System handout, they will be keeping the questions from the Jobs, Jobs, Jobs handout in mind. To help facilitate the discussion and assist students in arriving at their own answers for these questions, here is some additional information:

Medical Care – Who will pay for medical care — the company, the government or the individual? If the government is going to pay, it must be able to tax enough from the worker’s wages and/or tax corporations’ profits. If the people are going to pay for private health care, they must earn more than $500 per month for the extra costs. If they must pay and don’t make enough, they won’t be able to afford health care.

Things to consider: How much would it cost to go to a doctor or have an operation in Canada if we didn’t have a public health care system or health insurance? Medical costs all over the world are very high.

If there is no public health care and people cannot afford to pay for health care services, workers and their families will really suffer. There will be a higher level of infant mortality, and people will get sick.
and not be treated, resulting in premature death. Overall, the population will be less healthy and less productive as a result. There will be more single or disabled parents. All these factors have a huge impact in creating poverty.

**Job Related Injury or Illness** - What would happen to a worker who was injured or got sick because of their job and was not taken care of?

*Things to consider:* Someone who gets sick or injured on the job may never be able to work again or may have to stop working for a long or short time. If the family has no savings to pay for treatment and has no savings to hold them over while a bread earner recovers, they will either starve or be forced to put another family member who is not presently working to work. This may be a child or the person who takes care of the children. The consequences of this are described below.

**Wages** - What wage per hour will be necessary to ensure a good standard of living based on a minimum $500 living expenses? If workers earn too little they won’t have money to spend, so there won’t be any spin-offs from having the jobs. If workers don’t make enough money to purchase products, the economy doesn’t work very well.

*Things to consider:* Spin-offs are explained in the Funky Shoes Ltd. handout. If the wage level for a family is lower than the cost of living, more than one parent will be required to work. If the mother goes to work and there are pre-school-aged children in the family, free day care will be required to enable her to work without having to take her children to work. An eldest daughter may take on her chores, requiring her to end her education early if she is not finished school. Another option for the family is to send one of their children to work in order to earn enough as a family to survive. If all the children are in school, then the older children may be required to end their education early. This means they will have fewer chances of getting a better job in the future. In general, keeping minimum wage below the cost of living forces families into the vicious cycle of poverty.

**Work Week** - What will the work week look like? How many hours per day or per week may individuals work? What will their personal and family health be like if they work five, six or seven days a week?

How much overtime can workers do? Will they have holidays? What effect will too many overtime hours and no holidays have on workers?

*Things to consider:* If a parent or family member is required to work seven days per week on long shifts or do extensive overtime and they don’t get some holiday time, they will have no time to rest and be with their family. This could lead to serious health problems and burnout at a young age. This situation could also lead to pressure on the family and family breakdown. If a young person who has not completed school has to work to help their family but has no time after work to attend classes or study, they will never complete their education; getting out of the cycle of poverty will be impossible for them.

**Unions and Strikes** - If workers are unhappy and they can’t unionize or strike, do you think there will be unrest in your region or country? Do you think unrest will stop companies from investing in your country?

*Things to consider:* Companies don’t like to invest in a country or region where there is unrest. Unrest is often accompanied by violence and destruction.
Corporations like to invest in places where they know their investments will be safe from destruction and they won’t have to suddenly pull out. At the same time, they don’t want their workers to go on strike. If workers are underpaid and work in deplorable conditions, more often than not, if it is safe to do so, they will organize to ask for better pay or better conditions. If they are attacked by the police or company owners for doing this, they may find other ways (political movements) to make their demands and claim their rights. This may lead to general violence and unrest in the country if the government tries to crush any such movements.

**Minimum Working Age** - What will be the effect of not having a minimum working age on the children in your region or country? Will this have a long-term impact on your region or country?

**Things to consider:** If there is no minimum working age and companies can hire children, many companies will hire children instead of adults, because they are more easily exploited and easier to control. This will lead to adult unemployment and force more children to work to support their parents. Obviously, when a child works and cannot go to school, opportunities to break out of the cycle of poverty are removed. Children may have a lot of energy while they are young, but if they are pushed too hard physically in their youth, they may burn out in adulthood.

**Environmental Standards** - What would happen to your region or country and its people if you did not have basic environmental standards? If the government is going to take responsibility, it must collect money to from someone — the workers or the corporation. If the workers don’t get paid much, you can’t tax them a lot.

**Corporate Taxation** - Paying no taxes is a huge incentive for companies to invest in your region or country. Will this have an impact on the services you can provide for your people?

**Things to consider:** If you don’t tax the corporation and wages are kept really low, as a government you will have very little money to collect from workers’ incomes. You will have little money to spend on services like health and education, and you will have little money to pay people to enforce the policies you have put in place.

**Willingness to Enforce Laws and Standards?** - Will your country enforce labour, environmental and taxation laws?

**Things to consider:** If the decision makers are unwilling to enforce the standards and laws they have put in place, then all the standards and laws will have very little meaning. If there is no enforcement of standards or laws, there might as well have been no standards or laws in the first place, and conditions will deteriorate to the lowest possible level. Once again, unrest and violence become more likely, making your country unattractive to investors.
Jobs, Jobs, Jobs

Your group has been charged with the task of creating labour standards for your community. Your goal is twofold: to create an environment suitable for employment and to create a climate that will encourage investment by companies. You will need to discuss and make decisions about benefits (medical, dental, pensions), wage levels, length of work week, overtime and holiday pay, the right to form unions and strike, minimum working age, environmental standards, taxes on corporations, and the enforcement of laws and standards.

The following information and questions will help your group focus on developing a framework for the working standards of your community.

**Will you have a minimum wage? If so, what will it be?**
The cost of living in your region or country is a minimum of $500 per month. This meets the basic costs of living: housing (includes water, electricity, heat), food, clothing, supplies, transport and education. What wage per hour will be necessary to ensure a good standard of living? If workers earn too little they won’t have money to spend, so there won’t be any spin-offs from having the jobs.

**What will the work week look like?**
How many hours per day or per week may individuals work? What will their personal and family health be like if they work five, six or seven days a week? How much overtime can workers do? Will they have holidays? What effect will too many overtime hours and no holidays have on workers?

**Will there be a legal working age?**
What effect will having no minimum working age have on the children in your region or country? Will this have a long-term impact on your region or country?

Workers in B.C. have the right to organize into unions, hold demonstrations, strike, and negotiate with companies and governments for workers’ benefits.
Who will pay for medical care — the company? the government? the individual?
If the government is going to pay for health care, it must be able to tax enough from workers’ wages and/or tax corporations’ profits. If the people are going to pay for private health care, they must earn more than $500 per month for the extra costs.

What will you do about unions, strikes and compensation?
If workers are unhappy and they can’t unionize or strike, do you think there will be unrest in your region or country? Do you think unrest will stop companies from investing in your country? What would happen to a worker who got injured or sick because of their job and was not taken care of?

Will you have environmental standards?
What would happen to your region or country and its people if you did not have basic environmental standards? If the government is going to take responsibility, it must collect money from someone — the workers or corporations.

Will corporations pay taxes?
Paying no taxes is a huge incentive for companies to invest in your region or country. However, for the government to provide services like health care and enforce environmental standards, it needs to get money from somewhere. Who should pay the most taxes, the population or corporations? Remember, if the workers don’t get paid much, you can’t tax them a lot.

What about enforcement?
It is very important that a government enforce its labour laws and standards. After all, what is the use of having standards if nobody is forced to follow them? Unfortunately, many companies try to avoid standards when investing in another country, so there is incentive for a country to lower its standards to attract investment. When this happens, the quality of life for the workers is left in the hands of their employers. What are the problems with this?
On a large sheet of paper, list down the left side the headings on this handout. Across the top of the sheet, write standards above one column and Points above the next. Consider each of the options you have for the categories. For example, in the Minimum Wage category, decide if you want it to be $5.00, $2.50 or nonexistent. Write your decision in the column next to Minimum Wage and the corresponding points in the next column. Continue this process until you have decided on all categories. You get high points for policies that are capital friendly — policies that benefit the company. You will also be penalized if you go below certain standards. You can try to predict which categories have penalties for going too low, but you really won’t know until after you make the decision. How high or how low to make your standards is up to you. Add your points up for a grand total and hand in your bid.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Standards</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>medical, dental, pensions</td>
<td>Company must pay for</td>
<td>15 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Company does not pay</td>
<td>50 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workplace Safety and Compensation for Job-Related Injury or Illness</td>
<td>High Standards: Company must maintain high safety standards and pay for sick days for job-related injury or illness</td>
<td>10 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Medium Standards: Company must maintain medium safety standards and pay 50% of wages for sick days for job-related injury or illness</td>
<td>30 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low Standards: Company must keep minimum safety standards and is not responsible for workers who have job-related injury or illness</td>
<td>60 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum Wage</td>
<td>$5.00 per hour</td>
<td>10 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$2.50 per hour</td>
<td>30 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No minimum wage</td>
<td>90 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum Work Week</td>
<td>5 days</td>
<td>10 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 days</td>
<td>30 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7 days</td>
<td>60 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overtime</td>
<td>Max. 8 hours. wages + 50%</td>
<td>10 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Max 12 hours. wages + 25%</td>
<td>30 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No limit wages + same rate</td>
<td>75 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holidays</td>
<td>Company required to give two weeks minimum, paid</td>
<td>10 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Company required to give two weeks, minimum, unpaid</td>
<td>30 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Company not required to give or pay for holidays</td>
<td>90 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unions and Strikes</td>
<td>Workers can form unions and have the right to strike</td>
<td>10 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Workers can form unions but cannot strike</td>
<td>30 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Workers cannot form unions or strike</td>
<td>90 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Working Age</td>
<td>16 for all jobs</td>
<td>10 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16 for dangerous jobs</td>
<td>50 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10 for safe jobs</td>
<td>100 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Standards</td>
<td>High Standards: Company must carry out and pay for</td>
<td>10 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clean up spills, safe depositing of toxic material, restoration for mining or forestry</td>
<td>Minimum Standards: Government and company share responsibility</td>
<td>40 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Standards: Neither company nor government responsible</td>
<td>120 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax on Corporation</td>
<td>10% of profits</td>
<td>10 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5% of profits</td>
<td>25 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No taxes</td>
<td>150 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to Enforce Laws and Their Standards</td>
<td>High: Tolerance for corruption is low; officials can enforce laws</td>
<td>10 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Medium: Whether officials will enforce laws or can be bribed is unpredictable</td>
<td>30 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low: Corruption is high and officials almost never enforce laws governing corporations</td>
<td>175 points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Products I Buy

INFORMATION FOR THE TEACHER

Purpose:

• To have students link the products they buy to the possible working conditions of the people who make them.

Time: homework project

Materials:

None

Description:

Students choose 10 products they consume and find out where they were made. They then research economic and social conditions in one of the countries their products were made in and relate these to the possible working conditions of the people who made the products they consume. If possible, they could try to research the companies that make these products.

Resource

A good resource for students to research products they buy is the Maquila solidarity network website: www.maquilasolidarity.org

or the Canadian Students Against Sweatshops website:
http://opirg.sa.utoronto.ca/groups/sweatshops/
LESSON FOUR

Thinking About Solutions
Finding effective solutions to end exploitative and hazardous child labour is not an easy task. As the previous two lessons have illustrated, the term child labour represents a spectrum of different kinds of work, some more exploitative than others. It is a very complex matter to propose solutions to the problem of exploitative and hazardous child labour when so many factors are involved.

Grass-Roots Solutions and Advocacy

UNICEF says it is a myth to think that all solutions come from the West and that all momentum to end child labour is generated by Western pressure. In fact, local organizations, the media and sometimes governments in developing countries have been diligently exposing abuses, developing programs and raising consumer awareness about the problem for years. Locally, Canadian organizations have been organizing to provide services and safety for street youth in the sex trade and pressure the government to arrest those who sexually exploit children. In B.C., many local organizations have worked to oppose the weakening of child labour legislation.

More recently, organizations fighting to defend the rights of children all over the world have been joined at the national and international levels by organizations of working and street children and youth who want to have a voice in program development and policy making.

Many organizations have produced multipoint agendas to end child labour. The solutions they propose may be specific to ending child labour (such as birth registration) or aimed at poverty alleviation in general. The following “tools” are often identified in solutions for ending exploitative and hazardous child labour:

- free, quality primary education
- legal instruments (international conventions, domestic laws)
- alternative employment
- trade (boycotts and sanctions), consumer power
- company codes of conduct
- media and awareness campaigns
- poverty alleviation programs
- birth registration and data collection and monitoring
- support services for working children
- involvement of working children and their families at every step of the process
- careful monitoring of the impact of initiatives on working children’s lives
- solidarity campaigns with groups in other countries.
- support for working children to organize themselves
- punishment for abusive employers
- improvement of health and safety conditions

A Debate on What to Do

It is important to note, however, that these tools are not universally agreed upon. There is considerable debate, for example, on the effectiveness of consumer boycotts in ending child labour.
There are many examples of how the tools listed in the previous paragraph can be incorporated (effectively or ineffectively) into programs that target the problem of child labour. Finding appropriate solutions to end child labour has often required those involved to learn from their mistakes. This was poignantly illustrated when working children in Bangladesh were removed from factories following the passing of an American bill, the Harkin Bill, which barred U.S. companies from importing products made using child labour. With no place to go and no rehabilitative measures in place, the children were left on the streets with very few alternatives.

An example of a different strategy comes from MANTHOC, a movement of 5000 child workers in Peru. MANTHOC has attracted some controversy because it has no interest in ending all child labour – it wants to defend the rights of young workers and improve the quality of their lives. MANTHOC insists on the right of child workers to work in non-hazardous work. Some accuse groups of child workers such as MANTHOC of being manipulated by adults for their own political gains. MANTHOC is a movement run by the children and is organized in neighborhood groups. Since 1976, MANTHOC has organized its own school, three training centres, advocated for free health care for child workers, and runs vocational workshops.

**Putting the Children First**

Clearly, any solution to end exploitative and hazardous child labour must carefully consider the particular circumstances and the possible effects of a proposed solution not only on the children, but also on their families and communities.

To help children working in the export sector, company codes of conduct, consumer boycotts and trade sanctions are some of the most popular approaches. Nonetheless, without enforcement and independent monitoring, a code of conduct can be little more than a token piece of paper. Boycotts are often cited as doing more harm than good. Many people now advocate label campaigns, such as the Rugmark label for carpets made in India. The Rugmark label provides the consumer with proof that the carpet was made without using child labour, that the adult workers have been paid minimum wage, that the workshops are open for inspection and that children who have been removed from the carpet factory have been provided with rehabilitation programs.

The most effective solutions to complex social problems like child labour are defined and carried out by the people most affected. Sometimes, however, the people affected do not wield the power to make the big political or economic changes needed to resolve the problem. This is certainly true for the children, families and communities affected by exploitative child labour. It is possible for these children, their families and their communities to gain power when others who are also affected by the problem or a related problem work with them. When all these people, once they have organized, are supported by people who may not be directly affected by the problem, they can begin a movement that attracts international attention. People who may feel like they are “outside of the problem” can play a positive role by supporting organizations of other people, especially working children, who are actively fighting for children’s rights.
UNICEF: Specific Actions That Are Urgently Needed

1. **Immediate elimination of hazardous and exploitative child labour:** These forms of child labour must not be tolerated, and governments must take immediate steps to end them.

2. **Provision of free and compulsory education:** Governments must fulfil their responsibility to make relevant primary education free and compulsory for all children.

3. **Wider legal protection:** Laws on child labour and education should be consistent in purpose and implemented in a mutually supportive way.

4. **Birth registration of all children:** All children should be registered at birth so that they can exercise their right to education, health care and other services as well as provide proof of their age.

5. **Data collection and monitoring:** National and international systems must be put in place to gather and analyse globally comparable data on child labour.

6. **Codes of conduct and procurement policies:** National and international corporations are urged to adopt codes of conduct guaranteeing that neither they nor their subcontractors will employ children in conditions that violate their rights. UNICEF reaffirms its commitment to its own procurement policy, through which it undertakes not to buy from any supplier that exploits children.


**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

**Education for Working Children**

“*You can’t expect to just open the doors of a traditional school and have working children flock in.*” Anthony Swift reports from a Brazilian school for working children.

Working children report that they need access to an interesting education and professional training adapted to their reality and capabilities. The City of Emmaus School, in Brazil, is part of a growing movement of schools that are trying to make themselves relevant to poor-community children. The school was created in the early 1980s when organizers of the Republic of Small Vendors, famous for its work with children on the city streets, realized that a major reason why such children had abandoned school was the inappropriate education offered. The group set out to build a school based on local community needs and priorities. After consultation, the organizers proposed a school which would affirm the culture and rural origins of the local people and develop their children’s capacity to act as citizens and understand the community’s struggle for its rights.

The school dispensed with standard reading primers, which depicted model middle-class families with European-looking children enjoying privileges unknown in the area. Instead, original materials were compiled with the children’s participation, based on their own views of their lives, families, and community. The school is not rigid about the children keeping to a schedule, respecting the fact that they have other responsibilities.

“Our school is very concerned about children’s rights,” affirmed Leonidas, a pupil. “I think all the children here think about changing the social situation. This is a liberating school.”

Tackling Child Labour: A Ten-Point Plan

1. **Ban the most hazardous forms of child work** including bonded labour, work in heavy industry or with dangerous substances and commercial sexual exploitation. Governments should support the upcoming ILO Convention on Hazardous Labour — and act against these most extreme forms of child labour immediately.

2. **Guarantee universal primary education.** If they gave it sufficient priority even the poorest governments could deliver on this goal, to which they have all committed themselves by signing up to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

3. **Make education more flexible,** relevant and attractive to child workers. It is no good simply opening the school doors and assuming children will flock in. There are creative initiatives for state education systems to build on.

4. **Register all births.** This is vital if there is to be a chance of regulating under-age working.

5. **End structural adjustment’s crucifixion of Southern economies,** which has slashed education spending while fostering a dog-eat-dog climate which helps push children into work on the streets.

6. **Raise the status of child domestic workers.** Existing laws need to be applied to this forgotten group of child labourers and a new worldwide campaign launched to draw attention to their plight. Consciousness-raising can work wonders here, as a multimedia campaign in Sri Lanka recently proved.

7. **Rein in the transnational corporations.** In the absence of a world body prepared to regulate the transnationals, consumer pressure must do what it can to force corporations to adopt voluntary codes of conduct. These must apply to their suppliers’ employees as well as their own — and must offer dismissed children an adequately funded educational alternative.

8. **Give child workers’ jobs to their own adult relatives** so that the family as a whole does not suffer. This must be established as a general principle of anti-child-labour practice worldwide.

9. **Support child workers’ organizations** — along with their demand for more protection and rights in the workplace. If children’s wages are raised to the level of adults’, it will remove one of the main incentives to employ children.

10. **Gather more information.** Data on child labour is notoriously sketchy and inadequate. More research is especially needed into the ‘invisible’ areas of child labour — those within the home, on the family farm or in domestic service — which particularly affect girls.

— The New Internationalist, July 1997, p. 10
LESSON FOUR: Thinking About Solutions

INFORMATION FOR THE TEACHER

Purpose:

- To have students identify the groups or individuals at local, national and international levels, in developed and developing countries, who can participate in finding solutions to end exploitative and hazardous child labour.
- To make students aware of the four key steps to ending exploitative and hazardous child labour: releasing, rehabilitating, protecting and preventing.
- To help students develop skills to evaluate different strategies to end exploitative and hazardous child labour.

Overview:

This lesson consists of two main activities:

1. UNICEF Video: State of the World’s Children 2004 — video and discussion. The latter part of this video provides an excellent look at some of the solutions being used to combat exploitative and hazardous child labour and the communities and individuals that are involved in implementing them.

2. Weighing Solutions — students read two to three articles and analyse approaches to ending exploitative and hazardous child labour.

One Internet activity (see box)

Brainstorming Solutions:

At the end of this lesson, students can revisit their own list of problems and solutions, brainstormed in Lessons One to Three. They can compare their own ideas with solutions that have been proposed by others.
General Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this lesson students should be able to:

- assess a variety of positions on the controversial issue of child labour and defend them
- assess a variety of strategies to address the problem of exploitative and hazardous child labour
- demonstrate the ability to think critically about child labour, including the ability to define the issue or problem
- recognize connections between child labour, its underlying causes and the consequences and implications of solutions to the problem

Discussion Forum - Thinking About Solutions

HTTP://WWW.UNICEF.ORG/VOY/MEETING/LAB/LABHOME.HTML

Students post their comments on one of the discussion questions relating to any of the activities in this lesson on the UNICEF child labour website.
UNICEF Video: State of the World’s Children 2004

INFORMATION FOR THE TEACHER

Purpose:

- To introduce students to some of the solutions being used to combat exploitative and hazardous child labour and the communities and individuals that are involved in implementing them.

Time: 30 minutes

Materials:


Copies of UNICEF: Specific Actions That Are Urgently Needed handout (page 74)

Copies of the Working Children’s Charter

Description:

Have students write down the solutions to child labour that are mentioned in the video. Following the video presentation, hand out the Unicef: Specific Actions That Are Urgently Needed handout and copies of the Working Children’s Charter. Go over the solutions that are proposed and link these to the examples of successful programs presented in the video. Alternatively, have students first brainstorm solutions, then provide them with the Unicef handouts.

Discussion Questions:

- What did you learn from the video that you didn’t know before?
- Why do children work?
- What are some solutions to the problem of child labour?
- Are the solutions presented by children’s organizations different from those proposed by UNICEF? How? What does this tell us about the debate around solutions?
- Who are some of the people taking action on child labour?
- What can you do about child labour?
Working Children’s Charter

Working Children’s Charter
– What Working Children Propose

Working children from all around the world contributed to these proposals. They were made at a conference in India in 1996. The conference was attended by child workers from 33 countries.

“We, the working children of the Third World, propose…..”

1. We want recognition of our problems, our initiatives, proposals and our process of organization.

We want people to understand that our problems are important, and that they need solutions.

We want people to take seriously our ideas about how to help ourselves; the suggestions we make; and the way in which we are organizing ourselves.

2. We are against the boycott of products made by children.

We do not want people to stop buying things that are made by children.

3. We want respect and security for ourselves and for the work that we do.

We want people to respect us and to respect the work that we do.

We want to be safe and we want our jobs to be safe.

4. We want an education system whose methodology and content are adapted to our reality.

We want an education system where the things that we are taught and the way that we are taught are suitable for the kind of lives we really have.

5. We want professional training adapted to our reality and capabilities.

We want professional training that is suitable for the kind of lives that we have and the things that we are able to do.

6. We want access to good healthcare for working children.

We want all working children to receive good health care.

Voices of Children
Peruvian Anthem of the Movement of Working Children and Adolescents

With our song, with our struggle, we children will triumph.
We will all walk together, united; no one will stop us.
With the workers and the farmers, with city folk as well.
Today we tell you: “Unite! Brothers and sisters for your liberation.”

All together as brothers and sisters we will sow peace.
With love and friendship: no one will stop us.
Today we decide to go together to the market.
To teach any child we can find in our path.

You will see how beautiful it is when the child laborer knows how to read and write no one will cheat us.
You will see how beautiful it is when the child laborer knows how to read and write it will be our right.

Chorus: By our efforts we will triumph;
Our struggle will be a sweet song of liberty.

Translator: Cinder Hypki
7. We want to be consulted on all decisions concerning us, at local, national or international level.

Before other people make decisions that will affect our lives, we want them to ask for our opinions.

We want this to be done when decisions are made locally, nationally, or internationally.

8. We want the root causes of our situation, primarily poverty, to be addressed and tackled.

We want people to think about the reasons why we have to work, and to try to solve those problems.

The main reason is that our families are very poor. People must try to solve the problem of poverty.

9. We want more activity in rural areas so that children do not have to migrate to the cities.

We want more opportunities for children in the countryside so that the children who live in the countryside do not have to move to the cities.

10. We are against exploitation at work but we are for work with dignity, with hours adapted so that we have time for education and leisure.

We are against work where we are treated badly.

We are in favour of work where we are respected.

We are in favour of work that gives us time for education, and time to relax and enjoy ourselves.

In addition:

In any conference we want representation on an equal basis (if there are twenty ministers present, we want twenty working children also to be present).

We will have discussions with our ministers but we do not want them to represent us.

**Working Children in other areas have also proposed:**

The right to rest when sick, the right to play, and the right to legal aid.

www2.gol.com/users/bobkeim/child_labour/charter.html
Weighing Solutions

INFORMATION FOR THE TEACHER

Purpose:

- To have students evaluate the pros and cons of different solutions to ending exploitative and hazardous child labour.
- To have students consider the consequences and implications of the solutions for child labourers and their families.

Time: 50 to 60 minutes

Materials:
Copies for each student of the following handouts:
1. Child Workers in Peru – Organizing for a Better Life
2. An Agreement in Bangladesh
3. Bhima Sangha – A Working-Children’s Union
4. SFU Students Develop a No Sweat Policy
Solutions brainstormed in the first three classes

Description:

Students work in pairs to read articles. One student in the pair reads one article; the other reads the second. Give half the pairs article 1 and 2 and the other half the pairs articles 3 and 4. Each student must report to the other on the article they read by describing the solution to exploitive child labour proposed. Both students should make a note of the article and the solution offered. Also, students should report on any consequences of the solution, whether they were positive or negative.

After students have completed their reading, selected pairs should do short reports to the class on the articles so that all the students will know the various solutions offered.

As the pairs report, students should make a chart that records the problem addressed by each article, the solution offered and the consequences of the action.

| Problem | Solution | Consequences |

Students can compare these specific solutions to the general solutions they came up with in the first three lessons.
Child Workers in Peru
- Organizing for a Better Life

In Peru, it is estimated that there are about 1-2 million child workers. United Nations has criticized Peru for being the only country in Latin America to legally allow children to work from the age of 12, instead of 14 as elsewhere.

Children and youth were among the first young workers in the world to organize themselves into social movement. Their movement started into the early 1970s when members of the Christian Workers Youth Movement opened centres for street children in the poorest neighborhoods of the city of Lima. When the city threatened to evict the centers in 1976, there was an outcry. Parents, children and others organized to save the centres. These protests brought the children’s centres together into a loose network. Shortly after, in 1987, the Movement of Working Children of Christian Workers (MANTHOC) was formed.

MANTHOC has been successful in improving conditions for young workers. They have set up vocational training centres, schools, negotiated health care and other benefits for working children, and have organized a union of street vendors. Because MANTHOC is an organization of child labourers, it has been able to set up services that are relevant to child workers.

MANTHOC is an organization run by children. Its principles include:

1. Children and adolescents are not dependent; they can and should act on their own behalf
2. Children and youth must have an active role in society. They themselves, and not adults, should defend children’s rights
3. Advocacy must be universal – not just in favour of MANTHOC children
4. MANTHOC sees itself as a model for other movements
5. Children are teachers – not just for their peers, but for all people

MANTHOC and other working children’s organizations are controversial. MANTHOC supports the work of children and sees work (not exploitative or intolerable forms of work) as a positive value and a right. Some
NGOs feel that groups such as MANTHOC facilitate child labour and give too much responsibility to children. MANTHOC does not want to abolish child labour – it ultimately wants children to be able to have the right to work if they wish. Other NGOs, like the International Labour Organization, are striving to eventually abolish most forms of child labour.

MANTHOC, however, believes that its results are clear. Members now have more secure jobs and feel more dignified. Grades have improved for almost all MANTHOC members. Many children can give more money to their families, thus improving their quality of life. And, in the shantytowns, MANTHOC members are recognized as role models.

Vidal Coc Mamani, of MANTHOC, comments on what he understands about citizenship:

“It is to be the subject of rights and know your responsibilities. It is to want to be treated as a member of society, not as a victim of poverty. As citizens we should be respected – whether we are very small kids, working children, adults or old people. Citizenship is the exercise of mutual respect.”

MANTHOC has been successful in improving conditions for young workers. They have set up vocational training centres, schools, negotiated health care and other benefits for working children, and have organized a union of street vendors.

MANTHOC – Community Organizations that Work with Street Kids.
Cisneros, Luis-Jaime. Peru’s Child Workers Stake Their Claim
Swift, Anthony. Working Children Get Organised
International Save the Children
An Agreement in Bangladesh

Bangladesh is one of the world’s major garment exporters, and the industry, which employs over a million workers, most of them women, also employed child labour. The children were illegally employed according to national law, but the situation captured little attention...until the garment factories began to hide the children from United States buyers or lay off the children, following the introduction of the Child Labor Deterrence Act in 1992 by U.S. Senator Tom Harkin. The Bill would have prohibited the importation into the U.S. of goods made using child labour. Then, when Senator Harkin reintroduced the Bill the following year, the impact was far more devastating: garment employers dismissed an estimated 50,000 children from their factories, approximately 75 percent of all children in the industry.

The consequences for the dismissed children and their parents were not anticipated. The children may have been freed, but at the same time they were trapped in a harsh environment with no skills, little or no education, and precious few alternatives. Schools were either inaccessible, useless or costly. A series of follow-up visits by UNICEF, local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) discovered that children went looking for new sources of income, and found them in work such as stone-crushing, street hustling and prostitution — all of them more hazardous and exploitative than garment production. In several cases, the mothers of dismissed children had to leave their jobs in order to look after their children.

Out of this unhappy situation and after two years of difficult negotiations, a formal Memorandum of Understanding was signed in July 1995 by the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters.
Association and the UNICEF and ILO offices in Bangladesh.... This agreement explicitly directed factory owners, in the best interests of these children, not to dismiss any child workers until a factory survey was completed and alternative arrangements could be made for the freed children....

As of October 1996, 135 new schoolrooms were operational and more than 4,000 children were enrolled. The children are receiving primary health care, skills development training and a monthly cash stipend to compensate for their lost wages. In addition, personal bank accounts and credit facilities for their families are being set up.

The jury is still out on the long-term effectiveness of the Memorandum of Understanding. One key issue, for example, is whether setting up special schools for [former] working children and providing a package such as monthly stipends, health care and skills development is a sustainable model that could be applied elsewhere and on a larger scale. Nevertheless, the events and insights that led up to the Memorandum must inform the approach of all those seeking to eliminate hazardous child labour.

The world owes child workers a meaningful alternative if they are not to suffer from some of the very measures designed to help them.


Note: There is concern about the quality and level of education being offered in the special schools. In many cases, the special schools only go up to Grade 5, so more advanced students are still left with nowhere to go to continue their education. As well, the stipend offered for school is much less than many child labourers would earn to support their family.
It’s just possible that purchasing decisions at Simon Fraser University (SFU) bookstores and coffee outlets could soon reflect a global movement for social justice. A group of students, some faculty and staff on campus are calling on the university administration to adopt policies that guarantee that the sweatshirts, caps and coffee purchased at SFU aren’t implicated in child labour, forced labour and union breaking in sweatshops around the world. After months of advocacy and support gathering, the No Sweat Working Group - a group of SFU students connected with the North American-wide Students Against Sweatshops (SASS) movement - will approach the SFU Board of Governors, with a request to strike a task force to create an ethical purchasing policy for all goods and services purchased by Simon Fraser University. If a “No Sweat” ethical purchasing policy is adopted by the board it could mean a significant change in the way the university administration does business with its suppliers.

The request is endorsed by a wide variety of campus stakeholders. A student petition of some 1,500 names is also accompanying it. “The intent is to work with the administration and the SFU community, including staff, students, faculty members, and campus organisations to arrive at a policy that meets the university’s mandate to build a robust and ethical society,” says James Wood, an SFU student and a major force with the SFU No Sweat campaign. The group’s request to the SFU board follows on the heels of No Sweat campaigns at some 10 universities across Canada in the last couple of years - including U of T in 2000 and McMaster in 2002 - whose administrations have all adopted ethical purchasing codes.

The No Sweat Working Group came together last year with Wood’s involvement to raise awareness about the widespread human rights abuses associated with global clothing manufacturing and coffee production. The No Sweat movement gained media attention in recent years as campaigns were mounted against corporate brands like Nike and morning show celebrity Kathy Lee for their complicity in workers rights abuses in the sweatshops of the apparel big companies that produce for them.
Some 23 million people worldwide are said to be working in clothing manufacturing. “Sweatshop workers are overwhelmingly women and children and they are overwhelmingly poor, lacking even the basic resources to fight for their human and labour rights,” says Miriam Palacios of Oxfam Canada’s Vancouver office talking about Oxfam’s involvement in the No Sweat movement.

In Canada, No Sweat campaigns have put the spotlight on companies like Montreal based T-shirt manufacturer Gildan that produces for many Canadian university suppliers - including, until very recently, companies supplying SFU. Workers rights abuses documented at Gildan’s Honduras plant include the firing of some 30 workers who applied for a union, forced pregnancy testing and a highly hazardous work environment (Montreal Gazette, February 2003, CBC Disclosure January 2002).

The SFU campaign kicked off last September and has so far focused on the need for public disclosure of the manufacturing locations of clothing sold at SFU bookstores as a means of monitoring sweatshop practices, and a demand that Fair Trade coffee be sold at all campus outlets. The motion on the table at the Board of Governors meeting this week will go further, asking the board to endorse the development of a universal purchasing policy whereby all SFU suppliers must abide by verifiable International Labour Organisation (ILO) standards. Canada is a signatory to the ILO conventions and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that spell out these standards.

Should a No Sweat task force get a green light from the board, the working group - which will include representatives from the administration, unions and Faculty - will face the challenge of enforcing the new policy. The new policy would require SFU suppliers to commit to produce under international human rights standards but would also have to agree to verification checks by a credible human rights monitoring organisation.

To find out more about the SFU No Sweat campaign and what’s happening with the proposed ethical procurement task force, contact the SFU No Sweat Group at: no-sweat@sfu.ca.

LESSON FIVE

Individual and Collective Action
The main purpose of this lesson is to empower youth to take action: to know that actions are possible, to realize that there are many people already taking action, to develop their own action plan and to implement this plan individually or as a group with other students and/or organizations. Actions can take different forms: education and awareness raising; advocacy and lobbying; consumer, media and company campaigns; and support for projects that create alternatives for working children.

**Taking Action!**

The most important consideration in taking any action on child labour — or any issue at all — be it individual or collective, is to find out what other individuals and groups are doing. The ability to do community research to find out which groups are taking action on an issue is a vital skill for concerned global citizens. Teachers should provide students with basic information on organizations working on child labour issues and allow students to research what organizations are doing. Based on their findings, students can create their own action plan. They can support an action being undertaken by local, national or international organizations and/or actions being taken by the government. Students can also implement an action on their own or as a class. In the end, all actions form a larger, worldwide struggle to end child labour.

If it is not feasible to have students undertake their own community research, this lesson provides a list of the kinds of actions individuals and groups can undertake, along with one or more examples of organizations undertaking the particular actions described. There is also information on federal and provincial government actions on the exploitation of children in Canada and the world. Based on this information, students can evaluate actions that are already being taken and make their own plan.

**The Power of One...or More**

A variety of actions can be taken, each with its own possible results. Youth taking action might receive the message from adults that the actions and solutions they propose are simplistic and possibly harmful. Emphasizing the complexities of child labour and the risks of action is a method frequently used by others to stop any action from being taken. Many people, when confronted by this tactic, do nothing, believing that nothing can be done. However, there are actions that individuals can take — effective, realistic actions.

Youth, carefully considering the pros and cons of any action plan they choose to implement, are working in a very real way toward creating a world in which no child works in exploitative or hazardous conditions. Taking action is part of the solution but is also part of a learning process that will create better and more effective actions in the future.
LESSON FIVE: Individual and Collective Action

INFORMATION FOR THE TEACHER

Purpose:

• To have students make connections between causes of exploitative child labour, the solutions they have discussed, and actions they can take as individuals or as part of a group.

• To have students develop a personal plan for action on the issue of exploitative child labour.

• To have students take actions, as a group and as individuals, with or independently of organizations taking action on the issue of child labour.

• To have students understand that there are a variety of actions and solutions toward the ending of exploitative child labour and that many people are already involved in the struggle.

Overview:

This lesson consists of three main activities:

➤ 1. Actions Brainstorming Session — based on the previous lessons and solutions discussed, students brainstorm possible actions they can take individually or with others to end child labour.

➤ 2. Community Research on Actions — students research local, provincial, national and international organizations that are working on the child labour issue to find out what actions are being taken to end child labour. Students compare these actions with the ideas generated during the brainstorming session.

➤ 3. Developing an Action Plan — based on their brainstorming session and their community research, students make and implement an action plan that will have an impact on child labour, then evaluate their action. The lesson includes background information and examples of letters to government or corporations for students who choose to undertake letter writing as an action.

Three Internet activities: (see box)

Three optional activities:

➤ 1. Writing letters and Petitions: To Governments — individual, group or class project.

➤ 2. Writing Letters and Petitions: To Corporations — individual project

➤ 3. Creating a Sweatshop Fashion Show for your class

For information:

http://www.maquilasolidarity.org/tools/campaign/fashionshow.htm
Note: If this entire lesson is not feasible given time constraints, information on a variety of actions and one or more examples of organizations that are undertaking the actions described are included to eliminate the community research part of the lesson. However, the process of doing community research offers students an opportunity to learn valuable skills for global citizenship, and teachers are encouraged to allow students to carry out their own community research.

General Learning Outcomes:
By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:
• develop, express and defend a position on the issue of exploitative child labour and explain how to put the ideas into action
• demonstrate skills associated with active citizenship, including the ability to:
  - collaborate and consult with others
  - respect and promote respect for the contributions of other team member
  - interact confidently
• recognize the importance of both individual and collective action in responsible global citizenship
• conduct community research on actions being undertaken on the national and global issue of exploitative child labour
• co-operatively plan, implement and assess a course of action that addresses the problem of exploitative child labour

Some Places to Start

Global March Against Child Labour
www.globalmarch.org

Sweatfree Simon Fraser University
http://www.criticalthoughts.ca/ns-links.htm

Community Research on the Internet: This lesson includes Internet addresses for organizations taking action on child labour issues. Students can conduct part of their community research on the Internet.

Lobbying On-Line: Several organizations’ websites provide the public with actions they can take (e.g., sending messages) on the Internet. Students can also write letters to government representatives through the Internet.

Posting Action Plans: Actions students undertake can be posted on the child labour website. Students can compare the actions they have taken with the actions of other students in their class or even in other schools. Students can support the actions of other students.
Purpose:

- To enable students to discover their ability to define effective actions on an issue.
- To help students compare their ideas to what people are already doing in their community, their nation and through world organizations.

Time: minimum of 15 minutes

Materials:
Large piece of paper to record ideas

Description:
As a class, students come up with their own ideas about actions they can take. After conducting their community research, students can compare actions being taken by organizations with the ideas they came up with on their own.

The following questions will help them brainstorm:

- What can you do as an individual at a local, national and international level to combat exploitative child labour?
- What can you do as part of a group at a local, national and international level to combat exploitative child labour?
Community Research on Actions

INFORMATION FOR THE TEACHER

Purpose:
• To have students discover that there are many individuals and groups taking action on the issue of exploitative child labour.
• To help students become aware of actions they can get involved in that are going on in their community.
• To have students gain confidence in talking to representatives of organizations.

Time:
Since this activity is of a project nature, students will have to do this after school as homework.

Materials:
Copies of Community Research on Actions

Description:
Students conduct community research to discover organizations working on child labour issues, the actions they are taking, and the role that youth can play in these actions. Students can call, email or write to different organizations to request information.

Teachers can give students a lead of one local organization they can contact to get them started. After conducting their community research, students can compare the actions being taken by organizations with the ideas they came up with on their own. Once students have completed their research, teachers can also hand out copies of Groups Taking Action handout and Creative Action Ideas handout to further expand on students’ list of actions.
Developing an Action Plan

INFORMATION FOR THE TEACHER

Purpose:
• To have students develop, implement and evaluate an action plan designed to combat the problem of child labour.

Time: 50 - 80 minutes

Materials:
Copies of Action Planning How-To Worksheet for each student or group
Copies of Creative Action Ideas Handout for each student
Copies of Groups Taking Action Handout

Description:
Students develop action plans. These action plans may be individual or collective actions, actions taken as a class, or actions taken with organizations or government. The Action Planning How-To Worksheet will help students develop, implement, and evaluate their actions. The Creative Actions handout may help to stimulate ideas for actions. The most important thing is that students undertake an action, big or small. The Groups Taking Action Handout may provide useful information for students if extensive community research has not been undertaken by the class. For students who choose to write a letter to government or a corporation, this lesson provides information they will need to consider in order to write informed letters.
Community Research on Actions

Information for Students

The contacts in this handout should help you to identify groups (both globally and locally) that are taking action against child labour. The questions will help you to find information about the types of actions and strategies that groups are using to meet their goals.

Questions to ask organization representatives:

- What actions are you undertaking in Canada and in other countries to eliminate exploitative child labour?

- What local groups do you support in Canada or other countries?

- What do you think the Canadian government should do?

- Are youth involved in your organization? If so, in what way? If youth are not involved, how can I, as a concerned youth, be involved in taking action on this issue?

- Do you have a website? What is the website address?

- What other actions are being taken on this issue that you may not be taking yourself? Which organizations are taking these actions? What is their phone number, address, email, or website address and the name of a representative to contact?

Starting Points

International Actions Against Child Labour:
Global March Against Child Labour:  [www.globalmarch.org](http://www.globalmarch.org)

Local Actions Against Child Labour:

Local Actions Against Sweatshops:
Sweat Free (Simon Fraser) University  [www.criticalthoughts.ca/NoSweat.htm](http://www.criticalthoughts.ca/NoSweat.htm)
B.C. Ethical Purchasing Group:  Tom Sanborn:  604-224-1182
**Action Planning How-To Worksheet**

**INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS**

If you can plan a birthday party or gather a group of friends together, you can plan an action!

Here are some questions to help you get started:

1. Based on the class brainstorming session, choose an action that you will be able to do. Pick something you can do with the time and resources available.

2. Objectives – What do you want to achieve?

   - What are you calling on students/the public/corporations/public institutions/government to do?  
     e.g. do you want people to sign petitions? Write letters? Do you want your school to change its purchasing policy?  
   - Why do you want people to take the action you propose? What are the moral, legal, justice, economic reasons for your position?

3. Who do you want to reach?

   Who do you need to convince/involve for your action to be a success?

4. Who else is working on this issue?

   Do you want to work with other classes? Schools? Community groups? Is there a campaign already started that you can get involved with?

5. Make a Plan:

   - How long will this action take?  
   - Where, and when will the action take place?  
   - What tasks need to be done?  
   - Who will take responsibility for each task?  
   - What information and resources do we need?  
   - Is there anyone missing who needs to be involved?

6. Go for it!

7. Evaluate your action

   - Did your action work? Why? Why not? What would you do differently?  
   - Did you get a reaction or response from your audience? Were there any consequences?  
   - Did your action lead to other actions by yourself or others?

8. Celebrate!
Creative Action Ideas

Research:
- Identifying local sweatshops, documenting conditions in factories
- Identifying local businesses that use child labour
- Research whether goods purchased by your school are made with child labour
- Find out where clothes you buy are produced, and under what conditions

Education:
- Lunch time discussions at your school
- Organize your own sweatshop fashion show
- Develop media contacts: write letters to the editor
- Use street theatre in your school cafeteria to get your message across
- Make up some anti-sweatshop carols for the Christmas season and go out caroling
- Put up posters about your issue
- Hand out flyers
- Organize a teach-in at your school about child labour
- Make a presentation to a class

Lobbying/Policy Changes:
- Organized letter writing to CEOs of companies that use child labour
- Draft a petition on an issue related to child labour – ask people in your school to sign it
- Presenting letters to —- and having meetings with — local store managers
- Lobbying MP’s, MLA, municipal governments – calling for policies and enforcement of existing legislation
- Lobby your school/school board to have a code of conduct for suppliers
- Campaign for a federal task force on child labour
- Remind all levels of government of the promises made to children when they ratified ILO Convention 182 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Urge the Canadian government to ratify ILO Convention 138
Groups Taking Action

Note: There are many organizations working to defend the rights of children and to end exploitative and hazardous child labour. Around the world, there are hundreds of groups working to end hazardous child labour – we can only include a few in this directory. Refer to the resource list at the end of this manual for websites of other groups.

THE POWER OF EDUCATION

Part of the solution to the problem of hazardous and exploitative child labour is increased awareness. Political will to take action is the result of an informed and outraged public pressuring those in government and others in society.

Education can happen at many levels. An individual can become more informed on their own by reading and talking to others about an issue. An individual can educate their family and peers about an issue informally or formally by speaking to or getting a speaker to talk to a group or class on the issue.

Most organizations and government agencies involved in ending child labour include education as a central form of action. They may produce a video, a book, a pamphlet, or a poster and/or have a list of speakers who can give talks in schools or to community groups.

Free the Children

Free the Children is an organization of concerned children and youth across Canada interested in informing themselves and others and taking action on the issue of child labour. Free the Children representatives such as Craig Kielburger are involved in educating others, particularly other youth, about child labour. Free The Children is an international network of children helping children at a local, national and international level through representation, leadership and action. The primary goal of the organization is not only to free children from poverty and exploitation, but to also free children and young people from the idea that they are powerless to bring about positive social change and to improve the lives of their peers. Free the Children has built and outfitted more than 375 schools around the world. Free the Children has branches around the world and is linked with children in South America, Africa, Asia, and Europe.

Free The Children (International Office) Suite 300, 7368 Yonge Street Thornhill, Ontario L4J 8H9 Canada. Tel: (905) 760-9382. www.freethchildren.org or email: info@freethchildren.com
United Nations Children’s Fund – British Columbia (UNICEF)

UNICEF is an arm of the United Nations that concerns itself primarily with children of the world. As such, it is a key organization in the struggle to end child labour. On top of working to create international laws to stop exploitation of children, and implementing or supporting community projects in a number of countries, UNICEF has produced a great deal of educational material on child labour, including books and videos. The British Columbia office emphasizes education in its work and has materials and speakers available for schools and community groups who wish to learn about the issue.

UNICEF BRITISH COLUMBIA
201 - 3077 Granville Street, Vancouver, BC V6H 3J9
Phone: (604) 874-3666 Toll free 1-800-381-4343 E-mail: bc.secretary@unicef.ca
In Victoria: UNICEF Victoria Yarrows Building 210 - 645 Fort Street Victoria, BC V8W 1G2 Phone: (250) 598-9953
www.unicef.ca

B.C. Teacher’s Federation

The B.C. Teacher’s Federation represents teachers in the province of B.C. The Federation has a number of resources (videos, etc.) about child labour. The BCTF also has a section of their WEBSITE dedicated to educational materials (including research, posters and videos) about child labour in B.C.. British Columbia Teachers’ Federation 100 - 550 West 6th Avenue Vancouver, B.C. Canada V5Z 4P2 Phone 604-871-2283 or 1-800-663-9163 toll free. Child Labour Web resource: http://www.bctf.bc.ca/social/ChildLabour/Resources/

The B.C. Federation of Labour

The B.C. Federation of Labour has an excellent WEB resource page dedicated to supporting UNICEF’s child labour campaign and supporting the call for a federal task force on child labour issues. The WEB resource includes information about corporate campaigns, codes of conduct, and links to other groups working on the issue.

To contact the B.C. Federation of Labour:
(604)430-1421 or go to

OXFAM CANADA

Oxfam Canada is dedicated to fighting poverty and injustice around the world. In B.C., Oxfam has a variety of local committees working on fair trade, sweatshops and other social justice issues. Oxfam can help link with other groups doing social justice work, and provides valuable educational resources.

201 - 45 Dunlevy Ave. Vancouver BC V6A 3A3 Phone: (604) 736-7678
Email: van@oxfam.ca or www.oxfam.ca
THE POWER OF PEOPLE - GRASSROOTS WORK

Actions can be taken right at the source of the problem, such as projects that are run by and/or involve people affected by a particular problem. These may take the form of creating alternative options (night schools, safe employment, alternative sources of income, safe houses for children and youth, etc.) These projects are happening all over the world as well as in our own backyard. In Brazil, children’s movements have been very strong. Children in Brazil have occupied parliament, forcing politicians to deal with children’s rights. In other countries, such as India, children have held protest marches, demonstrations, and children’s conferences where they have drawn up a list of demands. Street youth in Vancouver have organized to demand rights and to provide appropriate services such as safe houses for street youth. We often don’t hear about the work children and youth are doing overseas or in Canada because it is not usually covered by the media.

Canadian organizations and government agencies, as well as doing education, often support projects of this kind by providing money and resources (equipment and volunteers) for people who are carrying out the projects.

CoDevelopment Canada

Apart from developing educational resources for teachers such as this curriculum unit and others, CoDevelopment Canada, along with community groups and trade unions, supports groups in Latin America who are working for social change. CoDevelopment Canada supports three organizations in Central America that work with girls and women employed in the sweatshops that manufacture clothing for North American consumers. All three organizations work to improve working conditions in the maquiladoras, and to advocate for basic health and education services for sweatshop workers.

CoDevelopment Canada 101-2747 East Hastings Street Vancouver, BC. Canada V5K 1Z8 Phone: (604) 708-1495 E-mail: codev@codev.org www.codev.org

Justice for Girls

Justice for Girls is a non-profit organization that promotes freedom from violence, social justice and equality for teenage girls who are living in poverty. JFG works to provide the support and resources that girls need to act on their own behalf in creating change in their lives. Justice for Girls provides legal advocacy, internships for girls, and public education.

Phone: (604) 689-7887 Email: info@justiceforgirls.org www.justiceforgirls.org

Corporations cannot ignore concerted public demands and pressure. Consumers have power, but only if that power is mobilized.
Canada Asia Pacific Resource Network

An independent, non-profit society, Canada Asia Pacific Resource Network’s mission is to promote regional solidarity among trade unions and NGOs in the Asia Pacific. Its activities aim: to provide critical information and analysis on regional development in the Asia Pacific, to promote and provide support to solidarity activities among workers in the region, to support developing countries in their quest for sustainable human development. CAPRN’s website includes an excellent directory of trade unions and NGOs in the Asia Pacific.

Contact at: Email: caprn@caprn.bc.ca or go to www.Caprn.org

The Concern for Working Children

The Concern for Working Children (CWC) is a grassroots group that works to empower working children in India. CWC works with local governments, community and working children themselves to implement viable, comprehensive, sustainable and appropriate solutions in partnership with all the major actors, so that children do not have to work. It empowers working children so that they may be their own first line of defense and participate in an informed manner in all decisions concerning themselves.

Concern for Working Children: www.workingchild.org

THE POWER OF CONSUMERS – PRESSURING CORPORATIONS AND MAKING ETHICAL CHOICES

Corporations – both national and transnational – are a large part of the problem in creating and maintaining conditions that are exploitative and hazardous for children. Corporations wield considerable power in our increasingly global market: however, their power contains an Achilles heel – the consumer. Those markets consist of people – individuals who can choose to buy or not to buy their products. Therefore, corporations cannot ignore concerted public demands and pressure. Consumers have power, but only if that power is mobilized.

Like government leaders, corporations must be sensitive to the concerns of the people (their consumers). They can sometimes become very concerned if their consumers act as a group. Public relations and image can be important to small and large corporations. For some, doing good works and appearing to be concerned about the environment or ethics is part of their public image and possibly part of their marketing strategy.

Buying from companies that behave ethically is using your power as a consumer to vote or make a statement with your dollar. The more people buy products that are made in an ethical fashion, the more companies will have to be ethical in their practices in order to sell their products. Ethical consump-
tion is a growing movement with the potential to be very powerful. One example is the growing movement of fair trade coffee suppliers.

In addition, trade incentives and preferences implemented by government (as a result of public pressure from consumers) can have a positive impact by encouraging and rewarding fair labour practices.

**B.C. Ethical Purchasing Group**

The BC Ethical Purchasing Group, started in 2002, is a local umbrella group of students, faculty, labour and human rights activists and other concerned citizens who are cooperating to put ethical purchasing practices squarely on the public agenda. The group is supporting “No Sweat” campaigns at SFU, UBC, Langara, Emily Carr, and Capilano College. The Ethical Purchasing Group would love to work with high school students, as well, to develop campaigns to stop sweatshop abuses.

Ethical Purchasing Group – contact Tom Sanborn at 604-224-1182 or email: tos@infinet.net

**Café Etico**

Since 1996, Codevelopment Canada has operated a fair trade coffee business called Café Etico. The proceeds from Café Etico go to help community development efforts in Latin America. Fair trade coffee systems help to provide a fair price for farmers, a safe environment for farmers and their families, and help to stop environmental destruction. Many schools have used Café Etico as an ethical fundraiser for social justice clubs and projects.

Café Etico: 101-2747 East Hastings Street Vancouver, BC Canada V5V 1T9
Phone: (604) 708-8782  E-mail: etico@codev.org

**Sweat Free (Simon Fraser) University**

The NoSweat SFU campaign is a student-led effort working with the Board of Governors of SFU to adopt a NoSweat licensing, purchasing and procurement policy for products bought and sold at SFU — Sweat Free University. The No Sweat campaign has successfully lobbied to get the SFU Board of governors to agree to a task force to develop an ethical procurement policy for SFU.

To Contact No Sweat SFU: email: no-sweat@sfu.ca. or go to: http://www.criticalthoughts.ca/NoSweat.htm

Leaders of institutions and especially members of government are well aware that the opinion expressed in one letter can represent the opinions of hundreds of others who have not written.
Students Against Sweatshops Canada

Students Against Sweatshops is a network of groups across Canada, often working through Public Interest Research Groups (PIRGs). Three main goals of their campaign are: to support the efforts of sweatshop workers in their struggle to end sweatshop conditions, to raise awareness around sweatshop issues, and to use their position as students to meet these goals by various strategies, including but not limited to the implementation of codes of conduct governing trademark licensing at schools. SASS has active campaigns at many university campuses.

http://opirg.sa/utoronto.ca/groups/sweatshops/newgroup.html

Maquila Solidarity Network

The Maquila Solidarity Network (MSN) is a Canadian network promoting solidarity with groups in Mexico, Central America, and Asia organizing in maquiladora factories and export processing zones to improve conditions and win a living wage. In a global economy, it is essential that groups in the North and South work together to achieve employment with dignity, fair wages and working conditions, and healthy workplaces and communities. The MSN has worked to support workers in a number of campaigns. The MSN website has a wealth of information about campaigns and tools for action.

Maquila Solidarity Network 606 Shaw Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M6G 3L6 Tel: (416) 532-8584 Email: info@maquilasolidarity.org or go to: http://www.maquilasolidarity.org/

Ten Thousand Villages

Ten Thousand Villages provides vital, fair income to Third World people by marketing their handicrafts and telling their stories in North America. Ten Thousand Villages works with artisans who would otherwise be unemployed or underemployed, providing sustainable income through fair trade. This income helps pay for food, education, health care and housing. Thousands of volunteers in Canada and the United States work with Ten Thousand Villages in their home communities.

Website: http://www.tenthousandvillages.com/ for store locations and further information.
THE POWER OF CITIZENS
– LOBBYING GOVERNMENT

Canada is a wealthy nation and can play an important role in eliminating the exploitation of children in Canada and around the world.

In fact, Canadians, through the government, are having an impact through international agencies like the United Nations (UNICEF and the International Labour Organization and its International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour), and national agencies like the Canadian International Development Agency.

Citizens can pressure governments to exercise the power and resources they have to take actions. Many groups and individuals have written letters to people with the power to make decisions, and have sought opportunities to actually talk to the people in power through the media or through the channels of government. People often feel that a single letter or signature on a petition or a phone call may not be effective. Leaders of institutions and especially members of government are well aware that the opinion expressed in one letter can represent the opinions of hundreds of others who have not written. Therefore a letter from a concerned citizen carries more weight than you might expect.

Canadians can write to their Member of Parliament (federal) or Member of the Legislative Assembly (provincial) to express their concern about any issue. Citizens can also lobby ministers or their advisors by writing them letters to pressure them to take action on an issue. People can even write to the prime minister or leaders of other countries.

Public pressure by people as individuals and as groups has had results. Canadians have pressured the federal government to take specific action to eliminate the exploitation of children in Canada and in the world. It is now a crime in Canada to buy sex from a child sex trade worker under 18. Recently the government enacted another law that gives it the power to convict anyone who has bought sex from a child through the international child sex trade, even if the transaction occurred outside of Canada.

Prime Minister of Canada – Paul Martin
Office of the Prime Minister 80 Wellington Street, Ottawa K1A 0A2 Fax: 613-941-6900
Email: pm@pm.gc.ca Web: http://pm.gc.ca/eng/contact.asp

The Government of Canada also has a website and commentary email address: Website: http://canada.gc.ca/main_e.html
Email: sitecanadasite@communication.gc.ca

Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade – Bill Graham
Phone: (613) 992-5234 Fax: (613) 996-9607
Email: Graham.B@parl.gc.ca
Address: Hill Office House of Commons Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6
Members of Parliament – Federal
Names, addresses, and phone numbers of MPs for each riding are listed in the blue pages under Government of Canada. All names, addresses, emails, and phone numbers are also on the WEB at:
http://canada.gc.ca/directories/direct_e.html

Senator London Pearson
The Honorable London Pearson, the Advisor on Children’s Rights
The Senate of Canada, Room 210, East Block, Ottawa, Canada K1A 0A4
Email: pearsl@sen.parl.gc.ca        Web: http://sen.parl.gc.ca/lpearson/

Premier Gordon Campbell
Website: http://www.gov.bc.ca/bvprd/bc/home.do?action=premier&navId = NAV_ID_province
Email: premier@gov.bc.ca
Address: Room 156, Parliament Buildings, Victoria, B.C. V8V 1X4
Phone: (604) 660-3202 or (250) 387-1715

B.C. Minister for Children and Family Development
Since governments frequently change ministers, part of your research will be to get the name of the current minister.
Website for Ministry: www.gov.bc.ca/mcf/

Members of the Legislative Assembly – Provincial
Names, addresses and phone numbers of MLAs for each riding are listed in the blue pages under Government of Canada.
This information can also be found on the WEB at:
http://www.legis.gov.bc.ca/mla/3-1-1.htm

World Leaders
The Free the Children website at www.freethechildren.org has a list of world leaders people can write to.
Writing Letters and Petitions: To Governments

INFORMATION FOR THE TEACHER

Purpose:

- To have students evaluate the new B.C. Child Labour Legislation and Regulations based on what they have learned so far about child labour.
- To help students learn skills in active citizenship and have a voice by writing letters on an issue that affects youth.

Time: 45 minutes

Materials:

Copies for Each Student of:


Description:

As a class, small groups or individuals, students write a letter or petition to a government representative in the Skills Development and Labour Ministry or to an MLA.

Based on what students have learned so far about child labour, its causes, and solutions, and based on a review of the new legislation and comments from both government and civil society sources, students write a letter to one of the government representatives mentioned above. Their letters can encourage the government to take specific actions or they can simply express their ideas on the issue.

Students can consider the following questions to help them formulate ideas for their letters:

- What effect do you think this new legislation will have on children in B.C.?
- Does the new legislation meet international standards?
- What changes would you propose to better protect children?
- Why do you think it is important for the government to get youth involved and to get their ideas on the issue?
Opinion Piece on the New Child Labour Legislation in B.C.

December 18, 2003
By Bob Forth, Helesia Luke, and Graeme Moore

The face of BC’s workforce is changing - it’s getting much younger. On December 14, new labour regulations came into force that position British Columbia as the most child labour friendly jurisdiction in North America.

In a move resembling a chapter from Dickens’ Scrooge, the provincial government has reduced the standard for child protection and dropped BC’s work-start age from 15 to 12 years. Under new legislation, a child as young as 12 may wind up selling you a loaf of bread at two a.m. in your local convenience store, picking up debris on a construction site or hocking goods door to door - all as government willfully turns a blind eye.

At a time when more and more families are struggling with unemployment and poverty, government is making it easier to hire children. The government’s claim that mandatory fines on employers will protect kids fails to recognize the intense financial pressures on BC families. Encouraging child labour with less government oversight is a recipe for disaster.

Under the previous system, an employer was required to apply to the Employment Standards Branch Director for a permit to hire a child under the age of 15. This process allowed Branch employees to conduct worksheet inspections and place restrictions on the type and hours of work. The Branch would consider whether or not potential employment opportunities would have a negative impact on the child’s education, health or safety. Contrary to the Minister of Labor’s claims, Branch officers frequently declined permit applications or imposed conditions on employers before issuing permits.

In addition, parental and school consent was required before a child under 15 could legally work. Through the permitting process, government had a direct role to play in protecting children and determining what work opportunities were safe and appropriate. In doing so, government created a cautionary environment where children’s rights were prioritized over work.

In defense of reducing child labour standards, Minister Graham Bruce claims that many employers were breaking the law and hiring children under 15 without a permit anyway. This explanation poses questionable logic: many motorists disobey stop signs, is removing stop signs the solution to breaking the law?
These changes end over fifty years of direct government oversight of children in the workplace. Now, employers are only required to obtain a parent’s consent, that’s a parent - only one, to hire a child between the age of 12 and 15. It’s the parents’ responsibility, Bruce claims, to make sure that work is right for their child. While it is surely true that most parents would never knowingly put their child in harm’s way, it is also true that most parents do not have access to in-depth knowledge and training needed to assess worksheet safety.

A startling example of this occurred several years ago when an employment officer visited a butcher shop to assess whether job related tasks were safe for a young teenage boy. On the site, the officer discovered that while the boy could easily enter the walk-in-freezer, he was not strong enough to operate the internal lever to exit the freezer. In this instance the boy’s parents had already consented to his employment – highlighting the fact that many well-intentioned parents simply don’t know what questions to ask and how to ensure their child is doing tasks suitable to ability and maturity.

Now, BC parents will be on their own when it comes to protecting their child’s best interests in the workplace. Minister Bruce asserts that new regulations protect children. It is hard to imagine that any reasonable person would interpret these regulations as protections. Children, between 12 and 15, can work up to 4 hours on a school day. When added to school time, that turns into a 10 hour workday - before homework or extra activities. On non-school days, children can work 7 hours. In some circumstances, the Branch may waive those limits. Educators have been removed from the process and children do not need permission from school authorities to work. Even more troubling: there are no prohibited occupations under the new system. Unlike our neighbours in Alberta and Washington, BC regulations do not list jobs that are obviously unsuitable for developing children including operating machinery or tasks that require strength or mature judgment.

Bill 37 is the legislation behind this and was enacted without consulting the many organizations and individuals who expressed serious concerns about the dangers of loosening restrictions on hiring children. While the rest of the world is implementing United Nation’s recommendations for more restrictions on child labour, BC is marching in the opposite direction.

Bill 37 puts children at risk as never before. It violates the government’s responsibility to its younger citizens and puts its own agenda of deregulation before the health and safety of the most vulnerable members in our society.

Bob Forth is an Anglican priest, Helesia Luke is a parent and researcher, and Graeme Moore is a former employee of the Employment Standards Branch. www.bctf.bc.ca/social/childlabour
NEWS RELEASE
For Immediate Release
2003SDL0033-001063
Nov. 28, 2003
Ministry of Skills Development and Labour

NEW RULES PROTECT YOUNG WORKERS

VICTORIA – Young workers, many starting their first jobs, will be protected under new employment standards rules, Skills Development and Labour Minister Graham Bruce announced today. The new regulation, which comes into effect on Dec. 14, makes employers responsible for ensuring employees who are 12, 13 or 14 years old don’t work during school hours. The student may work up to four hours on a school day and up to 20 hours a week when school is in session. If school is not in session, the maximum work time is seven hours a day and 35 hours in a week. In special circumstances the director of employment standards may authorize a longer workday. Employees under 15 must also be under the direct, immediate supervision of an adult in the workplace at all times.

“These rules mirror the conditions that used to be found in child employment permits issued by the Employment Standards Branch,” Bruce said. “Those permits were almost always approved, but sometimes delays in processing around 300 applications each year could mean a young person missed a job opportunity. “With almost 160,000 12, 13 and 14 year olds in B.C., we know there are far more than 300 youngsters working than have been issued permits, and we want to make sure they’re well protected. We are changing the rules to better focus on protecting these young employees by returning responsibility for deciding whether a youngster goes to work to that person’s parents.” Employers must have permission in writing for the young person to work and are subject to penalties of $500, $2,500 or $10,000 for not following these rules,” said Bruce. Employers will continue to need a permit from the director of employment standards to hire anyone less than 12 years of age. Specific rules have been developed for children working in the film and television industry. These rules set out how long a child can work in a day or week and ensure children’s incomes are protected. The standards were developed following discussion with U.S. and Canadian film producers, the Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee, educators and the Union of B.C. Performers. “We are taking action to effectively protect the interests of young people who are employed,” Bruce said. “Employers who choose not to follow these standards will face mandatory penalties. We will act, and act quickly, to address any problems with these standards.”

- 30 -

1 backgrounder(s) attached.
Media contact:
Betty Nicholson
250 387-2699
Visit the province’s Web site at www.gov.bc.ca for online information and services.
Writing Letters and Petitions: To Corporations

INFORMATION FOR THE TEACHER

Purpose:

• To have students gain skills in writing letters as a form of active citizenship.
• To help students articulate a concern as a consumer to a corporation.

Time: 45 minutes

Materials:

Copies for each student of:

• Student Handout - Sample Petition

• Sample Company Code of Conduct of Funky Shoes Ltd. Company plan written by students in Lesson Three: Global Economics and Child Labour or Student Handout – Sample Code of Conduct

• Student Handout – Letter Writing Tips

Description:

Students write a letter to a corporation to suggest that if they do not have a code of conduct, they should implement one, and to express as consumers of the corporation’s products their concern about child labour and the importance of ethical corporate behaviour in eliminating child labour.

Students can consider the following questions in writing a letter to a corporation:

• What can the corporation do toward ending exploitative child labour?
• How might the corporation do this?
Whereas some apparel products sold in Canada are made under "sweatshop" conditions in factories, workshops and homes where workers' rights are regularly violated;

Whereas these abusive and often illegal conditions are allowed to continue because apparel production sites are deliberately hidden from the public;

Therefore we, the undersigned, call on the Canadian government to require companies to publicly disclose the names and addresses of all manufacturing facilities making apparel products sold in Canada by instituting simple changes to the labelling regulations under the Textile Labelling Act.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>name</th>
<th>address</th>
<th>signature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please return completed petition by Sept 30, 2002 to: Maqas SOLIDARITY Network, #208 Union St., Toronto, ON M5H 3G8

Tel: 416-532-3954 • Fax: 416-532-7688 • email: info@maqasolidarity.org • web: www.maqasolidarity.org
SAMPLE CODE OF CONDUCT

What it should contain:

No forced labour;

No child labour (support for phasing out existing child workers);

No harassment, abuse or discrimination;

Maximum hours of work;

The right to organize and bargain collectively;

Payment of a living wage;

Health and safety protections;

Public disclosure of factory locations;

A written commitment by companies to work with suppliers to comply:

Public annual reporting by suppliers on progress; and

Third-party investigations of complaints and a corrective action plan if violations occur.
Letter Writing Tips

Letter writing:

Coordinated letter writing is even more effective than individual letters, particularly if letters are personalized. Church groups and international development agencies have organized letter-writing activities as part of educational and social events. Other examples of coordinated letter writing include:

During the Gap campaign, students in Vancouver stapled Gap labels to their letters to emphasize that they were Gap customers.

Grade Six students in Surrey, BC have written letters to Nike, Mattel, McDonald’s, Disney etc. When company replies are inadequate, they write again, demanding real answers.

In response to hundreds of letters from students in Catholic high schools across Canada, Nike wrote to every Catholic parish and Catholic high school principal in Canada, attempting to explain their side of the story.

Simple Rules for Letter Writing:

Ask specific questions that require specific answers, such as:

• What are you doing to investigate the violations?
• What specific actions are you taking to change the situation?
• What steps are you taking to ensure that similar violations do not occur in the future?

When you receive a form letter reply, write back thanking them and requesting answers to questions they ignored and/or to follow-up questions. Don’t be satisfied with form letters.

If they do take appropriate action, write again praising their decision. Reinforce positive behaviour.
PUBLICATIONS AND ARTICLES OF MOST VALUE


United Students Against Sweatshops. Organizing for High School Students. A manual about organizing against sweatshops for high school students. www.studentsagainstsweatshops.org/resources


OTHER ARTICLES OF VALUE


O’Grady, William. Study of 100 squeegee kids in Toronto. www.uoguelph.ca/mediarel/99-11-16/squeegee.html or contact Professor O’Grady at 519-824-4120 Ext. 8943 or wogrady@uoguelph.ca

Students Against Sweatshops. “Commonly Asked Questions.” www.ogirg.sa.utoronto.ca/groups/sweatshops/faq.html

EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

Child Labour is Not Cheap. Resource Centre of the Americas. From the authors of Many Faces of Mexico comes an innovative curriculum for grades 8-12 and adults, Child Labor is Not Cheap. Published in 1997 by the Resource Center, the book’s 41 pages include 28 reproducible pages of handouts, posters, maps, Web sites and other sources. Order from: www.americas.org

Child Labour Poster. B.C. Teachers Federation. A poster that focuses on the problems with B.C.’s new Child Labour Legislation. www.bctf.bc.ca or call 604-871-2283 or toll free at 800-663-9163.


Poverty Issues in the Classroom. A workshop provided by the B.C. Teacher’s Federation. www.bctf.ca/social/SocialJustice/Programs/brochure.html for more information.

BOOKS ON CHILD LABOUR

All of the following are available from the Vancouver Public Library System:


**VIDEOS**


*Children for Hire.* National Film Board of Canada. 1995. 22 minutes. About health and safety for Canadian workers. Available from the National Film Board at www.nfb.ca/store or through the Vancouver Public Library system or through the BCTF at: www.bctf.bc.ca/cgi-win/VideoDb.exe.frm_search.

*I am a Child.* International Labour Organization. 1999. 54 minutes. Available through the Vancouver Public Library System.

*It takes a Child.* “*It Takes A Child*” is an inspirational and educational video on Craig Kielburger, the founder of Free the Children, and the work of the organization on an international level. The video can be ordered from Free the Children at www.freethedefichildren.org ($16.95)


*Of Hopscotch and Little Girls.* National Film Board of Canada. 1999. A film about girls forced into the sex trade and other forms of forced labour. 52 minutes. Available at www.nfb.ca/store or through the Vancouver Public Library System.


*UNICEF – State of the World’s Children 2004: Child Labour.* Available on loan from the UNICEF British Columbia office at 201 - 3077 Granville Street, Vancouver, BC V6H 3J9 Phone: (604) 874-3666 Toll free 1-800-381-4343 E-mail: bc.secretary@unicef.ca.


*Life and Debt* – a Film by Stephanie Black – 86 minutes is a film about the effect of globalization in Jamaica including the creation of sweatshops and child labour. The film can be ordered at: http://store.globalexchange.org/lifeanddebt.html
ACTION RESOURCES FOR YOUTH

B.C. Ethical Purchasing Group. This local group helps schools, colleges, and workplaces set up ethical purchasing codes. Contact Tom Sanborn at: 604-224-1182.

Global Exchange Action Guide for Promoting Fair Trade Chocolate Sales in Schools http://www.globalexchange.org/campaigns/fairtrade/cocoa/chocolatekids.html#juniorhighactionkit The chocolate industry is a major employer of child labour – find out how to take action with this guide.

Global March Against Child Labour – action ideas: http://www.globalmarch.org/action-toolkit/

Maquila Solidarity Network www.maquilasolidarity.org Excellent action focused site with a section on how to make your school sweat free. A lot of campaign resources and downloadable fact sheets

Students’ Against Sweatshops Canada http://opirg.sa.utoronto.ca/groups/sweatshops/ A Good action-based Website – how to start new groups, do product research, organize a sweatshop fashion show. There is also a list-serve to join if you are interested in starting a SAS group in your school. The links section contains an explanation of how to trace sources of products.

Sweat Free University (Simon Fraser) Information about the campaign for a No Sweat Policy at SFU. www.criticalthoughts.ca/NoSweat.htm

UNITE Stop Sweatshops Campaign http://www.unite-svti.org/En/STOP_SWEATSHOPS/

United Students Against Sweatshops http://www.studentsagainstsweatshops.org/resources.html Resources section includes a great manual on Organizing for High School Students plus many other great resources.

Youth in Action Toolkit – a free web based resource from Free the Children on how to get involved and active around child labour issues. http://www.freethechildren.com/youthinaction/how_to_get_involved.htm

INTERNET SITES:

Anti Slavery International www.antislavery.org

Asia Monitor Resource Centre http://www.amrc.org.hk Asia Monitor Resource Center (AMRC) is an independent non-government organization (NGO) which focuses on Asian labour concerns.


B.C. Teacher’s Federation www.bctf.bc.ca/social/childlabour Information about child labour in B.C.

Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children www.rightsofchildren.ca

Canada Asia Pacific Resource Network www.caprn.bc.ca

Child Labour Coalition www.childlabour.org Good articles and links

Child Labour Research Initiative http://clri.uichr.org/ Hosts a good up-to-date news archive about child labour

Children’s Rights Information Network www.crin.org A very good site with updated articles, weblinks and reports about child labour and other children’s’ rights issues.

Child Slave Labour Newsletter http://www.geocities.com/cslnews/

Child Workers in Asia http://www.cwa.tnet.co.th/ A website about child workers in Asia by child workers themselves
Child Workers in India
www.workingchild.org

Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers
http://www.child-soldiers.org/

CoDevelopment Canada
www.codev.org

Corporation Watch
www.corpwatch.org

First Call B.C.
http://www.firstcallbc.org/
First Call is a B.C. Child Advocacy Group.

Free Child
www.freechild.org

Free the Children www.freethecedhildren.org
A Website maintained by Craig and Mark Keilburger with lots of great resources, and tools for children.

Global Exchange
www.globalexchange.org

Global March Against Child Labour
www.globalmarch.org

Global Movement for Children
www.gmfc.org

Health and Safety for Young Workers in Canada
http://www.ccohs.ca/youngworkers/

International Labour Organization site with fact sheets and statistical information about child labour.
http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipec/

Justice for Girls
www.justiceforgirls.org
Justice for Girls is a non-profit organization that promotes freedom from violence, social justice and equality for teenage girls.

Maquila Solidarity Network
www.maquilasolidarity.org

National Labour Committee
www.nlcnet.org

Oxfam Canada
www.oxfam.ca

Resource Centre of the Americas – a great up-to-date news source.
www.americas.org

Rugmark
www.rugmark.org
WEB site for Rugmark.

Save the Children Canada
www.savethechildren.ca

Street Kids International
www.streetkids.org

Sweatshop Watch
www.sweatshopwatch.org

UNICEF Canada – www.unicef.ca
A great website with lots of educational resources and links.

Working Child
www.workingchild.org

United Students Against Sweatshops
http://www.studentsagainstsweatshops.org/

Urban Native Youth
www.ynya.bc.ca
A Vancouver based group with resource links for urban native youth.
CoDevelopment Canada is a non-profit agency that was founded in Vancouver in 1985 to promote alliances between Canadian groups and their counterparts in Latin America. For example, working with the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation and the Canadian International Development Agency, CoDev has channelled extensive support to educators in Guatemala, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Honduras, Panama, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Cuba. Projects not only enable professional and institutional development, women’s leadership and changes to national education policy, they also provide a basis for building relationships among educators in Canada and in Latin America.

In addition to its support of people-oriented development in the South, CoDev helps educate Canadians about global realities. CoDev concentrates on reaching people through schools and colleges, producing curricular resources for elementary and secondary students, such as *Children of Peru, Shaping the 21st Century, Child Labour: Costly at Any Price, Globalization: Who is in Charge of Our Future?,* and *A Culture of Peace: A teaching unit on alternatives to war and violent conflict,* and for literacy and English as a Second Language programs, such as *Global Stories of People Working for Change and Community Success Stories.* CoDev previously published a *Not so natural disasters* curriculum unit geared to senior high school students.

CoDev’s strategy of linking like-minded groups is most directly expressed in its international exchanges and meetings, involving community groups, educators, health workers and labour activists. These encounters help raise awareness of the economic, social and political struggles of people in the South, and build support for local and international change.

CoDevelopment Canada gratefully acknowledges the support for this publication from the Canadian International Development Agency and the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation International Solidarity Fund.

CoDevelopment Canada
101 - 2747 East Hastings St., Vancouver, BC V5K 1Z8
Phone: (604) 708-1495 • Fax: (604) 708-1497
codev@codev.org
www.codev.org