



Tackling child labour.
*Policy options for achieving sustainable
reductions in children at work*

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S. Lyon

September 2006

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As part of broader efforts toward durable solutions to child labor, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the World Bank initiated the interagency Understanding Children's Work (UCW) project in December 2000. The project is guided by the Oslo Agenda for Action, which laid out the priorities for the international community in the fight against child labor. Through a variety of data collection, research, and assessment activities, the UCW project is broadly directed toward improving understanding of child labor, its causes and effects, how it can be measured, and effective policies for addressing it. For further information, see the project website at www.ucw-project.org.

This paper is part of the research carried out within UCW (Understanding Children's Work), a joint ILO, World Bank and UNICEF project. The views expressed here are those of the authors' and should not be attributed to the ILO, the World Bank, UNICEF or any of these agencies' member countries.

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to identify the appropriate policy response to substantially reduce child labour and review key policy options. Key policy options fall with the broad categories of prevention, second chances education and direct action. The main burden for a sustainable reduction of child labour and increase in human capital investment rests on prevention. “Second chance” policies targeting children already exposed to child labor although likely less significant in resource terms, should not be neglected. “Direct action” is needed to identify and rescue laborers in forms of child labor that pose a direct threat to their health and safety or that violate fundamental human rights.

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1. CHILD LABOUR: A GLOBAL POLICY CHALLENGE

1. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) estimates that there were some 191 million children aged 5-14 years at work worldwide in 2004, accounting for around one-sixth of total children in this age group. Of these working children, 74 million were in “hazardous” work, i.e., in work activities posing a threat to their safety, health or moral development. Some 108 million working children were below the age of 12 years. While these figures all constitute an improvement compared to 2000, the challenge posed by child labour clearly remains daunting.

2. The Asia-Pacific region harboured the largest absolute number of 5-14 year-old working children in 2004 (122 million), but the Sub Saharan Africa (SSA) region was where a child was most likely to be involved in work. Over one-quarter of 5-14 year-olds were at work in economic activity in the SSA region in 2004. The great majority of these children worked on the family farm, or otherwise helping parents in their daily businesses. In total, about 69 percent of working children were found in (mainly family) agriculture, while about 22 percent worked in the services sector and nine percent in industry. An earlier (2000) estimate put about four percent of all working children – 8.4 million in absolute terms – in “unconditional” worst forms of child labour.

The existence of such a large numbers of child workers, beside the social and individual suffering, represents a major development challenge threatening the achievement of the MDGs (especially on education and youth employment) and hampering the possibility of growth by perpetuating the existence of a unskilled labour force. Most if not all of these children missing out on primary education are child labourers; child labour also affects the academic achievement of the considerable number of children who combine school and work, contributing to the early drop-out and entry into full-time work.

2. IDENTIFYING POLICY OPTIONS FOR REDUCING CHILD LABOUR: GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

3. Child labour is a complex phenomenon that cuts across policy boundaries – education, health, labour markets, capital markets, social security, economic growth and income distribution all play an important role. Achieving a sustainable reductions in child labour therefore requires a policy response that is cross-sectoral in nature and targets three broad groups: (1) children at risk of involvement in child labour; (2) children already harmed by exposure to child labour; and (3) children in the worst forms of child labour requiring immediate, direct action.

4. The main burden for a sustainable reduction of child labour and increase in human capital investment rests on prevention. Clearly, sustainable reductions in child labour cannot be attained without addressing the factors causing children to enter work in the first place. By changing the economic and social environment, mainly of the household, preventive policies should aim at changing the “equilibrium” or long run level of child labour and school enrolment. Such policies are also the most relevant in terms of resources needed. However, given the cross sectoral nature of the phenomena, programmes aimed at reducing child labour will also contribute to other objectives and vice versa generating economies of scope in the use of the resources.

5. “Second chance” policies targeting children already exposed to child labour, although likely less significant in resource terms, should not be neglected. They are critical to avoiding large numbers of children entering adulthood in a disadvantaged

position, permanently harmed by early work experiences. Children with little or no schooling will be in a weak position in the labour market, at much greater risk of joining the ranks of the unemployed and the poor. If left alone, these children and youth are likely to be in need of other (more costly) remediation policies at a later stage of their life cycle.

6. “Direct action”, is needed to identify and rescue labourers in forms of child labour that pose a direct threat to their health and safety or that violate fundamental human rights. “Unconditional” worst forms of child labour identified by ILO Convention No. 182 include (a) all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict; (b) the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances; and (c) the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties. These types of policies and programmes should aim to remove children immediately from work and provide them with services for rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

7. Achieving sustainable reductions in child labour also requires a supportive national political, legal and institutional environment. Political commitment is needed to ensure that child labour is mainstreamed into broader development plans and programmes. This may include, for example, integrating child labour as an explicit concern in Millennium Development Goals, Education for All plans, and poverty reduction strategy plans. Labour legislation consistent with international child labour standards is necessary both as a statement of national intent and as legal and regulatory framework for efforts against child labour. As child labour is an issue that cuts across sectors and areas of ministerial responsibility, progress against it requires that institutional roles are clearly delineated, and that effective coordination and information-sharing structures are in place.

8. The following sections will review key policy options falling within the broad categories of prevention, second chance education and direct action.

3. PREVENTION: INFLUENCING HOUSEHOLD DECISIONS CONCERNING CHILDREN’S TIME USE

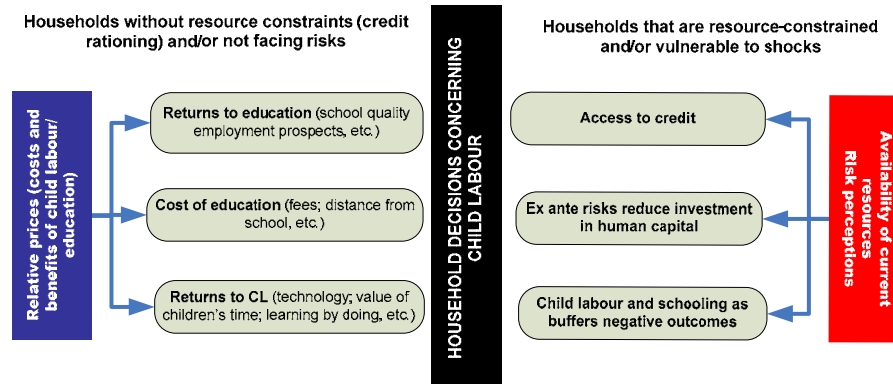
9. Effective prevention measures are the starting point to achieving sustainable reductions in child labour. As children are rarely responsible for their own choices, the design of preventive measures requires an understanding of factors influencing household decisions relating to schooling and work.

10. If parents have sufficient current resources and/or access to credit and are not facing risks, the allocation of children’s time is guided by the perceived relative returns of work with respect to education. But if parents are resource-constrained or vulnerable to shocks, then these additional considerations also enter into their decisions concerning children’s time use.

11. While these general statements concerning parents’ decision-making are clearly an oversimplification, they nonetheless allow us to draw a broad distinction between policies that affect relative prices of children’s work and schooling, on one hand, and

those concerned with household resources and exposure to risk, on the other. This simple framework is illustrated in Figure 3 below.¹

Figure 1. Determinants of household decisions concerning child labour and alternative time uses



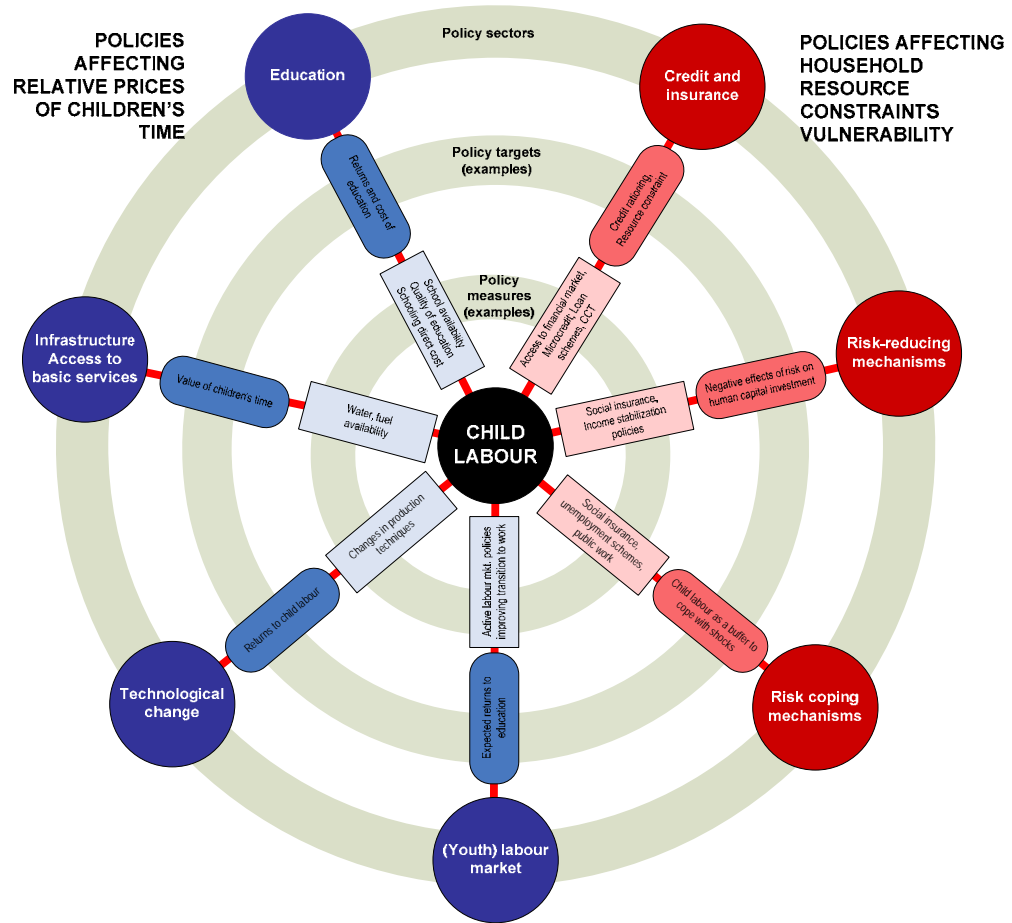
12. Following from this framework, addressing factors affecting the relative price of children's time, e.g., school access and quality, basic services access, and production techniques, is particularly important to preventing households from opting to involve children in work at the expense of schooling. Policies addressing household resource constraints and vulnerability to shocks, e.g., credit rationing and social insurance schemes, are also important in this context, as credit market imperfections prevent households from exploiting “profitable” investment opportunities, and child labour is often used by households as a buffer against insecurity and uncertainty.

13. It is apparent that policies for addressing child labour are cross sectoral in nature and that no single policy prescription can be applied in all contexts. The particular condition and characteristics of child labour and of the economy will determine the optimal policy mix.

14. The following graph presents in extreme synthesis a set of policies that have a bearing on child labour, using a classification that matches the explanatory framework presented above. In particular, policies are divided in to two groups: the first refers to policies that address the relative price of child labour with respect to the other children's possible use of time (mainly education). The second refers to social risk management policies that address household resource constraints and other inefficiencies in the financial and insurance markets. In what follow we will briefly discuss the different policies. Where studies have tried to identify the impact of these policies on children's work directly (or indirectly through education) , we present such evidence. In general, however, the direct effects of such policies on child labour have not been rigorously evaluated.

¹ The table aims only to give an extreme synthesis, the interested reader can refer to Cigno and Rosati, *The Economics of Child Labour*, Oxford University Press and to the literature cited therein for a detailed discussion.

Figure 2. Policies influencing household decisions concerning child labour



3.1 Policies affecting household resource constraints and vulnerability

15. Poverty is associated with child labour but is not necessarily its cause. If households do not have access to credit markets, they might be forced to give up on “profitable” investment in human capital. Moreover, there is increasing evidence that the vulnerability of household to risks is an important determinant of child labour. In absence of perfect capital and financial markets, *ex ante* income risks tend to depress investment in human capital. Uncertainty about returns to educations are also likely to generate inefficiently high level of child labour. Negative outcomes see children used as a buffer to substitute or complement for non existent (or not sufficient) coping mechanisms.

16. Social risk management (SRM) policies address these three issues, i.e., lack of access to resources, lack of risk reduction strategies, and lack of risk coping mechanisms. In what follows, we offer some examples of SRM policies. It is worth stressing that such policies are not directly targeted at child labour, but aim at addressing household vulnerability in general. Hence, if well targeted, they might prove a cost efficient way to address child labour.

■ **Credit and insurance:** Policies aiming at favouring household access to credit and financial markets and/or to relax the current budget constraint are relevant. Conditional cash transfers (CCT) are a very relevant intervention as it eases the resource constraint of the household and also changes the relative prices. CCT schemes have proved effective in increasing school attendance, further evidence on their effects on child labour needs to be gathered. Moreover, more in depth analysis of the relative efficacy and costs of conditional and nonconditional transfers is necessary. Finally, as transfer programmes tends to be very large, it is necessary to evaluate them within the overall public finance setting of a country. Other policies in this area include loan schemes, micro credit, community based saving groups, improving accessibility of banking or other financial institutions.

■ **Risk reducing mechanisms:** We consider two groups of risks. The income (or resource) risk that the household faces while its children are in school and the risks associated with uncertain return to human capital investment. For the first category of risk social security policies, health insurance, income support schemes and, to a certain extent, also CCT programmes are all examples of relevant policies. The risks associated with uncertain return to human capital are more difficult to tackle, policies improving a smooth school to work transition or a better functioning of the matching mechanisms of the labour markets are relevant in this case.

■ **Risk coping mechanisms:** There is a growing evidence that child labour is used as a buffer against the negative effects associated with exposure to shocks. Policies that help households cope with shocks will substantially increases that chances that children are not sent to work and kept in school. Insurance policies, public works, and support of formal or informal community networks are examples of interventions that can have a strong impact in protecting children from vulnerable households from child labour and/or early school drop out.

3.2 Policies affecting the relative prices of children's time

17. In the absence of resource constraints and risk, the (immediate) returns to work and the (longer-term) perceived returns to education are at the centre of parents' decisions concerning their children's time use. High returns to work raise the price of time foregone to attend school, while high perceived returns to education place a cost on school time lost for work. Addressing factors affecting the relative price of children's time is therefore particularly important to preventing households from opting to involve children in work at the expense of schooling. Policy options targeting a number of such factors are discussed below.

■ **Education:** There is broad consensus that the single most effective way to stem the flow of school-aged children into work is to extend and improve schooling, so that families have the opportunity to invest in their children's education and the returns to schooling make it worthwhile for them to do so. This in return requires measures aimed at reducing the (direct and indirect) costs of schooling, expanding school access and improving school quality. Investment in early childhood and adult education is also relevant in this context.

In terms of addressing *school costs*, incentive schemes that provide cash or in-kind subsidies to poor children conditional on school attendance offer one promising route. These schemes can increase schooling directly by providing poor families with additional resources (i.e. income effect), as well as indirectly by compensating parents for the foregone economic product from their children's labour and thus reducing child labour (i.e. substitution effect). Such schemes have proved effective in several countries in increasing enrolment and especially continuation in school. They

have also helped to reduce child labour supply, although more evidence is required concerning their effect on child labour.

School accessibility represents part of the indirect cost of schooling and it affects household decisions concerning children's time use. Targeted school expansion is a necessary condition to reduce child labour. Secondary school availability is also relevant in determining parent's decisions about time use of primary school age children.

The importance of improving *school quality* is theoretically well established, but the empirical evidence linking school quality to child labour is far from robust. Emerging evidence points to the fact that it is not so much the level of school inputs, but the way they are utilized to cope with children's need that are likely to influence schooling decision. More work is needed in this area, before a substantive claim can be made about the use of policies aiming to improve school quality as an instrument to combat child labour.

Investment in *early childhood education* appears to substantially lower the risk of child labour and increase the likelihood of school attendance at later ages. This seems to indicate that the possibility of beginning to invest on children's human capital when they are very young, spills over also to later age investment. Many reasons can be behind this effects. Early investment have high productivity and increase productivity of human capital investment at later ages, pre-school might contribute to raised parental awareness of the benefit of education. That is, learning begets learning and skills acquired early on make later learning easier.

The evidence supporting the role of *mothers' education* in promoting school attendance and reducing child labour supply is also very strong. A possible explanation of these findings is that education confers on the mother greater weight (moral authority or, if education translates into income, bargaining power) in family decisions. Another possibility is that the mother's time is an input into the education (production of human capital) of their children, and that the mother's own level of education raises the productivity of this input. Finally, more educated parents might have a better knowledge of the returns to education and/or be in a position to help their children exploit the earning potential acquired through education.

■ **Infrastructure and access to basic services:** The availability of basic services can affect the value of children's time and, consequently, household decisions concerning how this time is allocated between school and work. A lack of access to water networks, for example, can raise the value of children's time in non-schooling activities, as children are needed to undertake responsibility for water collection, or to help cover the cost of purchasing water. In addition to its health and other social benefits, therefore, expanding access to basic services is an important strategy for getting children, and particularly girls, into school and out of work.

■ **Technological change:** Technology of production, both in agriculture and other sectors, has proved to be influential in determining demand for child labour. Although it is difficult to disentangle the income from the substitution effects, there is evidence that changes in technology might reduce returns to child labour and increase returns to education. Hence, policies, especially in the agricultural sector, that aim at introducing innovations requiring an increase in the average skill level are likely to help reducing the demand of child labour and increase the demand for more skilled labour force.

■ **Youth labour market:** Returns to education are an important determinant of human capital investment decisions. The decision to enter and to remain in school depends on the expected benefits. If chances of employment after "graduation" are low or transition from school to work is difficult and lengthy, it is likely that children,

especially from poor households, will decide to leave school early and begin to work. Policies aimed at improving youth employment outcomes are likely to reduce child labour and early drop out. However, there is still no substantive evidence that offers strong support to this hypothesis.

18. Missing from the preceding discussion are measures addressing the employers of children external family, who fall outside the household decision-making framework.² Collaboration with the private sector, especially through fair trade agreements, is currently being discussed as one possible instrument in this context. The "Fair Trade" initiative, which assures, *inter alia*, that producers receive prices that cover the cost of production and a social 'premium' to improve their living and working conditions, has grown rapidly in recent years in a number of developing countries. The potential effects of this initiative are twofold: on the one hand Fair Trade supports household income, on the other it might change parents incentive to employ children if no child labour/and or schooling conditionality are included. There is, however, relatively little research on the effectiveness of FairTrade in mitigating demand for child workers, in improving children's working conditions and in increasing school attendance.

4. "SECOND CHANCE" LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

19. Second chance learning opportunities are critical to helping children whose education has been interrupted or hampered by involvement in child labour. These include children never having had the chance to enter school, early drop-outs and students lagging behind because their time and energy for study is curtailed by the exigencies of work.

4.1 Reintegration through transitional education

20. Transitional education (TE) programmes are aimed at smoothing the transition of child labourers and other vulnerable children into the formal school system as a key component of broader efforts to promote their constructive reintegration in society. They are based on the premise that child labourers are often difficult to insert directly (back) into the formal education system because of their age, different life experiences and lack of familiarity with the school environment. Their lack of formal education also frequently leaves them too far behind their peers academically to catch up on their own. If systems and programmes do not take these challenging characteristics into account, then inevitably they will either not reach these children or will fail to retain them in the classroom.

21. Transitional education programmes are therefore critical to ensuring that children, once in school, remain there, and are able to learn effectively. International programming experience points to two main policy options for easing the transition of child labourers back into the formal school system (a) remedial education, providing returning children and child labourers with special remedial support within the regular classroom context; and (b) "bridging" education, involving intensive compensatory or "catch-up" courses designed to raise academic proficiency or help students pass proficiency level examinations, offered in either non-formal community schools or in school facilities prior to, during or after regular classes.

² It is worth noting that in the case of the overwhelming majority of child workers, the "suppliers" and "demanders" are one and the same – parents – so that the household decision model can be utilized to also interpret the behaviour of these children.

- **Remedial education (RE):** RE efforts providing returning students with special support in the regular classroom are consistent with broader efforts towards inclusive education and mainstreaming disadvantaged children in the regular school system. Depending primarily on existing school facilities and human resources, they are often the most cost-effective and sustainable TE option. Remedial education might be most appropriate for younger, 7-9 year-olds returning to school, whose remedial learning needs and adjustment difficulties are lesser than their older counterparts. One concern emerging from international experience in the area of remedial education is teacher capacity. Teachers in many developing country contexts are not well qualified and many lack training in even basic teaching skills, calling into question their ability to cope with additional demands of remedial education for children with special learning needs. Placing local teaching assistants in the classroom, as in the India *Balsakhi* programme may be one way of addressing this concern.

- **“Bridging” education (BE):** BE courses provide children with a more gradual introduction into the school environment, and a teacher dedicated exclusively to their learning needs. They are designed to ensure that children have good foundations in basic literacy and numeracy skills and the prerequisite attitudes and habits for learning. The most common model involves the establishment of non-formal networks of community schools offering intensive courses designed to raise academic proficiency to a level permitting entry into the formal school system at the age-appropriate grade level. Such programmes are useful in hard-to-reach areas lacking formal school facilities and for groups of disadvantaged children (e.g., street children) outside the reach of State structures. However, in the absence of a link to the formal education system, non-formal education programmes risk evolving into parallel, frequently inferior, education systems for disadvantaged children, rather than as bridges to the regular classroom.

4.2 Flexible schooling for working children

22. Flexible schooling (FS) programmes are targeted specifically to working children, and are designed to make school more accommodating of the exigencies of work. These programmes are not therefore aimed primarily at reducing child work *per se*, but rather at increasing school attendance and reducing drop-out among child labourers. Flexible schooling programmes are designed to balance the learning and earning needs of families and children by facilitating fluid work/study schedules. They can encompass formal, non-formal and work-based learning arrangements, and, ideally, help children who need or want to work to move back and forth between systems considered to be equally valid and relevant

23. International programming experience points to three main policy options for helping children to combine work and school more easily: (a) flexible delivery modes, designed to make schooling more accommodative of children’s work schedules; (b) adaptive curricula, designed to make course contents more relevant to the lives of working children; and (c) substitute non-formal education, designed to impart basic literacy, numeracy and life skills at times not in conflict with work. Ethical issues associated with attempting to accommodate rather than combat children’s work need to be looked at closely when introducing flexible schooling measures, in order to avoid legitimizing child labour. These measures should only be applied to benign forms of work. Unconditional worst forms of child labour (e.g., forced and bonded labour, trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation) and hazardous forms of work should be targeted for elimination.

- **Flexible delivery modes and adaptive curricula:** Flexible school scheduling and curricula are often of particular relevance in rural agricultural contexts (e.g.,

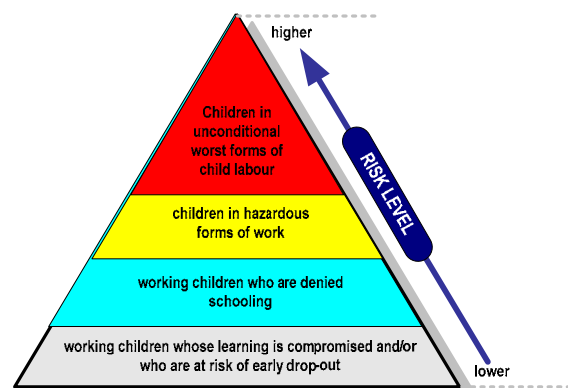
family-based agricultural work), where the sheer numbers of children at work make its elimination an unrealistic initial policy objective, and where there is thus a need for strategies to accommodate work and school. There are a variety of possible *flexible delivery modes* making schooling more accommodating of children's work schedules, including setting daily school hours to accommodate daily work schedules; setting the yearly academic calendar to reflect local conditions; adding additional school shifts during off-work hours; and introduction of independent study modules to compensate for class time lost due to work. These measures are typically combined with *adaptive curricula* reflecting the socio-cultural realities of working children and tailored to their needs and interests.

■ **Substitute non-formal education:** Non-formal substitute education is designed to provide disadvantaged children, and particularly working children, with basic literacy, numeracy and life skills, but not necessarily formal school accreditation. Courses are frequently held at the work site, with lessons conducted at times and for a duration that accommodates children's work schedule. Non-formal substitute education programmes run counter to the broad strategies of mainstreaming and inclusive education and as such are typically targeted only to children with no prospects of entering the formal system. For hard-to-reach groups of working children such as street children, and other groups with few prospects of entering formal schooling, non-formal programmes may represent the only chance of acquiring basic life skills and knowledge.

5. DIRECT ACTION: REMOVAL, RECOVERY AND REINTEGRATION

24. Direct action is needed to ensure the removal, recovery and reintegration of working children whose rights are most compromised, i.e., those facing the greatest degree of hazard and/or exploitation. This refers, first and foremost, to children in so-called "unconditional worst forms of child labour" (activities against fundamental human rights) and those in hazardous forms of work (activities compromising children's safety, health or moral development). Better legal inspections and enforcement, together with grassroots level monitoring, are critical to identifying and removing the stock of children already in the worst forms of child labour. Recovery and rehabilitation services, including remedial education discussed above, are important to ensuring the successful reintegration of former child labourers and preventing their return to work.

Figure 3. Priority target groups for direct action measures



5.1 Identification, removal and recovery

■ **Identification and removal (direct action):** Immediate, direct action is needed to rescue children from unconditional worst forms of child labour and provide them with the support and follow-up needed for their recovery and reintegration. Such action is relevant above all in cases of trafficked children, children subjected to commercial sexual exploitation, and children facing other extreme forms of hazard or exploitation in the workplace. The effective identification and follow-up of these groups depends, first and foremost, on mobilising and capacitating the local State and non-governmental actors that operate closest to where these frequently-hidden forms of child labour occur.

■ **Recovery and reintegration:** Follow-up actions ensuring that rescued children are provided a full range of needed social services (e.g., emergency shelter, needs assessment and referral, medical care, psycho-social counselling, legal support, family tracing and assessment, post reintegration follow-up, etc.) are also critical. Regulatory frameworks need to define minimum standards of care for former child labourers and other vulnerable children, and to specify the respective roles of the various State and private actors in meeting these care needs.

■ **Strengthening enforcement and monitoring of child labour laws:** In many developing country contexts there is a need to strengthen the State's ability to monitor workplaces for compliance with child labour laws, starting with the priority hazardous sectors specified by governments upon ratification of ILO Convention No. 182. Numerous measures may be relevant in this context: (a) improving workplace monitoring for compliance with child labour laws; (b) training inspectors on child labour laws and on workplace inspection for occupational health and safety (OHS) purposes; (c) developing implementation guidelines for child labour laws for use by inspectors and other enforcement bodies; (d) strengthening business registration and licensing systems and extending them to informal enterprises; and (e) introducing requirements relating to validation/authentication of workers' ages as part of licensing criteria.

■ **Introducing informal community-based monitoring mechanisms.** But given the extent of child labour and the limited resources of many labour inspectorates, the formal inspection system alone is unlikely to be effective in protecting children from workplace violations in many national contexts, even with more training and a clearer legal framework. There is therefore also a need for labour inspectors to join hands with other organisations (e.g., employers' organisations, social workers, local community organisations) to form broad-based child labour monitoring systems at the local level.

6. CREATING AN "ENABLING ENVIRONMENT" FOR CHILD LABOUR REDUCTION

25. Achieving sustainable reductions in child labour also requires political commitment, an appropriate legal and regulatory framework, functioning coordinating structures, capable institutions and a mobilised society, i.e., an enabling environment.

■ **Awareness-raising:** Perceptions of child labour as either beneficial or, at worst, a necessary evil, remain entrenched in many societies. This underscores need for expanded communication efforts on the negative effects of child labour and the benefits of schooling as part of an overall strategy against child labour. Such an effort needs to take place at both national and local levels, and involve a wide variety of

communication vehicles. Baseline information on local knowledge and cultural attitudes towards child labour is needed to tailor communication messages, and to evaluate changes in awareness and attitudes following communication efforts. The urgent need to address unconditional worst forms of child labour, including human trafficking and child commercial sexual exploitation, should be a particular focus. Providing information on national child labour legislation, presented in terms that are understandable to the populations and communities concerned, is another communication priority.

■ **Social mobilisation:** Building on efforts being undertaken with support from ILO-IPEC, UNICEF and other groups, religious organizations, educational institutions, teachers' organizations, NGOs, the mass media, community-based organizations, trade unions, employers' organizations and numerous other groups need to be actively engaged in addressing child labour. Care providers in direct contact with children, including teachers and health workers, are in an especially good position to identify and refer child labourers, and therefore constitute particularly important allies in protecting children from child labour. Initiatives such as community-based child protection networks provide useful vehicles for bringing together a wide variety of stakeholders to combat child labour.

■ **Strengthening and extending the legal framework on child labour.** Laws governing child labour need to be strengthened, to serve as both a statement of national intent and as a basis for wider prevention and education efforts (UNICEF 1997). Although most countries have ratified ILO Convention No. 138 (Minimum Age), ILO Convention No. 182 (Worst Forms) and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and inconsistencies between national legislation and these international child labour norms persist in many countries. The provisions on child labour in national legislation rarely apply to the informal sector where the overwhelming majority of child labourers are found. The lack of legal protection for child domestic workers is another common shortcoming. Comprehensive reviews of current laws relating to child labour are an important initial step in the process of strengthening the child labour legal framework.

■ **Institution-strengthening:** Strengthening institutional capacity at all levels of Government is needed for continued progress towards child labour reduction goals in many national contexts. While national plans of action, PRSPs and other development plans provide solid bases for action, these frameworks are unlikely to be implemented effectively in the face of capacity constraints. Institution require strengthening in a number of areas, including using data for strategic planning, policy and programme design, programme monitoring and evaluation, programme coordination, and the mainstreaming of child labour in broader development plans and programmes.

■ **Improving co-ordination and information-sharing:** As child labour is a cross-sectoral issue, requiring close collaboration across a range of Government bodies, the clear delineation of roles, and the strengthening of coordination and information-sharing, will also be critical to the effective functioning of Government institutions and their social partners in efforts combating child labour. Assistance in the child labour field is often highly fragmented, with a large number of actors operating with little or no coordination or linkages. This leads to overlaps in assistance in some areas and to gaps in assistance in other priority areas. The starting point for improved co-ordination is a detailed mapping of current efforts in the area of child labour, and the establishment of a system for monitoring assistance on the basis of this mapping.