

The Child Labour Problem. Issues and Solutions

Edited by G.K. Lieten

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The Child Labour Problem. Issues and Solutions is the most recently published number of Defence for Children's Monitor. This number, dedicated to the child labour issue, is published at the time of the celebration of the 25th anniversary of DCI. It is an outcome of the cooperation of DCI with IREWOC, the Foundation for International Research on the Exploitation of Working Children. The book presents articles with different views on child labour policy ranging from proponents of a respectful approach to children's decision to work towards proponents of the total eradication of child labour. It also contains some articles that give insight into special cases of working children. (See Contents)

The first article deals with the achievements and shortcomings of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, since 2004 is also the year of the 15th anniversary of the adoption of the CRC by the General Assembly. Although a lot has been accomplished during these fifteen years, Professor Jaap Doek argues that the rights of children can be insured and respected in a much better way when people in the world would be willing to change their priorities.

The next article, by Kristoffel Lieten, reflects on the implications of the globalisation process for child labour. One of the main questions he treats in the article is whether globalisation can have the effect of either increasing or reducing child labour. Although a broad question and lack of empirical evidence in this field, Lieten points at some important actors and developments that can give some insights to answer it.

Included as well is an article on the right to free and compulsory education for children. Katarina Tomasevski criticizes in the article the lack of international cooperation, the "...rupture between global development goals, the right to education, and children's freedom from labour" (p.42). She stresses the importance of international children's rights in the accomplishment of education for all.

Peter Bille Larsen discusses in his article the problems of tackling child labour among indigenous and tribal children. His aim is to give a brief overview of the major child labour challenges and the root causes and drivers which make this group especially vulnerable.

Attention has been given to child trafficking practises in Burkina Faso by Albertine de Lange. She focusses on the supply side of rural-rural child labour migration and points at the belief in certain (real and alleged) benefits of children and their parents, that motivate child labour migration. Her research challenges, among other things, the common view that child labour migration always is to be understood as a crisis coping mechanism.

Walter Alarcón Glasinovich writes on the way the violation of the human rights of children has been confronted during the last ten years in Latin America. He thereby concentrates on the eradication of child labour, stressing the interrelatedness of child labour with child rights and development problems.

One of the countries that account for a substantial contribution to the world number of child workers is India. The trends in child employment here have been analysed by Uday Kumar Varma and Anoop Satpathy. In the analyses they have made a distinction between different age categories and economic activities. The positive development mentioned by them is that a decline has been observed. However, they also direct attention to some 'hidden groups', like child domestic workers, that present major challenges for research and effective action.

Virginia Murillo Herrera discusses in her article the developments in Costa Rica on the rights of children. She argues that although Costa Rica has adopted a large body of national and international regulations aimed at the protection of the rights of the underage persons, there are still many challenges to prevent and eliminate child labour and protect children.

The last article that this number of Monitor contains is about the International business codes in which child labour issues are addressed. Although companies are supposed to be leading in addressing the issue of child labour, Ans Kolk and Rob van Tulder argue that this view needs considerable modification. Nevertheless, they also point out that large international companies can potentially play a big role, if their role is not considered in isolation.

As becomes clear from the presentation of the articles, this 25th anniversary publication contains a diverse set of articles all devoted to the issues and possible solutions of child labour. General trends and specific cases are discussed that give insight into the current problem of child labour in the world.

