Child Labor and Health
ADULT EDUCATION WORKSHOP

Child Labor Publication Education Project

Child Labor Research Initiative
University of Iowa Labor Center
University of Iowa Human Rights

The University of Iowa
Child Labor and Health: Instructor's Manual

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Additional components to Child Labor and Health:
• Handouts
• Overheads

http://www.continuetolearn.uiowa.edu/laborcr/child_labor/

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Note: This module could be taught either as an independent class, or merged within the Child Labor Public Education Project (CLPEP) curriculum to create a health emphasis within the broader introduction to child labor. The following manual is designed with the assumption that the class will be taught independently, and incorporates variations of the introductory exercises and materials from the CLPEP curriculum to provide a framework for the health discussion.

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Guide for Instructors: Child Labor and Children's Health

Approaches to Adult Education
These workshop materials are designed to be used with adult, college, or other public audiences. Materials were piloted between 2002-2004 in workshops held in various Iowa communities, primarily with groups of union members, but also with members of church groups, college students, and several mixed public audiences.

Components of the materials are designed to be consistent with the principles and practices of popular education. These include encouraging group participation, drawing on the experiences of participants, and allowing time for participants to discuss and solve problems.

The workshops are designed so that participants ideally will:
• receive and share information to increase their knowledge;
• analyze information to develop understanding of the social, political, and economic conditions of their lives and worlds;
• consider options for personal or collective responses to knowledge gained during the workshop.

To be effective, workshop leaders will need to prepare and become familiar with the subjects they plan to cover, but they do not need to be all-knowing “experts.” The materials assume that an instructor's primary role during the workshops is to facilitate active learning and discussion. Large or small group activities, suggested discussion questions, and case studies are included to engage participants in analyzing information and generating their own conclusions about it. While we recommend including as many of these interactive components as possible, facilitators have the option (based on available time and objectives of the session) to select from among these activities and questions.

Using the Instructor's Manual
The instructor’s manuals are guides to workshop content and process, and include background reading and references for facilitators to review before leading workshops and discussions. Interactive adult education workshops, however, are not designed to be taught strictly by a script, so the manuals are meant to be flexible tools that can be altered as group discussions evolve or adapted for the needs of particular audiences.

We recommend that facilitators first review the materials as a package. This will provide a comprehensive knowledge base and a perspective on how different workshop components are related and which sections might be most relevant for an intended audience.

Then, we recommend that facilitators prepare their own notes and develop their own style for actual use in the classroom. This will not only make you feel better prepared, but will make the session more natural and reflective of your own speech and thought patterns.

Preparing for Workshops
In preparing to facilitate a workshop, the more you know about participants the better. We recommend, if possible, talking with the host group before the workshop to find out about their expectations, their existing knowledge level, the source of their interest in the topic, and how the workshop fits into their future plans.
Once you know something about your anticipated audience, you can select components from the materials to construct a workshop that will be most relevant to their interests.

In selecting components to include, it may help to focus on a few key points:

1) Introduce and discuss the concept of child labor. Because issues surrounding child labor are complex and often elicit strong feelings from participants, we have found it important to open workshops by establishing a rapport among participants and allowing them to air questions and concerns about the topic. We recommend beginning workshops by devoting at least 15 minutes to the opening exercise, “Defining child labor.” This allows participants to examine their own assumptions, values, and opinions while developing a shared understanding of the nature of child labor. Subsequent discussion of any of the other topics included in the workshops can then build upon this understanding.

2) Focus the middle section of the workshop on a few carefully selected aspects of the problem (see ideas for options below).

3) Allow time for participants to synthesize and respond to the information. Ideally, this occurs through a closing activity (such as “Analyzing a Case Study”). Knowledge about the global problem of child labor can seem overwhelming to many participants, and it is important to allocate time to discuss measures that governments, organizations, and individuals are taking to address the problem. Pay attention to the time early on in the workshop to make sure that there will be enough time later on to discuss these issues.

There is more information included in the instructor’s manuals than can be presented in any one workshop. Materials cover a range of issues, and facilitators should choose the topics and activities that they feel will best communicate an understanding of the problem of child labor with a particular audience. There is more educational value in selecting just a few segments to present or in spreading topics out over a series of sessions than flooding participants with information in a short time.
Assembling a Workshop

The comprehensive child labor workshop has five sections that take participants through an understanding of what child labor is, the scope of the global problem today, an introduction to the history of child labor in the U.S., factors that contribute to the problem today, and ways in which people have responded to the problem. Each of these sections is adaptable and can be condensed or expanded depending on what a facilitator chooses to emphasize. Materials can be used for short one-hour sessions, longer three- to five- hour workshops, or can be used as part of a series of several one- or two-hour sessions.

The additional workshop materials that focus more intensively on child labor in relation to international labor standards, international trade, and children’s health can be used to either follow up on an introductory workshop in later sessions, or can be incorporated into the basic workshop structure to expand on information in a particular area.

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<tr>
<td>Time frame:</td>
<td>15-30 min.</td>
<td>5-25 min.</td>
<td>10-50 min.</td>
<td>10-45 min.</td>
<td>10-70 min.</td>
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<td>Main points and activities from which to choose:</td>
<td>Activity: Defining child labor (15-30 min.)</td>
<td>Overview: International and U.S. child labor statistics (5-10 min.)</td>
<td>Overview: Child labor in U.S. history (10-20 min.)</td>
<td>Overview: International labor standards in the global economy (5 min.)</td>
<td>Overview: Responses to the problem of child labor (10-15 min.)</td>
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<td>Discussion: “Why should child labor matter to us?” (5 min.)</td>
<td>Activity: State and federal child labor law quiz (15 min.)</td>
<td>Discussion: “Historically, what factors contributed to child labor (or its decline) in the past?” (5-10 min.)</td>
<td>Discussion &amp; Overview: What factors contribute to the problem? (5-20 min.)</td>
<td>Discussion: “Which strategies do you consider most important?” (5-10 min.)</td>
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<td>Activity: Rights and standards for children and workers (15 min.)</td>
<td>Activity: Analyzing historical strategies in combating child labor (20 min.)</td>
<td>Case study: Child labor in Ecuador’s banana industry (10 min.)</td>
<td>Activity: Analyzing case studies &amp; developing messages (45-60 min.)</td>
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Sample Two-hour Agenda that Addresses Trade, International Standards, and/or Health Issues:

1. What is Child Labor? (20 minutes)
   • **Activity:** Defining child labor
   • **Discussion:** “Why should child labor matter to us?”

2. How Widespread is Child Labor Today? (10 minutes)
   • **Overview:** International and U.S. child labor statistics

3. Child Labor and Child Labor Reform in U.S. History (10 minutes)
   • **Overview:** Child labor in U.S. history
   • **Discussion:** “Historically, what factors contributed to child labor (or its decline) in the past?”

4. Why is Child Labor Still Prevalent Today? (15 minutes)
   • **Overview:** International labor standards in the global economy
   • **Discussion & Overview:** What factors contribute to the problem?

5. Child Labor and International Trade Issues (45 minutes)
   • **Overview:** Background on international trade issues
   • **Discussion & Overview:** Links between international trade and child labor issues
   or

6. Child Labor and Children's Health Issues (45 minutes)
   • **Overview:** Effects of child labor on children’s health
   • **Discussion & Overview:** Emphasis on health effects of particular industries

7. Unions and the Global Struggle Against Child Labor (20 minutes)
   • **Overview:** Responses to the problem of child labor
   • **Activity:** Analyzing case studies & developing messages

**Updating Materials**

These materials were prepared in 2002-2004. While the workshop outlines, activities, and sequences should remain useful for some time, particular statistics on child labor or information about policies on labor standards and international trade may become dated, and facilitators should be prepared to consult references listed in the materials and to update materials with new data or statistics as needed.
Introductions

Introduce yourself and, if the group is not too large, ask participants to introduce themselves by giving their names and identifying the union or organization to which they belong (if applicable).

Children in all societies are expected to do some forms of work; most of us in this room probably did some form of work when we were children or expect our own children to work. Some forms of work promote self-confidence, responsibility, and skill development, while others can be harmful to children’s health and development. Some forms of work could have both positive and negative consequences for child workers.

Part I: What is Child Labor and How Widespread is it? [20 minutes including activity]

GROUP ACTIVITY: Defining child labor [15 minutes]

Objectives

• Involve participants in formulating a working definition of “child labor” from their perspectives
• Introduce distinctions between “child work” and “child labor”

Materials

• Worksheet A: What kinds of work do you consider acceptable?
• Worksheet B: Spectrum of acceptability
• Flip-chart or chalk board

Instructions

• Participants each receive a copy of “Worksheet A” listing 5 child labor scenarios and are split into groups of 5-10 people (depending on audience size). Each group receives a copy of “Worksheet B” with a spectrum spanning from “completely unacceptable” to “completely acceptable.”
• In groups, participants are given 10 minutes to discuss where on the spectrum each scenario falls, and to mark where each scenario falls if their group reaches consensus.
• At the end of 10 minutes, groups take turns reporting on one scenario. Each group is asked: Why did your group choose where to place the scenario on the spectrum? What criteria made a given example more acceptable or less acceptable?
• While groups answer, the instructor documents answers on a flip chart by listing, in two columns: 1) Why some conditions are acceptable; 2) Why some conditions are unacceptable.

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• After each group reports, ask the other groups where they placed that same scenario on their spectrum, and why. Were there differences in their interpretation of the example?
• Based on the answers in each column, ask participants which of these factors would be the same for child and adult workers, and which are unique concerns governing child labor. What are the key factors that make some forms of children’s work unacceptable, qualifying them as “child labor”? 
The International Labor Organization (ILO), a specialized agency of the United Nations, published a report in 2002 on economically active children in the world. The report estimated how many of these working children were performing child labor, defined by three criteria:1

1. “Labour that is performed by a child who is under the minimum age specified for that kind of work (as defined by national legislation, in accordance with accepted international standards) and that is, thus, likely to impede the child’s education and full development.”

2. “Labour that jeopardizes the physical, mental or moral well-being of a child, either because of its nature or because of the conditions in which it is carried out, known as hazardous work”

3. “The unconditional worst forms of child labour, which are internationally defined as slavery, trafficking, debt bondage and other forms of forced labor, forced recruitment of children for use in armed conflict, prostitution and pornography, and illicit activities.”

Using this definition of child labor, the ILO report estimated:

• 246 million children between the ages of 5-17 are involved in child labor.2

Q: TO GET A SENSE OF HOW LARGE THIS NUMBER IS, DOES ANYONE KNOW THE POPULATION OF THE U.S. COUNTED IN THE LAST CENSUS?


• Even more surprising, simple minimum age violations only represent 27% of child labor cases. 73% of these children work in jobs classified as hazardous or the “unconditional worst forms” of child labor (which, by definition, are also hazardous).3

[OVERHEAD: ILO STANDARDS ON HAZARDOUS WORK]


3 A Future Without Child Labor, 17, 18. 170.5 million children between the ages of 5-17, of a total of 245.5 million child laborers in that age group, are estimated to be engaged in hazardous work.
Part II: What Types of Hazardous Jobs are Children Performing Today?

Many of the jobs that children perform are hazardous by any standard. Mining, construction, and agriculture rank as the three most hazardous sectors for workers across the globe, in both developing and industrialized countries.\(^4\) Yet children can be found working in each of these sectors.

In parts of Africa, Latin America and Asia, children work in underground mines, opencast mines and quarries. They face a range of hazards, including cave-ins, injury from carrying heavy loads, and exposure to dust and chemicals. An ILO study in Madagascar found that 53% of the children in small-scale mines and quarries were aged 12 or younger.\(^5\)

Agriculture accounts for the majority of fatal workplace accidents around the globe each year\(^6\), it is also the sector in which children are most frequently employed (70% of all working children can be found in agriculture, hunting, forestry, and fishing).\(^7\) Although the work performed by children in agriculture varies widely, “child labor often assumes serious proportions in commercial agriculture, associated with global markets for cocoa, coffee, cotton, rubber, sisal, tea, and other commodities.”\(^8\)

Children in agriculture can be exposed to a range of hazards, such as dangerous machinery, sharp tools, pesticides, heavy lifting, extreme temperatures, noise, and lack of water and sanitary facilities.


\(^5\) A Future Without Child Labor, 30-31.


\(^7\) A Future Without Child Labor, 23.

\(^8\) A Future Without Child Labor, 25.
Less than 9% of child laborers are involved in manufacturing, and only about 5% are estimated to be involved directly in manufacturing goods for export – but even this small percentage amounts to around 15 million children. Most child labor, even in manufacturing, is somewhat hidden, occurring not in large factories, but in small workshops or in homes.

As these pictures demonstrate, child manufacturing workers may operate dangerous machinery, and frequently lack basic safety equipment. In one study in India, children under 7 years of age were performing almost all tasks involved in match production, including dipping sticks into chemicals, counting matches, making boxes, and sticking labels. Nearly all workers were exposed to concentrated toxic chemicals, as well as risk of fire and explosion. Children received approximately half of adult wages, worked longer hours, and were considered more dependable than adults.

Child domestic workers, most of whom are girls, are often overlooked by labor laws. There are links between child domestic service and human trafficking. Many child domestic workers work far from their families, under the total control of their employers. They frequently experience long work days, with little or no pay, and may be victims of physical, emotional, or even sexual abuse.

Some urban children in desperate poverty make their living by scavenging in garbage dumps, looking for bottles, clothes, plastic, and other objects to sell. They risk disease, cuts, toxic fumes, and injury by bulldozers or dump trucks. Child garbage pickers are more common in big cities in developing countries, such as Brazil, Mexico, the Philippines, and Thailand.

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9 Every Child Counts, 23.
10 By the Sweat and Toil of Children, Volume I, 2.
12 A Future Without Child Labor, 29.
13 Children at Work, 48.
Part III: How does Hazardous Work Affect Children?

Many cases of child labor would be considered hazardous by adult standards. But children are different than adults. Although we often think back fondly to our youth, when we felt energetic and invincible, children’s and adolescents’ bodies may actually be more vulnerable than adults’ bodies to certain workplace hazards.

Q: HOW MIGHT WORKPLACE HAZARDS AFFECT CHILDREN AND ADULTS DIFFERENTLY?

[GIVE PARTICIPANTS TIME TO DISCUSS ANSWERS WITHIN THE FULL GROUP.]

Throughout childhood and adolescence, organs, tissues, and bones are developing and maturing at different rates. At each stage, work-related hazards could pose different risks to a child’s healthy development. For example:

- **Musculoskeletal development** continues through adolescence, until growth plates on the ends of bones fuse into the bone. During times of rapid bone growth, children and adolescents are at high risk of injury to ligaments and bone growth plates. Heavy work may place excessive stress on growing bones and cause skeletal damage or impaired growth.15

- **Organ and Tissue Development**: Development of the brain continues through adolescence, as do development of the lungs and the endocrine system, which guides hormonal functions. The rapid cell growth associated with childhood and adolescence has raised concerns that chemical exposures at work could harm immature organs, affect hormonal balance, or increase the risk of cancers.16

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• Studies on noise exposure conclude that young workers are more susceptible to hearing loss than adults. Noise exposure limits set for adults may not be adequate for children.17
• Children have a lower heat tolerance than adults, so maximum heat levels permitted for adults may not be safe for children.18
• Chemical and Lead Absorption: Studies suggest that children absorb higher concentrations of chemicals than adults, when they are exposed to similar doses (per unit body weight).19 A study of children living in a fruit-growing region of Washington State found that younger children tended to have higher pesticide concentrations in their urine than older children.20 Some scholars argue that children experience higher exposures to chemicals because their developing bodies are less capable of excreting toxic substances; others point to their greater intake of water, food, and air, relative to body weight.21 It is well-documented that children absorb substantially more lead than adults, after similar exposures, especially when they suffer nutritional deficiencies (such as iron, calcium, or zinc). Once absorbed, lead is more likely to affect the central nervous system (such as the brain) in children; in adults, lead toxicity tends to show up primarily as peripheral nervous system dysfunction (such as muscle weakness).22
• Children and adolescents have a greater need for food and rest, relative to adults.23 In fact, research demonstrates that adolescents need as much or more sleep as younger children. The amount of sleep needed by adolescents does not decrease significantly between the ages 10-18.

[OVERHEAD: WORK TOOLS AND SAFETY EQUIPMENT…]

Even when child workers are provided with safety equipment that meets adult standards, the equipment may not be sufficient for children. Safety equipment is not designed for children’s physical proportions, working capacity, and limitations. Using seats and workbenches designed for adults may contribute to repetitive motion injuries, back problems, and other disorders among child workers.24

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17 Children at Work, 74.
18 Children at Work, 74.
19 Children at Work, 63: “…a greater proportion of a similar dose of a chemical per unit body weight is likely to accumulate in the body of a child, and the concentration of the chemical in the blood and tissues of the child is also likely to be higher for a similar exposure.”
21 Children at Work, 62-66.
22 Children at Work, 68-70.
24 Children at Work, 58.
Developmentally, the ability to analyze options, consequences, and the credibility of sources increases through adolescence. The ages of about 11-12 and 15-16 are important transition periods in gaining the ability to assess risks. These abilities are also affected by the adolescent’s experience and knowledge about the situation.\textsuperscript{25}

Despite their relative inexperience, young workers often receive little training or supervision. Several studies in the United States concluded that at least half of young workers receive no health and safety training on the job. Supervisors are frequently absent when youth are working. The average young worker in one U.S. study spent only 12\% of his or her time in the presence of a supervisor.\textsuperscript{26}

Considering the large number of child laborers engaged in hazardous work, and the physical and developmental vulnerabilities of children, it is not surprising that children and adolescents experience large numbers of work-related injuries. In fact, most studies emphasize that rates of work-related injuries among children are likely to be far higher than any estimates suggest. In the United States, for example, the Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses is based on lost workdays following injuries; however, many youth are part-time employees, who may not be scheduled to work for several days following their injuries. The survey also exempts small-scale agricultural employers and youth working for their family’s business.\textsuperscript{27} Another U.S. survey (National Electronic Injury Surveillance System) is based on hospital emergency room data, but may reflect only one-third of all work-related injuries.\textsuperscript{28} Globally, many child laborers are not covered by any workers’ compensation systems that could provide a means of measuring injury rates, or are working “off the books.”

Even excluding the many injured child workers who are not counted in estimates, the existing statistics are quite high. Surveys of 26 countries by the International Labor Organization have found that nearly one in every four economically active children suffered illnesses or injuries. Approximately half of these children had to stop work temporarily due to their injuries.\textsuperscript{29} In the United States, the National Electronic Injury Surveillance System found that youth aged 15-17 have a rate of work-related injury nearly twice as high as the rate for all workers studied: 4.9 per 100 versus 2.9 per 100 full-time equivalent workers.\textsuperscript{30}

\textsuperscript{25} Protecting Youth at Work, 95.
\textsuperscript{26} Protecting Youth at Work, 88.
\textsuperscript{29} Children at Work, 24.
A recent ILO study represents one of the first attempts to quantify the global annual impact of death and disability, in terms of healthy years lost, due to hazardous child labor. This chart includes both the estimated total years lost (by industry, per year) and the rate of lost years in each industry (per 100 full-time equivalent employees, per year). Based on these major economic sectors, the study estimates that 2.7 million healthy years of life are lost due to child labor fatality and disability across the globe each year.

While shocking, this estimate is almost certain to underestimate the impact of hazardous child labor. It does not include death and disability relating to the “unconditional worst forms of child labor” such as sexual exploitation, child soldiers, and drug trafficking, because of a lack of data. Also, statistics from industrialized countries, such as the United States, were used to estimate injury rates in certain industries when developing countries lacked such statistics. It is likely that rates of work-related injury and illness are actually much higher in developing countries, where working conditions are usually more difficult.

While some jobs are clearly more dangerous for young workers than others, injury statistics demonstrate that no sector is “safe” from youth injuries. Globally, 70.4% of economically active children work in agriculture; 70.2% of work-related injuries and illnesses among children occur in agriculture. The next three highest employment sectors for children are: retail, service, and manufacturing; these three sectors also account for the three highest incidents of youth work-related injury, following agriculture.

In the United States, 51.8% of 15-17 year-old workers are employed in retail; 54% of documented youth work-related injuries occur in retail. The service sector employs 25.9% of 15-17 year-old workers; the service sector accounts for 20% of youth work-related injuries.

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32 *Health Benefits of Eliminating Child Labor*, pp. 43-44.
34 *Protecting Youth at Work*, pp. 46, 75.
Some jobs have proven particularly hazardous for young workers, according to work-related fatality statistics. In the United States, agriculture accounts for only 8% of youth employment, but has the highest incidence of fatalities of any sector, accounting for 40.2% of young worker fatalities.\(^{35}\) Although global fatality statistics are unavailable for child laborers, construction, transport, mining, and agriculture appear to have the highest rates of injury for child workers, compared with other sectors.\(^{36}\)

In the United States, a substantial percentage of injuries and fatalities among working youth occur when employers violate federal child labor regulations. A 1995 study found that 19% of youth with work-related injuries and treated in emergency departments appeared to have been injured in jobs prohibited by federal child labor law. Of 104 deaths of young workers investigated by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration in the years 1984-1987, 41% were engaged in work prohibited by federal child labor law.\(^{37}\)

The article shown here is one recent example of a young worker who died while performing work prohibited by federal child labor law. In this case, a 15-year old was working as a forklift operator in a warehouse, when the vehicle suddenly went into reverse, ran through the loading dock gates, flipped over and plunged four feet onto a concrete floor. The teen driver was reportedly pinned under the forklift and died on the way to the hospital. Operating a forklift is a hazardous occupation, banned for youth under 16 by federal child labor law. The company was fined the maximum $11,000 penalty by the Department of Labor. OSHA also fined the company $4,900 for allowing an unqualified forklift instructor to train the young worker.\(^{38}\)

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35 Protecting Youth at Work, p. 46, 81.
37 Protecting Youth at Work, p. 88.
38 Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Press Release: “OSHA Cites Atlanta-Area Firm for Fatal Forklift Accident,” October 16, 2003. HRnext article can be found at www2.hrnext.com/Article.cfm/Nav/5.0.0.0.28050.0.
Injuries and fatalities are not the only measure of the impact of work on young people’s health. Some studies have begun to look at the way work affects children’s psychological development, self-esteem, and future achievement.

Several studies in the United States have found that the amount of hours a teen works can have a significant (positive or negative) impact on the teen’s health and development. Using 20 hours per week as the dividing line between “low intensity” and “high intensity” work, some studies have drawn the following conclusions:

- Adolescents who work less than 20 hours per week seem to have lower high school dropout rates than students who do not work. However, working more than 20 hours per week is linked to higher dropout rates.
- Adolescents who work less than 20 hours per week tend to complete more months of higher education than students who do not work. On the other hand, working over 20 hours per week is associated with completing fewer months of higher education.
- Adolescents who work more than 20 hours per week are less likely to practice “good health habits”, such as getting adequate sleep and exercise, and eating breakfast.
- Adolescents who work more than 20 hours per week have higher rates of “problem behaviors” including alcohol, cigarette, and drug use, and minor delinquency (such as theft, aggressive behavior, and school misconduct).

Although 20 hours has frequently been used by researchers as the benchmark for analyzing work experiences, it is not a scientifically-determined guideline. Some studies have found negative effects associated with youth working over 15 hours per week, and other studies have found positive outcomes associated with working over 20 hours per week.

The quality of work also affects young workers’ psychological health. For example, some U.S. studies have concluded:

- Overly stressful or demanding jobs during high school can increase the likelihood of depression in the 12th grade and 4 years after high school, and may continue to diminish young adults’ coping strategies 4 years after high school.
- Teen workers who feel their work gives them money to go out with friends report a greater sense of well-being. This perception of good pay can continue to cause an increased sense of well-being 4 years after high school.
- High school students who view their work and school training as contributing to each other are less likely to be depressed in the 12th grade.

39 Protecting Youth at Work, p. 97: 115-134, 140.
Some research has begun to indicate the long-term health effects for children who perform hazardous work at young ages. For example, ILO studies conducted in India, Korea, Malaysia, and Nigeria suggest that child laborers suffer growth deficits, compared to children (with initially similar height and growth patterns) who attend school.\textsuperscript{41} A Brazilian study found that adults who began work at an age younger than 10 are significantly more likely to report “less than good” adult health than those who began work at older ages.\textsuperscript{42}

Other research suggests that the high rate of female illiteracy resulting from girl child labor has serious health implications for future generations. Maternal illiteracy has been associated with low birth weight which can then diminish cognitive function in early adult life. Studies have also linked lack of maternal education in a community with higher incidence of severe child malnutrition. Furthermore, illiterate parents are less likely to send their children to school, which can perpetuate a cycle of child labor.\textsuperscript{43}

Hazardous child labor may also pose health risks for the larger community. For example, silicosis, which is prevalent among workers in granite quarries, brick factories, and stone-cutting facilities, is closely linked to the development of tuberculosis. In many countries, these industries employ high numbers of child laborers. Younger workers appear to be at significant risk of developing silico-tuberculosis due to their early exposure, frequently poor working conditions, and poor nutrition.\textsuperscript{44}

Children who are working because of family poverty may face the greatest risks at work. Children from impoverished families are more likely to suffer from related health problems, such as malnutrition, fatigue, and anemia. When exposed to work-related hazards, these children are at a higher risk of illness, disability, and premature death.\textsuperscript{45} Low-income children are also more likely than children from high-income families to be employed in high-risk occupations such as agriculture, mining, and construction.\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{41} \textit{Children at Work}, 14-15.
\textsuperscript{45} \textit{Children at Work}, 57.
Part IV: The Challenge of Combating Hazardous Child Labor in Agriculture

The agricultural sector deserves special treatment in this discussion; it represents the largest share of child laborers, and appears to be one of the most hazardous sectors of employment for adults and youth alike. What are the risks of agricultural labor for children, and what challenges do nations face in eliminating those risks?

According to the ILO, an estimated 1.3 billion workers are active in agricultural production worldwide, representing half of the world labor force. The majority of this work is concentrated in developing countries, and nearly half is wage labor. As we discussed earlier, agricultural work is estimated to account for as much as 70% of all child labor cases. 47

Agriculture is considered one of the three most hazardous occupations in the world, both in terms of the rate of fatalities and the incidence of serious injury. An ILO SafeWork report in 2000 estimates: “…out of a total of 330,000 fatal workplace accidents worldwide, there were some 170,000 casualties among agricultural workers. The increasing use of machinery and of pesticides and other agrochemicals has aggravated the risks. In several countries, the fatal accident rate in agriculture is double the average for all other industries. Machinery such as tractors and harvesters cause the highest frequency and fatality rates of injury. Exposure to pesticides and other agrochemicals constitute major occupational hazards which may result in poisoning and death and, in certain cases, work-related cancer and reproductive impairments.” 48

Although the rate of fatal accidents decreased in the mining and construction sectors during the 1990’s, the rate of fatal accidents in agriculture has continued to increase, both in industrialized and developing countries. In addition to machinery and pesticides, agricultural workers are exposed to a variety of occupational hazards, including: use of sharp tools, exposure to extreme temperatures, contact with animals and plants, lack of clean water, inadequate sanitation, as well as a variety of musculoskeletal risks due to heavy lifting, bending, and repetitive work. 49

As we have discussed, agricultural accidents also account for the highest proportion of injuries and fatalities to working youth. (Globally, 70.2% of work-related injuries and illnesses among children occur in agriculture.)
In the United States, agriculture accounts for only 8% of youth employment, but has the highest incidence of fatalities of any sector, accounting for 40.2% of young worker fatalities.\(^{50}\)

[OVERHEAD: PESTICIDE RISKS INCREASE IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES]

In all nations, pesticides represent a serious potential health risk to agricultural workers. As of 1993, “the World Health Organization has estimated an annual worldwide incidence of 3 million cases of acute, severe pesticide poisoning…matched possibly by a much greater number of unreported cases of mild-to-moderate [pesticide] intoxication, with some 220,000 deaths.”\(^{51}\)

However, the likelihood of experiencing pesticide poisoning appears to be much greater for agricultural workers in developing countries than for those in industrialized nations. For example, in 1991, although developing countries used only 20% of the world’s pesticides, they accounted for 99% of the poisonings arising from pesticide use.\(^{52}\) This discrepancy relates, in part, to a lack of chemical legislation in developing countries, such as: prohibition or restriction of highly hazardous pesticides, protection of children from chemical exposure, and labeling requirements. In 2001, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Health Organization reported: “Around 30% of pesticides marketed in developing countries with an estimated market value of US$900 million annually do not meet internationally accepted quality standards. They are posing a serious threat to human health and the environment…”\(^{53}\) Once again, the regions most likely to employ child labor appear to be the same regions facing the greatest occupational health threats.

[OVERHEAD: AGRICULTURAL WORKERS LACK ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE]

Occupational risks in agriculture coincide with a widespread rural dilemma – lack of adequate health and medical services. Technological advances, health personnel, clinics, and other health resources are often directed toward urban centers, leaving rural areas with limited health care, at primary through tertiary levels.\(^{54}\)

Furthermore, few agricultural workers receive health insurance benefits as part of their compensation package. Even in the United States, only approximately 8% of the farmworker population reported having health insurance provided by their employers, and 26% of minor teenage farm workers reported difficulty in obtaining health care.\(^{55}\) Family farmers also frequently lack insurance or have limited, high deductible policies.

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\(^{50}\) Protecting Youth at Work, p. 46, 81.


\(^{52}\) ibid.


\(^{54}\) Forastieri, “The ILO Programme on Occupational Safety and Health in Agriculture.”

\(^{55}\) Report on the Youth Labor Force, p. 54
A growing number of rural people, particularly in developing countries, live below the poverty line. Among other factors, growing poverty can decrease agricultural workers’ overall health due to inadequate diet, poor housing conditions, poor sanitation, and related illnesses.\textsuperscript{56} These health risks, in turn, can make agricultural workers more susceptible to work-related illness and injury.\textsuperscript{57}

Poverty is also an extremely important factor in pushing children out of school and into work. Some common agricultural payroll practices may exacerbate the problem, by providing additional incentives for adult workers to recruit children. For example, in many agricultural workplaces, payment is based on weight or pieces of products harvested, rather than hourly pay. Employers may require a minimum amount of a crop to be collected in order for any wage to be paid. These systems provide strong incentives for parents to recruit their children to join them in the fields.\textsuperscript{58}

Related incentives exist on family farms, where financial pressures, due to low or fluctuating farm prices and the resulting need to pay off large debts, encourage maximum production and child labor.

Despite the many challenges to the health of agricultural workers in general, and child agricultural workers in particular, many countries offer relatively few legal protections for these workers. In many countries, safety and health legislation was enacted as governments were aggressively promoting industrialization; these laws frequently excluded agriculture from their scope. For example, occupational safety and health regulations exclude most agricultural work in India, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe, among others. In other countries, laws may cover full-time agricultural work, but not part-time, seasonal, or temporary work, which are increasingly common employment relationships in agriculture.

Social Security and Workers’ Compensation systems may not cover agricultural workers, and in many cases only cover full-time permanent employees. For example, the Social Security Institute in Panama estimates that it covers only 8.8% of all agricultural workers.

Child labor laws also frequently provide exemptions for some, or all, agricultural work. A 1996 ILO study of child labor legislation in 157 ILO Member States found that in over 40 countries, agricultural work was permitted at \textit{any} age.\textsuperscript{59}

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\textsuperscript{56} Safety and Health in Agriculture, Report VI (1).
\textsuperscript{57} Children at Work, 57.
\textsuperscript{59} Safety and Health in Agriculture, Report VI (1).
Even in some industrialized countries, agricultural work is subject to fewer occupational regulations. In the United States, for example, agricultural workers may not be eligible for such legal requirements as minimum wage, overtime, and OSHA protection. While most businesses with annual sales of less than $500,000 are exempt from federal minimum wage laws, agricultural employers have an additional exemption: if an agricultural employer used less than 500 “man days” of agricultural labor (which equals approximately seven full-time workers) in any calendar quarter of the preceding calendar year, the employer is exempt from federal minimum wage provisions. Agricultural employers of all sizes are exempt from federal overtime requirements. The industry is also exempt from most OSHA standards, and OSHA is prohibited from conducting inspections on some small agricultural operations, even after receiving complaints about the operation or after a fatal employee injury.60

Federal child labor laws are also less restrictive for agricultural work than for most non-agricultural employment. Children working on farms owned or operated by parents are exempt from federal agricultural child labor provisions. Children may perform non-hazardous agricultural work at younger ages, with fewer restrictions on their hours of work, and may perform hazardous labor at a younger age. Specifically:61

- Children age 10-11 may be employed to hand-harvest short-season crops outside of school hours, under special waivers granted by the U.S. Department of Labor, up to 5 hours per day and 30 hours per week.
- Children under 12 may be employed outside of school hours in non-hazardous jobs on farms not subject to the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) minimum wage if their parent is also employed on that farm, or with parental consent.
- Children age 12-13 may be employed outside of school hours in non-hazardous jobs, but only on the farm on which their parent works or with the written consent of a parent.
- Children aged 14 or 15 may perform any non-hazardous farm job outside of school hours, and, with proper training and certification, they also may perform certain hazardous duties.

The relatively lenient regulations on agricultural work in the United States are often attributed to the country’s strong tradition of family farming. As this chart demonstrates, farm residents represented nearly 70% of the U.S. population in the 1850’s. By the time the Fair Labor Standards Act passed in 1938, the farm resident population had declined – but it still represented nearly a quarter of the U.S. population. By 1990, the number had plummeted to only 1.9% of the U.S. population.

The International Labor Organization and the United Nations have created a number of international standards limiting and prohibiting child labor. Convention 182, adopted unanimously at the 1999 conference of the ILO, is the most recent, and is the most widely ratified child labor convention. (As of December 2003, 147 of 177 ILO nations had ratified Convention 182.) It calls on member nations who ratify the Convention to take “immediate and effective” steps to prohibit and eliminate the worst forms of child labor. Unlike some previous conventions, Convention 182 contends that a nation’s poverty is no excuse for allowing the worst forms of child labor to continue, and provides no exceptions due to national poverty or development.

Specifically, Convention 182 requires the elimination of the “worst forms of child labor” among children under the age of 18, including:

(a) all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and servitude 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;
(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;
(d) work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.

Convention 182 was ratified by the United States Senate and signed by President Clinton in 1999. By ratifying an ILO Convention, a government agrees to apply the principles of the Convention in law and practice, promoting new laws and policies if necessary.

Trade unions across the globe are increasingly joining with consumers, human rights organizations, and students to demand ratification and enforcement of Convention 182 and other international labor standards. For example:
GLOBAL: The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) has proposed including a social clause on seven core labor standards in WTO rules (this proposal has so far been rejected). The ICFTU is working to publicize these standards around the world in conjunction with its global campaign against child labor, launched in 1994.

GLOBAL: Around the world, trade unions have participated in campaigns to encourage their governments to ratify ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labor.

UNITED STATES: Recent additions to the Trade Act of 2002 call on negotiators to: promote respect for core labor standards, include core labor standards as one objective of trade, and encourage more cooperation between the WTO and ILO. Some have criticized these guidelines, however, since they are not binding or enforceable regulations. Certain textile agreements with countries like Cambodia have successfully included incentives for improving worker rights.

[OVERHEAD: RAISING AWARENESS]

INDIA: In a region where many children under 12 were performing hazardous work in slate mines, India’s All India Trades Union Council organized a visit to the mines and mobilized their members to organize a campaign against child labor.

UNITED STATES: Here in the U.S., labor unions including the American Federation of Teachers and the Communication Workers of America have created materials specifically to educate their members about the problem of child labor, and many unions regularly feature information about child labor campaigns in their publications.

BRAZIL: In Brazil, where children are regularly employed in the footwear and garment industries, on plantations, in mines, and at “informal” jobs like selling goods on the street, Brazil’s largest labor federation (the CUT) is carrying out a nationwide program to educate local trade unionists on child labor and organize community support for local enforcement of child labor laws.

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62 International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, “ICFTU Statement on Building a WTO that Can Contribute Effectively to Economic and Social Development Worldwide,” 1999 (http://www.icftu.org/displaydocument.asp); see also Fyfe and Jankanish, 34.
66 Haspels and Jankanish, 257.
GLOBAL: In 2001 factory monitors confirmed illegal union-busting
and other violations – including employment of 13-15 year-old
children – at a Mexican factory sewing clothing with university logos
for Nike and other U.S. companies. Thousands of American students,
workers, and consumers wrote letters to corporate CEOs protesting
worker treatment. The international solidarity campaign helped
factory workers to overcome violence, intimidation, and mass firings
when they tried to organize, and after months of struggle, workers
won an independent union.67

GLOBAL: Citizens in countries including the U.S. that import bananas have supported workers’ efforts to
organize a union on Bonita banana plantations in Ecuador, where child labor is a common problem. As news
of Bonita’s child labor abuses and violent attacks on workers spread in 2002, thousands of workers, consumers,
and students contacted plantation owner Alvaro Noboa to demand that he recognize the workers’ union and
cease using illegal child labor, and leaders of labor organizations (including the AFL-CIO in the U.S.) issued
statements in support of Ecuadorian workers.68

UNITED STATES: The International Labor Rights Fund has begun pursuing legal action in U.S. courts
against multinational companies for labor abuses. For example, ILRF filed a 1996 suit against Unocal for using
slave labor to build pipelines in Burma. More recently, with the support of U.S. labor unions, ILRF filed suit
against Coca-Cola for failing to protect workers who have been harassed, tortured, and even killed for union
activity at contract bottling plants in Colombia. These cases are still pending, but, if effective, this strategy could
be used in the future to hold corporations accountable for child labor abuses.69

PERU: In urban areas, where a 1996 survey found 4.3 million child
workers, Peru’s national labor federation (the CUT) has begun fund-
ing, training, and staffing to make education programs available to
children working in street markets.

BANGLADESH: Many children working in especially hazardous
workplaces such as automotive and welding workshops in Bangladesh
have been removed through a program run by the Building and Wood-
workers’ Federation and the Metal Workers’ Union. After leaving work,
children are enrolled in education and assistance programs.70

GLOBAL: Aid agencies, non-governmental organizations, child rights activists, and teachers and public sector
unions from 180 countries have joined an international coalition called the Global Campaign for Education

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(http://henningcenter.berkeley.edu/gateway/kukdong.html).
69 Suits use the Alien Tort Claims Act of 1789 that allows foreigners to sue one another in U.S. courts; after a successful 1979 case, human rights
groups have tried to use the law to sue multinational companies for abuses. See Terry Collingsworth, The Alien Tort Claims Act: A Vital Tool for
70 Haspels and Jankanish, 258.
(GCE). The GCE organizes in support of the goals set forth by 185 world governments at the World Education Forum in Dakar in April 2000, including the achievement of free, compulsory primary education for all children by 2015. ⁷¹

[OVERHEAD: HISTORY’S STRATEGIES STILL APPLY]

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In all the examples we considered, adult workers are acting locally through their unions to advocate for better conditions for children. They recognize that exercising and protecting their rights to organizing and collective bargaining as adult workers goes hand in hand with providing standards and protections for children.

Collective action and union organizing are still key components of accomplishing child labor reform.

[OVERHEAD: COLLECTIVE BARGAINING STRATEGIES]

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⁷¹ See Global Campaign for Education (www.campaignforeducation.org).