

International Labor Organization Report

Child labor soars in African continent

Helen Halyard
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A report prepared by the International Labor Organization entitled: "Child Labour in Africa—Targeting the Intolerable" estimates that at the current rate of increase the number of child laborers in the world's poorest continent will swell from 80 million to over 100 million by the year 2015.

The ILO report states: "The poverty, population and education indicators give a potentially bleak picture for the future of child labor in Africa."

While children are used as a source of cheap labor by transnational corporations throughout the world, Africa has the highest percentage of child laborers of any continent. Forty-one percent of children aged 5 to 14 are engaged in some type of labor activity in Africa, compared to 21 percent in Asia and 17 percent in Latin America.

The largest concentrations of child laborers are found in nations located in sub-Saharan Africa, where the number of people living in poverty rose by 20 percent between 1988 and 1993 according to a recent report by the World Bank. In a several countries—Kenya, Ethiopia, Niger and Uganda—nearly half of all children are deprived of normal childhood activity and basic educational instruction because they are forced to work very long hours. Large numbers of children are employed in mining and other export industries. In addition, the continent has the highest number of young female workers engaged in domestic activity.

The report cites disquieting evidence of widespread physical, mental and sexual abuse of young females working in households other than their own. The consequences of long hours, emotional deprivation and servitude on young girl workers include "withdrawal and regression, premature aging, depression and low self esteem."

The number of children aged 6 to 11 who are not in

school grew by 2 million between 1990 and 1995 to reach nearly 40 million, two-thirds of whom are female. Living in areas that are predominantly rural, as many as 70 percent of all child laborers are involved in agricultural production.

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The social disintegration of the African continent, sharply manifested in the crisis facing children, is the product of decades of oppression by imperialism. The various national bourgeois regimes implement policies dictated by the multinational banks and corporations and agencies like the IMF and World Bank.

Many of the female domestic workers are exploited by the small layer of African bourgeois rulers, who are politically backed and supported by the US government. The consequences for the African masses are staggering and affect every aspect of social life, including the raising of children.

Joint conferences are being organized by the Organization of African Unity to discuss measures to reduce child labor. The OAU member governments are incapable of elaborating the necessary measures to eliminate the scourge of child labor because they accept the dictates of the IMF, and serve as its agents for the extraction of interest payments from the impoverished masses of Africa. A greater proportion of the continent's wealth is exported in the form of debt repayment than is expended on the social needs of the population.



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