

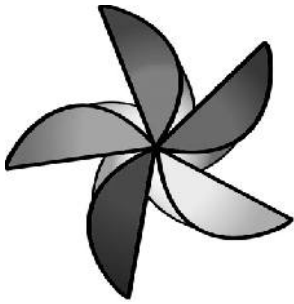
DIGGING FOR SURVIVAL



International
Labour
Organization

The Child Miners

DIGGING FOR SURVIVAL *The Child Miners*



World Day Against Child Labour

12 June 2005 is World Day Against Child Labour



M. Crozet/ILO

On this day, thousands of people across the globe will come together to remind the world of the ongoing injustice suffered by children whose lives are spent working long hours in dangerous and often life-threatening conditions.

Child labour is not confined to just a few countries or even one particular continent. It is worldwide. According to the most recent figures compiled by the International Labour Organization (ILO), there are more than 246 million child labourers between the ages of 5 and 17 in the world today. Over 100 million of these have no access to education of any kind. For most, getting time to play is a luxury they simply cannot afford.

Although there are millions of them all over the world, child labourers, by the very nature of their work, often go unnoticed. They cannot fight for their own rights and they do not have access to the media to tell their stories. When they do speak up, they are often simply ignored or punished. Because they are powerless, child labourers need others to advocate and campaign on their behalf. This process must begin with an awareness of the problem, an understanding of the issues involved and an empathy with those directly affected, the child labourers themselves.

Issues of social justice are important to young people. They see what is wrong with the world and

want to change things for the better. By learning more about an issue, students can then begin to explore what actions they themselves as individuals, or as a group, can take to bring about change. The role of teachers and educators is central to this process, helping young people gain access to information and helping them explore all of the issues involved.

The global movement to eliminate child labour is growing all the time. Through the information supplied in this brochure, teachers, educators and students will have the opportunity to play an important part in helping millions of children throughout the world to lead happier, more fulfilled lives.

This brochure is designed to form the basis for a short lesson to introduce students to the issues involved in child labour and in the particular sectors of mining and quarrying (the theme of this year's event) and then, through discussion and activities, explore ways in which they themselves can play their part in the international campaign to eliminate child labour.



E. Giannotti/ILO

Child labour is widespread and varied. It is not confined to one particular economic activity or industry. It can be found in one form or another in most countries and on all continents. The worst forms of child labour force children to work long hours in hazardous conditions for little or no wages. Some are found in noisy and dangerous factories. Others toil all day in fields, mines and quarries. Many are sold into the sex industry where they are constantly abused and sometimes simply disappear. Others may find themselves in bonded labour working to pay off a debt that has dogged their family for generations. The consequences for these children are long term and traumatic.

Some will be badly injured through accidents at work. For others, the nature of their labour will leave them with severe physical handicaps. Some will die before reaching adulthood or may be damaged physically, mentally or emotionally to the extent they cannot work as adults. A great many will lose the chance for a better future because they have had no education. For those who survive, the psychological scars of what they have endured will stay with them for the rest of their lives.

What Is Child Labour?

While all forms of child labour are harmful to children, those who work in the mining sector are at particular risk. In mines and quarries throughout the world, children work in dangerous and dirty conditions that pose a serious risk to their health and well-being. What has always been a high-risk activity for adults puts children at even greater risk, exposing them to serious injury on a daily basis and possibly even death. In the absence of proper medical care, injuries and health

problems sustained in the course of their work will have a lifelong effect.

The ILO estimates that some one million children work in small-scale mining and quarrying around the globe. The World Day Against Child Labour this year is dedicated to highlighting the plight of children who must toil every day just to make enough money to live. They are the **Child Miners** and they are **digging for survival**.



E. Gianotti/ILO

Sudha began work as a stone crusher at a quarry when she was 12 years old hoping to raise some extra money for her family. Although the stone she produces is used for road building in her area, it has not paved the way for an education for Sudha. This is something she regrets every day, as the local school is just a short walk from her home.

When asked if she would prefer to be at school, Sudha sighs and responds that it's too late for her to start now.

Her wages from crushing stones, though small, are now an important part of her family's income, supplementing their small earnings from farming livestock along the banks of the river near where they live. Searching the nearby forest, the family gathers firewood, which they then sell at the market, providing another source of much needed money.

Sometimes, Sudha's brother, sister and her parents also work as stone crushers in an effort to supplement their meagre earnings from farming. Their combined efforts earn them 1,400 rupees a week (around US\$20 or €15).

When asked why she continues to do this back-breaking and dangerous work, Sudha simply sighs and stares at the sky. "There is no alternative", she says. For her, this is her destiny, her pre-ordained role in life.

Case study 1, Nepal

ILO-IPEC, 2005

Sudha from Nepal

What Is Child Mining?

DIGGING FOR SURVIVAL
The Child Miners



F. Molerés/LO

Mining and child labour have always gone hand in hand. The coal mining boom of the industrial revolutions in Europe and the United States of America in the 19th and early 20th centuries saw thousands of children working in the pits.

Up to 1842 in Britain, children as young as four or five could legally work underground. After that year, the legal working age was set at ten, though many children younger than this were still put to work. In the USA in the early years of the 20th century, children as young as eight years old still worked in the coal mines. This was despite a law passed in 1885 requiring boys to be at least twelve to work as coal breakers and at least fourteen to work inside the mines. It was not until the first Federal Child Labour Law was passed in 1916 that child mining in the USA was finally outlawed.

Today, despite ongoing efforts in many countries to eliminate the practice, child miners can still be found in various parts of the world. Child labour is

most commonly found in small-scale underground and open-cast mines and quarries in countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. There, children work in the extraction and processing of many types of ore and minerals, including gold, silver, iron, tin, emeralds, coal, chrome, marble and stone. Invariably, they work long hours in dangerous and difficult conditions.

Unlike the early days of child mining in Europe and the USA, most of today's child miners are not working directly for big mining companies. They may work for a small local mining or quarrying company or may work with their own families on small concessions near bigger mines. They may also work in mines abandoned by multinational companies after they became unprofitable.

The nature of this employment makes it difficult to regulate and monitor. In addition, for many families, the contribution their children make is crucial to the survival of the whole family unit.



E. Gianotti/ILO

In a dim and dangerous tunnel lit only by the flicker of candles, Juan Laguna and four other children toil with rusty pick-axes to loosen chunks of rock they hope will yield at least a little bit of gold.

Juan then undertakes the arduous process of milling and washing the ore. If it is a good day, it will give him enough gold to sell for about US\$3/€2.30. But he is not always lucky. "Not every day goes well," says Juan, who is 12 but has the slight build of a child half his age. Working with hundreds of other youngsters, he has spent five years scratching the walls of tunnels in the La India mining district, more than 100 miles (160 km) west of Nicaragua's capital Managua.

According to the ILO and Nicaragua's National Commission for the Eradication of Child Labour, nearly 400 children work down the shafts and potholes. Child miners suffer from malnutrition and dehydration, kidney diseases, gashes and serious accidents in the scorching, gas-filled tunnels.

Enrique Urrutia is only 17 but his thin body and callused hands bear witness to the ten years he has spent mining gold "to buy food and clothes and to help in the house". Enrique and three friends meet early in the morning in their village and walk two hours to the mines, returning home exhausted as darkness falls with their loads of stone. "I come every other day," says his friend Junior Calderon, 12, although he added he only mines when he has no classes.

The incentive to find gold is not surprising given that its price on international markets recently hit 16-year highs of nearly US\$460/€352 an ounce. These miners receive only a fraction of that, but they have precious few options. "For people who only have their physical strength to work with, it is an attractive thing, particularly when the gold price goes up," said one official from a multinational company exploring in the district.

*From "Gold Tempts Nicaragua Children"
By Ivan Castro, Reuters, December 2004*

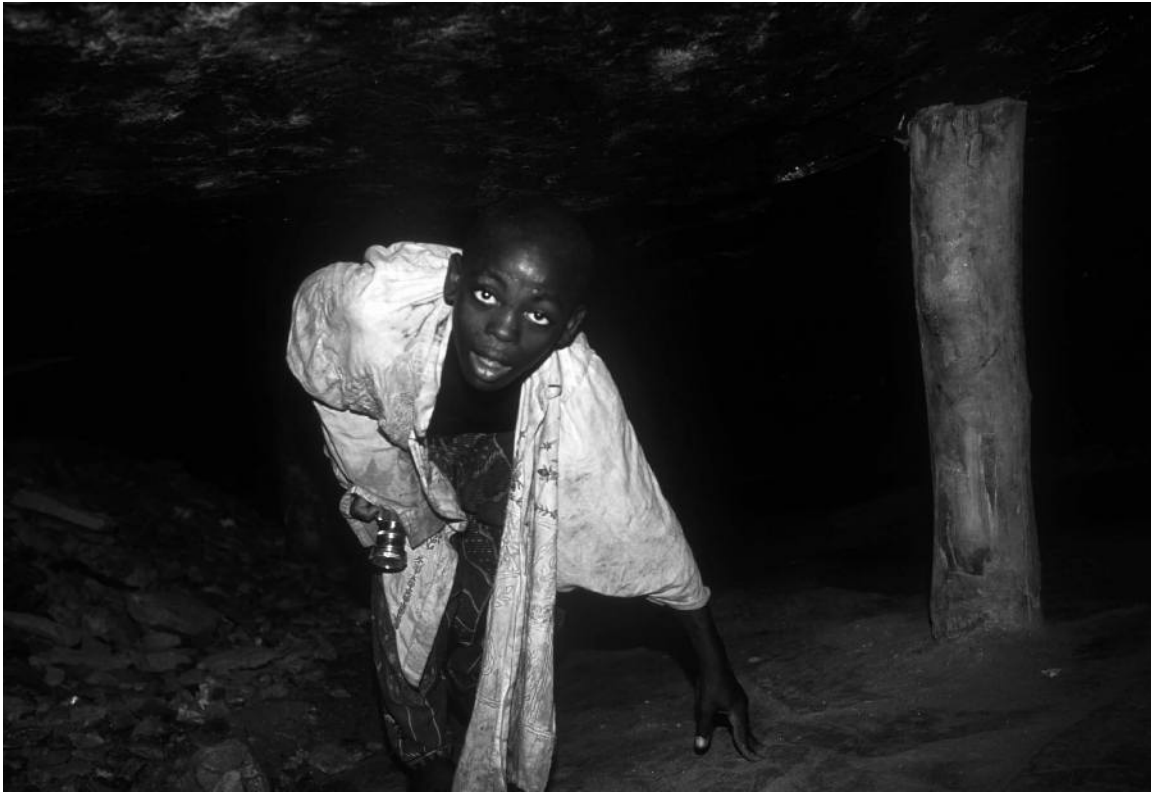
Juan, Eurita and Junior from Nicaragua



E. Giannotti/ILO

From the gold mines of Côte d'Ivoire in Africa to the stone quarries of India and Nepal; from the Madre de Dios mines in Peru to the coal mines of Nalaikh in Mongolia, child miners put their lives at risk every day.

- Badly maintained mines are constantly vulnerable to collapse. Deaths of child miners from cave-ins are not uncommon and those who survive suffer serious and sometimes disabling injuries. Accidental explosions are an ever-present danger for children in some mining environments.
- Child miners work long hours without adequate protective equipment, clothing or even training. They are also frequently exposed to high humidity levels, extreme temperatures, both hot and cold, excessive noise and intense vibrations from machines used in the mining process.
- Other hazards include prolonged exposure to harmful gases, fumes and dust that cause breathing difficulties leading to serious and sometimes fatal lung diseases. Children working in gold mines are vulnerable to mercury poisoning due to its use in the process of extracting gold from the ore.
- Child miners suffer from physical strain, working long hours and often carrying loads not suited to their stage of physical development. This leads to constant tiredness and damage to their backs and muscles, as well as broken limbs and serious injuries from falling objects.
- When accidents happen, first aid or medical facilities are rarely available in or around the workplace, increasing the risk of permanent disability or even death. For those who survive, few will have access to any form of rehabilitation or social security schemes to aid in their recovery.



E. Gianotti/ILO



In Africa, children as young as eight or nine descend 30 metres into the ground and spend seven or eight hours a day digging through narrow passages without ventilation or proper lighting and with earth frequently caving in.

*In the Mererani gem mines **in Tanzania**, boys often hide in mine tunnels deep underground during blasting to improve their chances of being first to find exposed gems. The 'bonuses' received for these finds are their only hope of pay.*

As a result of taking such risks, many children suffer serious injury or lose their lives.

Children in Mines and Quarries

ILO/IPEC, 1999

The Snake Boys of Mererani



E. Gianotti/ILO

Given the extreme poverty of people working as stone crushers, it is not surprising that many parents get their children to work too. The money that comes from selling gravel produced by children is often an important part of a household's income and can mean the difference between eating and not eating on any given day.

Stone crushing is hard and dangerous work, particularly for children. Older children carry heavy stones from the riverbank to the work sites and break stones with hammers and sledgehammers.

Children as young as 5 years old break the rocks with hammers and gather the gravel into piles. Adults and children typically work more than eight hours a day, six or seven days of the week.

There are virtually no safety measures taken in stone crushing. Dangers include flying shards of rock that can cause

severe eye injury, back and muscle problems associated with lifting loads that are too heavy, skin disorders resulting from prolonged periods working in intense sun and heat, and dehydration.

There is no drinkable water near the river, which is highly contaminated due to pesticide and herbicide runoff and the dumping of industrial and residential waste. There are no toilets available either.

Stone crushers are at risk from diseases carried by mosquitoes, especially malaria and dengue fever which, if untreated, can be fatal. Other common health problems include breathing disorders, diarrhea, skin diseases, back pain and headaches.

Child Labor in Gravel Production in Retalhuleu, Guatemala

ILO/IPEC, 2000

The Stone Crushers of Retalhuleu

What Can Be Done?

DIGGING FOR SURVIVAL
The Child Miners

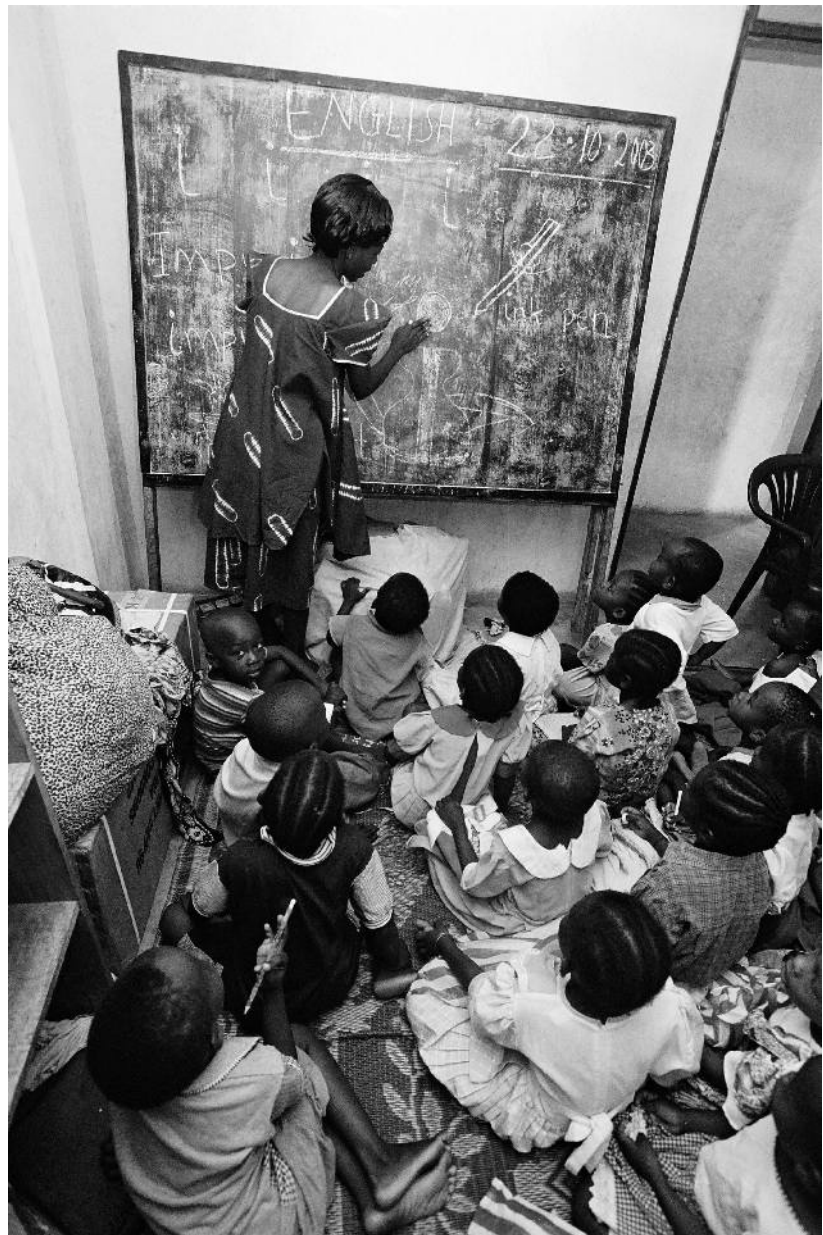
As explained, most child miners are employed in small-scale enterprises which are unregulated and often undocumented. Without accurate information about the size of the problem, it is difficult to put in place effective measures to deal with it.

Also, many mining enterprises are family run with the money from mining often helping families to survive. Children cannot be withdrawn from working in the mining sector without adequate alternative sources of support for their family being put in place. Children who leave mining must then have access to good quality education with real prospects of meaningful employment when they leave school. This is the only real way of breaking the cycle of poverty which afflicts their communities.

Through its International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), the ILO is striving to ensure that no child has to work in a quarry or a mine.

Projects in Mongolia, Tanzania, Niger and the Andean countries of South America have shown that the best way to assist child miners is to work with the children's own communities. Mining and quarrying communities have been helped to organise co-operatives and to improve their productivity by acquiring machinery, thus eliminating the need for child labour. They have also been assisted in developing essential services such as schools, clean water and sanitation systems.

While projects on the ground can assist child miners in a direct and practical way, only global awareness of the problem can mobilise the international effort that is needed to end the practice for good. Students and young people have a central role to play in this process. Learning more about the issues surrounding child labour is an important first step. This can be done through the web sites and contact points provided at the back



M. Crozet/ILO

of this brochure where information can be found on how to become more actively involved in the worldwide effort to combat all forms of child labour.

The real energy for change, however, is generated through empathy with the plight of others. The activities in this brochure are designed help students enter the world of the child miner. Through their imagination they can, for a short time at least, sense something of what life must be like for a child miner, a child whose days are spent in hazardous and back-breaking labour in mines and quarries around the world, digging for survival.



E. Gianotti/LO

The aim of this activity is to encourage young people to dig beneath the surface of the child mining issue, shedding light on the day-to-day challenges faced by child miners and their families. It involves the whole group and gives each student the opportunity to participate as much or as little as they can or want.

The activity is quite simple to structure and organise, yet by using their own imagination the students will enter deep into the world of the child miner and return with a greater empathy for those young people worldwide who spend their days working in quarries and mines. It may be useful to re-read to the group any or all of the testimonies from the previous text before beginning the activity.

Find a stone about the size of an adult's hand. It is better if the stone has a rough surface. Now show the stone to the group, explaining that this represents a fragment of the life of a child miner – a child for whom working with rocks or stones, coal or ore is the only life he or she knows.

Now invite the group to play a game. Ask them to imagine that this stone has magical properties, that whoever touches it and holds it in their hands can speak for a child miner somewhere in the world. So long as they are touching the stone, they are a child miner with a story of their own to tell so all their sentences must begin with "I....".

Appoint a 'Story Keeper' who will write down what the child miners say through the Touchstone. If possible use a separate sheet for each story.

Now ask for a volunteer to be the first to hold the Touchstone!

The students may find it difficult to get started so help them to make that leap of imagination. Asking questions can help to get the game started. "What is your name?". "Where do you come from?". "How many brothers and sisters do you have?". "What kind of mining do you do?". They can take on the name and the circumstances of any of the child miners described in the previous text or they may prefer to come up with different names and scenarios.

Activity 1

The Touchstone

DIGGING FOR SURVIVAL
The Child Miners

Encourage them to be imaginative. In this way, they can truly place themselves in the life of a child miner. Now, encourage the other students to ask them questions. "How many hours a day do you work?". "Have you ever been injured or sick?". "What's it like working underground?". "Do you go to school at all?".

After a few minutes, ask for another volunteer to take the Touchstone and the game begins all over again. Remind the group how crucial it is that the holder of the Touchstone speaks as though they are the child miner. "My name is...". Be aware also that, in building empathy with the life of a child miner, it is important to move outside the challenging circumstances of their life and begin to see

them as similar to young people everywhere. Children who love to play, laugh and dream about the future. See if the questions asked of the holder of the Touchstone can reflect this, for example, "What is your favourite colour?". "If you had all the money in the world, what would you do with it?". "If you weren't working in a quarry or mine, what would you like to do?".

By the time the Touchstone has made its way around the group, the 'Story Keeper' will have a collection of testimonies. Place them under the Touchstone in a corner of the room for a few days, encouraging the students to read them again whenever they have the time.



In this activity, you are asking the students to explore the role that various people and organisations can play in helping to stop child mining. You are also introducing the group to the idea that child labour is viewed differently in different cultures and finally challenging them to look at the part they themselves can play in determining Sudha's destiny.

Ask the group to listen while you read about 'Sudha from Nepal' which can be found in the earlier part of this brochure. Ask them to pay particular attention to the final part of her story: *"When asked why she continues to do this back-breaking and dangerous work, Sudha simply sighs and stares at the sky. "There is no alternative", she says. For her, this is her destiny, her pre-ordained role in life.*

Ask the group what they understand by the word 'destiny'. Does it mean an outcome is set in stone, that nothing can be done, that a situation must be accepted as it is? Ask them if they can imagine a different destiny for Sudha and if so who must be involved to help bring this about. Ask for suggestions and make a list of these on the board or a sheet of paper. These could include family, employers, teachers, government ministers, multinational mining companies, world leaders, the United Nations, etc.

Help the group with the list, making it as broad as possible to help emphasise the fact that child labour is a worldwide problem and that a solution needs some form of action to be taken, no matter how small or big, by everyone.

Now begin to explore how all those people and organisations on the list can help shape Sudha's destiny. With her family, for example, the suggestion might be for them to 'send her to school'. It's a good idea, of course, but ask the group how her family would pay for the education or survive without the money she makes from breaking stones.

How can the government help change Sudha's destiny? Maybe they should pass laws to stop her working, but without alternative means of support then she and her family would be worse off. These laws may already exist, but how can they be enforced? Maybe the government should give them money, but is this possible if the country is burdened with a huge national debt?



M. Crozet/ILO

It soon becomes clear that changing Sudha's destiny will take a combination of real commitment and action on the part of all those on the list. It seems like a lot of hard work, almost an impossible task. So where do you start?

The answer is found by adding another name to the list of those who must be involved in changing Sudha's destiny. This name needs to go at the top of that list. Ask the group if they can guess who that is.

No?

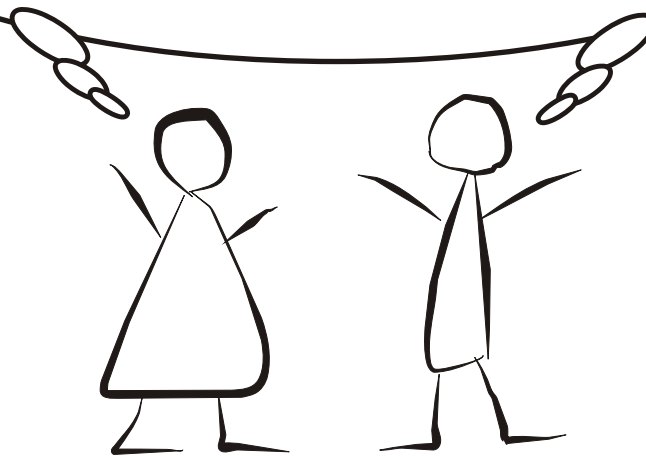
Tell them "It's you, everyone in the group!"

Now make a new list detailing what this group can do to help change Sudha's destiny. Maybe spread the message about child miners by making everyone in the school aware of their plight through holding special events like art competitions or information days.

Look at ways to share information about child mining with families and in local communities. What about meeting with local public representatives who could then pass on their concerns to government departments and ministers or writing directly to companies or organisations whose actions impact on the lives of child labourers?

There is a lot students and young people can do once they realise they have the power to initiate change. And maybe help change Sudha's destiny along the way.

Have Your Say!



Faced with the scale and extent of child mining in the world today, it may be difficult for young people to imagine how they, just one human being, can even start to make a difference. This activity is designed to build on Activity 2 to show that everyone has a voice and, when combined with others, can form a powerful force for change.

Make sure that each student has a sheet of paper and a pencil or pen. Then divide the students into pairs and ask them to draw a picture of each other in the right-hand bottom corner of the page. It is important to remind the students that artistic talent, though welcome, is not an important part of this exercise. In other words, they will not be judged on what they draw and the only important thing is that they all take part. This activity can be a lot of fun so be prepared for loud talk, laughter and some hilarious results!

When the students have finished drawing each other, ask them to imagine the picture of their classmate speaking like a comic book character by drawing a large 'voice bubble' coming from their mouth. This 'bubble' should cover most of the page.

Now ask the students, in the same pairs, to imagine they are at a conference of world leaders, convened

to discuss the issue of child miners. This is a picture of them addressing that conference. Ask the students to tell each other what they would say. It is important that they listen carefully to each other, then fill in the 'bubble', summarising what their partners have said.

Now, make your way around the room asking each person to introduce his or her partner to the class by holding up their picture of them. Then ask them to read out what is written in the 'bubble', their partner's contribution to the 'World Conference on Child Mining'. When everyone has 'had their say', explain to the class that many people are unable to speak for themselves and need the help of others to bring their message to a wider audience for their voices to be heard. Suggest to the class that by becoming advocates for child miners, they can ensure that the suffering of thousands of children does not go unnoticed. In doing this, they could become the voice of the voiceless.

Now take the pictures and put them up, all together, on the wall of the room. It will be an impressive sight. Explain to the class how, the more people that speak out, the harder it is to ignore them; the more voices that are heard, the stronger the energy for change.

The **International Labour Organization (ILO)** is the United Nations specialised agency which seeks the promotion of social justice and internationally recognised human and labour rights. Within the UN system, the ILO has a unique tripartite structure with workers and employers participating as equal partners with governments.

www.ilo.org

The ILO's **International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC)** is the world's largest technical co-operation programme on child labour. Its aim is the progressive elimination of child labour worldwide, with the eradication of the worst forms an urgent priority.

www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipec/index.htm

ILO-IPEC, 4 Route des Morillons, CH-1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland
e-mail: ipec@ilo.org

Education International (EI) is a Global Union Federation (GUF) of 310 national trade unions and associations in 159 countries and territories which represent 26 million members who work in all sectors of education from pre-school to university. EI's work to end child labour is a key aspect of its human rights campaign.

www.ei-ie.org

Education International, 5 Boulevard du Roi Albert II, B-1210 Brussels, Belgium
e-mail: headoffice@ei-ie.org

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND EDUCATION RESOURCES

World Day Against Child Labour, 12 June 2005

ILO-IPEC's home page for the World Day Against Child Labour 2005 provides further information and links on the issues surrounding child labour in mines and quarries which can be found at:

www.ilo.org/childlabour

SCREAM Stop Child Labour Education Pack – Supporting Children's Rights Through Education the Arts and The Media, ILO-IPEC 2002

This community-based education and social mobilisation programme will provide teachers and educators with further activities to conduct with a wide range of age groups of children. Further information and the education modules themselves are available in download format from:

www.ilo.org/scream

Child Labour: An Information Kit for Teachers, Educators and their Organisations, ILO-IPEC 2004 (revised edition)

Teachers, educators and their organisations are key partners in the international effort to eliminate child labour. This information kit is designed to raise awareness of the nature and effects of child labour and to instil a sense of commitment and motivation to inform others and take action in the classroom and within teachers' organisations. The four modules in this kit can be downloaded from the ILO-IPEC Information Resource Centre:

www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipec/publ/index.htm

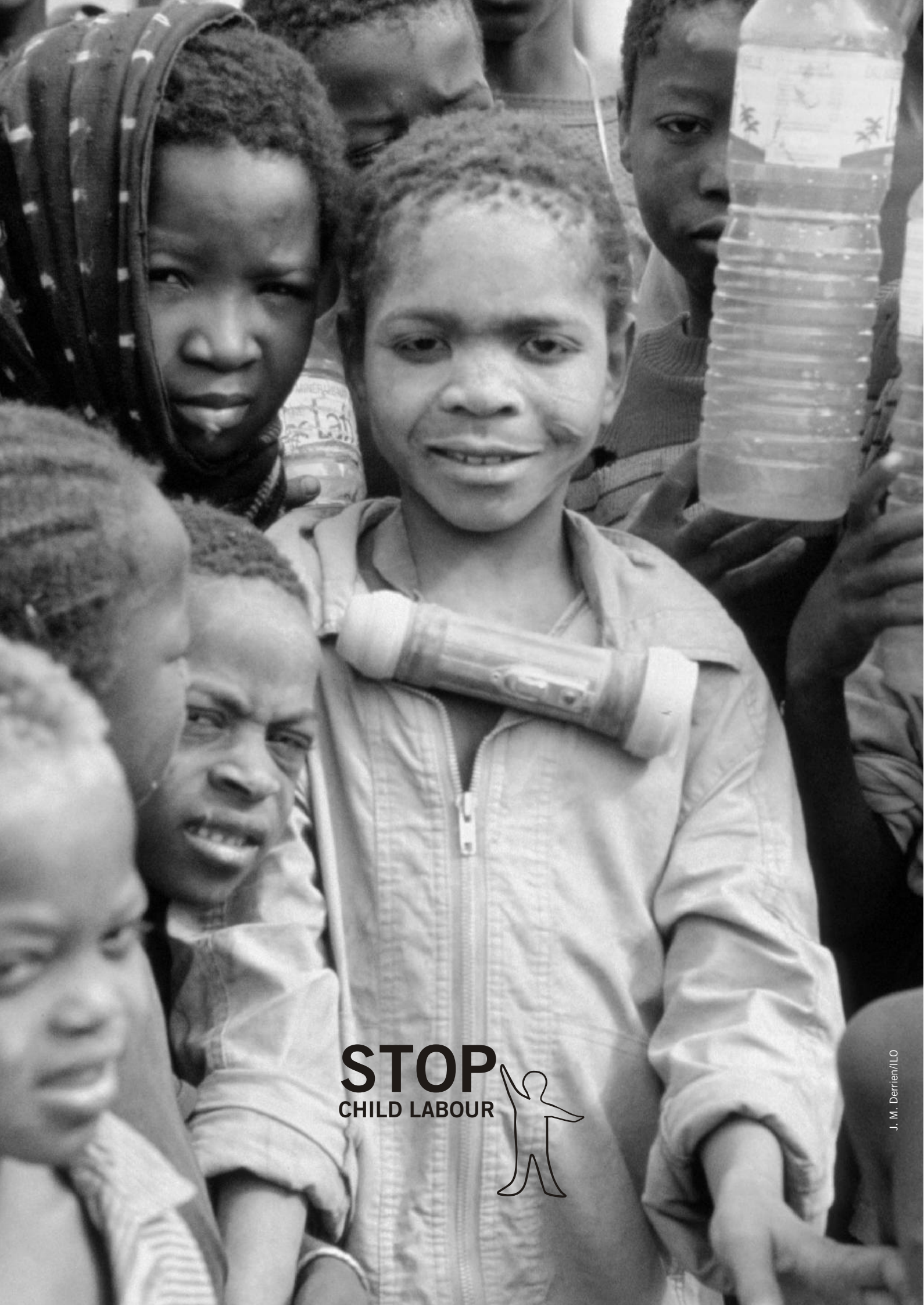
ILO-IPEC Fact Sheets on Child Labour

A series of detailed fact sheets on child labour issues are available in download format from:

www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipec/about/factsheet/index.htm

A special request from ILO-IPEC and EI to all teachers and educators

If you use this brochure (and we hope you will) in order to conduct an activity related to child labourers in mining and quarries with your students, then we would like to hear from you. Please send us details of your activities with any supporting material, including drawings, writings, photographs, and so on. Please also let us know if you and your students would agree to us using such material in official documentation and promotional supports, such as our web sites. Our contact details are included in this brochure. Please accept our sincere thanks for your support and that of your students – it all helps and does make a difference!



STOP
CHILD LABOUR

