

# Child Labor

## Family Survival Strategies and Their Impact on Child Development-A Call to Action

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# Introduction

- ▶ Childhood is a time to explore and learn various developmental aspects of life necessary for progression toward adulthood.
- ▶ Definition of childhood varies across different socio-economic and societal beliefs.
- ▶ Child labor: is a factor that impedes on a child's ability to successfully transition into adulthood.

# Child Labor: Historical Perspective

## ▶ Early 1800s

1. Children were termed as a valuable part of family economy;
2. Child labor was prevalent among diverse socio-economic groups.

## ▶ Current

1. International labor standards, federal and state child labor laws, and child protection laws since 1970's.
2. Reported youth employers in the US estimated 5.5 million in 1997-2001 (OSU, 2004).
3. The global incidence of child labor is still at 13.7 per cent for children 5-14 years old (ILO, 2006a).

# Today's Focus

- ▶ To discuss how child labor impedes child development.
- ▶ To explore cultural factors of family survival strategies as a micro-economic framework of child labor.

# Definition of Child Labor

- ▶ “Child labor”
  1. Any economic activity undertaken by children under the minimum age for admission to employment.
  2. This age is specified.
  
- ▶ “Children in hazardous work”: a category defined as “children working in any activity or occupation that, by its nature or type, has or leads to adverse effects on the child’s safety, health and moral development.” (ILO, 2006a, 6)
  
- ▶ 166 million child laborers under the age of 15, 74 million were engaged in hazardous work (ILO, 2006a).

# Definition of Child Work

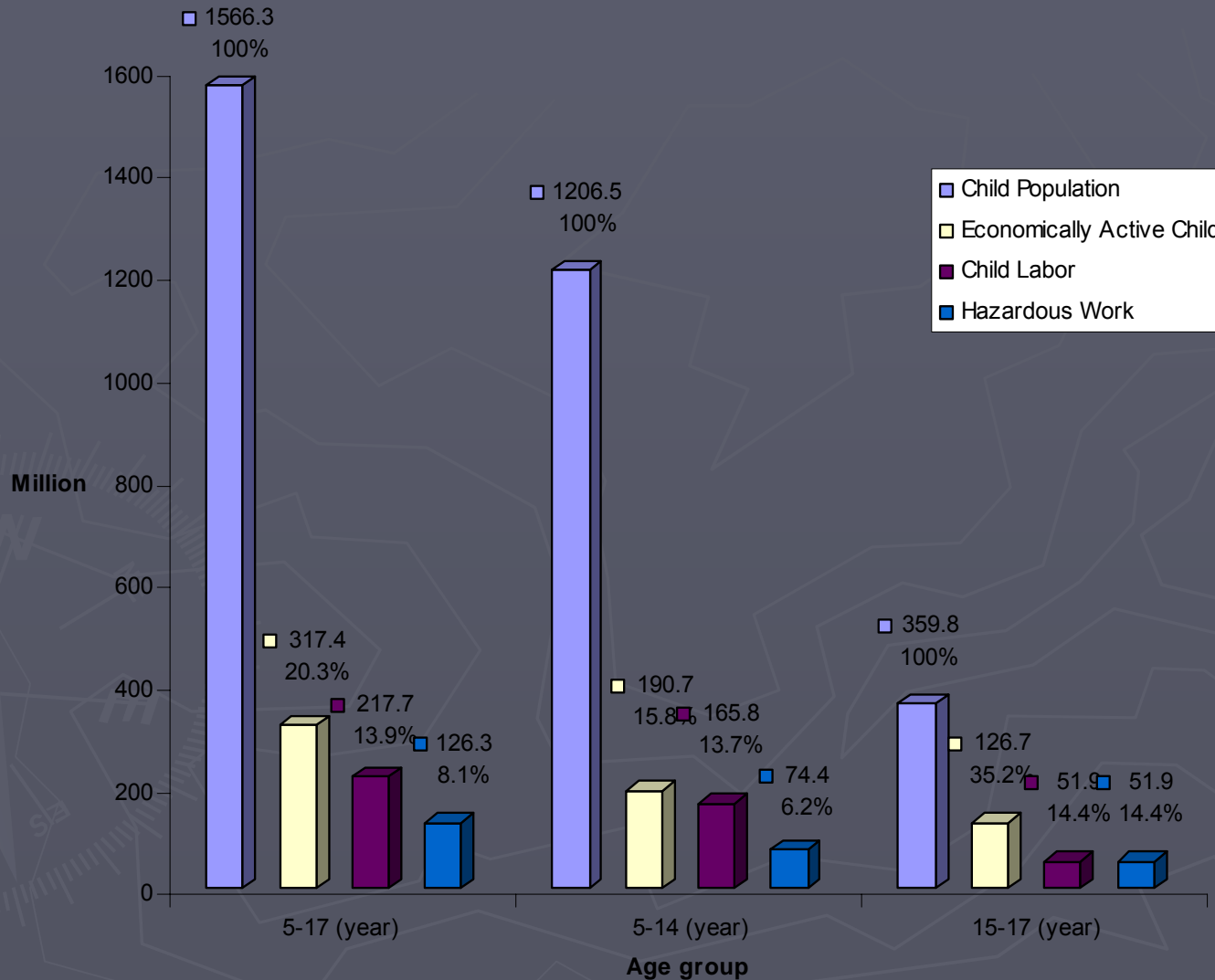
- “Child work” or “economically active children”
  1. All children under the age of 18 working more than one hour per week in paid or unpaid work, on a casual or regular basis, legal or illegal.
  2. Different from “child labor”

# The Worst Forms of Child Labor

- ▶ The worst forms of child labor
  1. Trafficking
  2. Commercial sexual exploitation
  3. Child domestic labor
  4. Children in armed conflict
  5. Illicit activities

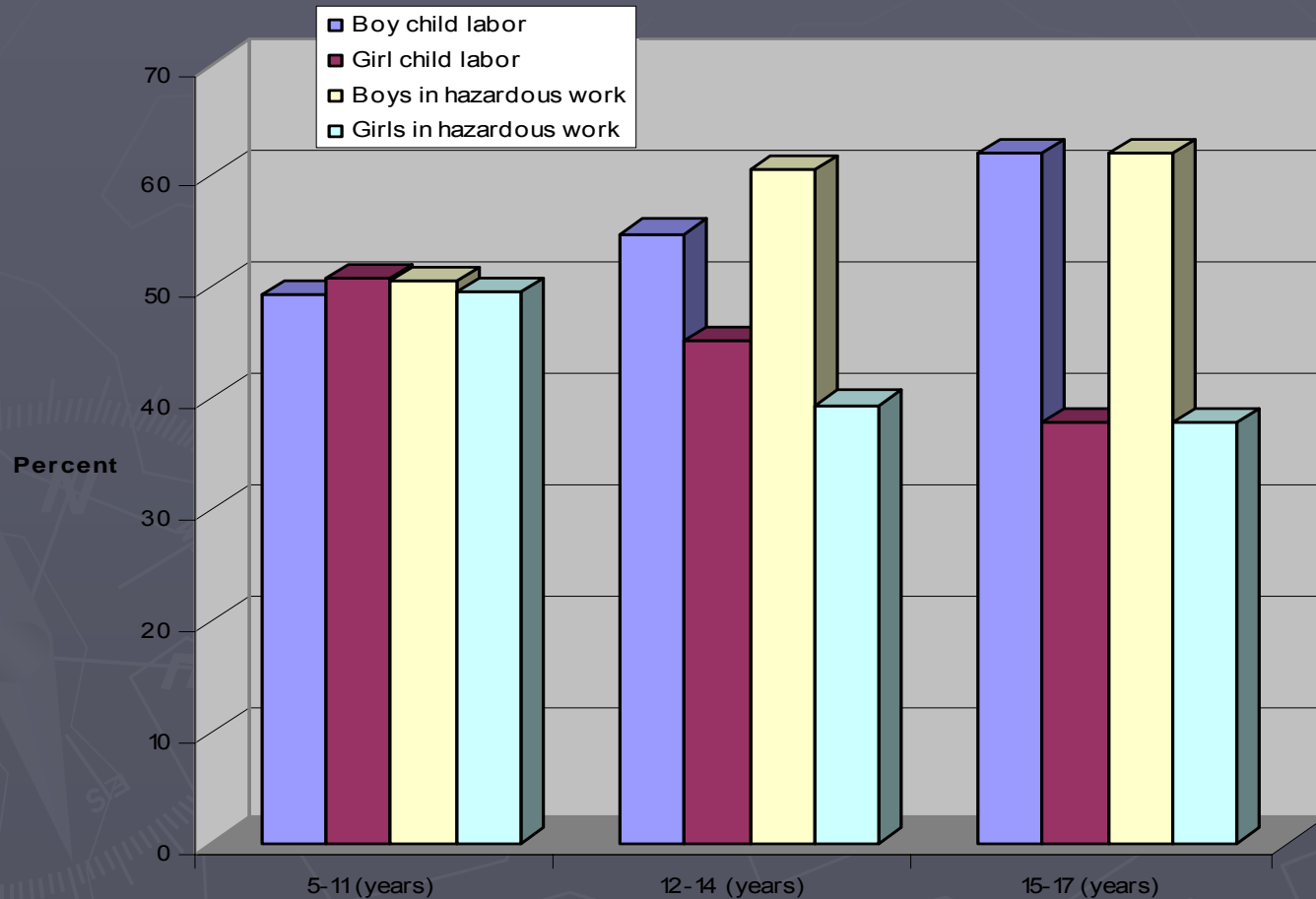
# Child Labor by Age 2004

Graph 1: Child Labor by Age 2004



# Child Labor by Sex 2004

Graph 2: Child Labor by Sex 2004



# Family Characteristics

- ▶ The working class families in cross-continent societies.
  1. Low and insecure incomes
  2. Limited access to land, education, and social protection
- ▶ Active participation of children in the household economy of the working class as a morally righteous institution and legitimate social practice (Zelizer, 1994).

# Family Survival Strategies

- ▶ A framework to recognize and understand cultural factors of child labor
- ▶ It explains why child labor has until recently received little attention from households and communities of the high incident of child labor.
- ▶ Household
  1. Analytic unit of child labor
  2. Child labor decision making entity
- ▶ The economic value of the child
  1. A family survival strategy to achieve minimum security
  2. A social norm – it lowers the societal cost of child labor within working children and their immediate communities.

# The Health Effects of Child Labor

- ▶ Negative Health Outcomes (WHO, 1987)
  1. Increased muscular and skeletal disorders
  2. Higher incidence of respiratory and gastrointestinal diseases
  3. Poorer nutritional status
  4. Lower hemoglobin levels
  5. More frequent headaches, fatigue, and vision problem
  6. Lower average height and weight





# Social Work As A Facilitating Agent

- Social work as a profession has led child safety campaigns, child labor law, more humane industrial conditions, children's insurance, wrongful death cases, minimum wage for adults, war on poverty, and child protection laws.
- Child labor was the fundamental concern of the settlement movement and the early Western child welfare system.
- Today, social work continues to contribute greatly to infrastructure of knowledge on child well-being and awareness raising of all forms of child abuse.
- Child welfare policy and child protection law as indicators of cultural meaning and understanding of childhood fundamentally exclude children from workforce markets (Tomes, 1986; Zelizer, 1994, 23).
- Direct child welfare services in the areas of child abuse and neglect function as a facilitating agent against child labor.
- Social work facilitates elimination of child labor services by providing vulnerable children and families' access to health, social, and community services (Gilligan, 2003, 25).

# Global Movement Against Child Labor

## ▶ Leading organizations

1. Labor organizations
2. Human rights organizations

## ▶ International instruments

1. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989
2. The ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138)
3. The ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182)
4. The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC)
5. The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (OPSC)
6. The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking on Persons.

# Ongoing Movements

- ▶ Global Watch Against Child Labor
- ▶ Stop Child Labor in the United States
- ▶ SCREAM Stop Child Labour
- ▶ Understanding Children's Work
- ▶ Child Labour Research Network

# New Challenges

- ▶ The incidence of child labor globally fell by 11 per cent and that of children in hazardous work decreased by 26 per cent from 2000 to 2004 (ILO, 2006a).
- ▶ Since 2004, 13.9% children were involved in child labor and 8.1% children in hazardous work.
- ▶
- ▶ There are 36 and 21 nations that have not ratified the Convention No. 138 and the Convention No. 182 respectively.
- ▶ the United States has not ratified both the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child 1990 (UNCRC) and the Convention No. 138.

# Social Work Challenges

- ▶ Child labor stays outside of the scope of child welfare and child protection (Otis, Puzstor, & McFadden, 2001).
- ▶ Social work fails to recognize the issue of child labor and to protect child laborers from economic exploitation and child-rights violations.

# Action!!!!

- ▶ Social work has to take child labor into consideration in development and implementation of child welfare policy and child protection services.
- ▶ The first step: changing the structure of child welfare and child protection services.
- ▶ Two elements of this new child protection services:
  1. Children's Rights, including the right to be protected from economic exploitation and performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with their education, or to be harmful to their physical, mental, spiritual, moral health and social development (UNCRC, 1990).
  2. Cultural Appropriation: reorganizing cultural factors of family survival strategies as important determinations of child labor (Weston, 2005).

# Implications of Cultural Appropriation

- Identifying the negative impact of family survival strategies on cultural practices of child labor
- Ensuring the engagement of various stakeholders who encourage the necessity of child labor for the family's survival.
- Special attention to the culture of children who are disproportionately affected by child labor, such as impoverished children, children in developing countries, children in migration or in migrant families, and indigenous children.
- Case 1: Indigenous and tribal children are more likely to work than their non-indigenous peers (ILO, 2006b; Martínez, 2000).
- Case 2: limitations of self-determination for children on defending child labor from perception of family survival strategies due to the economic and educational function of child labor for family livelihood (Lieber, 2004).

# Questions



# Thank You!

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