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المنظمة العالمية للحركة الكشفية

World Day against Child Labour

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Scouting has had a long relationship with the International Labour Organisation and its International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC).

In 1993 the World Scout Conference passed a resolution asking National Scout Organizations to play an active role in raising awareness of the worldwide problem of the exploitation of child labour and to develop their own creative means to help improve the situation.

In 2004 World Scouting signed a Memorandum of Understanding with ILO/IPEC for a more formal cooperation in this area.

In the past three years, several Scouting seminars and projects have taken action concerning youth employment, street children, and child labour in Egypt, Kenya, Ukraine, and Russia.

In early 2005, The Scout Association of El Salvador launched a project entitled "Semillas de Esperanza" (Seeds of Hope), a project run in partnership with the ILO and in the framework of the IPEC. This project, run by the rover and venture sections, offers working children (aged 10-18) opportunities to join youth groups and gain essential life skills through non-formal education, as well as to attend camps and be able to interact with others as children. Following the camps, groups are organised in their communities, involving the adults and educating them of the importance of children's rights and taking a stand against child labour.

This project will be El Salvador's "Gift for Peace", their centennial project, and will be developed throughout 2006 ahead of our 100th anniversary of Scouting in 2007.

In 2005, the World Day Against Child Labour focuses on children working in mines and quarries.

For more information:

Digging for Survival: a booklet produced by ILO/IPEC to introduce young people to the issues involved in child labour, particularly mining and quarrying. Through discussion and activities, they can explore ways in which they themselves can play their part in the global campaign to eliminate child labour.

[Web site for the World Day](#) (ILO/IPEC) Scouting is mentioned as a partner.

News story (ILO/IPEC):

The reality of child mining worldwide

Somewhere in the world at this very moment, in a mine or a quarry, a child is hard at work. They may be labouring underground in stifling heat and darkness. They might be carrying loads of coal and ore too heavy for their backs. They could be breaking stones in a quarry using only a hammer or be exposed to dangerous chemicals, explosives or other hazards. The money that they earn is crucial to ensuring that they and their families can afford even the basics of life. There are over one million of these children worldwide. They are the Child Miners and they are digging for survival.

While all forms of child labour are harmful to children, those who work in the mining sector are in particular danger, labouring in conditions that pose a serious risk to their health and well being, exposing them to serious injury or even death on a daily basis.

In the absence of proper medical care, injuries and health problems sustained in the course of their work will have a life long effect. In the Mererani gem mines in Tanzania, for example, children as young as eight or nine descend 30 metres underground to spend seven or eight hours a day digging through narrow passages without ventilation or proper lighting. Tunnel collapse is an ever present danger. Sometimes the boys hide in the mine tunnels deep underground during blasting hoping to be first to find exposed gems. The 'bonuses' they get for these finds are their only hope of pay. Because of the risks they take, many of these children suffer serious injury or lose their lives.

Despite ongoing efforts in many countries to eliminate the practice, child miners can still be found all over the world. Child labour is most commonly found in small-scale underground and open cast mines and quarries in many 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. 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 multi-national companies when large-scale mining became unprofitable.

Because the income these children earn is crucial to the survival of the whole family unit, education is not an option for many child miners. In Nepal, girls as well as boys, work long hours in quarries. Sudha began work as a stone crusher when she was just 12 years old, hoping to raise some extra money for her family. Her wages, though small, are now an important part of her family's income, supplementing their small earnings from farming livestock. 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 1400 rupees (US\$20 or ?15) a week.

Although the local school is only a short walk from her home Sudha does not consider education an option for her. Even though she would prefer to be at school, she simply says that it's too late for her to start now. Asked why she continues to do this back breaking and dangerous work Sudha sighs and stares at the sky. "There is no alternative", she says. For her, this is her destiny, her pre-ordained role in life.

There are some however who believe that, for Sudha and hundreds of thousands of children like her, life can be better. Through its International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), the International Labour Organization (ILO) is working worldwide to ensure that no child has to toil in a quarry or a mine.

But bringing about change, demands an understanding of the complex nature of the problem. Most child miners are employed in small-scale enterprises which are unregulated and often undocumented. Without accurate information about the scale 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 ensuring the family's survival. Children cannot be withdrawn from labour 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.

Pilot projects undertaken by ILO-IPEC 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 or reducing 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 worldwide awareness of the problem can mobilise the international effort that is needed to end the practice for good.

In the meantime, all around the world, thousands of children are still hard at work, digging for survival.

This year's World Day Against Child Labour, June 12th 2005, will focus on the plight of child miners world-wide.