



UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL'S STUDY ON VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

8. VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

More than 200 million children are working, legally or not, and 126 million children perform 'hazardous work'. Some children work even before they reach the legal age to do so. These children face many kinds of violence, including abuse and exploitation. Even children who are of legal working age, though, face violence at work.

- Many commentators consider that 'child labour' is in itself a form of violence against children. Their work is often hazardous and their health, safety and morals are at risk.
- Because they are young and inexperienced, young workers are often assaulted or insulted by co-workers and employers.

Facts and figures

- Most cases of workplace violence against children are inflicted by "employers," although perpetrators may also include co-workers, clients, foremen, customers, police, criminal gangs and, in the case of sexual exploitation, pimps and brothel owners.
- It is estimated that the majority of out of school girls, numbering about 60 million, are engaged in child domestic labour. Children report maltreatment such as physical punishment, humiliation or sexual harassment.
- Some children, in the 'worst forms of child labour' – often in slave-like conditions, or forced to work to pay off debts or after they have been trafficked – need to be removed at once.
- The prostitution of children and their exploitation in pornography are, by definition, forms of violence.
- Some 5.7 million children are in forced and bonded labour, many in South Asia. They are rarely able to protect themselves and studies suggest that they face all forms of violence.

Recommendations include:

- Implement a minimum working age and put in place programmes to ensure that children below this age do not enter child labour. Mainstream the elimination of child labour into national development policies and give priority to eliminating the "worst forms" of child labour.
- Where children are working legally, create and implement regulatory regimes and inspection processes which explicitly include violence prevention programmes, reporting systems and complaints procedures.
- Where children are working illegally, ensure availability of removal, recovery and integration programmes that focus on helping children to leave work, receive education and training and improve their life chances.
- Enlist the support of the private sector, trade unions and civil society to work together to stimulate corporate social responsibility measures.