

CHILD LABOUR



Manitoba Council for International Cooperation

Age: Gr 5-8; the Labour Line can be used for older students as a stand-alone activity.

Materials Needed:

- 24-hour clock worksheet – 1 per student + markers
- Child Labour profiles – 1 copy
- Root Causes of Child Labour – 1 copy

Introduction to topic of child labour:

5-10 mins

Group questions:

- How many of you have regular chores at home? What kind?
- Does anyone have a job? Where? What do you do? How much money do you make? Do you keep that money or give it to your parents?
- Are there differences between what girls do and boys do? What?
 - o Ex: Babysitting, cutting grass, snow blowing, paper routes

24 Hour Clock exercise:

10-15 mins

- Fill out the clock (see attached sheet) for a day that you would do chores.
Colour in what you usually do – when are you sleeping, doing chores, at work, at school, other activities, etc.
- Do you spend more or less than 5 hours a week doing chores?
- Do your chores interfere with school work or time with friends?
- Although they might seem annoying, are there any benefits to chores?
 - o *Helping around the house, clean atmosphere, organized, learning skills, contributing to family life, etc.*
- Who here has heard the term “child labour”? Is it good or bad?

Labour Line

10 mins

Draw a line on the board with “good work” at one end and “bad work” at the other. Have students split into 10 small groups to read their story (see attached stories). Have them decide where on the spectrum of good-to-bad work the story should be placed. Have them tape/write it



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on the line. Alternative: Hang a long string/rope and have students clip the profile to the string; or work as a class to decide where each profile should go.

For older students, you may wish to give them more time, and have them work alone or in pairs to read all 10 stories and build their own labour line with all of the profiles.

Class debrief:

- Ask each group to read/explain their story, and why they placed it where they did.

Which children from the profiles should be allowed to work and which should not?

- What makes something child labour rather than good work?

Highlight student answers on these themes: dangerous/forced/too young/unpaid work is “bad work” and freely chosen/appropriate age/safe/limited work/doesn’t interfere with education is “good work”. Look! The group already knows what child labour looks like. Keep a list of what they said makes work bad/good.

- What ages are considered “children” when it comes to child labour? When did you (or your siblings/parents) start working? *14/15 is the agreed upon age when light work is possible. I.e. children > 16 years old doing hazardous work is still child labour.*

One definition of Child Labour is: “work that children should not be doing because they are too young to work, or – if they are old enough to work – because it is dangerous or otherwise unsuitable for them.”¹ Work is not Child Labour if it does not affect health or personal development, and does not interfere with education – this work can be positive.

Count out students 1 – 6 and have all the 1’s stand up. If our classroom represented all the children in the world between 5-14, all the 1’s would be children engaged in child labour. Have 1/3 of the 1’s sit down. This is how many are involved in the worst forms of child labour.

What do you think these worst forms are?

*Forced labour (slavery/serfdom), child trafficking, armed conflict, forced labour in the drug trade or other illegal activities, or for sexual purposes.*²

24-Hour Clock Exercise (Part II)

5 mins

Have students fill out the clock as they listen to the story about Maya (below). Read the story at least twice through very slowly, out loud, so students can have time to fill out the clock.



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Maya's Story:

In 2010, Maya visited the capital city of her home country Nepal, with her uncle. She was 10 years old at the time. Her uncle sold her to a carpet factory where she had to work 16-hour shifts. For one year she worked in the factory where she began her days at 4 a.m. and finished her days at 6 p.m. She barely had any breaks throughout her shift – just a short 15-minute break to eat some rice and beans around noon. After she was done her shift Maya was too tired to go out and play. Since her income was sent home to her parents, sometimes she would go out in the evening for an hour to beg for extra food. The factory feeds her and provides her with a bed, but she still feels hungry most of the time. Maya tries to go to sleep around 8 p.m. so she is rested for the next day.

- How does hearing/seeing this make you feel?
- Are there any differences in your clock compared to Maya's?

What are the causes of child labour? 5 mins

- Now we know a little bit about what child labour is... Why do you think child labour exists? Let's watch a video to learn more.
- Play video:
- *Children of the Mines* (3 mins 11 sec, from UNICEF on child labourers in DRC diamond mines. Note: mature themes): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JfxpeHV-fXg>
 - o If the above video is not appropriate for your students, here are two other options:
 - 📺 *The Fight Against Child Labour* (3 mins, 29 sec, from United Nations about Madagascar): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ckz4gccSVpY>
 - 📺 *Child Labour Around the World* (2 min, 55 sec, from World Vision, the story of a young Cambodian girl): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=So4VAeLLmxI>
- What are some reasons that they said child labour exists? (*poverty, to provide for the family, to obtain money for school fees, loss of family member*)

Root Causes of Child Labour 10-15 mins

In small groups, have students read one of the root causes to child labour (see attached). Have the small groups create a scene or short skit that shows one of the reasons child labour happens. Have students perform their little skit for the rest of the class and explain what is going on in the scene.

Alternatively, if the group is very large, or shy, you can post the 4 root causes around the room, with a sheet of paper divided in half. As groups rotate around the room, they can write on the



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sheet any questions they may have about that root cause, as well as any solutions that could be used to combat that root cause.

After activity is complete, you can ask students how we might prevent child labour, given these situations. This is not always an easy question to answer, but some answers may include: Make sure school is an option (free, accessible, equal access), make child labour illegal, enforce the laws, provide health care to parents, provide fair wages to parents, provide relief in disasters, support companies that don't use child labour (ie: fair trade).

What can we do?

5 mins

Ask students: Has anyone heard of the United Nations (UN)? What is it?

In 1989, the UN created the Convention on the Rights of the Child,⁴ which has been ratified by 196 countries. This document says that children are human beings and individuals with their own rights. The Convention says childhood is separate from adulthood, and lasts until 18; it is a special, protected time, in which children must be allowed to grow, learn, play, develop and flourish with dignity. The Convention went on to become the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history and has helped transform children's lives. Enforcing and embracing this Convention is one way to help children around the world

What would happen if we just put anyone who used child labour in jail? Would that solve the problem? Child Labour is already illegal; why don't you think it's being enforced?

(Lots of children rely on labour to survive or support their families. Punishing people for using child labour might just drive the practice further underground. The solution needs to be holistic: providing wages to adults that can support their families, better medical care, better education, etc.)

Some tangible actions that students can take:

5+ mins

- Letter-writing campaigns to corporations that use child labour (chocolate companies, companies that use conflict minerals, or companies that use child labour in mining).
- Hold an assembly to educate others at school.
- Write an article for the school newspaper or a letter to the editor of the local newspaper.
- Support development projects that eradicate poverty, provide healthcare, provide schooling.
- Learn about fair trade⁵ and change school procurement policies (for clothing, chocolate, coffee, tea, or sports balls) to fair trade standards.

Challenge your students to take action using the ideas above or new ideas you come up with as a group! Be sure to allow time for them to create an action plan and take action.



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Child Labour Profiles (Labour line exercise: 10 stories)

Jessica, Chile

Jessica is 16 years old. She works one night a week after school and on Saturdays at a trendy clothing store downtown. Most of her pay cheque is spent on clothes from the store and going out with her friends. Her parents didn't want her to work, but she insisted. They made a deal that she is allowed to keep working as long as her grades stay the same or improve.

Brian, British Columbia

Brian is 17 years old. He has been working at McDonald's for two years and has worked his way up to the position of "Crew Chief", making \$9 an hour. Brian works 4 or 5 times a week after school or on weekends. He would rather work less, but his mom is a single mom and needs help supporting Brian's brothers and sisters.

Jaime, Colombia

Jaime is a 10-year-old mine worker in Amaga, a tiny town about an hour from one of Colombia's larger cities. The area is very poor and many families depend on their children's pay from working in the mines. Jaime wakes up at 4 a.m. and works up to 10 hours below ground in the mines. Jaime has to haul heavy sacks of coal up narrow slippery tunnels. He is paid \$18 per week.

Julekha, Bangladesh

Julekha is 10 years old and has been a domestic worker from the age of five. Her father is paralyzed and cannot walk. She has three sisters and four brothers. Julekha works for a family that lives across town from her. Her main job is to take care of the family's young child, but she also helps in household chores. Most days she works from 8 am until 6 pm for the family, and when she returns home around 7 pm she helps take care of her brothers and sisters. Julekha has never attended school because of her family's poverty, but she would like to learn to read one day.

Ishmael, Democratic Republic of Congo

Ishmael was only 7 years old when he was taken from his village to be a soldier. Military men came into his village at night and ordered everyone out of their house. The men made all of the young boys come with them, and hurt anyone who refused or tried to hide. Ishmael goes through rigorous military training and is forced to take drugs that make him feel dizzy and kind of like he's dreaming. He often sees people being killed by the military men, and he has been told he will never see his family again.



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Noor, Pakistan

Noor is 13 years old and works sewing soccer balls in one of the poorest areas in Pakistan. Earlier this year she was going to school, but her one-year-old brother became very ill and needed medicine. Noor's mother borrowed \$100 to buy the medicine but had to use Noor as collateral for the loan. Noor earns 5 cents an hour, and spends 10 to 15 hours a day stitching but interest is being charged on the loan at such a high rate that the loan doubles every few months. This growing debt may even be passed on to Noor's children and grand children.

Prama, India

Prama works for her parent's busy food cart. She works at the cart 4 days a week when her father works his other job as a rickshaw driver. Prama learns how to read and write 3 days a week from a local woman who teaches children in her home. Prama often falls behind because she has to miss classes twice a week and she doesn't have time to play in the evenings because she is always catching up with schoolwork.

Chad, Iowa

Chad is 15 years old and works at a construction company in the summer. This is his second year working for the company and he has learned a lot during his summers working. This year Chad has been promoted and gets to work on laying the foundations of buildings. The tasks are more complicated, he has to do some heavier lifting than last year, and he has to be very careful around the cement truck because working with cement can be very dangerous. After his promotion, Chad now earns \$16 an hour and he is saving up his money to buy a car.

Maria, Mexico

Maria just turned 18 and has a job waitressing full time near the resort area in Cancun. She makes the minimum wage of \$7 an hour. On top of this, she usually makes about \$50 in tips every shift. Maria likes her work, and other than being on her feet all day, the only part she doesn't like is that her managers make her wear high heels and a short skirt.

Carla, Italy

Carla babysits her two little brothers every day after school, while her mom works a night shift at a restaurant. Carla is 11 years old and once home from school she makes dinner, bathes her brothers, and tucks them into bed. After they are asleep she finishes her homework, makes herself lunch for the next day and goes to bed herself. Carla doesn't get paid for her work, but she feels good about being able to help her mom because she knows money has been tight since her dad left.



Root Causes of Child Labour

Barriers to education – basic education is not free in all countries and is not always available for all children, especially in remote rural areas. Where schools are available, the quality of education can be poor and the content may be disconnected from what life is like in that country. In situations where education is not affordable or parents see no value in education, children are sent to work, rather than to school.

Root Causes of Child Labour

Culture and tradition – In many places, women are expected to spend their life working at home. Often they are taken out of school at a very young age (if they go at all) and are put to work cooking, cleaning, and taking care of younger siblings. Sometimes girls are married off at very young ages – as young as 5 or 6 – to men in their community. Often, once these girls learn housekeeping skills at home, they will also find jobs doing housework for richer families.

Root Causes of Child Labour

Market demand – Child labour is not accidental. Employers may prefer to hire children because they are “cheaper” than their adult counterparts. Some employers also use child labour because they are easy to fire or treat unfairly. Sometimes adult workers get together to demand better conditions for their work. Usually children do not do this and just accept whatever treatment they are given. Some employers also claim that children’s small hands are better at doing work like weaving carpets or tying knots on soccer balls.

Root Causes of Child Labour



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The effects of income shocks on households – Sometimes unexpected things happen to families (like natural disasters, or sudden illnesses). This may create a need to get more money very quickly, or it may mean that a family member who used to earn money is no longer able to do so. If a parent gets very sick or dies, children may need to drop out of school to take care of their family.

