



# Facts on **DISABILITY** and **CHILD LABOUR**

Few studies have explored the linkages between disability and child labour. Common wisdom, rather than empirical evidence, tends to shape policymakers' views on the subject. This fact sheet is an attempt to summarize the data available, and provide an overview of the subject both from a global perspective and in the context of Indonesia in particular. It is organized in three parts: **section I** defines the terms of the discussion; **section II** provides some quantitative background with global and Indonesia-specific figures on disability and child labour; while **section III** focuses on the linkages between the two issues.

## I. ABOUT DISABILITY AND CHILD LABOUR

The 2006 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) introduces a 'social' approach to disability, which "results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others"<sup>1</sup>. The UNCRPD reaffirms that people with disabilities must enjoy the same rights than non-disabled people, and emphasizes that societies must

uphold the principle of *reasonable accommodation* of their needs, in order to ensure their full participation.

The ILO's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) refers to **child labour** as "work that is mentally, physically, socially and morally dangerous and harmful to children; and also interferes with their schooling by depriving them of the opportunity to attend school; obliging them to leave school prematurely and requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Preamble, UNCRPD, 2006

<sup>2</sup> ILO IPEC definition on Child Labour, <http://www.ilo.org/ipec/facts/lang-en/index.htm>.

## II. ISSUES IN FIGURES

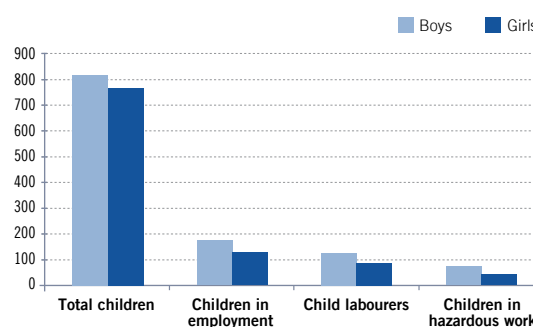
### Disability, Education and Child Labour at the Global Level

UNICEF estimates that there are at least 150 million children with disabilities<sup>3</sup>, while the WHO and the World Bank estimate the number of children aged 0-14 years with “moderate or severe disability” at 93 million, with 13 million children experiencing severe disabilities. Children with disabilities are more likely to be male than female, possibly suggesting that baby girls with an impairment have less chance of survival. Around 80 per cent of people with disabilities live in developing countries, where they make up between 15 and 20 per cent of the poor<sup>4</sup>.

The global number of children in the 5-17 age group classified as ‘in employment’ is 306 million **globally**. Among them, 70 per cent, or 215 million, are in child labour<sup>5</sup>.

Global trend analysis<sup>6</sup> shows that child labour is declining (-3.2 per cent between 2004 and 2008), particularly in Asia and the Pacific, which nevertheless remains the region with the highest absolute number of child labourers. Most child labourers in the region continue to work in agriculture, and the majority of them are in unpaid employment.

#### Global estimates, millions



Source: ILO, *Accelerating action against child labour*, Geneva, 2010.

### Disability, Education and Child Labour in Indonesia

Indonesia’s National Socio-economic Survey 2006 indicates that 3 million people, or 1.4 per cent of the total population, live with a disability. The difference between the Indonesian and the global disability rates suggests an under-representation of people with disabilities in the country. According to the most recent estimate (WHO, 2005), the number of children with disabilities in Indonesia is 1.5 million<sup>7</sup>. A 2005 World Bank study used household surveys to investigate the relationship between disability and household economic status, and found that the incidence of disability seems to be higher among the poorest quintiles of the population.

All children have equal rights for basic education. However, according to the WHO and World Bank report<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> UNICEF, *The state of the world’s children 2006: excluded and invisible*, New York, 2005

<sup>4</sup> World Bank, *Poverty and disability: a survey of the literature*, Social Protection Discussion Paper, Washington, 1999.

<sup>5</sup> ILO, *Accelerating action against child labour*, Geneva, 2010

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> ILO – EAST Project, *Disability, access to education and child labour: exploring the links*, Jakarta, 2010

<sup>8</sup> WHO and World Bank, *World Report on Disability*, 2011

children with disabilities in Indonesia do not have the same opportunities for education as non-disabled children. The gap between children with disabilities and other children for primary school attendance is as much as 60 per cent.

### Prevalence of disability, age 6-17

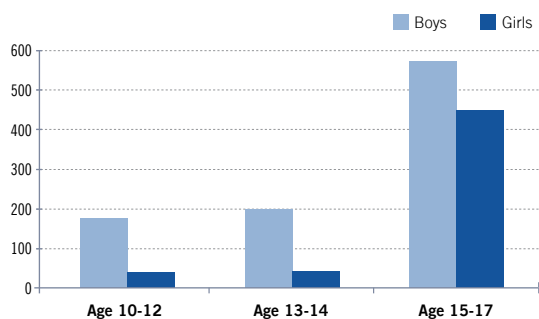
	Poorest quintile	2 <sup>nd</sup> quintile	3 <sup>rd</sup> quintile	4 <sup>th</sup> quintile	Richest quintile
Indonesia 2003*	0.70	0.55	0.41	0.50	0.38

\*The survey includes vision, hearing, speech, and physical disabilities

Source: World Bank, *Disability, poverty and Schooling in Developing Countries: Results from 11 Household Surveys*, Social Protection Discussion Paper, Washington, 2005.

Child labour figures in Indonesia are traditionally lower than in other countries in Asia and the Pacific<sup>9</sup>, particularly as compared to South Asia. Still, in 2009 the country was home to an estimated 1.7 million child labourers aged 5-17<sup>10</sup>, the age bracket of reference for the Child Labour Survey.

### Child labour in Indonesia by age group, thousands



Source: Indonesia Child Labour Survey, 2009

## III. LINKAGES BETWEEN DISABILITY AND CHILD LABOUR IN INDONESIA

*The linkages between disability and child labour are complex to investigate.* The available evidence does not provide univocal answers with regard to their causal relationship. Living with a disability often means that a child is more vulnerable to violations of fundamental rights, including the right to education or health care. The question is whether disability makes a child more vulnerable to entering child labour as well. Several hypotheses have been investigated by different studies on the subject.

The first hypothesis about the linkages between disability and child labour is well recognized in one direction, namely from involvement in child labour to *the risk of acquiring a disability due to exposure to hazardous work*. According to ILO Convention No. 182, child labour is ‘hazardous’ when ‘*by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children*’<sup>11</sup>. Such work in dangerous or unhealthy working arrangements can result in injuries, ill health, and permanent disability.

However, a second hypothesis on *the converse linkage between the two, from disability to vulnerability to child labour, is actually more controversial*. Investigating this correlation is a challenge. Additional factors come into play and their effect is not easily disentangled. Above all, poverty-related variables

<sup>9</sup> ILO – EAST Project, *Disability, access to education and child labour: exploring the links*, Jakarta, 2010

<sup>10</sup> Indonesia’s 2009 Child Labour Survey

<sup>11</sup> ILO Convention on the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999 (No.182)

are strongly associated with both disability and child labour, as they are at the same time both causes *and* consequences of poverty<sup>12</sup>. Further research is also constrained by a lack of data and the difficulty for household surveys to capture the presence of impairment, as fear of stigma and shame leads families to often hide disability away.

***A useful channel to analyze the linkages between disability and child labour is education.*** Given its role as a key intervention in the fight against child labour, education is often considered in the light of its implications for children and work. In child labour statistics, for instance, indicators for universal basic education serve as proxies to measure variations in child labour<sup>13</sup>. Children who are not in school are more likely to become involved in income-generating activities and in child labour. Evidence from Indonesia shows that dropping out of education is often found to be associated with financial constraints<sup>14</sup> and the need for children to contribute to household income<sup>15</sup>. In addition, by dropping out of school, children miss out on the chance to acquire skills that in the future open the door to decent employment opportunities.

***Disability is a strong factor keeping children out of education.*** Stigma and ignorance on the part of the community often lead parents to keep a child with impairment at home. If household resources are scarce, parents may also educate non-disabled

children only, based on the belief that they will better support their siblings with disabilities<sup>16</sup>. Consequently, children with disabilities tend to receive relatively little education. UNESCO estimates that one-third of the 75 million children worldwide who are not in school have an impairment<sup>17</sup>. A child with a disability aged 6-11 is on average half as likely to be in school as a child without a disability of the same age<sup>18</sup>. In the context of Indonesia, despite the government's efforts towards inclusive education, the attendance rate in primary school is still almost 60 percentage points lower among children with disabilities compared to non-disabled children.<sup>19</sup>

***For children with disabilities who are in school, the education system and infrastructure can exacerbate marginalization.*** Physical access to school premises can be inadequate, curriculum and pedagogy inappropriate, attitudinal barriers may exist and teachers may be inadequately trained to meet the support needs of students with impairment. Some children with disabilities may find schools noisy, confusing and threatening<sup>20</sup>. A non-inclusive education environment would increase the barriers that children with impairment face, thereby accentuating their marginalization<sup>21</sup>.

***Despite a lower probability of being in school, disabled children do not seem to be systematically more vulnerable to child labour.*** A recent qualitative

<sup>12</sup> The correlation between disability and poverty works in both directions. As argued by this policy brief, disability is often accompanied by low educational attainment, and consequently, low skills and diminished chances to find jobs. Living with a disability also implies facing extra costs, such as health care. On the other hand, poverty can cause disability through several factors such as malnourishment, denied health care, or involvement in child labour.

<sup>13</sup> ILO, *Accelerating action against child labour*, Geneva, 2010

<sup>14</sup> ILO-IPEC, *Indonesia's Youth Labour Market and the Impact of Early School Drop Out and Child Labour*, 2006

<sup>15</sup> ILO-EAST, *Equivalency Education and Access to Decent Work*, Jakarta, 2010

<sup>16</sup> N E Groce, *Adolescents and youth with disability: Issues and challenges*, Asia Pacific Disability Rehabilitation Journal, Vol.15 No.2, 2004, pp.13-32

<sup>17</sup> UNESCO, *Global Monitoring Report on Education for All*, 2010

<sup>18</sup> UNESCO, *Global Monitoring Report on Education for All*, 2008 study of 20 developing countries

<sup>19</sup> UNESCO, *Global Monitoring Report on Education For All*, 2010

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Please refer to Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, [Education.http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf](http://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf)

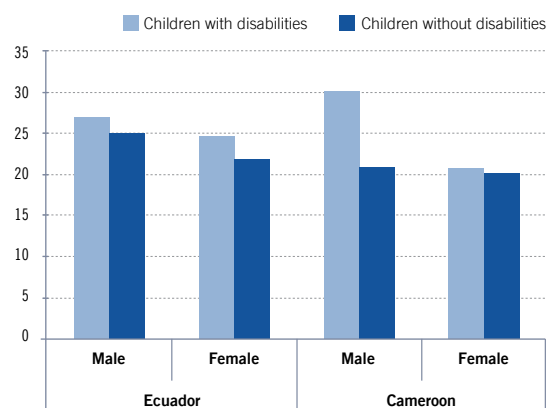
rapid assessment<sup>22</sup> conducted by ILO-EAST in Kupang, East Nusa Tenggara province found that most children with disabilities interviewed who did not go to school were not involved in income-generating activities either. They were also not found performing household tasks. Instead, they were mostly 'idle'. While disability may well represent a vulnerability factor for school attendance, these findings seem to suggest that disability may in some cases become a 'protective' factor in relation to child labour.

Analysis of the child labour-education nexus is often based on the assumption that poor households would make the most of the working capital at their disposal; however, evidence from child labour surveys shows that (a) sometimes a large share of children are neither in school nor at work, and (b) the phenomenon cannot be explained only by children's involvement in household chores, or by the lack of work opportunities<sup>23</sup>. The rapid assessment conducted by ILO-EAST in Indonesia suggests that in the case of children with disabilities, protective concerns of parents may play an important role in their decision not to send their children to work.

*However, evidence from other studies leads to different conclusions.* A working paper from ILO-IPEC<sup>24</sup>, taking a more global perspective, argues that disabilities can in fact represent a 'push' factor into child labour. The paper's findings are based on data from national child labour surveys carried out with the support of the ILO-IPEC Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour (SIMPOC)

in Cameroon and Ecuador. This evidence supports a higher propensity for 'idleness' among children with disabilities, but at the same time shows that complete idleness applies to only a relatively small percentage of individuals. More often, children with disabilities are found to be substantially involved in productive activities. In some contexts, they are more likely to be at work than children without disabilities<sup>25</sup>.

### Average work hours per week, by sex and disability status, age group 5-17, %



Source: ILO-IPEC, *A Working Paper on Descriptive evidence on child labour and disabilities*, Geneva, 2010

## LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK IN INDONESIA

### On Disability

The Government of Indonesia (GoI) is taking actions in **protecting the rights of people with disabilities** and promoting inclusion:

- **1997:** Comprehensive disability law: Act of the Republic of Indonesia Number 4.
- **2007:** Signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

<sup>22</sup> ILO – EAST Project, *Disability, Access to Education and Child Labour: exploring the links*, Jakarta, 2010

<sup>23</sup> UCW, The puzzle of "idle" children: neither in school nor performing economic activity. Evidence from six countries, October 2003

<sup>24</sup> ILO-IPEC, *A Working Paper on Descriptive Evidence on Child Labour and Disabilities*, Geneva, 2010

<sup>25</sup> There are however methodological issues with this study that does not differentiate disability and illness

- **2004-2013:** National Action Plan for the Measure of Social Welfare Enhancement for Indonesia's People with Disabilities.

### On Child Labour

- **1999:** Ratification of ILO Convention on *Minimum Age for Admission to Employment*, 1973 (No.138).
- **2000:** First Asian country to ratify ILO Convention on the *Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour*, 1999 (No.182).

### Inclusive Education

- **2003 National Education System Act:** stipulates that children of basic education age and with special needs are to receive 'equal attention' from the government. This has translated in recent years into 2,230 new special education schools. By 2007, 9,999 'learning places' for children with disability had been created in all provinces, managed by 2,574 schools. Altogether, more than 327,326 students were benefiting from these places in 2007.
- **2007-2015 Conditional Cash Transfer programme** is implemented in 118 districts and 25 provinces (as of 2011). Families accepting the reintegration of their children in school receive aid of between USD 45 and 90 annually, depending on the number of children and their grades.

**Mixed evidence suggests that the linkages between disability and child labour work through context-specific channels.** Where attitudes to disability are particularly negative, parents are more likely to keep their children with disabilities away from the public

eye. In these cases, disability might act as a protective factor against child labour. Local sentiment towards begging, which is a common outcome of disability and poverty, also can limit the incidence of child labour among children with disabilities<sup>26</sup>. However, as the chart above illustrates, in other contexts, where different attitudes are possibly in play, and when economic pressure increases, living with a disability can lead children to significantly higher vulnerability to exploitation and long working hours.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Programmes for the elimination of child labour and for children with disabilities need to be better integrated, in particular by:**

- Including disability as a dimension of the child labour surveys, together with educational status, work status, and participation in household chores;
- Working towards a holistic approach to education inclusiveness by facilitating the meaningful participation of children with disabilities, and of children vulnerable to child labour, in the learning process;
- Prioritizing efforts to withdraw children from hazardous child labour in order to prevent accidents/sickness leading to disabilities;
- Maximizing the learning (school and vocational) capacities of children with disabilities and at the same time strengthening policies, actions and systems aimed at reducing the possibility that their new skills will expose them to exploitation.

<sup>26</sup> ILO – EAST Project, *Disability, Access to Education and Child Labour: Exploring the Links*, Jakarta, 2010