

As many as 250 million children are to be found working in all sorts of situations today, often in appalling conditions. Evidence suggests that child labour is on the increase and that this is partly due to increasingly unregulated global trade.

The accompanying material provides you with the background information, suggested activities and hand-outs to explore the following issues with your members on your trade union courses:

1. What Child Labour is and is not – as defined by ILO Convention 138, and its extent and distribution
2. Why do children work ?
3. The trade union response to child labour



Activity One

What is Child labour ?

How many children are involved
and where ?

Aims:

To increase participant's awareness of what child labour is and is not; the extent and distribution of the problem; and to introduce international instruments/standards in place to protect children's rights.

Timing:

30 minutes

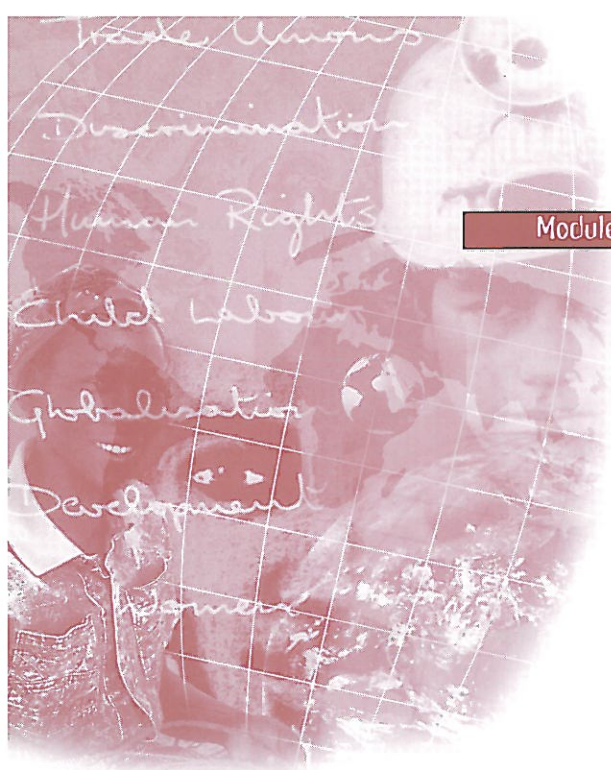
What you need:

- overheads 1 - 4 and copies for participants.
- flipchart paper & pens

What you need to do:

- Ask participants to discuss together in small groups what they think child labour is / is not. Encourage them to use examples to illustrate their point in a class discussion.
- Participants can record their ideas on flipchart.

Tutor then gives input using overheads 1 - 4 on definition and distribution of child labour.



Tutor Notes for input:

While the problem is obviously concentrated in Asia (60%) , Africa (30%) and Latin America (7%) it also exists in industrialised countries and is a growing problem in Eastern Europe and the CIS. Below are some examples from the developing world.

Examples include:

Asia:

Bangladesh garment sector; Indian carpet and glass industry; Nepal agriculture and carpets; Pakistan 10 million or more in bonded labour/brick kiln industry/sewing footballs and manufacture of surgical instruments in Sialkot.

Latin America and Caribbean: Brazil shoes, sugar, tea, tin and charcoal; Colombia: coal mining, flowers. Peru: domestic child workers, (mostly girls), rubbish dumps and gold mining.

Africa: Work in fields rather than attend school, rural; domestic and informal sectors.

Mauritania: slavery; Zimbabwe: mining and gold panning.

You could then ask participants to state any examples from the developed world that they are aware of.

Examples of Child Labour in the "developed" world include:

Great Britain: Recent Newspaper reports include following headlines
"Girl 14, raped on paper round"
"Flower firms risk children's lives in illegal roadside work"
"Cut throat traders hire children on the cheap"

There is also evidence of the use of child labour in Agribusiness in the USA

Research in Northern Ireland has shown evidence of child labour in:

Construction; clerical; newspaper delivery; coal and milk deliveries; shop and market stalls; door to door selling; pubs; cafes and restaurants. There is evidence of all of above leading to underachievement in school and potential health hazards.

There is no research on Child Labour in the Republic, but anecdotal evidence, (often from teachers), shows that, despite the Protection of Young Persons (Employment) Act 1996, abuses are present and are affecting educational performance.

(Some videos on child labour are available. These can be used to illustrate the reality of child labour for some children. Contact Congress or any other contacts listed in this resource.)

Activity Two

Why do children work?

Aim:

to help explore with participants the reasons for the existence of child labour.

Timing:

20/25mins

What you need:

- List of Agree/Disagree statements and
- "Agree" and "Disagree" signs;
- Blu-tac;
- Supply/demand table on why children work.
- Overhead 1

What You need to do: Agree/Disagree?

Below is a list of statements in relation to child labour. Ask participants to stand in the middle of the room. Stick an "agree" and "disagree" sign on opposite walls. Having read the statement aloud, ask participants to move to the side of the room that suits their opinion. Once in position ask people to state why they are standing where they are. If others are persuaded by arguments put by other participants, they may change their position. After some debate, move participants back to the centre and repeat with another statement.

You can finish this section by examining together on an overhead the table that explores why children work in terms of both supply and demand.

Time: 20 / 25 minutes

Agree / Disagree Statements on Child Labour

1. Child Labour will never be eliminated until poverty is eradicated.
2. Children should, in all circumstances, be at school not work.
3. Those campaigning to ban the trade of goods made by child labour are merely trying to protect jobs in the rich (OECD) countries by placing unreachable standards in the way of developing countries.
4. Parents who send their children to work should be severely punished.
5. Where schools don't exist or are in terrible condition, children have the right to work.

(You are encouraged to make up your own statements,
The whole purpose is to provoke debate)



Activity Three Case Studies

Aim:

- To get participants to reflect on the complex issues associated with the eradication of child labour.
- To explore the trade union response and the role of Irish Trade Unions.

Timing:

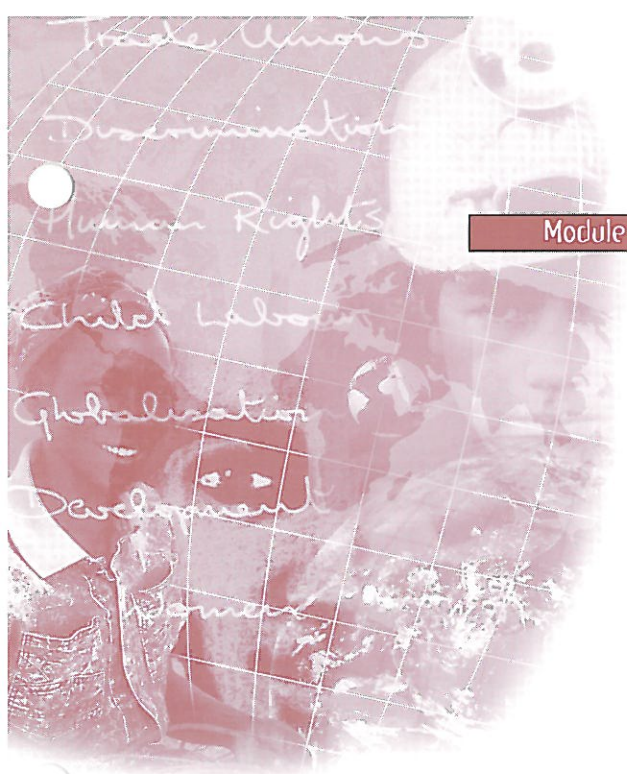
35 minutes – 20 minutes in groups followed by 15 minutes general discussion.

What you need:

copies of case studies.

What you need to do:

Distribute the following case studies to small groups of 4 – 6. Having had time to read them, ask them to consider the questions attached.



Handout

Case Study One

Child Labour on Soya Farms Banana Plantations, Mindanao, the Philippines.

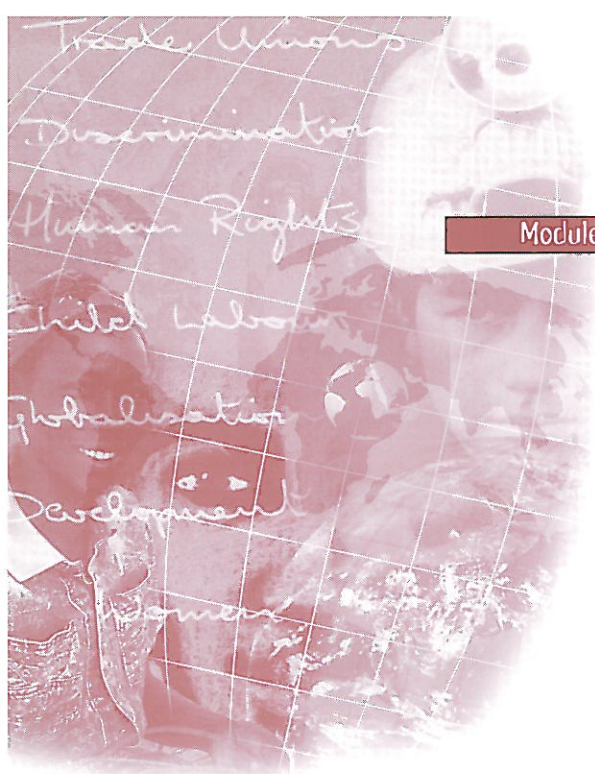
At Soyapa farms school children work in the fields and packing sheds to supply Dole with bananas for export. The children work for two hours before school, return to the fields for four hours after school, and work eleven hours on Saturday. Many families have been forced to pull their children out of school altogether.

The former rice growers who pooled their land to form the Soyapa Farms banana plantation have individual contracts to sell their bananas to Dole at a low price. The terms reflect similar deals with other co-operatives supplying Dole in the region, and have locked the workers and their families into poverty and debt. As Soyapa Farm worker Nenita Baylosis recently explained to a journalist. "The children on this plantation work because their families can't survive without the wages they earn."



Questions for discussion:

1. Discuss the situation of workers in case study.
2. What are the issues arising from this case?
3. Is there any relevance to the situation in Ireland?
4. What is the role for the local union?
5. Is there a role for us as Irish trade unionists?



Tutors Notes for case study one

This case study was revealed by the International Union of Foodworkers in March 1998.

It raises many issues, including:

- The power of multinationals over peoples' lives
- Does the price of goods in our shops reflect back to the producers?
- Our role as consumers in influencing this?
- The importance of trade union rights being respected in order to avoid the use of child labour
- Importance of international solidarity in the global economy.

The relevance to the situation re child labour in Ireland is:

The importance of children being able to devote the vast majority of their time to their education and links between family income and educational opportunity. Although Child Labour of this severity probably does not exist here, there is no doubt that legislation is being flouted in many cases. Although the abuses are not as extreme as some of the examples from third world countries, Irish children's rights need also to be protected. This concept is often referred to as "the universality of children's rights".

The role for the local union could be:

- Renegotiating the agreement between Dole and the co-operative:
In fact the local union was instrumental in organising a work stoppage and barricade of the farms to protest their worsening living conditions. Despite violent dispersal of such protests, two co-operatives have been able to negotiate better contracts including a better price per box and an annual price review.
- Seeking international solidarity in support of their case:
IUF have organised a major campaign in support of the workers on the farms. They could not have done so without union research and communication of the situation on the ground.

Role for us as Irish Trade Unionists?

- Send a letter to Dole demanding it negotiate a fairer price for the bananas it buys there.
- Write to supermarkets and other outlets of Dole products informing them of the situation and urging them to use their contacts with Dole reps to ask why Dole is behaving in this way and suggesting that the bad publicity may lead to consumers avoiding Dole products.
- Urge Dole and other banana companies to agree to a code of conduct for the production of bananas which includes reference to no child labour; freedom of association and collective bargaining; and to independent monitoring of the code so that it is not merely a PR exercise.

In short, INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY actions.

Handout

Case Study Two

Young Irish Supermarket Worker.

Baz is a sixteen year old from Cork. he works in a supermarket during the weekend and his school holidays. The pay isn't great but he needs the money to satisfy his love for sport and sportsgear. He wishes the sports factories would bring their prices down a bit as he can rarely afford the most fashionable items ! His neighbour, Kathleen works there full-time also for about the same wages. He wonders how she supports her daughter and makes ends meet. With the supermarkets being so profitable he cannot understand why the wages are so poor.

Although he does all right at school he is very tempted by an offer from the manager to take up a post as trainee manager of the store. He says he can always come back to his leaving certificate and the increase in pay would mean he could afford better gear.

Questions to consider:

1. Discuss the situation of workers in case study.
2. Is the above story realistic ? Does it relate to your own experience in any way ?
3. What in your opinion should Baz do ? If you were his parent how would you persuade him towards your opinion ?
4. How could the rights of Baz and Kathleen be better protected ?
5. Is there a role for the local shop steward ?

(Adapted from DEFY / Trocaire - The Rights Stuff)



Tutors Notes for Case Study Two

The following points could help a discussion on this case.

Child labour is prohibited in the Republic of Ireland under the Protection of Young Persons (Employment) Act 1996.

The general Minimum age is 16.

14 and 15 year olds can do light work, under certain conditions.

Under 18's - no more than 40 hours a week

Under 15 - 8 hours term time, 35 hours holiday work a week

Under 14 - no work during term time; 35 hours other.

There is no research to indicate how this legislation relates to the reality of young people's working lives here. The monitoring committee for the Act has met only a handful of times since its inception and anecdotal evidence suggests educational attainment is being affected by children working long/late hours during school time.

Many children are being tempted by the present economic boom to leave school for short term financial gain and abandoning longer term prospects by leaving school with few qualifications.

The employment of children in Northern Ireland is now mainly regulated by articles 133-148 of the Children (NI) Order 1995. In general, no child under the age of 13 can be employed at all and no child who is 13 or older can work before 7.00am or after 7.00pm or for more than two hours on any one school day. Nor can a child be employed in street trading or in any occupation likely to be injurious to his or her health or education. Any person employing a child in contravention of the law (or any parent allowing it) can be fined up to €1,000, while any child engaged in street trading can be fined up to €200 (art. 148).

Article 36 of the UN Children's Convention on the Rights of the Child:

"you have the right to be protected from all forms of exploitation, including exploitation in the work place..."



Activity Four An appropriate response ?

Aims:

to familiarise participants with various responses to child labour and the trade union position in particular.

Timing:

30 minutes.

What you need:

Copy of Trade Union Charter on Child Labour Handout.

What you need to do:

Ask participants in groups to design a programme of action to tackle child labour. Encourage them to be realistic (and creative !), considering the aids and hindrances to their suggestions. The programme should be on a national and international level. After brief presentations and a look at similarities and differences contained, handout the Trade Union Charter against Child Labour (Nov 1998) and ask them to read and discuss.



Tutor Notes for Design of Programme to tackle Child Labour:

Positions on child labour tend to be either abolitionist or regulatory. The former is very clear and straightforward but until economic prospects in those parts of the world where child labour is prevalent improve, it is going to remain extremely difficult to implement. Those espousing this approach are now focusing more on tackling the "worst forms". A new international standard is currently being prepared to help governments do just that. The Global March against child labour is an effort to ensure that this is an effective instrument.

The regulatory approach argues that children need an income of their own to pay for various things such as school requisites and consumer goods. As long as there are effective protective measures in place, there is no reason to ban child labour.

Elements of programmes at national level could include:

- Commitment by government to abolition of child labour and to ratify and implement ILO Convention 138.
- The worst forms must be immediately banned.
- Income and employment situation of adults should be improved.
- Protect working children and combine work with education as interim measure.
- Governments must be encouraged to provide better and affordable education.
- Social awareness and anti-child labour campaigns.

At International Level:

- Reinforcing of international treaties (UN and ILO) (ie; aid to projects implementing ILO Conventions on Child Labour).
- Development aid activities.
- Trade policy measures such as a social clause in trade agreements which guarantees basic human rights in the workplace.
- Ensuring that policies of other international financial institutions (such as the International Monetary Fund and World Bank) do not contribute to the causes of child labour.



Tutors Notes Continued

With regard to the various positions on child labour, Trade Unions are firmly in the abolitionist camp.

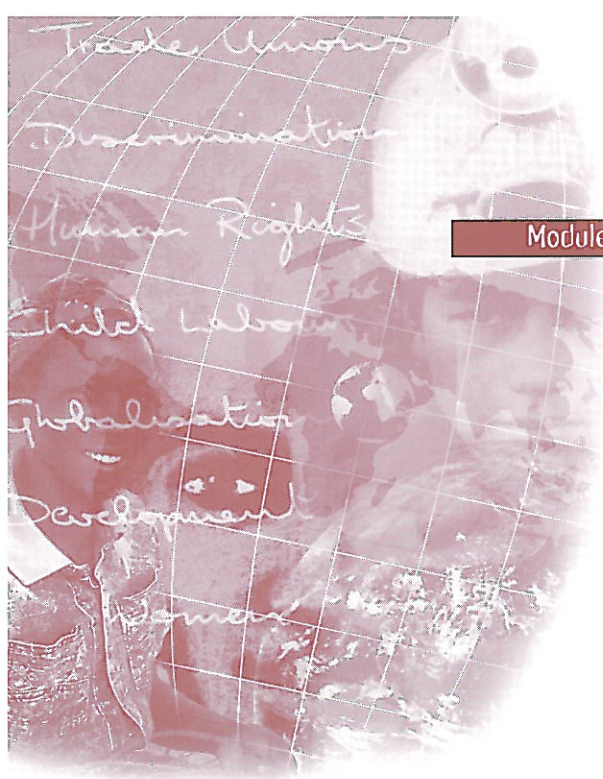
Priorities for action include:

- preventing children from becoming child labourers
- withdraw those currently in "worst forms", providing them with real alternatives such as education
- take transitional steps to protect other children and get them out of work into school

Five Principles need to be put in place in order to achieve this:

1. Education for All
2. No more Exploitation
3. Economic Security
4. Rights for Children and Rights for Adults
5. Everyone has a part to play

These form the basis of the
Charter Against Child Labour on Page 12



HANDOUT

Charter against Child Labour

STOLEN FUTURE:

Over 250 million child labourers are being exploited for profit or are forced to work in order to survive. Whole generations of children are being deprived of the chance to take their rightful place in the society and economy of the 21st Century. If recruitment of new child workers ends now, child labour will disappear in a decade. To stop this exploitation, the five principles of the Child Labour Charter need to be put in place:

1. EDUCATION FOR ALL

Child labour deprives children of the chance to go to school. Without an education, children become locked into a life-long cycle of poverty. At the start of the 3rd millennium, getting all children, particularly girls, into school is still one of the great challenges facing the world. Governments and the international community must meet this challenge.

2. NO MORE EXPLOITATION

Tens of millions of children are exploited for profit every day. Those who gain from child labour must be stopped and must help undo the damage they have done. They must help to pay for the rehabilitation and education of the child workers. National and inter-national laws against child labour must be enforced.

3. ECONOMIC SECURITY

Most of these children work because their families are poor. Child labour can only be ended when adults have decent jobs and social support. National governments and the international institutions need to do much more to ensure that adults can go to work and children can go to school. They need to make sure that the global economy brings benefits to all people, not just a privileged few.

4. RIGHTS FOR CHILDREN AND RIGHTS FOR ADULTS

The rights of children and of adults are guaranteed in national laws and international treaties. Child labour is usually found where adults' rights are also violated. Where there is discrimination and repression, where there is corruption, where there is forced labour, where freedom of association and expression are denied, child labour is found. Child labour can only be ended when universal human rights are respected.

5. EVERYONE HAS A PART TO PLAY

We cannot afford to turn our backs on child labourers. We must listen to them and help them, so we can help build a better world. Governments, consumers, employers, trade unions, non-government organisations, religious groups, teachers, students and the general public, working together, we can end the scourge of child labour. The United Nations' International Labour Organisation defines child labour as work done by children under 15 years of age (or 14 years where economies are less developed). Light work, for a few hours a week, can be done by children of 13 years (or 12 in less developed economies). Children under 18 years should be protected from hazardous and exploitative work.

CHILDREN ARE OUR FUTURE. YOU CAN HELP THEM NOW.
JOIN THE INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN AGAINST CHILD LABOUR.
ICFTU – International Confederation of Free Trade Unions

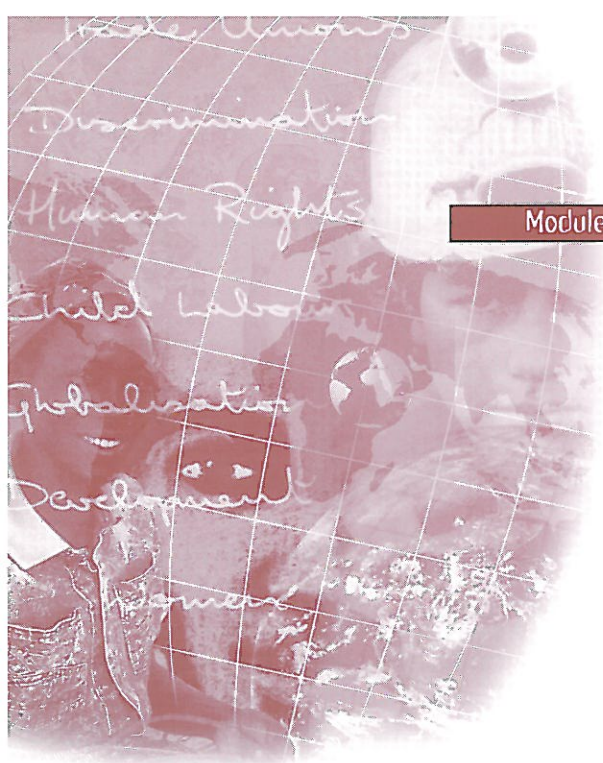


Overhead One

Child Labour

“Work that endangers a child’s physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development or that interferes with his/her education and schooling....” . (ICFTU)

.....is defined as work regularly done by children under the age of 15 (ILO Convention 138)



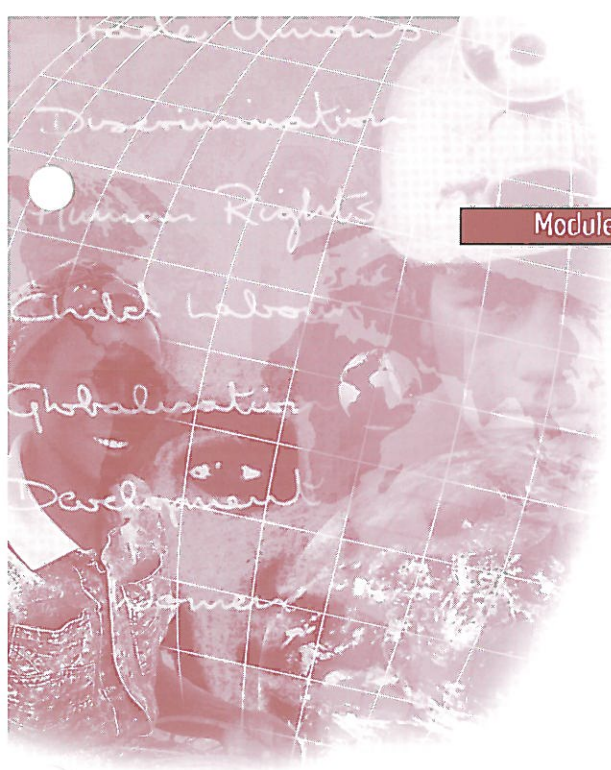
Overhead Two

What it is not ?

- helping with housework
- or on the farm
- or earning some money after school and during holidays

Children gain from these activities. It is part of growing up

But when it hurts rather than helps them,
children's work becomes child labour.



Overhead Three

Some facts on Child Labour

- 250 million children between the age of 5 and 14 are currently working (ILO).
- At least 120 million of these are working full-time.
- Most work on farms, plantations, as domestic workers or in the informal sector, hidden and unprotected.
- Millions more work in factories and workshops.



Overhead Four



Overhead Five

Why do Children Work?

Supply	Demand
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty: Used to supplement family income; survival; unable to attend education. • Labour Market System Competition and Flexibility mean children can substitute adults. Piece rate systems mean children drafted in to help meet targets. • Education System Failure of system in terms of cost, availability and quality can lead to child labour as preferred option. Government spending on education often forced down by structural adjustment programmes. • Family Size Poor and large families are associated with less children at school and more in the workforce. • Social and cultural environment: Girls sometimes kept from school if choices made. Some children, not seeing relevance of school, prefer to work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informalisation of production Smaller, subcontracted household enterprises increasingly common to avoid legal regulations. • Cost of Child Labour Child Workers paid less than adult counterparts. • Family Work: Parents demand children to work for their economic viability. Often exploitative rather than beneficial to child. • Level of Technology Cheap multi function machines mean subcontracting and home manufacturing easier. • Children's size and dexterity: Common perception, but ILO research has shown that adults can and do perform the same jobs at least as well and often better. • Level of workers' organisation Flourishes in non-formal sector where unions find it difficult to organise. • Culture of Impunity Government's commitment or reluctance to pass and enforce legislation.

(Source: ILO)

