

# The Paper Bag Game

## Hard labour... Background information for leaders about working children

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) there are 500 million workers who earn just US\$1 a day. That is all they have to support themselves and their families. Most are in developing countries. By 2013, 460 million new young jobseekers will join them – two-thirds of them in Asia.

Many of these workers are children. In 2002, an ILO report estimated that of the 250 million children aged between five and 14 who are economically active in the developing world, 186 million are doing work that should be abolished. The worst forms of child labour include prostitution, bonded labour in sweatshops, military service or hazardous industries – for example, where chemicals are used.

## Child workers: the facts

- Around 250 million children work in the developing world.
- Half of them work full-time; half combine work with school.
- Asia, the world's most populous region, has the largest share of working children (61%), followed by Africa (32%) and Latin America and the Caribbean (7%).
- More than two-thirds of working children are involved in agriculture; the rest work in manufacturing, trade, hotels and restaurants, domestic service, transport, construction and quarrying.
- In some countries, up to 20% of economically active children in rural areas and up to 5% in urban areas are under the age of ten.

There are many reasons why children work. These include:

- **poverty:** the worst cases of child labour involve children from families that are poor, unskilled and illiterate.
- **family situation:** children from single-parent families may be under more pressure to work than others, and girls may be expected to do more than their brothers in the home.
- **social position:** differentiation between gender, class, ethnic background and caste can all influence which children are most vulnerable.
- **attitude to work:** different societies have different notions of childhood; many see work as a central part of childhood and a means for children to learn the skills they need in adult life.
- **the demand for cheap labour,** fuelled by growing competition in the global market – children are paid less than the minimum wage.

## Child labour v child work

**There is a difference between child labour and child work. Sometimes work benefits children, teaching responsibility and skills that will be of use later in life, and that contribute to family income. Yet when it is heavy manual work or a child is working so many hours that there is no time to play or attend school, it is more commonly regarded as child labour, which is potentially damaging for the child.**

**According to research by agencies working on child labour, there are approximately 60 million child labourers in India alone. The US Department of State estimates that most – if not all – of the 87 million children who are out of school in India do housework, work as paid agricultural labourers alongside their parents, as domestic servants or are otherwise employed.**