



in our own backyard

THE HIDDEN PROBLEM OF
CHILD FARMWORKERS IN AMERICA

<http://www.ourownbackyard.org>

Part II: How Can This Happen?

International Standards to Protect Children from Harmful Work

An overview of international standards.

Source: Child Labor Public Education Project and the Child Labor Coalition



Around the world, most nations' child labor laws:

- set 14 or 15 as the minimum age for work
- prohibit children under 18 from doing hazardous work

Many international standards have also been ratified by a majority of countries through the United Nations and International Labor Organization:

<i>ILO Convention 138</i>	Sets minimum age of 15 for employment
<i>ILO Convention 182</i>	Prohibits the "worst forms" of child labor and requires countries to act toward eliminating "worst forms"
<i>UN Convention on the Rights of the Child</i>	Guarantees children rights to protection from economic exploitation and hazardous work, and access to health care and education
<i>Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 23</i>	Guarantees workers the right to join unions and receive just compensation for work
<i>ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work</i>	Declares the rights to: join a union and bargain collectively, reject forced labor, work free from discrimination, and reject child labor

Unfortunately, existing laws and international standards are often violated.

Many countries and states:

- lack effective laws to protect children.
- include exemptions that make laws unenforceable or only cover children in certain industries.
- rarely enforce existing laws on child labor, or are under pressure from employers or local governments not to enforce laws.
- lack funds or trained personnel to enforce laws.

Did you know?

- Since it was adopted by the United Nations in 1989, only two countries have not ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child: Somalia and the United States.
- As of 2000, Iowa had only two full-time officers responsible for enforcing labor laws. In survey responses, officials commented that due to understaffing, the state labor board could only investigate when they received complaints, and rarely had time to perform on-site inspections.

Additional information on the International Labor Organization conventions:

ILO Convention 138: “The minimum age shall not be less than the age of completion of compulsory schooling and, in any case, shall not be less than 15 years. A country whose economy and educational facilities are insufficiently developed may, after consultation with the organizations of employers and workers concerned, where such exist, initially specify a minimum age of 14 years.”

ILO Convention 182: The worst forms of child labor include:

(a) all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict;

(b) the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances;

(c) the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties;

(d) work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.