

## Child Labour Discussion Sheet

### Facts about child labour

- Child labour is defined as work that negatively impacts children. It is work that is harmful to children's physical and mental health and their social and spiritual development.
- There are more than 200 million children around the world engaged in child labour.
- It is not unusual for children to be forced into slave-like conditions, the very worst form of child labour. This type of child labour includes situations where children are bonded labourers working in dangerous conditions, children forced into armed groups and children trapped in prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation.
- It is estimated that 171 million children work in hazardous conditions such as in mines or in agriculture without protection from pesticides and dangerous equipment.
- The education of a child is almost always interrupted when they are engaged in child labour. A child's future opportunities are then limited, prolonging a cycle of poverty in the life of the child, their family, community and their country.
- Poverty causes child labour and poverty is perpetuated by child labour.
- In economic terms, there is a cost to eliminating child labour in the world. That cost is estimated to be US\$760 billion over a 20-year period. The estimated economic benefit to eliminate child labour? More than US\$4 trillion.

### Scripture

"He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

'The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.' Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." — Luke 4: 16-21

"And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward." — Matthew 10:41-42

### Discussion Questions:

1. There are so many disturbing elements to the practice of child labour. What are your initial thoughts and feelings after viewing the DVD, hearing Phearady's story and reading the statistics on child labour?

2. The DVD you have watched deliberately sets up a sharp contrast between the life led by many North American children and Phearady's life, which includes a 12 hour work-day. What is the role of a Christian in reversing great injustices?
3. In the first Bible verse above, we see Jesus' call and ministry was integrally connected with the spiritual health of his followers, but also with issues like oppression. Surely, child labour fits under this category. What do you think Jesus would say to and require from his followers today regarding this practice?
4. In the second verse, from Matthew, Jesus uses the term "little ones" which makes us automatically think of children. We often use that term fondly to refer to young children. Probably, Jesus meant the most vulnerable and weak of Christian followers, which certainly would include children like Phearady. What does it mean to you to offer a cup of cold water (that most refreshing of beverages) to a child engaged in child labour?
5. Think back to some of the reasons that Phearady has to work at the brick factory with her mother. List as many as you can remember. How do you think the work that World Vision and other like-minded organizations do in communities around the world can alleviate the need families and communities feel to engage children in the practice of child labour?
6. How could your church or group work together to make an impact on this issue?

### **Closing Prayer**

Dear God,

All through the Bible: through the words of the prophets, through your laws and commandments, through Jesus' life and teachings, we see how you care about the poor, and the value you place on the downtrodden and vulnerable. We pray for the millions of children trapped in child labour around the world.

We know that you know each one of them by name. We know you love them. Help us to see them with your eyes, and love them with your heart — a heart that must be broken by the ugly reality of how your children are treated.

Strengthen and inspire us to move forward in our journey of justice for these little ones. Help us to see the role we can play in encouraging alternatives for families and communities. Thank you for how much you care. Help us care. Help us act.

Amen

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For more information on this topic visit World Vision Canada's [Combating Child Labour page](http://www.worldvision.ca/About-Us/News-Centre/tackling-poverty/children-in-crisis/Pages/combating-child-labour.aspx).  
(<http://www.worldvision.ca/About-Us/News-Centre/tackling-poverty/children-in-crisis/Pages/combating-child-labour.aspx>)