Abstract

The issue of child labor eradication has always been in the consciousness both within countries and the international community as a whole. Positive program experiences from many parts of the world combined with hard-line stance and strong commitment among different international organizations have begun to bring teeth to anti-child labor advocacy.

However, it has also been argued, most notably by the International Labor Organization (ILO) itself, that not all work done by children should be classified as child labor that should be aimed for elimination as in some instances, their participation in work may even be considered as something positive as long as it does not hamper their health and personal development. Hence, Article 7 of ILO Convention No. 138 stipulates that children in particular age groups are permitted to engage in such “light work.”

Using data from the Labor Force Survey (LFS) of the National Statistics Office (NSO), this paper examines working children in the Philippines. The term working children is used to differentiate it from child labor which is often associated with inappropriate and hazardous work of children aged 5-17 years. The analysis also gives a demographic and socio-economic profile of the country’s working children, with a highlight on patterns and trends from 2004 to 2008. It also probes on the implications of such empirical data on whether or not child labor exists in the country. Data can also be used as benchmark for policy making and evidence-based program interventions.