

Prepared by:

Education to Combat Abusive Child Labor Team
L. Diane Mull, Senior Associate /Activity Coordinator
Daniela Lerda, Program Associate
Marylee Rambaud, Senior Associate
Cynthia Prather, Editor/Technical Writer
Don Graybill, BEPS Director

**Planning Education to Help
Combat Abusive Child Labor:
Important Considerations**

Transcript of a Presentation by:
William E. Myers, Ed.D.
November 9, 2000

**The Education to Combat Abusive Child
Labor Activity,
The Basic Education and Policy Support
(BEPS) Activity**

Contract No. HNE-I-00-00-00038-00
Task Order No. 748-09

Prepared for:

**The Global Bureau
Human Capacity Development Center
US Agency for International Development
January 2001**

Foreword

On November 9, 2000, CREATIVE ASSOCIATES INTERNATIONAL, INC. (CAII) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) co-hosted a first in a series of luncheon presentations targeted to stimulate discussion regarding education to combat abusive child labor. The first luncheon presentation was entitled, “Planning Education to Help Combat Abusive Child Labor: Important Considerations.” The featured speaker for the luncheon was William E. Myers, Ed.D., an internationally well-known and respected authority on child labor issues.

A transcript of Dr. Myers’ presentation was developed based on numerous requests to provide a copy his presentation. Transcript editing includes only very basic grammatical changes, the addition of headings, punctuation, and paragraph breaks, and the inclusion of an occasional missing word in order to enhance clarity [as noted by the use of brackets around the word]. Copies of the transparencies that were used by Dr. Myers are appended at the end of the transcript. Throughout the transcript, references made to the transparencies are noted and highlighted by the use of *[brackets in italics]*.

Approximately forty-one individuals attended the luncheon presentation, including representatives from senate and congressional offices, the Academy for Educational Development, the American Federation of Teachers, the American Center for International Labor Solidarity, Development Alternatives, the U.S. Department of Labor’s International Labor Affairs Bureau, the International Labor Organization (ILO), the Society for International Development, the World Bank, World Learning, and CAII staff.

The event was sponsored by the USAID-funded Basic Education and Policy Support (BEPS) Activity, Education to Combat Abusive Child Labor (ECACL). If you would like any additional information about this event or any other aspect of the ECACL activity, please do not hesitate to contact me at 202-966-5804, ext. 120, or email me at DianeM@caii-dc.com.

Sincerely,

L. Diane Mull, Senior Associate/Activity Coordinator

About the Speaker

William E. Myers, Ed.D., obtained his doctorate degree from Harvard University Graduate School of Education in 1983. He considers himself an educationalist focusing on child rights in developing countries. Some highlights of his work on child labor related activities include: Special Assistant to the Director, Working Conditions and Environment Department with main responsibility for child labor policy and research, for the International Labor Organization (ILO) in Geneva, Switzerland; Manager of the ILO's Interdepartmental Project on the Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC); and Project Officer responsible for the establishment and management of UNICEF programs in the Amazon region of Brazil, including the creation of rural sustainable development approaches.

As an International Human Resources Consultant, he assisted both UNICEF and the ILO in various studies and program development tasks relating to working and street children. Additionally, he provided technical assistance to field and central offices, prepared a UNICEF book on the protection of working children, drafted an ILO special report on child labor, and published various articles and "how to" materials on the same subject. Additionally, he helped UNICEF/Brazil design a sustainable development program for meeting the needs of children in areas of severe environmental risk or degradation. Also for UNICEF, he directed a global policy study on children in especially difficult circumstances, including child victims of armed conflict and natural disasters, working and street children, and abused and neglected children. He currently works as an independent consultant on child rights in developing countries.

Transcript: Planning Education to Help Combat Abusive Child Labor

First, I want to thank you for coming, and second I would like to express my thanks to Creative Associates [International, Inc.], who are involved in this project. I happen to think that this is a very exciting undertaking, and having met yesterday with USAID and DOL personnel and so on. I think they are very exciting partners to work with as well. I am very much looking forward to my somewhat limited role in this project.

I think that the project, as I was saying this morning to somebody here, “trying to get at child labor through education,” opens the door to many other really important concerns. In the education sector for example, where we have to deal with children who come from many kinds of situations, the work is one aspect of their lives that gets in the way of some stereotypes that we tend to bring. And it opens the way into thinking more actively about development-- not only development of children but also development of communities and development of a country. So I would hope that this project is not just a project, but that it is a door to other and future interests of a broader nature.

Wondering what I could do in a short time, I thought that since first of all child labor is increasingly recognized as really an inter-sectoral, multidimensional kind of problem, and since people here come from so many different kinds of backgrounds (we have educators, development people, labor people, and so forth), and because this is a very exciting time in which lots of new ideas and lots of new research is flooding into the market on this subject—in fact on both education and labor issues—that it might be interesting to kind of expose this group to a sense of the kinds of variety and the different kinds of ideas that are “out there” right now.

So everything I am going to talk about might insult the intelligence of somebody in this room because they are going to know more about it than I do. But I am hoping that by the time I get done, everybody will have also heard something a little new as I try to get my arms around it. I am going to talk first about different ways of looking at child labor that are occurring now in the world. Then, I am going to relate that to education, and I’m going to talk about one of those

ways, in particular, which I think is less well known in the United States. Then, at the end, I'm going to relate that to education.

General Overview of Approaches to Addressing Child Labor

There is more than one way of looking at child labor. There always has been. But the different ways of looking at it are being more formalized. They are being institutionalized and are complete with research and programs of activity and so forth in a way that they have not been in the past. But the ones I'm going to talk about are all responsible approaches. I'm not going to include in this discussion the various types of resistance to child labor reform and so on. Let's say it this way: Everything I'm going to talk about are the ideas of people who first of all would agree that no child should be doing work which is in any way injurious to the child or keeps him from receiving an education. And all of them would agree that every child should receive a good education. So, we are going to be in the "how to" domain here. I think that the things that I'll be talking about are questions of strategy, tactics, and so forth. There are many. I'm going to pick four that I think are particularly at this time dominant. *[Transparency 1]*

The first one I'm going to call the "labor market approach," and that's the child labor thinking we are all most familiar coming from this country. It's the one we grew up with. It's the one that unions, ministries of labor and Department of Labor, and people who have an idea of labor rights hang very closely to. Their concern is not only about children (and they are concerned about children); they are also concerned about the social conditions within which child labor occurs. They worry, for example, about such things as competition, and unfair competition with the employment or the income of adults, depression of wages that can come from having children involved in labor markets, and so on. We'll get into this. That's the "labor market" discourse, let's call it, that most of us are familiar with.

Somewhat more recently, although it goes back to Adam Smith, there has been much more emphasis on what we call "the human capital approach." Those of you who are in development or in certain aspects of education are quite familiar with this. This approach basically takes the point of view that we should be improving our human resources, their quality, their skills, their

attitudes, and so forth, so that not only individuals but also societies can develop. And in this particular case, where we live in the land of the World Bank [Washington, D.C.], that has a strongly economic emphasis. That is, they are talking about developing national economies. And they take the point of view, of course, that child labor can get in the way of that because it ends up weakening children rather than strengthening them, and becomes inimical to the development of an economy.

These two perspectives [*points to the first two bullets on Transparency 1*] are very much concerned with social organization around economic issues. There is a second set of two approaches that are more social and cultural than economic in their orientation. The first one I call “social capital” here, but since I did this here, I am more referring to it as “social responsibility.” This is a group of people that says that child labor is largely a problem in a nation of exclusion. It is society not playing its proper role in relation to its weaker elements, children, the women, ethnic groups who suffer discrimination, castes, and so forth. It links the whole idea of child labor to society not properly conducting its responsibilities. They don’t mean only government; they mean the whole society. So, this kind of an approach looks a lot at government, but in addition to government, to institutions, religious, social, cultural institutions, and so on. These people, for example, frequently talk about mobilization, about having to get society to be concerned about its future, including child labor, and taking action against it [*points to fourth bullet on Transparency 1*].

Most lately there has been a campaign for the “child-centered approach,” that basically says we should be looking at individuals. The others all talk about society primarily, giving that kind of a framework. The child-centered approach says that our first, and sometimes they say almost exclusive, aim should be the development of the child. We should do what’s best for children. Children should have priority over adults. I’m going to talk about this in a little more detail because I think that in the United States this approach is less well understood than the others.

I want to say something about what one finds in each one of these perspectives. They all have a separate idea of social concern [*points to “labor market” approach*]. In this particular case, labor market perspectives are concerned about economic injustice and things like that. They have

actors, they have their own versions of child labor problem, they have their own objectives, and they have their own priorities for action. They even have a view of children, which is important. In this particular case, for example, a child is seen either as an actual or potential victim; as somebody that is capable of being manipulated. Children have to be protected from without.

The four approaches have ideas about what are the key rights that people have. For example, in this case [*points to "labor market" approach*] children should have a right not to have to work before adolescence, so you try to get them out of the job market where they are exposed. And the approaches even have ideas about education. For example, look at this particular idea that the goal of education should be to remove children from the labor market. That's why you have compulsory education and you coordinate it with the age that children are allowed to work so that children will stay in school until the proper time.

I'm not going to go through all of these approaches within our limited time, but I will point out that these different discourses each have a kind of internal logic. What's important about that is that they disagree on fundamental points. And that is causing at this time, right now, a lot of [policy] disagreement. Some arguments are very heated between people who would hang together around these different points of view.

In my opinion, I think most of us who look at this [*points to Transparency 1*] as a kind of system is coming to think that we need this debate. Because when that happens, people dig down into the reasons why they think the way they do, and it generates research. We have some very interesting research coming out of these areas right now, and it sharpens our view. We also would say that no one of these approaches contains the whole truth. They are all legitimate, and I think that all of us would agree, for example, that a labor rights perspective is useful and needed. And I think that all of us would argue that a focus on children, what's good for children, is needed. But we've had a lot of trouble in being able to get a single view that allows us to do all of this at once. So we find that people tend to specialize. For example, you find labor departments up here [*points to the "labor market" approach*] and you find that the World Bank [*points to the "human capital" approach*] tends to be a little more interested in the human capital approach. You find that churches and some Christian organizations [*points to the "social*

responsibility” approach] are more interested in approaches based around the idea of what are social responsibilities. And you find that child welfare people, for example [*points to the “child centered” approach*], are more interested in the child-centered approach.

The Child-centered Approach

I’m going to skip right to the child-centered approach because it is one that this project is going to need, and which is quite different from our normal thinking and our normal discourse. [*Transparency 2*] It merits a little bit of examination so that we have some idea of [what] it gets into. A child-centered perspective tends to look at the problem of children being impaired, either physically or mentally, from involvement in activities that are damaging to them. Abusive work would certainly qualify as that. What they want out of anything that they do is the better well-being and development of children. This is identified with institutions like UNICEF, a lot of child advocacy NGOs, you know the Save the Children and people like that. Educators in a large number are in this position, too. They tend to think of child labor in terms of work that undermines children’s well-being and development. Obviously, if you are being poisoned by some toxin, that is a physical development problem. So is working in a situation where you have a lot of psychosocial stress, for example, children working as maids. Live-in maids in households where they are under a lot of duress certainly would not be consistent with children’s development. If a child cannot get an education, if they have to work so long that they can’t go to school or otherwise receive an education, that would, of course, be a child labor problem for them. Advocates of a “child-centered” approach are not particularly concerned, on the other hand, like the labor rights people, whether children work or not. They are concerned with what happens to the child; some work is actually good, from this point of view.

Obviously, then, the objective of child labor interventions is to promote children’s welfare and development. It is very focused on the child. And they (advocates of that position) tend to really look at it carefully and invest in the kinds of activities that allow them to understand children quite in detail. What is the situation? What is this child up to? How does this child operate? What is the family behind? And so forth. And they look at children as partners. I am going to come back to that in a minute. They have a view of children that is quite different from the other

approaches. They tend to look toward the competency of children; seeing children as being very adaptive, and being smart and capable of doing things in the world. And they tend to work in empowering children to do whatever it is that needs to be done. The CRC (Convention on the Rights of the Child), that I will come back to, is really the key instrument internationally which is the framework for this line of thinking. And it has different articles that I will delve into.

Advocates of the “child centered” approach see education as something that should reach out to children. Children should not be adapted to fit education; education should be made available in a way and in a form that it can extend itself to meet children. And so, for example, you find street education, street educators who go out and try to find working children who are on the streets and make contact with them and begin to attract them to programs. You find a lot of participative work in which children come in and participate in the actual planning of their own activities. You find a lot of emphasis on developing different capacities in children; they will be working on developing three or four different kinds of intelligences or capacities at once. You find a lot of programs in which children are involved in changing society, just learning off site, getting involved in communities or work with other children, or whatever. That’s a different model than the other ones. Now, understand that I’m not saying that this model is more important; I think that all four are important. I’m going to get into this one now simply because I think it is the one strangest, perhaps, to more of the people that are here, and it happens to be particularly useful when thinking about education. [*Transparency 3*]

The Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was adopted in 1989 and has now been ratified by every country in the world except for Somalia and the United States, is the key international framework these days for planning all interventions with children in every country. In developing countries where we work, we are going to see that it has a very high priority. It is the master treaty that is supposed to set certain parameters for other treaties that come under its provisions. So, for example, Convention 182 of the ILO [International Labor Organization] that addresses specifically child labor was designed with this particular convention in mind. It states things in such a way as to be consistent with it—saying that member states are supposed to see that children are protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with their education, or to be harmful to the child’s

physical, mental, or spiritual health or social development. In other words, that is their idea of the bad forms of child labor, if you want to call them that. So Convention 182 is very much within that concept.

What this convention also does is demand that in all actions concerning children, the best interest of the child should be of primary consideration. This is generally considered the most fundamental article of this convention. That means that anything we do has to have the child's welfare uppermost in its mind—it's not just a little bit. It says a "primary consideration," although it realizes that there are adult areas too that can't be ignored, but its very demanding.

What this means is, if you put these two together, is that interventions that promote children's development normally would meet that best interest criteria. Interventions that could undermine their development, either physical or mental, would tend not to be in their best interest. That's not made formal, but that's how that is reasoned out. I want to bring that up because there is a problem with child labor that I will not go into here. There are interventions of different kinds, not all from one of these different kinds of lines of reasoning, which have been shown by research to be inimical to children in some way or another. In other words, this is an area wherein trying to help people, we can hurt them, and have. It is well documented. So it's an area where we need to be careful in policy, and I'm going to go into a little bit more now into this child's perspective. *[Transparency 4]*

In addition to the CRC, there is a whole other line of reasoning that is behind this child-centered approach, and that is new thinking about child development. I'm going to put up just a few of the new lines of thinking that are particularly pertinent for thinking about child labor. *[Transparency 5]* First of all, we now think of children as developing cognitively, socially, mentally, and in every way as part of a social milieu. It doesn't just happen inside a person – you don't get more mature just by getting older; it is through your transactions with the environment. Children do that; we now know very well that they tend to become individuals by becoming social. In other words, you don't become an individual person and then become social; your individuality is based on the way you transact with society from the very first days.

Children become social according to different values. For example, some societies like ours emphasize making children independent. But some other societies feel that the best that people become is when they are interdependent in an intelligent way; when people are part of community and have a set of responsible relationships. This means, for example, that whereas we tend to raise children here to do more and more on their own, in other societies, in some cases, a good parent would raise children to do everything with others. One of the things that goes with that is a sense of responsibility. You get a sense of belonging, or, as they put it in Africa, your right to belong is defined in part by your gradually increasing responsibilities, which, by the way, are very multiple. I'm not saying, by the way, that work is the only responsibility, but you can see where I'm heading. Work is one of the ways in which families are tied together, not just out of economic necessity but out of the kinds of people that they are trying to create, which often are not the kinds of people who are individualistic in the same way that we are.

And so, what developmental psychologists are saying today is that each child grows up in a "developmental niche," a little pocket of a certain kind of a cultural background. [*Transparency 6*] These are different from place to place and there is no indication that one is better than another. There is no indication for example, when anthropologists look at it, that children raised to be individuals like ours are necessarily better or worse off than children who are raised in other ways to become other kinds of children. But it does mean that all children have to be recognized as part of a family unit.

This has led us to think in terms no longer of one childhood that has cultural expressions-- which is kind of an old idea, a Piaget idea--that all children go through the same phases. Well, that's true in some instances. But as we talk about middle childhood, that seems to get less and less true. And now people are talking about different childhoods even within a given culture. So children do not have the same experience of childhood and are quite different, and children thrive in a very wide variety of childhoods. They do not have to be protected or pampered in the same way in all societies.

I want to point out one thing in particular, and that is that people protect children in very different ways. For example, we tend—our first tendency in this society is—to protect children by separating them from danger. Many other societies look at the kind of danger first, and then the ones that are not too severe and that can be handled, they teach the child how to handle. They expose the child on purpose with guidance so that that child will be “inoculated” and will know how to handle itself in the future. And if you have, as I have, gone to some places in Africa, they think that we are very neglectful by not teaching our children how to deal with such things at a young age. They really think that we are kind of neglectful parents.

Development is not something that just happens to children as they get older. *[Transparency 7]* The new view is that it is something they do. It is because they are active; they are reaching out. Even when they start crying to get fed and they get their mother’s attention, that child is reaching out to the world, making the world, shaping the world to its view and its needs. And that doesn’t go away; that gets stronger as children get older. And the thinking is that children need more and more room to do that as they grow. They transact with their environment in increasingly sophisticated ways, and what they find out with participation and directing their own life is in itself developmental. People develop skills and abilities by taking responsibility for their own lives, and in their interaction with their environment, whatever that may be.

One of the most interesting and hot topics right now is resilience. *[Transparency 8]* I’ve just come back from a conference in Oxford on resilience of children in serious adversity. They are finding that children who have more life experience in fact are more resilient. And there are a lot of things that you can do to either improve or undermine children’s resilience. An adverse experience has both undesirable and desirable effects. What is really important and comes out of it is less the situation (except in the most extreme cases, as in the example of being caught in the middle of armed conflicts) than how adults and peers regard the child in this. We use street children as an example, [for] this has been shown over and over with street children. Being on the street is bad enough, but it may not be nearly as bad as being looked down on and made to feel as some kind of a delinquent, or perhaps a vagabond, on the street. It’s the way that people regard you as a child that has a lot to do with your resilience. And working children are very sensitive to this.

There is all kinds of interesting research in which kids say, "I don't mind the work; I mind being looked down on." And interventions in the work that immediately tell the children that what they are doing is wrong convinced some of us from looking at the experience (I am one); that this does more damage, perhaps, than the work that they are involved in. So that maybe the way you get involved in the right way doesn't mean you have to leave them there, but you find ways to work with the kids "from the inside out." You bring them along. Sending them a message that society thinks that what they are doing is wrong is exactly the wrong way to go about working with children in a way that makes them stronger rather than weaker. Families are critical for resilience. So are circles of friends, which suggest, for instance, that interventions should be involved not only for the children but should involve the whole family or a sense of community. And all of these things act together.

Another really interesting line of research: You who are in education are going to recognize right away; this is Gardner and people like him. [*Transparency 9*] Children have not just one intelligence, like that for school; they have many types of intelligences and they do different tasks by using these intelligences in different ways. If one is a little down, they use another one and adapt it to be able to cover that ground and get things done. That's why we all think and act differently. They are extremely resourceful in using these intelligences. But some things -- some kinds of work, or school for example -- only call on certain intelligences that the children have. Now we end up putting them in very narrow confines. So a lot of the thinking that comes from this research says we need to be paying attention to children's competence, bringing them along in ways that develop a variety of these capacities, intelligences, and competencies that they have. Different societies value different competencies and develop them to different extents and in different ways.

We are very much into formal schools; that's what we do, although there is some indication that we may be moving from that in the more innovative programs. Other societies emphasize other parts and, perhaps, other kinds of education, and school is the more narrow part of a child's learning. So there are many different channels of learning and learning theory; these days is

looking very much at learning in groups. It looks like the schools may not be a terribly rich environment for learning.

Children do not evolve toward a fixed point. They do become more mature as they become older, but in fact they change their profile through life. There are wonderful longitudinal surveys following people from birth through their 40s and seeing how different influences of childhood have different effects at different times in their lives. And children, unlike our usual idea that they need a stable environment, adapt very nicely to change under certain circumstances, if they have a core to hang to and so forth. There is no indication that they necessarily develop better in stability than without challenges.

[Transparency 10] This view of children leads to a kind of logical conclusion, which is that the same child protection strategies have very different outcomes in different places. What works perfectly well in situation A, even when everything else being the same, is going to have totally different impacts on different children in situation B. Something that is beneficial in A can be damaging in B. I would suggest that, if we had a longer conversation, this is a problem that [we] are now having with very blunt instruments of policy—you know, [a] single minimum age and that kind of thing—in child labor. Something that is helpful in one place is damaging in another; it doesn't make sense [there]. And this is leading people to think a lot more these days about interventions and how you adapt them. Not that you change or dilute the objectives, but that you find tools that are better adapted to the particular situations to which they have to be applied.

Family integration is coming up as an especially important determinant of developmental outcomes; seeing the family as a whole turns out from studies to be extremely important. And I think that that is a clue that we can take that, maybe, when we are talking about child labor, we need to be a lot more sensitive to what's happening in families as we think about our interventions. What do we do that is practical about that?

[Transparency 11] The whole idea of diversity in childhood certainly has pushed the idea that you find in social scientists today, that we need to look into child labor and other areas more carefully. We need to really know what we are doing. Interventions have to be based on good

empirical understanding. Just sort of reasoning from a right, or from a principle, or international convention may be ok to get started, but that is not enough when it comes to having a beneficial effect on children. We have to try to get busy and understand what is there. On the other hand, we don't have to be rocket scientists. In other words, there are a lot of techniques for doing this that don't mean years of studies; there are fast assessments and things like this.

A second thing that is suggested is the importance of social contexts in which children develop. There is a need to create the right kinds of environment for them. The kind of community, the kind of family, the kind of economic and social environment—justice if you want to call it—that they grow up in is very important. And perhaps hardest for us to get a handle on, coming from the United States, is the idea that children's active participation suggests that they should be full partners in advocacy and action on their behalf. I will come back to this in a little bit, because that is something that sounds very strange to our ears, although it is happening all over the world today, especially in dealing with child labor.

Let's just take, if you want to in practical terms, what are the practical implications of the child-centered approach. (By the way, all of these things that I am putting up are plagiarized from somebody else, from other workshops and such on child-centered approaches. I am throwing out ideas that are not just my ideas, but are ideas that I collect from people who think in these terms from lots of places). First of all, *you need to understand children*. Secondly, *we need to be able to organize and operationalize the whole idea of the high priority of children*. Make sure that the government and civil society can deal with the complexity that this issue is, so that we can look at things holistically and can bring in all the stakeholders. These ideas are coming out of experience; this is what people are coming out and saying, and it turns out to be important from this point of view. And third is *to include children as partners*. I will talk about that more in a few minutes.

[Transparency 12] To give you an idea about the kinds of things that people talk about when they get together in workshops and talk about this, they spend a lot of time talking about such things as how to do situational analysis, or at the donor level, how do you define the needs analysis, or the kinds of mandates that you give to your contractor, and so forth. Then they look

at policies. NORAD for example, in Norway, has a child labor policy, and they evaluate all of their policies and proposals in terms of their likely impact on child labor. They have a way of doing this. They ask for changes in national statistics, since our official national statistics will not give us this kind of information.

The ILO and some others are actually trying to change national statistics to reflect, for example, work that is done by young people that doesn't normally apply, or so that they distinguish between part-time, full-time, or seasonal employment of children, which is poorly defined. Or to indicate the number or distribution of children in the worse kinds of child labor, which is something you can never find in official statistics. There is a problem with official statistics because they usually talk about participation in the labor force, but they don't talk about impacts on children. You end up with the labor statistics definition of child labor, and you try to apply it to an objective, which is about getting to the kids who are in trouble. And the two don't match, of course.

[Transparency 13] A lot of talk these days is on how you deal with the concept of children's well-being and development and how you get that into program objectives. What should we use for indicators? Do you do nutrition assessments? Do you have children put something down in writing? What do you do? There is a lot of interesting talk these days about cross-cultural and cross-sectoral ways of working. Most of us now believe that child labor should not be, ipso facto, in a labor ministry. Not that it's wrong, because labor ministries' kinds of concerns are in fact very important, but they are very limiting. Neither should they be just an education concern, nor just be a welfare concern. The real question is, "How do we get this whole area under some kind of a more general look that can deal with the holistic aspect of children and the need to bring in other parts of society to work together?" Are you talking about committees? Are you talking about putting it in a general ministry like the planning ministry? Are you talking about a program group? What do you do? There is a lot of this stuff going on, and lots of talk these days about how to involve children. What are the "how tos" of that?

[Transparency 14] Some of the most interesting work related to education that I am going to call to your attention and that I think is worth taking a look at, I wouldn't oversell. I think it can

apply to just a small portion of the problem, but it is very important in many other ways. And that is, “How do you get kids to be aware of what possible dangers are?” “How do you get them involved?” “How do you get them to do what they can for themselves?” “How do you get them to work with each other?” “How do you even get children to go out and work with other children and with adults to change their situation?” This is very much in line with what we talked about earlier as some of the new thinking about child development.

There are two basic ways. One is to consult children, and right now there are a whole host of ways and schemes for focus groups, kinds of interview activities, and so forth at which people come to consult with children, including through their organizations where they exist. The other one is partnership. These are ways of bringing kids right into the definition of a problem, the planning of alternatives for getting at it, and even with the evaluation and follow-up. There are programs doing this today. They are not rare. Some of the most interesting actually help children organize and get together. Some of you from Latin America have seen these with street children already. But they are also common in West Africa. India has some that are famous, and they are spreading. There is a whole movement of these kinds of programs that is being created right now.

Then adults have to create space for children, within their activities. What activity or decision will we leave to children on their own? What will we let them do to define that space? This is a concept not really very familiar or manageable to us, where we come from in our policy. It is a different idea of policy. Then of course there is a lot of money invested. There are manuals and all kinds of things that are for training adults in how to support and work with children’s participation. There is no such thing as children working by themselves. They have what they call “working children’s organizations” but they aren’t just children. All of these kinds of activities are special kinds of partnerships, and I would say *educative* partnerships, between children and adults. There is a model of thinking and a way of getting at things that seems to be very unfamiliar to us here. But if you went to, let’s say, Lima or to Dakar in Senegal or some other places, you would find that this kind of stuff is quite available.

Role of Education

[Transparency 15] What is this saying about school? If you go nowadays to people talking within this frame of reference in workshops all over, what kinds of things are they saying? First of all, education isn't a sector. Education is what happens to a person; it's what you learn. And you will find them talking a lot about what are all the things that children need to learn in life to get through it. What do they normally learn at home? What do they not learn at home, and what do they learn from elsewhere? What do they learn from social contact? And one of the social contacts they talk about is work. They may learn all the wrong things at work, they may learn very unadaptive things at work, or they may learn very good things. Or they may learn nothing, as is often the case—a kid goes and sits in a room and does the same thing over and over again and doesn't learn a darn thing. That also would be a major concern. But they look at the whole environment as potential for its learning. Then when they start looking at school, they find that relationships between school and learning, and school and work, are very varied. There is increasing evidence that while work is often a cause for missing school, even more often in some countries (for example, Egypt) school is more likely the cause of children going to work. It pushes them out. So they find something to do with their time; they go to work. The whole idea that work takes children from school is true in some places, and it is not true in other places.

School often depends on work. In lots of places, children work in order to pay the costs of going to school. So that is a different kind of relationship. Or in some places only a group of children do this. Blame tends to be misplaced on what's the kid's fault, what's the parent's fault, what is the school's fault. You see these parents as really retrograde because they won't send their kids to go to school, and then you go talk to them and they say, "Hey I want my kids to go to school, but either we don't have any money to pay the expenses or this school is a lousy school—no kid that has ever gone there has ever learned to read," or any of these things. Or the child will say, "I don't learn anything there." Or, as is very common for street kids, they will ask, "Why don't they have school in the late afternoon when I can go? Why does school have to start at 10 o'clock only?" There are all kinds of these issues that come up. It turns out that the blame is really hard to place; it is a matter of your perspective, and who you are in that picture.

Economic incentives certainly can favor work. They can also favor school. Work is often a desired educational option. I don't know how often we hear kids say, "One reason why I want to keep working, even if its only part-time, is I want to learn the stuff that's there." If you look as I did for example, in Egypt in Alexandria and Cairo, at the market for all these people who can make the things that urbanization needs, you see that you can't learn them at a vocational school anywhere. You learn them by being an apprentice. And kids fight for those: "I want to be an apprentice because I'll end up being a shop owner." But the first two years look to us like child labor. I mean, they are exploited, they don't get much, they work in awful situations, they use unsafe tools and stuff. And because it is a learning thing that doesn't mean that child labor is ok. But it does mean that we have to think in ways that are more complex.

Process of Learning

[Transparency 16] As people began to think about learning and all these contexts, not only in terms of education but in terms child development, they have come up with some very different ideas of what learning is. This is part of the 21st Century Learning Initiative, which is both here in Washington and in London. They are a group of people--brain scientists, educators and trainers from industry and so on-- who have tried to take all of this stuff and put it together and come up with some new rules of learning. I want to leave you with these just to give you an idea. I'm not saying these are right or wrong—I'm really not qualified to say that—but this is something that is out there in the environment right now.

"Learning is fundamentally social and inseparable from engagement in the world." They have a critique of schools as taking children away from the world and putting them all together in a little box and making them stay there. "Knowledge is integrated in the life of communities; it is how people gain membership and participate in community." They talk about citizenship, that learning is on the way to citizenship. "Learning is an act of membership, it's a way that you participate with others." You show who you are part of. It's not that it's imposed on you; it's something that you evolve in order to belong to the group which you are part of or want to belong to. And knowledge is what enables you to participate fully in that. They say that's how

we are wired; it's not something that we chose, it's not philosophy; it is biology. "Knowing depends on engaging in practice." You don't really know it unless you do it.

We've heard that a lot of times before. "Only in the classroom is knowledge presented in abstract." On that point, there is a wonderful piece of research, and there is a videotape here about it for those of you that are interested, done by a Brazilian researcher, Teresinha Nunes. She showed that street children in Recife could do all sorts of computations in their head, selling different kinds of wares and adding them up and figuring out what people owed and never putting pencil to paper. But when they went to school, they couldn't do any of the same math problems, even those that are less complicated, with pen and paper. The one place where they were following the algorithms, as she put it, was school, and they couldn't remember them. In the other work, they were really doing math which they had learned on the street. Why? Inside a social context their work demanded it, called for it, and it made sense.

"Engagements are inseparable from empowerment." The potential for learning is greatest where participants have meaningful roles in real action that has consequences, not only for them, but for their community. One of the most interesting things about the street children and working children's groups is that they always immediately start doing things for other people, as soon as they start doing it for themselves.

"Failure to learn is a result of exclusion." It's interesting in many ways; think about our own kids. *We are all lifelong learners*, and what we learn now is only a piece of what we learn throughout. Just think for a minute about the gist of this, and think about some of the implications as we start thinking about the relationship between education and children's work, their family life. And again, get an idea of what some of the implications are for creative new activities and ways of getting at these problems that we might undertake. Thank you very much.

**Transparencies used by William E. Myers
in his luncheon presentation:**

**“PLANNING EDUCATION TO HELP COMBAT
ABUSIVE CHILD LABOR: Important Considerations”**

[Transparency 1]

SOME CURRENT WAYS OF THINKING ABOUT 'CHILD LABOR'

Economics-oriented perspectives

- * 'Labor market' approach
- * 'Human capital' approach

Culture-oriented perspectives

- * 'Social responsibility' approach
- * 'Child-centered' approach

Each approach reflects particular organizational actors, their assigned mandates, their clientele, and their interests.

Each approach has its own perspective on the world, hierarchy of values and line of reasoning. Each emphasizes particular concerns, definitions, problem analysis, action objectives, social policies and program strategies.

Different approaches imply different views of children, child rights, work and education.

[Transparency 2]

THE ‘CHILD-CENTERED’ PERSPECTIVE

- Social concern:** Children’s impairment, physical and mental stunting. Abuse of children and violation of their rights.
- Social goal:** Children’s well-being and development.
- Key actors:** UNICEF, government child and family units, child advocacy and defense NGOs, educators.
- C.L. problem:** Work that undermines children’s well-being and personal and social development.
- C.L. objective:** Promotion of child welfare and development.
- C.L. action:** Empirically understand situation of working children, operationalize children’s best interests, empower children as agents and partners. Start from respect.
- View of child:** Children as competent, resilient and active agents of their own growth and development. They are best protected when they participate together with others (adults and other children) in their own defense, and turn protection into development.
- Key rights:** CRC (e.g. articles 3, 12, 15, 19, 20, 28, 29, 31, 32, and 39); ILO Convention 182.
- Education:** ‘Street education’, participation of children in planning and conducting education activities, emphasis on multiple capacities and learning needs and sources, education through social engagement.

[Transparency 3]

**THE RIGHTS OF WORKING CHILDREN CAN BE
CONNECTED TO THEIR DEVELOPMENT
THROUGH THE CRC**

**“IN ALL ACTIONS CONCERNING CHILDREN THE BEST
INTERESTS OF THE CHILD SHALL BE A PRIMARY
CONSIDERATION.”**

Article 3, paragraph 1

**“STATES PARTIES RECOGNIZE THE RIGHT OF THE CHILD
TO BE PROTECTED FROM ECONOMIC EXPLOITATION AND
FROM PERFORMING ANY WORK THAT IS LIKELY TO BE
HAZARDOUS OR TO INTERFERE WITH THE CHILD’S
EDUCATION, OR TO BE HARMFUL TO THE CHILD’S
HEALTH OR PHYSICAL, MENTAL, SPIRITUAL, MORAL OR
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT.”**

Article 32, paragraph 1

**INTERVENTIONS PROMOTING WORKING CHILDREN’S
DEVELOPMENT ARE IN THEIR BEST INTERESTS.**

**INTERVENTIONS UNDERMINING WORKING CHILDREN’S
DEVELOPMENT ARE NOT IN THEIR BEST INTERESTS.**

**ALL INTERVENTIONS IN CHILDREN’S WORK SHOULD HAVE
POSITIVE EFFECTS ON CHILD DEVELOPMENT AS AN
INDICATOR THE ‘BEST INTERESTS’ CRITERION IS BEING MET.**

[Transparency 4]

**PRINCIPLES OF PSYCHOSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
IMPORTANT FOR CONSIDERING CHILD WORK**

[Transparency 5]

CHILDREN DEVELOP IN SOCIAL CONTEXT

Children become individuals through becoming social.

Children become social according to different cultural values and patterns. For example:

- * Some societies emphasize individual independence.

- * Other societies emphasize responsible relationships.

Children grow up in a “developmental niche.”

Children must be understood as part of a family unit.

[Transparency 6]

THERE ARE MANY CHILDHOODS;

Not a universal childhood just having different expressions

Childhood, child development and the best interests of children are defined differently in different contexts, and can be properly understood only with contextual factors clearly in mind.

Children thrive in a wide variety of childhoods, and no one child-raising approach seems best for children everywhere.

Even within a given society, all children are not treated equally, and this profoundly affects a child's experience of childhood.

[Transparency 7]

**DEVELOPMENT IS SOMETHING CHILDREN DO:
It does not just naturally happen to them as they get older.**

Children are not passive recipients of experience, but active contributors to it.

Children actively transact with their environment in order to promote their own development.

Participation in directing one's own life is developmental.

[Transparency 8]

**CHILDREN ARE RESILIENT
AS WELL AS VULNERABLE**

The effects of experience are indirect and difficult to predict.

Adverse experience may have negative and/or positive effects.

Resilience is much affected by the regard of others; ‘victim mentality’ can be detrimental to children’s development.

Family and other social support reinforces resilience.

The various aspects of development act synergistically, and the effect may be holistic.

[Transparency 9]

CHILDREN HAVE MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCE AND MANY CAPACITIES

Different contextual demands require different abilities, and therefore child development objectives vary with context.

Different societies develop different abilities through different means, institutions and processes.

Children do not evolve toward a single fixed point of maturity, but toward functional responses to diverse situations.

Children adapt to change and contradiction and do not necessarily develop better in the safest and most stable environments.

[Transparency 10]

DIFFERENT CHILD PROTECTION STRATEGIES HAVE DIFFERENT OUTCOMES

The same policy or strategy may produce different outcomes in different children or different contexts. What benefits some may harm others.

Activities considered protective can be counterproductive or dangerous to children, depending on the situation, context and children's own capacity.

Separating children from a danger may sometimes protect them less in the long run than does teaching and enabling them to cope with it successfully.

Family integration has especially important developmental outcomes, especially in societies valuing group rights.

[Transparency 11]

**IN ORDER TO ENSURE THAT INTERVENTIONS
ARE CHILD-CENTRED:**

- 1. FULLY UNDERSTAND WORKING CHILDREN AND THEIR SITUATION BEFORE UNDERTAKING ACTION TO PROTECT OR SERVE THEM.**

- 2. OPERATIONALIZE CHILDREN'S WELL-BEING AND DEVELOPMENT AS THE TOP PRIORITY FOR SOCIAL ACTION, ENSURING GOVERNMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY CAPACITY TO:**
 - DEAL COMPETENTLY WITH THE COMPLEXITY OF CHILD WORK ISSUES, AND TREAT WORKING CHILDREN HOLISTICALLY,**
 - INVOLVE ALL STAKEHOLDERS.**

- 3. INCLUDE WORKING CHILDREN AS FULL PARTNERS IN ADVOCACY AND ACTION ON THEIR BEHALF**

[Transparency 12]

TO UNDERSTAND WORKING CHILDREN'S SITUATION:

- 1. REQUIRE ADEQUATE SITUATION ANALYSIS RESEARCH, INCLUDING INPUT FROM INVOLVED CHILDREN AND COMMUNITIES, BEFORE APPROVING ACTION PROPOSALS.**
- 2. EVALUATE EXISTING AND PROPOSED CHILD LABOUR POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES FOR THEIR IMPACT ON CHILDREN.**
- 3. REQUIRE A CHILD IMPACT ASSESSMENT FOR ALL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS, AND INCLUDE IN IT AN ASSESSMENT OF EXPECTED EFFECTS ON CHILDREN'S WORK, SCHOOLING AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS.**
- 4. AMEND NATIONAL STATISTICS TO:**
 - INCLUDE WORK BY YOUNG CHILDREN AND STUDENTS,**
 - INCLUDE IMPORTANT NON-ECONOMIC WORK,**
 - DISTINGUISH BETWEEN FULL-TIME AND PART-TIME OR SEASONAL EMPLOYMENT,**
 - REPORT BY GENDER, AGE GROUP, URBAN/RURAL, REGIONAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CATEGORIES,**
 - INDICATE THE NUMBER, DISTRIBUTION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN IN THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOUR.**
 - REPORT BOTH NATIONAL AND LOCAL RATES OF SCHOOL ENROLLMENT, ATTENDANCE, GRADE COMPLETION AND LITERACY ACHIEVEMENT.**

[Transparency 13]

**TO MAKE CHILD DEVELOPMENT THE REAL
PRIORITY OF INTERVENTIONS IN
CHILDREN'S WORK:**

- 1. IN FORMULATING POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES DEALING WITH CHILDREN'S WORK, ARTICULATE CHILDREN'S WELL-BEING AND DEVELOPMENT AS AN EXPLICIT OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVE, AND MONITOR AND EVALUATE ALL ACTIONS AGAINST THAT GOAL.**
- 2. PRIORITIZE CHILD WORK PROBLEMS THAT MOST THREATEN CHILDREN'S WELL-BEING AND DEVELOPMENT.**
- 3. USE STRATEGIES THAT HONOR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS.**
- 4. MAKE CHILD LABOUR POLICY AND PROGRAMMES A CROSS-SECTORAL RESPONSIBILITY.**
- 5. INVOLVE WORKING CHILDREN, CHILD DEFENCE ORGANIZATIONS, AND COMMUNITY GROUPS IN DECIDING ACTION PRIORITIES AND STRATEGIES.**

[Transparency 14]

TO EXPAND PARTICIPATION BY WORKING CHILDREN:

- 1. INVOLVE WORKING CHILDREN IN ADVOCATING, PLANNING AND EVALUATING POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES ON THEIR BEHALF.**
 - * CONSULTATION**
 - * PARTNERSHIP**
- 2. HELP WORKING CHILDREN GET TOGETHER AND TO ORGANIZE.**
- 3. CREATE SOCIAL SPACE FOR WORKING CHILDREN TO PARTICIPATE IN THEIR OWN PROTECTION AND UNDERTAKE THEIR OWN INITIATIVES.**
- 4. TRAIN ADULTS TO ENCOURAGE AND SUPPORT CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION AND TO COLLABORATE AS PARTNERS IN CHILDREN'S ORGANIZATIONS AND INITIATIVES.**

[Transparency 15]

EDUCATION, WORK AND SCHOOL: A PROVOCATIVE PERSPECTIVE

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHILDREN'S WORK AND THEIR EDUCATION IS VARIED AND AMBIGUOUS.

- WORK IS OFTEN A CAUSE OF MISSING SCHOOL
- SCHOOL IS OFTEN A CAUSE OF FULL-TIME WORK
- SCHOOL OFTEN DEPENDS ON WORK
- BLAME FOR SCHOOL FAILURE IS OFTEN MISPLACED
- ECONOMIC RETURN CAN FAVOR WORK AND SCHOOL
- WORK IS OFTEN A VALUABLE EDUCATIONAL OPTION
- SCHOOL OFTEN QUALIFIES AS CHILD LABOUR

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EDUCATION AND SCHOOL IS EQUALLY AMBIGUOUS, AND OFTEN PRECARIOUS

- SCHOOL IS AN INEFFICIENT LEARNING CONTEXT
 - Fails under new understanding of learning dynamics
 - Main advantage is existing infrastructure, social habit
- USEFUL FOR A NARROW RANGE OF SKILLS ONLY
 - Literacy is the most important school contribution
 - Most essential life skills are developed outside school
- SCHOOL BENEFIT TO THE POOR IS OFTEN MARGINAL
 - <25% literacy at end of primary cycle in many countries
 - Home teaching, NFE, literacy groups, etc. perform better
- SCHOOL ISOLATES CHILDREN FROM ENVIRONMENT
 - New learning theories stress the value of engagement

[Transparency 16]

A Provocative Example:

PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING BASED ON NEW INSIGHTS

(As summarized by 21st Century Learning Initiative)

1. Learning is fundamentally social and inseparable from engagement in the world.
2. Knowledge is integrated in the life of communities; learning is how people gain membership and participate in community.
3. Learning is an act of membership; motivation in learning lies in the intimate relation between the desire for participation and the role of new knowledge in enabling that participation.
4. Knowing depends on engagement in practice; only in the classroom is knowledge presented in the abstract.
- 5.5. Engagement is inseparable from empowerment; potential for learning is greatest in situations in which participants have meaningful roles in real action that has consequences not only for them but for their community as well.
6. Failure to learn is the result of exclusion from participation; people denied membership with the right to contribute in the creation of meaning cannot be sufficiently engaged to learn easily.
7. We are already lifelong learners; in the search to participate, people learn all the time, but not necessarily what is best for them or society