Achieving the goals of the Conventions involves action in several key areas:

- Awareness raising;
- Law enforcement;
- Labour inspection;
- Educational support;
- Support for children and their families, and
- Cooperation with international initiatives.

Child labour’s role in the perpetuation of poverty and its negative impact on long-term economic development is now widely recognized. Thus, worst forms of child labour prevention, withdrawal and rehabilitation measures should be complementary to broader poverty reduction strategies, such as universal basic education, where it is not already available, and labour policies that promote what the ILO refers to as “decent work” for adults – productive and adequately remunerated work for adults with social protection and respect for rights at work.

In certain cases, the worst forms of child labour also have an international dimension that calls for action on an international scale. Among the most repugnant forms of child labour are slavery-like practices, such as the trafficking and sale of children across national borders for labour and commercial sexual exploitation. As child trafficking is a problem that affects many countries around the world, both industrial and developing, C.182 and R.190 stress the importance of cooperation with and participation in international efforts to combat it on many levels, including prevention, rescue and repatriation, rehabilitation, and law enforcement and prosecution.

Monitoring progress towards national goals

A national plan for eliminating the worst forms of child labour is obviously meaningless without a monitoring mechanism to assess whether or not its goals and target dates have been met or are likely to be met. Data obtained must be analysed by the competent government services, such as the national statistical office, a central child labour unit or whichever unit of government has been designated for this purpose. These data and analyses should provide the basis for an informed debate on the effectiveness of existing policies and programmes and on corrective action that may need to be taken.

Reporting to the ILO

Member States ratifying ILO Conventions are under obligation to report regularly. As Convention No. 182 is a fundamental ILO Convention, its application is reported every two years. Employers’ and workers’ organizations should be consulted in the preparation of national reports and may make their own observations independently if they wish. Reports are subsequently reviewed both by a committee of experts and a committee comprised of representatives of the ILO’s tripartite membership during the annual International Labour Conference.

Further information

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**Eliminating the Worst Forms of Child Labour: A practical guide to ILO Convention No. 182** (Geneva, 2002) a joint publication of the ILO and the Inter-parliamentary Union. Available in English, French and Spanish at www.ilo.org/childlabour

The latest ILO global child labour estimates confirm what many have feared for some time: the number of children trapped in the worst forms of child labour is actually greater than previously assumed. It is now estimated that an alarming 179 million girls and boys under the age of 18 are victims of these types of exploitation.

In the face of this, it is encouraging that many ILO member States have already ratified both the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) and the ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138). By so doing, these governments have made a strong affirmation of their responsibility towards these highly vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

The exceptionally rapid rate of ratification of Convention No. 182 in particular attests to the growing awareness worldwide of the injustice of child labour and its harmful effects on both children and society. Ratification, however, is not an end in itself. All governments that ratify Convention No. 182 also make a commitment to act. They pledge to take immediate and effective time-bound measures to eliminate the worst forms of child labour that occur in their countries, to rehabilitate victims and to prevent other children from becoming victims. They commit themselves to work with employers’ and workers’ organizations, concerned civil society groups and other governments to ensure that progress is both rapid and sustainable.
Moving ahead: implementation of Convention No. 182
Preparatory Activities
There are several essential preparatory activities for all ratifying countries. These are:

► identifying which worst forms of child labour exist and how prevalent they are;

This is in many cases neither a straightforward nor simple undertaking, particularly given the often illegal and hidden nature of many worst forms of child labour. Reliable data, however, is one of the cornerstones of implementation. It is essential for fixing priorities, setting targets and monitoring progress towards achieving the Convention’s goals. Many countries have already carried out national child labour surveys with the assistance of IPEC’s statistical unit, SIMPOC. In addition, SIMPOC’s “rapid assessment” methodology, specifically geared towards collecting information on worst forms, has so far assisted some 20 countries to assess their specific problem.

► determining what constitutes “hazardous work”;

Governments must consult with employers’ and workers’ organizations to determine what constitutes “hazardous work”. Practically, this means that together they must create a list of the hazardous occupations, processes (such as those involving dangerous machinery and chemicals) and unhealthy conditions to be prohibited to children below 18 years of age. All economic sectors should be scrutinized in this effort, and the resulting provisions should be consistent with other relevant international labour standards.

Consultation with the social partners is not only mandatory under the Convention, but is clearly the most effective way to make sure the list is adhered to. Governments are also encouraged to seek advice from experts and other concerned organizations, particularly those in the fields of occupational health and safety.

► reviewing current legislation to determine if existing laws — criminal, labour, military, and child protection — conform to the provisions of the Convention; and

Do they effectively prohibit all of the worst forms of child labour as defined in C. 182 and sufficiently cover the provisions of the Convention? If not, they need to be amended or new laws drafted to close the gaps. Additional related elements that should be considered include:

► access to free basic education, and where appropriate, to vocational training, for all children;

► adequate sanctions for violators;

► adequate redress and compensation for children who have been victims of the worst forms of child labour and their families; and

► a competent authority to enforce the legislation.

► creating a national structure for the purpose of following through with the Convention’s implementation.

Whether part of an existing administration, such as a unit of the Ministry of Labour, or a body created for the purpose of implementation, an efficient structure or mechanism must be established to oversee the process of implementation. Such a structure should preferably include government, employers’ and workers’ groups and non-governmental organizations. It should also play an important role in helping to mobilize resources, enlist partnerships within and outside of government, and integrating the Convention’s goals into wider social and economic development efforts.

Designing and implementing action programmes
Action programmes aimed at the worst forms of child labour require a broad alliance of ILO constituents and other stakeholders at all levels. While the ultimate responsibility lies with the member governments, consultation and cooperation should be sought from employers’ and workers’ organizations, international agencies and local civil society organizations. The views of children that are directly affected by child labour and those of their families should also be taken into consideration.

What ratifying governments undertake to do
All countries that have ratified C. 182, regardless of their level of economic development or the magnitude of the problem in their individual countries, should create and implement a national plan to eradicate the worst forms of child labour within a specific time-frame. They are also responsible for identifying the necessary financial and human resources to execute it and for monitoring its progress.

Clearly, the nature and mix of the programmes and other measures that comprise this plan will be specific to each country’s individual situation, and thus there is no single blueprint for fulfilling the Convention’s obligations. In order to be truly effective, however, the implementation process should be both consultative — including the input and collaboration of employers’ and workers’ organizations and other concerned groups — and comprehensive — integrating the Convention’s goals into the country’s overall national economic and social development plans. Where needed, it must change social attitudes to reject child labour. The Convention also encourages governments to assist each other with implementation.

How can IPEC help?
The implementation of C. 182 is entirely the responsibility of each country. IPEC, however, stands ready to advise and assist ILO members according to their particular needs. IPEC has ten years of experience in the design and implementation of programmes to eliminate child labour and is active in 75 countries. IPEC can support the development and implementation of national plans by providing legal advice, capacity-building expertise and technical assistance in the areas of data collection, awareness raising, programme design and workplace monitoring. Over the past several years, IPEC has accumulated substantial know-how in the development of project evaluation tools and has compiled wide-ranging analyses on good practices for the elimination of child labour. This knowledge base is a rich source of information for governments and other organizations planning action programmes.

Some governments, particularly of countries with multiple and deeply rooted worst forms of child labour, have chosen to adopt the IPEC Time-Bound Programme (TBP) approach to manage the implementation process and fulfill their obligations under C. 182. This approach is designed to provide governments with a comprehensive framework they can use to chart a course of action with well-defined targets. It also strongly emphasizes the integration of policies and programmes aimed at the eradication of the worst forms of child labour into national economic and social policies.

Ratification of the Convention also obliges governments to:

► design, implement and monitor programmes of action;

► designate national mechanisms to monitor the Convention’s implementation;

► enforce the Convention’s provisions, including penal or other sanctions;

► take effective and time-bound measures to prevent engagement of children in the worst forms of child labour and to remove and rehabilitate those children who are victims of it; to ensure access to free basic education; to reach out to at-risk children and to take account of the special needs of girls;

► assist one another in giving effect to the Convention, including support for social and economic development, poverty eradication programmes, and universal education.

Recommendation No. 190, which accompanies C. 182, proposes a general outline for achieving the Convention’s goals and elaborates further possible measures. These include, among others: collecting detailed information and statistical data on child labour; cooperating with international efforts to exchange information and to detect and prosecute persons involved in the sale and trafficking of children; mobilizing public opinion and employers’ and workers’ organizations and civic organizations; monitoring and publicizing best practices on the elimination of child labour; and creating jobs and providing skills training for parents and adult family members of concerned children.

Convention No. 182 (C. 182) and Recommendation No. 190 (R. 190) in brief:

Convention No. 182 applies to girls and boys under the age of 18. It defines the worst forms of child labour to include: a) slavery and slavery-like practices, including forced labour and forced recruitment for armed conflict; b) the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution or pornography; c) the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, and of work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is harmful to a child’s health, safety or morals. The last category, also referred to as “hazardous work”, must be determined by the governments of each country in consultation with employers’ and workers’ organizations.

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*The full texts of the Convention and Recommendation are available on the web site: www.un-il.org
Moving ahead: implementation of Convention No. 182

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