

Let's March Against Child Labour

Aim: to explore how different types of work affect children and young people's rights.

Age: All

Time: 30 minutes

Materials: Role cards for each participant, large space



What to do

Brainstorm on the rights that children and young people need in order to survive, grow and participate. Line everyone up in a straight line across the room. Give each participant a role card. From the list of rights, choose one and read it out. Each person considers whether they think their character would be able to exercise the particular right. For example, 'you have the right to go to school' or 'you have the right to protection from violence'. If yes, then they should take a large step forward. If yes, but they are limited in their choices, the participant takes a baby step forward. If no, then don't move. Keep going until all the rights are mentioned. It may be necessary to add a few extra statements of your own. Ask individual participants to read out their role card. Ask the following: How do you feel about where you have ended up? Why did you make particular choices? How did it feel when you passed others by/others passed you by? Ask where other participants with the same role card ended up.

Discussion Suggestions

Which types of work allow children to enjoy their rights? Which don't? Why do particular types of work prevent children from enjoying their rights?

Note for Leaders

It may be necessary to have a list of rights statements already, particularly with younger age groups. Some examples are:

- I can go to school
- I can speak out about things that affect me
- I am protected from violence
- I can play games
- I have a family
- I can meet my friends
- I can get information that I need
- I can earn a fair wage
- I am happy
- I am able to go to secondary school
- I will be well looked after if I get sick



Role Cards

Nihal: I am 8 years old and come from Pakistan. Last year, I was sent to work in the village carpet factory. I work a fourteen-hour day and sleep beside the loom. If I complain, the boss beats me. My fingers are always being cut by the loom. I am very unhappy.

Marvin: I am 14 and come from Nicaragua. I work all day from 5.30am shining shoes and earn £6.00 a day. My mother uses the money to buy food for me and my two brothers and three sisters. I'm going to go to school soon, even though I'll only be able to work half the day.

Manuel: I am 13 years old. I come from Colombia. Two years ago, I was abducted from my village to join rebels who are fighting against the Colombian government. Two of my friends who were taken with me have died after stepping on mines. I'm scared to escape, as those who try get beaten. I miss my family.

Ama: I am 10 years old. I come from Mozambique in Southern Africa. I look after my younger brother and sister while my mother and father work in the fields. I clean the house and start preparing the food. When my parents and my older brother, who is at school, come home in the evenings I help my mother to get the dinner ready and clean up afterwards.

Paul:** I am 15 years old and come from Galway. I work packing shelves in a supermarket. I work evening and early morning shifts. I find it hard to stay awake in class but I need the money so I can afford good clothes. My parents are happy because I don't ask for pocket money.

Chandra:** I am 14 years old and I come from Nepal. My family is very poor and I work on a tea estate. I have to walk an hour and a quarter to reach the estate. I work from 8am to 4pm. I have to pick at least 10kg tea each day, for which I receive 21p. I also do other jobs such as fetching tea and water. I have to provide my own tools and don't get paid when I am sick. I dream about going to school, but I don't even have enough clothes or food, so school is impossible.

Xi-Li: I am thirteen and I come from China. I make toys, which end up in shops in the West. I work twelve hours a day with small parts. The glue and paint smells terrible and I often feel ill. If I complain, I get hit or docked wages. I don't have time to play with toys.

Dara: I am 14 years old and I live in Ireland. My parents have a farm and I work evenings, weekends and holidays, helping my Dad with the farm work. During the summer, the hours are long and I feel tired. I don't get much time to play football with my local club.

Nadia: I am seventeen and come from Ukraine. A man came to my house and told my mother he could get me a visa for the West and a good job cleaning houses. I came on a truck with twenty other girls. When I arrived in Ireland, I was put to work on the streets as a prostitute. I complained but he threatened to tell my mother I am a prostitute. I couldn't bear the shame. He holds onto my identification documents.

Ranjeet*: I am 14 and live in Delhi, India. I work as a domestic maid for a rich family. I work from early morning to late evening Monday to Saturday, cleaning, washing, cooking and looking after the young children. The family treat me quite well giving me food and a room. The money I get goes to my family. On Sundays, I go to a free local school.

Amalia: I am 12 years old. I crossed the border to the USA from Mexico with my family last year. I work with my parents and two older brothers on a large plantation, spraying crops and removing weeds. The hours are long, we earn very little and the dust and spray cause me to cough a lot. Sometimes I go to school, but often I don't get the chance – we're just too busy.

Nelson: I am ten and come from Peru. I work with my Uncle, who makes gold jewellery for tourists. I mix the ore with mercury and the gold can then be extracted. Often, the mixture splashes on my body. I work from seven in the morning to six in the evening. I get Sundays off and I like to play football.

Anne: I am 15 and work in a small paper factory in my home town of Carlow. I work from 3.30–5.30pm, either packing paper into boxes or using a large machine to cut it into lengths. I earn £30 a week. I haven't told my parents about the job. It's very dusty in the factory and I cough a lot. I get tired at school, but I don't want to miss work.

Martin: I am 17, with the Leaving Certificate this year. I work as a kitchen porter in a restaurant in the local town 15 miles away. My hours are from 6 - 11.30pm. I get £25 a night. I burnt my hand on a hot pan a few months ago. It hurt a lot and I had to go to hospital. I missed a month of work but got no money for it.

* Adapted from: One World Centre for Northern Ireland (2001). Exploring Our World.
** Adapted from: Focus for Change (1992). Class, Gender and Race Inequality and the Media in an International Context.

