

Who is Responsible?

Aim: that the participants understand that we are all responsible for child labour

Age: 11 years and up

Time: 45 minutes

Materials: Role Cards

What to do

Read out the scenario. Form groups of six people. Give each member of the group a different role card. Take one group aside and explain that they are the youth group. They listen to what the different characters have to say. They question the different people about whether they think they are responsible for child labour. Each group spends 15 minutes discussing who is responsible for the exploitation of children for child labour.

The youth group representatives feed back from each group. Was it difficult to reach a decision? How did the decisions compare between the different groups?

In the same groups, ask participants to identify three things that they could do tackle child labour. Get one solution at a time from each group.

Give a copy of the case study to each group. Ask the group if the workers are getting a fair deal. How could a company be held responsible for practices in individual factories?



Case Study

Not-So-Happy Meal

A newspaper reported that Snoopy, Winnie the Pooh and Hello Kitty toys sold with McDonald's meals in Hong Kong are made at a mainland Chinese sweatshop that illegally employs child labourers to package the toys. The children, as young as 14, work 16 hour days for about \$3 – barely the cost of a McDonald's meal in Hong Kong. The newspaper said that one of its reporters mingled with some of the youngsters in a guarded factory complex where they live in crowded conditions. It said 16 workers sleep in a single room on wooden beds with no mattresses. The newspaper quoted some of the youngsters as saying they lied about their age and used false identification documents to obtain jobs. McDonald's was quoted as saying the company has a strict code on labour rights that prohibits child labour and that it carries out audits at regular intervals. The company said it had not reason to believe its Hong Kong toy supplier was in violation of its standards (Sunday Morning Post, August 2000).

Source: ILO (2000). Trade Unions and Child Labour.

Role Cards

Government Representative

You work in the Department of Social Welfare in your country. The extent of child labour is exaggerated in the media. You have put laws in place to eliminate child labour and to punish those responsible for causing it. But you have few resources for enforcing them. Closing factories that employ child labour will just create more poverty.

Local Employers

You employ 150 people in your factory. Without your help, they would not be able to survive. There is pressure from buyers for cheaper products, so you need a plentiful supply of cheap labour.

Consumers

Today, how you look is very important. You want the best gear at the best value. You are aware that certain companies may use child labour, but your friends would slag you off for wearing something without a label.

Large Corporations

You are answerable to the shareholders. The market dictates that if labour is too expensive, then production has to move elsewhere. You have a code of conduct for the organisation but feel it is the responsibility of the individual factories that supply you to enforce it.

Parents

You feel it is terrible that your children should have to go out to work instead of school, but without their contribution, the whole family would suffer. The price of food keeps going up and even school costs are rising. At least by working, the children are keeping out of trouble.

Children

You are proud to be able to help your family by providing money for food and clothes. The work makes you tired and someday you would like to go to school. You would like to earn respect from employers and the Government and a decent wage for the work that you do.

Scenario

A group of young people are trying to learn more about the issue of child labour. They contact DEFY who put them in touch with activists in developing countries who are working on the issue. They are invited to participate in a meeting where different groups affected by child labour will be present. The group will feed back about what they learned in the meeting.

