

Media Press



International Labour Organization

SCREAM

Stop Child Labour

Supporting Children's Rights through Education, the Arts and the Media



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Press**

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Aim: Develop contacts with the media in order to bring public attention to the issue of child labour. Understand how the media works. Learn to write a press release and make sure it's published.



Gain: Enhances the potential for community integration and awareness and increases the multiplier effect.



Time frame

2 single and 2 double teaching sessions

Motivation

A key community to mobilize in the campaign to eliminate child labour is the media. In this era of global communications and instantaneous news, it is important to harness the media as a potentially powerful source of support in broadening the impact of community awareness of child labour.

We have included two Media modules. This one deals with the written press, i.e. newspapers and magazines. The other focuses on radio and television. Both modules look at how young people can involve the media in their project and inform more people in the community about what they are doing and why and how the community can help.

The great advantage of the Media modules is that they enable young people to put into practice the skills and abilities they have been developing so far. They will see the





Note for the user

It is a good idea to implement the Research and Information module prior to this one. In the press-clippings exercise, the group members scan newspapers and magazines for articles on child labour and related human rights issues. By analysing these press clippings, the group will have got a better understanding of what makes an eye-catching headline, good opening paragraph, main story, and so on. This will help them in completing the exercises in this module.

practical benefit of what they have learned. Young people can tell the tale of child labour and all its evils in a form that their peers around the world will understand. They can develop stories, appeal for help and call on others to take action, all through the media. This module dovetails very well with others such as Creative Writing. Indeed, their ability to write creatively will help them in drafting press releases and writing to journalists and editors.

It is relatively rare that young people are called upon to take responsibility for important issues. This module offers them an ideal opportunity to make their mark in the community. Working with the media is becoming a necessary skill in the new economy, as news and information occupies an essential part of many people's lives. This skill will serve them well in their future academic and professional careers and will ensure that the lessons they have learned from these modules stay with them in later life.

This module deepens the personal development process. Implementing this activity will assist you in assessing the potential and the character of the young people you are working with. It will bring out such qualities as leadership, communication and sensitivity.

Preparation

News is now, what is happening today. Talk about your project while it is happening and not weeks after it has finished. This means that as the educator, you need to think about when to implement this module. Plan it carefully.

You and your group will need to establish contacts with local journalists and newspaper editors before submitting a press release. Editors need to be forewarned that your release will be coming in the next few days and they need to have an idea of what it will be about. They have to plan their next edition and by contacting them first you will know whether to launch the press release immediately or

send it in another week when there is still enough space in the paper. It is not a good idea to work on a release and send it to a paper if you know in advance that it will not be published – this could be demoralising for the group. Timing is crucial.

Articles have more impact if they are illustrated. When you talk to the editor or journalist, suggest good opportunities for photo shoots, for example, upcoming visits by outside speakers or a celebrity, events such as performing a piece of drama or holding an exhibition of the art competition submissions, and so on. Make sure the photographer has full details of time and venue so that he or she spends the minimum amount of time hanging around. They, too, are very busy people and will often be freelancers on very tight schedules.

If you have colleagues with relevant experience around you who would be willing to make themselves available to help you in the implementation of this module, avail yourself fully of such support. You may also know somebody personally – perhaps even a parent of one of the young people in your group – who either works in the media or has media experience.

It is also possible that your local newspaper would send someone out to help with this module. If nothing else, they may be willing to come and talk to the group about the work of a journalist and how to get a story published. Young people are usually genuinely interested in how the media works, given the extent to which they are exposed to television and radio. In addition, by eliciting the support of the local or even national media, you would automatically draw attention to the work you are doing with the group and pave the way for publication of a press release or an interview on local radio or television. Alternatively, you could solicit the help of a media and communications consultant or specialist. If you do not know of any, you will probably find them listed in a local telephone directory. Given the nature of the subject, you should ask if they would offer their services free of charge.



External support

What you'll need



- ✓ Paper and pens or pencils.
- ✓ Black/whiteboard or flipchart.
- ✓ Access to a telephone if possible, but by no means essential.



Getting started



How you go about implementing this module will depend on different factors:

- Whether or not you have been able to invite a speaker (or speakers) from the media.
- Whether or not you have a colleague, another teacher or individual who will be helping you to take sessions.
- Whether or not you will be conducting the sessions yourself.

Whatever the case, the approach described below should be sufficient to enable you to implement the module by yourself, with or without previous experience in this area.

Group organization

The way the module will eventually work out will depend very much on the group and their interest. There will be writing involved in putting together a press release and this is probably best done in small groups of two to four. The exercises will help the confidence-building process and young people will need this before they move on to actual contact with the media.

If you are implementing this module after the Creative Writing module (which is recommended), you should have been able to identify some good wordsmiths. Make sure

that these individuals are not all in the same group, but that they are separated into other groups so that their skills will help others. They may well assume a leadership role within their small sub-group, which would be helpful for you.

Setting the scene

1 teaching session

Even in today's fast-paced, information-technology-driven world, we should not underestimate the power of the written word. A well-written and well-targeted press release with a good story is a very effective way of getting publicity for your project and the campaign to eliminate child labour.

If you have been successful in contacting a speaker from the press world, this would be a good starting point for the teaching process. Invite him or her to address the group before you commence any of the teaching activities. Encourage a question and answer session at the end of the presentation. However, the young people may feel hesitant and self-conscious about asking questions even if they have loads to ask. So, set the ball rolling by asking some questions yourself. This will take the heat off the group and they will feel more confident about asking their own.

Ensure that a letter of thanks is sent to the speaker following his or her visit. These small efforts are always appreciated and it will mean that the individual concerned will be more open to future requests for support.

If you couldn't identify a guest speaker to talk to the group, it is important that you give the group an understanding of how the media world works. Newspapers, even small local ones, are very busy organizations. Their journalists are likely to be on the road most of the day, seeking out stories, following up leads, conducting interviews, co-ordinating their beats and photographers,



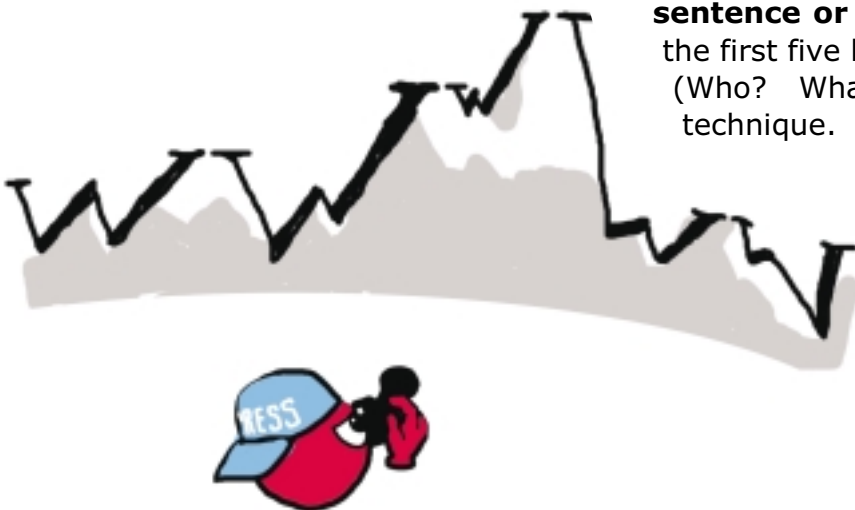
and so on. They then have to spend time back in the office either getting their articles typed up or typing them up themselves. They have an awful lot of pages to fill every week and their time is precious. So, the best way to get their attention is to do a lot of their work for them. In other words, prepare a press release that they can more or less transpose into the pages of the newspaper if they need to or if they lack the time to follow up immediately.

Activity one: Drafting a mock press release

1 double teaching session

Start with the whole group together. Write up on a board the following basic but important rules for drafting press releases. Only write up the highlighted phrases and expand each point as you go along.

- **What's the story?** To be newsworthy, your press release should tell a good story. It helps if you can give it a creative angle – look for what is novel, unique or special about the project.
- **Write short, simple sentences.** The attention span of many readers is quite short and long sentences in an article can be off-putting and confusing.
- **Summarize the story in the opening sentence or paragraph.** Tell the story in the first five lines or so based on the 5 W's (Who? What? When? Where? Why?) technique.



- **Include quotations.** Quotes make it more interesting for the reader. Get key individuals to say something hard-hitting and relevant about child labour or your project. If you don't have quotes to hand, turn some facts or information into a quote and ask someone if they will be willing to be quoted (but be careful about this practice and be sure that the person quoted is always consulted).
- **Look for an eye-catching headline.** Your main headline should grab the reader's attention and is a critical part of any press release. Subheads at strategic points in the press release will help break up dense text.
- **Avoid jargon and slang.** Your press release should be well written and the text should flow. Using jargon or slang can alienate the reader and turn them off.
- **Keep the press release as short as possible.** Make sure the release is clear, concise and to the point. Cut out the superfluous and focus on the issues you want to get across. Some editors will not look at a release that goes over a page. While it may seem difficult to fit all you want to write on a page, this just means that you have to be very disciplined in your style and in your priorities.
- **Tell them who you are.** Somewhere at the top of the release or in the covering note with it, you should have a brief note explaining who you and your group are.
- **Give the media an easy way to contact you.** It is important that journalists can easily identify whom they should contact to follow up on any details in the press release, organize a photo shoot, and so on. Only give them one main contact so that they do not have to chase people around. They will lose patience very quickly and you will lose the opportunity to get your story published.



Let the group ask questions as you go through the list on the board. Make sure they have understood the key points and the basic principles of writing press releases. Ask questions of them as well to reassure yourself that they do understand. Maintain their interest by interspersing your presentation with questions and examples.

Task setting

The exercise, of course, is to have the smaller groups get together and produce their own press releases. The objective is not necessarily to produce a final copy of a press release at this stage. This would be pretty unlikely on a first attempt, although it is possible that some of the groups will surprise you. The idea is to put the young people at ease with the task of writing and from there you can move on to writing up a final press release together (see Activity two below).



However, before breaking up into the smaller groups, a good way to get everyone in a relaxed and creative frame of mind is to have a brainstorming session with the aim of coming up with a catchy headline for the press release. The editors or journalists – and ultimately the readers – should see the headline and want to read on. If you have an organized event coming up or one that has just taken place, the headline could reflect this. Or else it could be designed to promote the project as a whole. Get the group members to call out whatever ideas come into their heads. Let them be spontaneous. Write up on the board the various suggestions – even those that are funny, inappropriate or off-the-wall. Encouraging the group to be witty or outrageous stimulates creativity and they will have a greater chance of hitting on a great headline. Stop the session after about 5 or 10 minutes. Then get the group to vote for the best one – and even introduce an element of competition by including a prize or several prizes.

Once a headline has been decided upon, write it up on the board and ask each group to develop a press release based on it. Give them the following guidelines:

- That the press release should be no more than 250 words, which should work out at about half an A4 sheet of paper;
- That there should be an introductory paragraph of no more than five lines, that sums up the main point of the press release using the 5 W's technique;
- That there should be at least one subhead in the press release;
- That there should be at least one quotation in the press release, either from the educator, i.e. you, or from someone in the group.

- That there must be a “story” to the press release, that is not just a series of facts linked together tenuously by various words and phrases.

Give the groups plenty of time to write up their press releases; 30 to 40 minutes should be enough. Make sure everything is going well, however, by circulating among the groups. Sit down briefly with a group if you see that they are having trouble or are struggling; make a couple of minor suggestions as to what might be included in the release. Once they have made a start, the rest will follow. It is usually the initial sentence or two that is the hardest. Encourage them to use the 5 W’s technique as this will help kick-start any writing exercise simply by forcing them to answer the questions.

If you were able to spread some of your identified writers among the groups, you should not have too many problems with this exercise. Two hundred and fifty words is not much and most young people should be able to cope with this. Reassure them that you are not necessarily looking for quality at this stage. The main objective is to get every group to write something and prove to themselves that they can do it. Try and make sure that each member of the smaller groups is contributing and that it is not just one individual doing all the drafting.

Stay within your set deadline and make sure each group completes within that time. Do not allow the drafting to drag on; you should call a halt to the exercise after the allotted time even if not everyone has finished. Get the groups to nominate a representative to read out their press release. If you feel that an element of competition will add a bit of excitement and maintain the interest of the group, you can offer a prize for the best finished piece of work.

Annex 1 is an article that was written by two young girls involved in a pilot test of these modules in the Republic of Ireland in 2001. This was published in a local newsletter and may help you and your group in this exercise. It is more of a descriptive article than a press release, but it was their own work and all the more powerful because of it.



Activity two: Drafting a real press release

1 double teaching session

The second part of this exercise is to create a press release with the whole group with the aim of having it published in some form of written media.

Paving the way

Prior to moving on to the final task of developing a polished press release for publication, you should begin working with the group on contacting the local media being targeted by the press release. You might choose more than one local newspaper and perhaps even aim to get the press release out to national newspapers and/or magazines. However, for the benefit of your group and to build their confidence, start with one or two local newspapers, as you have a greater chance of getting the press release published locally.

This may be the moment to call in your external support (see above). Any contacts that will enhance the chances of the press release being published are worth making use of.



Involve the group in the contacts with the editor and/or journalists. Get them to nominate representatives to make the contact and develop some briefing notes with the full group on what the representatives should say about the forthcoming press release. Find out when would be the best time to contact the editor; for example, many local newspapers are weeklies, so it is pointless trying to call the editor the day before the paper goes to press. The call should be made the day of or after publication when things will be quieter in the office.

The important issues to be clarified are to assess the interest of the editor in publishing an article on the group's project and what the deadlines are for the press release. In addition, the editor should be asked if photographs would be useful to illustrate the article and suggestions should be made by the group for a photo shoot by the paper's photographer. The editor can also give more specific indications on the desired length of the article.

The general press release should be around 500 words long (unless you have heard otherwise from the newspaper's editor) and should be made up, if possible, of the best components of the shorter press releases produced by the smaller groups.

It is quite possible that some of the short press releases will be of a very high quality, which will simply make this final exercise that much easier. Your involvement will be quite critical in this phase as, effectively, you are going to have to help extract bits from all the short press releases and "edit" them into a longer one. You would have listened very carefully to the different texts and made notes of the best points raised by the different groups. Talk to the group about what the priorities of the press release should be: What is the main point that you want to get across to the reader? On this basis, you should be able to cut and paste to begin to piece together a final press release.

It is inevitable that you will have to do some bridging and editing work to link together the different paragraphs and the different text styles. This can either be done on a board, a flipchart or by asking someone to write the new text down. The best approach is simply to do the cut and paste and then see where the gaps are and where the editing is required. Involve the group in the process and make it fun.

Once a text outline has been developed, it can be honed and refined so that the best result is achieved. Taking the final text, get the group to develop the opening paragraph based on the 5 W's technique.

Lastly, take another look at the headline. Is this the best headline that the group can come up with? Now that the full text has been prepared, read it out again to the group and see if any other ideas come forward for a better headline. It is quite likely that different ideas will be generated from the new text. You should then ask for a volunteer to produce the final press release by either writing it out neatly, typing it up or, if possible, providing you with an electronic version on diskette and a printed copy for your files.

The final press release



Note for the user

It is very important to meet the deadline for submission of your press release. If your local newspaper needs the press release by Monday 12:00 so that it appears in the newspaper on Friday, that is exactly what must happen. Get the release to the right person within that deadline. Find out when the deadlines are when you call the newspaper's offices.

Having produced a final copy, help the group to make contact with the local newspaper to send in the release and check on the arrangements that were made (if any) for a photo shoot. Any press release should be followed up with phone calls to journalists or the editor to make sure that an article will be published. Newspapers receive hundreds of press releases from various sources in the course of a week. You have to make sure that yours will be used, which requires follow-up phone calls. Work with the group representatives on this activity.



Annex 2 is a press release published during the pilot test of the modules in the Republic of Ireland. It might give your group some ideas and inspiration in developing their own.

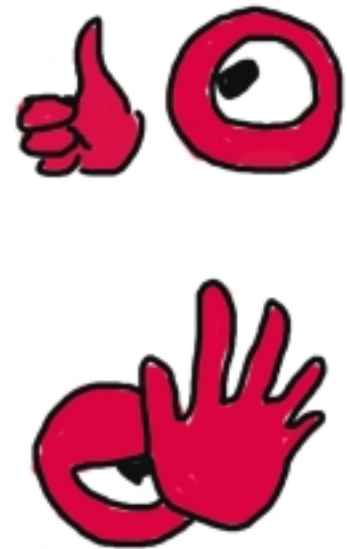
Note for the user

The aim is for the group's press release to be published as an article in the local newspaper. If it is, work with the group to produce a thank you letter to the editor and send it off as soon as possible after the paper comes out. Afterwards, encourage the group to call either the editor or the journalist concerned, thank them personally and ask if there is any follow-up information or stories they might like that would keep the issue of child labour in the news for longer. In terms of community awareness, an article in the local newspaper is near the top of the list of achievements. Get the group to cut out the article and begin to make a press clippings file.

If an article is not published, do not lose heart, and make sure that the group does not become discouraged. Support them in contacting the editor or journalist concerned and ask why the press release was not used. This is a very useful exercise as there may be a straightforward reason why it was not used, for example, there was not enough space that week and so it may be used the following week. By asking why it was not used, you and the group will find out what can be done to make sure the next one is better. It is a learning experience for them and for you and it gives motivation to the group – to make sure that something is published in the media about child labour and their efforts to stop it.

Do's and don'ts

- Do make sure that every individual takes part in every session of this module.
- Do ensure that each group writes something, no matter how short or sparing in detail.
- Do use humour and light-hearted banter within the group to help the session along. Humour can really be used in the development of headlines, for example.
- Do encourage the groups to read out their press releases.
- Don't allow the group to make fun of finished pieces of work.
- Do praise the groups on their work. Tell them their efforts will be valuable in producing the final press release for publication in the local newspaper.
- Do keep all the press releases that the groups produce.



Final discussion

1 teaching session

Have your final discussion after the press release has been completed to the satisfaction of yourself and the group. Working with the media is an exciting prospect and your group will probably respond very well to this module. They will like the idea of being in the newspaper and of having people in their community read all about what they are learning and doing. They will also like the idea of seeing photographs of themselves and each other in the newspaper. They will make a big fuss, say how awful they look and how they hope no one they know sees the photographs – but, deep down they will be very pleased and proud, and so they should. Allow them to let off steam and express their feelings about the exercise.

Help maintain the excitement and the interest within the group by being animated in your closing comments. Tell

them all to look out in the next edition of the local newspaper to see if the article is published. It will be something to look forward to and it will provide plenty of scope for follow-up. For example, the editor might take a personal interest in the issue and the project you are conducting. The paper might be willing to run articles for a couple of weeks. You could suggest that they might be interested in publishing some of the group's short stories or other related art forms that the group has produced, for example, pictures and paintings.



Evaluation and follow-up

In terms of measurable indicators for this module, there are indeed specific outcomes that are measurable in so far as they will either have occurred or not. The smaller groups will have produced a short press release and, on the basis of these, a longer press release will have been produced by the full group.

Further indicators include:

- contacts established with the local (or regional and national) written media;
- a press release sent to the media;
- an article published in the media on the basis of the press release;
- follow-up activities set in motion following the publication.

This module is all about moving into the action phase of involvement in the global campaign to eliminate child labour. The above indicators, therefore, are very important in determining to what extent your group is committed to taking action and their involvement in the issue and the project. The results of this action will be important for you, the educator, in terms of your personal evaluation of the implementation of the modules to date and the participation of the group and individuals within the group. You should certainly by now have been able to identify specific individuals who are most committed to the project.

This particular module is key for the education of your young group. The activities in this module show them how they can take action to promote awareness about the problem of child labour. They can express their feelings to the wider community and who knows where their message might go from there? Other groups and individuals may also develop an interest and establish contact. The local education authorities may be interested in what the young people are doing. Getting the message out into the media can begin to open many doors, you never know.



The module emphasises the message of hope for the group. They see that not everything is hopeless and that there are ways and means available to them to take positive action. It can be very empowering if properly managed and followed up. If the press release is published, make sure you build their pride and confidence and develop motivation to take further action.

Once you have completed this module to your satisfaction, we recommend that the next module you implement takes the group into other areas of media campaigning (see Media: Radio and Television). The press release you have developed here will also be useful in forging contacts with these media.

Annex 1

Article published in *Scariff News*, Ireland, March 2001

Child Labour

by Antoinette Collins (16) and Denise Bolton (16)

You may already be aware of the unique child labour project that we, the transition year students at Scariff Community College, have undertaken. This has been a highly informative project. We have found out a tremendous amount about the cruelty of child labour and also the reasons why children have to go out to work.

To start our project on an informal note we all got pieces of paper and old magazines and created two different types of collage. The first was one of our choice. The second was on the topic of child labour. We currently have these on display in our classroom. We have two to three teaching sessions a week on our child labour project. During these, we talk about facts and figures of child labour. Some of our classroom sessions are being filmed on video and these recordings will be edited later and made into a video of the project.

Also once a week, in our English classes, we get newspapers and we examine these for articles that might be of interest to us. Several other teachers are also getting involved with our project. During these classes, we discuss topics which are relevant to the project such as in geography where we are studying some of the causes of poverty.

Another aspect of our project, which we are all enjoying immensely, is the drama class. These classes are unlike anything most of us have done before. We are preparing a play for the youth section of the drama festival on 15th March.

On 14th February we held a debate. The motion was "Children belong in school not in the work place". This proved very informative. A Clare County Councillor attended the debate and told us how moved he was by our speeches. We have also had a visit from a member of Parliament who was very impressed with our project. Several students interviewed both politicians.

From 15th to 16th February, we had a very enjoyable creative writing workshop with author Larry O'Loughlin. Larry wrote the book "Is Anybody Listening?" which deals with child labour. Everybody thoroughly enjoyed his visit.

Our project is all about young people and what we can do to help eliminate child labour around the world. By getting to know more about the problems and understanding why child labour exists, we feel that we can play our part in doing something about it. Before you can do anything, you need to know more. But once you know more, then it is impossible to sit around and not do anything.

Using the skills that we have learned, we believe we can make a difference. This is what our project aims to do – to make a difference to the lives of millions of children working around the world.

Annex 2

Group press release, Ireland, January 2001

Labour of Love for Scariff Students

A group of young people from the Scariff Community College are spearheading a unique project that could help to eradicate the worst forms of child labour worldwide. Twenty-four students in transition year at the east Clare secondary school are taking part in the development of a pilot programme aimed at raising awareness among young people of the issues surrounding child labour.

Overseen by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Geneva, Switzerland, the project is being developed by the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC). They have commissioned Nick Grisewood, a freelance communications consultant based in Scariff, to develop a series of educational modules which can be used in schools around the world. Nick is confident that working with schools is an ideal way to tackle the problem of child labour. "The best way to make a lasting difference to the situation of working children around the world is through education, particularly the education of young people."

The test phase of the project is being carried out in close co-operation with the teaching staff at Scariff Community College. "This is a great opportunity for our students to work in a wider context and feel that they are making a difference. It's great to think that a small school like ours in rural Ireland could play a key role in bringing about fundamental changes worldwide," says Mr P.J. Mason, Principal of Scariff Community College.

An innovative aspect of the project is that it covers all areas of the curriculum as Geraldine Condren, transition year co-ordinator explains. "The students are looking at the issue of child labour from every angle... they are making posters in art class, studying issues of poverty in geography, exploring relevant poetry and literature in Irish and English classes and they even organised a debate around the issue attended by transition and fifth year students."

The project includes a heavy emphasis on the use of drama, music and creative writing. The students are working with a local theatre director to develop and perform a theatre piece that will be included in this year's East Clare Drama Festival.

The reaction to the project in the wider community has been very positive. Clare County Library has assisted by offering Internet training and access to the students involved and making resources available for research at the libraries in Killaloe and Scariff.

Any change in the field of child labour world-wide will ultimately be made at a political level and the transition year students have addressed this issue by inviting Tony Killeen TD and local county councillor Paul Bugler to visit Scariff Community College and see at first hand the work being done. As a consequence, both politicians have pledged to do what they can at the local and national levels to raise awareness of the issue.

"The students enthusiasm and commitment is the best encouragement for IPEC people working in Geneva and around the world," says Frans Röselaers, Director of IPEC in Geneva. "We believe that adolescents can spearhead social mobilisation when their creativity and imagination are given free rein. Educators will thus give more recognition to young people's ability to assume responsibility in building a culture of human rights."

In the long term, the success of the current project at Scariff Community College will be how effectively the east Clare students can raise awareness of the issue. Transition year student Nollaig Burke explains: "It is estimated that there are over 245 million children below the age of 18 working around the world. Of these, around 179 million work in the worst forms of child labour. Our project will be going around the world helping to teach other young people about the tragedy of exploited children. With that knowledge I hope that they, and we, can make a lasting difference."

IPEC was launched in 1992 to help States combat child labour through action programmes, research, policy development and advocacy. IPEC is now operating in 74 countries in all regions of the world.

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