Child Labor in the Philippines

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Agenda

• The Philippines
• The problem of child labor
• The Filipino case
• Why is child labor a problem?
• What happens when we ignore it?
• Ways to fix the problem
• What can we do to help
• Suggestions for further research
The Philippines
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The Philippines

- Approx 300,000 sq km → about the size of Arizona
- Population approx 90 million people or about the same as California + Texas + New York + Florida
- GDP @ PPP approx $325 billion or $3,500 per capita → about the same size as the economy of Virginia [versus $14tn or $48,000 per capita in the US]
- Independence from Spain 1898 → becomes US colony 1899 → independence from US 1946

★ The economy of the Philippines rests primarily on labor-intensive services like garment manufacturing and electronics assembly
The problem of child labor

- UNICEF estimates that approx 160 million children between 5 and 14 years of age work, excluding domestic labor → when domestic laborers are included the number rises to almost 300 million.

- Survival in poor families involves a trade-off → how much will my kid eat versus how much money can they bring in [this is why young children are better, because they eat less to earn the same as others].
The Filipino case

- There are about 36 million children 5-14
- Approx 16% of those or 6 million work ‘officially’ → how many work ‘unofficially’?
- The Bureau of Women and Young Workers has no inspectors of its own to enforce child labor laws
- Most children are employed in export industries or in household jobs, so limiting child labor here could significantly affect export earnings and domestic feed/earn tradeoff
Why is child labor a problem?

• A society which exploits children often tolerates other forms of violence → domestic abuse, homophobia, racism, gender discrimination, state torture, totalitarian government

• Child labor steals from the future by making less productive adults → this creates a vicious circle of poverty
What happens when we ignore it

- We get stuff we want cheaper → apparel, electronics, housewares
- The US is the only country in the world NOT to sign the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child . . . and we helped write it!
- Poor countries get addicted to child labor, which weakens economies and governments such that more people suffer
Ways to fix the problem

- Reduce poverty → this is the best way: strengthen domestic economies and advocate free, fair trade
- Support human capital formation → people who are literate and aware of their rights are more likely to have productive jobs and avoid exploitative relationships
- Strengthen laws and enforcement → exploiting children is wrong and we should help make sure it stops by supporting UNICEF, ILO etc
- Limit governments to reduce corruption → a stronger private sector in poor countries and a stronger consumer base will help keep governments and businesses honest
What can we do to help?

• DO SOMETHING
• Lobby Barack Obama and Senators Durbin and Burris to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child
• Boycott known abusers of child labor → HERSHEY, FIRESTONE
• Support initiatives to limit child labor locally, in the US and around the world → give money, volunteer time, write letters etc
★ Support policies and initiatives to ameliorate poverty in the worst abuser countries: fair trade, accountable government, micro-credit etc
Suggestions for further research

- An Australian Broadcasting Corp story available on YouTube [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yBA5bleC0n4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yBA5bleC0n4)
- UNICEF [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)
- ILO – International Labour Organisation [www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org)
- Kathryn Gay, *Child Labor: A Global Crisis*
- Janet Hilowitz and Peter Matz, *Annotated Bibliography on Child Labour*
- Cathryne Schmitz et al, *Child Labor: A Global View*
- Institute for Labor Studies (Philippines), *Comprehensive Study on Child Labor in the Philippines*
Thank you

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