

due to lack of clean drinking water, vaccinations, access to adequate medical care, and other basic forms of societal infrastructure such as electricity, education and transportation.

Today, as the 60th anniversary of the United Nation's adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights approaches, many poor countries remain mired in poverty and have correspondingly poor quality of living indices such as high infant mortality and low life expectancy because corruption, abusive trade mispricing, and criminal activity have systematically robbed these countries of capital.

The Declaration states that "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing, medical care, and necessary social services."

The link between capital flight and degradation of human life is clear. Improving transparency and information sharing will hinder both government kleptocrats stealing money and multinational corporations evading taxes, which will in turn allow capital to accumulate in poor countries. The way is there, what is critically needed now is just the will. **MD**

Right to Health

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World Health Assembly and the World Health Organization (WHO) Executive Board, which pay scant attention to human rights as a means of driving global health policy. Draft WHO guidelines on the international recruitment of health personnel, for example, fail to recognize certain international obligations on recruitment that flow from the right to health.

It has been thirty years since the Alma-Ata Declaration proclaiming health for all. Since then there have been many shifting approaches to global health policy, but none that combine the enduring values, analytical power, motivating force for communities, and potential for realizing health for all as a human rights approach. If the right to health is to achieve its potential rather than be a passing fancy, everyone concerned about global health must not only embrace it, but also ground their work in it. **MD**

Education's Effect on Poverty

Combating child labor and breaking the cycle of poverty through education.

BY AZRA KACAPOR, DIRECTOR OF CHILD AND YOUTH PROGRAMS, AND JOHN FOX, SENIOR DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS, WORLD LEARNING

ON A RECENT VISIT TO A school in Kisapincha, a poor indigenous community in the Ecuadorian sierra, we were meeting with a teacher when an eight-year-old boy named Jose arrived several hours late to class and approached the teacher to speak in private. He was clearly upset to be late and wanted her to know it was because his parents had kept him home to spray the fields with pesticide. The teacher contacted Jose's parents and community leaders to ensure he is kept in school and away from hazardous work in the future.

That moment, brief as it was, cap-

tured a snapshot of a system functioning as it should to acknowledge and protect the rights of a child from economic exploitation and hazardous labor, linking the responsibilities of the state down the line to the empowerment and well-being of the child himself. Jose had learned the importance of being in school rather than working. He trusted his teacher, the school system, and implicitly the state, to address the situation and protect his interests. **▷**

A girl learns agricultural techniques at the Colegio Avila vocational high school, Loreto, Amazon region of Ecuador.



And he felt empowered to claim his right to an education as his pathway out of poverty.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, approaching its twentieth anniversary next year, has changed the way the world views children and provided a legally binding platform for protecting their unique and inalienable rights. Although a legal document by definition, the Convention has inspired a shared vision for children's rights that recognizes their protection as fundamental and sacrosanct. It also represented a paradigm shift by defining the rights of the child comprehensively and stipulating the responsibility of the State to protect those rights "to the maximum extent of their available resources."

In its application to real-world contexts, however, the Convention's vision remains distant from the reality in much of the developing world where poverty, armed conflict and other factors leave children at risk and not covered by the laws that should protect them. In these contexts, child labor predominates, depriving children of education and perpetuating the generational cycle of poverty for vulnerable and marginalized groups.

In Ecuador, for example, child labor is disproportionately high among indigenous children who live in poverty. Indigenous children are, by tradition, more involved in domestic labor and farm work, and have less access to quality education than non-indigenous children. Like many other marginalized groups, they often start school when they are older and are more likely to drop out, weakening their opportunities for

Wiñari: Growing from the Bottom

Recognizing the link between child rights and poverty alleviation, World Learning is partnering with the U.S. Department of Labor and indigenous communities in Ecuador to combat child labor and break the cycle of poverty through education. The purpose of education projects that combat child labor is to reduce the number of current and potential child laborers by increasing their enrollment in school, reducing their hours of work, and removing them from the worst forms of labor.

Wiñari, which means "growing from the bottom" in the local Kichwa language, addresses child labor by:

- Supporting re-enrollment of children who have dropped out of school through accelerated classes that allow them to re-enter at grades appropriate to their age;
- Improving teacher performance and teaching methods to encourage first-time enrollment and retention;
- Providing older, out-of-school children with technical training in skills they need to compete for jobs; and
- Strengthening the capacity of school committees and community organizations to support their schools, effectively advocate for improved government policy, and establish networks of activists to continue advocacy beyond the life of the project.

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employment and perpetuating poverty across generations.

Studies suggest a direct link between more equitable distribution of education and lower poverty and inequality, as well as faster economic growth. World Bank studies show that access to education for girls strongly impacts the educational achievement, health prospects, and mortality rates of their children, while additional Bank data suggest that education for girls and boys may also be the most effective preventative measure in fighting HIV/AIDS. However, studies such as these also consistently confirm that access to education is only a start toward achieving the positive benefits of education.

In Ecuador and elsewhere, World Learning has found that for the 165 million children involved in child labor today the answer to their future lies in ensuring access, retention and completion of adequate, quality education. Child labor among marginalized populations is too often a rational response to desperate poverty and lack of hope that is only reinforced when the alternatives are seen to have little value. Quality education and clear pathways out of poverty must be assured in order to counter the perception of poor families that their interests are better served by keeping their children home to work than sending them to inadequate schools.

By addressing the intertwined rights of the child to an education and a childhood free of hazardous and exploitative labor, we are in turn establishing the conditions necessary for marginalized communities such as Kisapincha to break free of poverty. Through a chain of protection involving the government, NGOs, community partners and parents, Jose and children like him can be confident of their rights and have the hope and opportunity to envision a better, more secure future. 