



International  
Labour  
Organization



# Ending child labour by 2025:

A review of  
policies and  
programmes

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**



**CONTRIBUTION  
TO ACHIEVING  
SDG TARGET 8.7**



# Executive Summary



**T**he international community has made clear that the persistence of child labour in today's world is unacceptable and, in the Sustainable Development Goals, has renewed its commitment to eliminating all forms of child labour by 2025. This report aims to contribute to such efforts by offering an analysis of trends and an evidence-based discussion of policy solutions.

As we show, available evidence suggests that investment in expanding free education of good quality, extending social safety nets, improving the governance of labour markets and the functioning of family enterprises, and strengthening social dialogue and legal protections hold a great deal of promise for eliminating child labour and offer the key elements of an underpinning strategy for efforts from today until 2025.



# Child labour in the world today

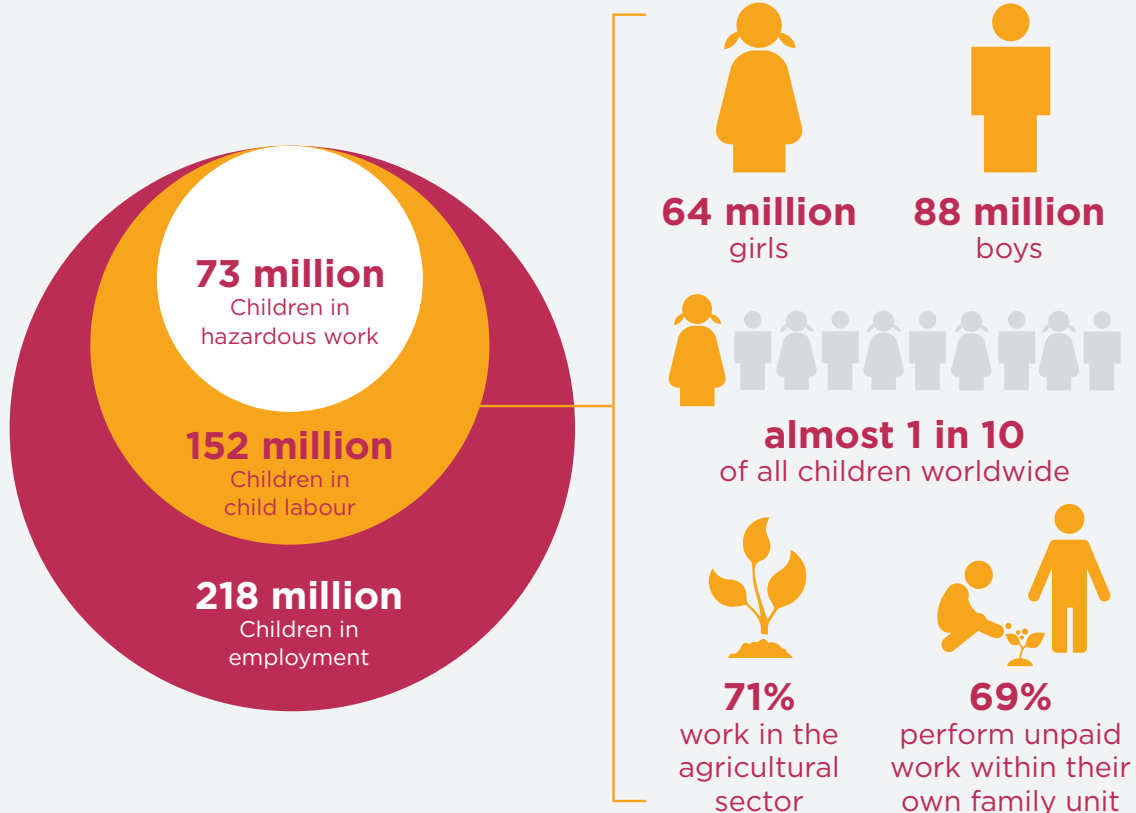
## The challenge of ending child labour worldwide remains formidable.

The latest Global Estimates indicate that 152 million children — 64 million girls and 88 million boys — are in child labour globally, accounting for almost one in 10 of all children worldwide. Nearly half of all those in child labour — 73 million children

in absolute terms — are in hazardous work that directly endangers their health, safety, and moral development. Children in forced labour, a worst form of child labour that is estimated using a separate methodology, number 4.3 million.



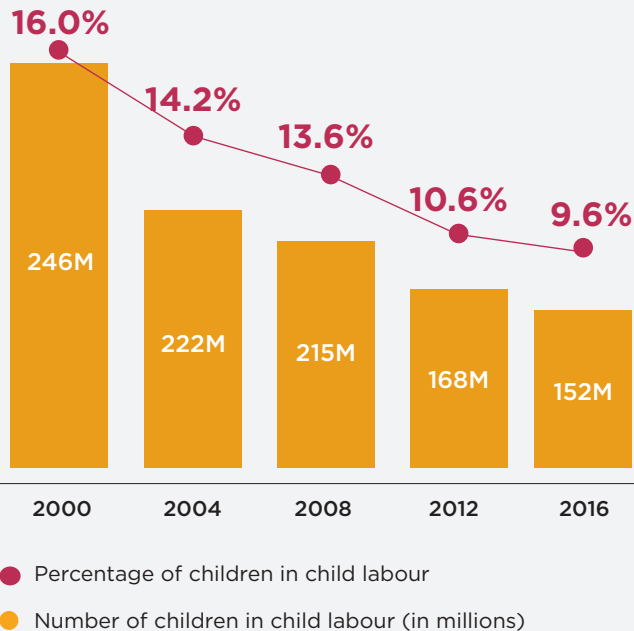
There are more than 150 million children in child labour in the world, half of whom are in hazardous work.



Absolute number of children in employment, child labour and hazardous work



While there have been encouraging advancements in reducing child labour over the last two decades, the pace of progress has slowed in recent years.



**The 2016 results show that child labour has again declined worldwide, but that the pace of progress has slowed significantly.**

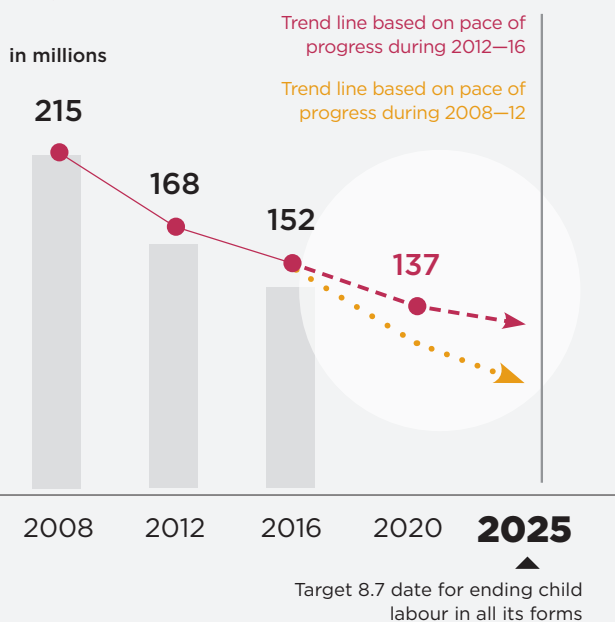
The share of children in child labour fell by only one percentage point during 2012 to 2016, compared to three percentage points in the previous four-year period. The decline in hazardous work slowed in a similar fashion. Beyond this general slowdown in progress, the 2016 results highlight a number of specific areas of concern. Child labour increased in Africa despite the fact that many African countries have taken strong action to combat it. A closer look at the patterns during 2012 to 2016 also indicates almost no progress among children under the age of 12.

**We must move much faster if we are to honour our commitment to ending child labour in all its forms by 2025.**

A simple projection of future progress based on the pace of progress achieved during 2012 to 2016 indicates very clearly the challenge ahead. As reported in the figure at lower left, **maintaining the current rate of progress would leave 121 million children still engaged in child labour in 2025.** A similar calculation, also shown in the figure, indicates that even maintaining the pace achieved during 2008 to 2012, the fastest recorded to date, would not be nearly enough. We are moving in the right direction, but we must greatly accelerate the pace.



Even maintaining the pace achieved during 2008 to 2012, the fastest recorded to date, would not be nearly enough eliminate child labour by 2025.



Children in child labour (in millions), showing actual and projected trend lines toward eliminating child labour by SDG 8.7 target date 2025

# Policy prescriptions for a world free of child labour

How do we get from where we are now to where we want to be by the SDG target date of 2025? Thanks to a growing body of practical experience, research and impact evaluations, we know **progress relies centrally on an active government policy response — supported by workers’ and employers’ organizations and the wider international community — that addresses the array of factors that push or pull children into child labour.** Progress does not, in other words, happen by itself, nor does it depend only on forces beyond the realm of policy. While economic growth is relevant, the accumulated evidence and experience suggest that policy choices and accompanying resource allocation decisions can matter even more.

We also know a lot about *which* policies are most relevant. The evidence suggests that **policies in four principal areas stand out in this regard —**

**education, social protection, labour markets, and legal standards and regulation — all underpinned by social dialogue that ensures their relevance.**

These policy areas are linked not only to the SDGs concerning poverty eradication, quality education, and decent work, but also to the foundational objective of the 2030 Agenda to achieve “peaceful, just and inclusive societies”.

But the consensus around a common set of policy priorities does not mean that there exists a one-size-fits-all approach to addressing child labour everywhere. Policy responses need to be tailored to the variety of contexts in which child labour persists and they should be built on the “policy blocks” already in place. Two contexts that present special challenges — global supply chains and state fragility and crisis — are discussed separately below.

## ELEMENTS OF AN INTEGRATED POLICY RESPONSE TO CHILD LABOUR

INCLUSIVE AND  
EQUITABLE  
QUALITY  
EDUCATION  
FOR ALL

SOCIAL  
PROTECTION  
SYSTEMS,  
INCLUDING SOCIAL  
PROTECTION FLOORS

DECENT WORK  
FOR ADULTS  
AND YOUTH  
OF LEGAL  
WORKING AGE

LEGAL  
STANDARDS  
AND  
REGULATION

**SOCIAL DIALOGUE AS  
A FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENT**

## FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO CHILD LABOUR

1. Limited legal protections
2. Poverty and social vulnerability
3. Exposure to individual and collective shocks
4. Poor quality schooling, limited school access
5. Limited decent work opportunities, difficult transitions to work
6. Absence or weak realization of freedom of association and of the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining, and of other forms of social dialogue



## INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL

### THE RATIONALE

Schooling and child labour are inextricably linked. In the words of Nobel Peace Laureate Kailash Satyarthi, “We will not end child labour until every child is in school, and we will not succeed in ensuring every child is in school until we eradicate child labour”.

**There is broad consensus that the single most effective way to stem the flow of school-aged children into child labour is to improve access to and quality of schooling**, so that families have the opportunity to invest in their children’s education and the returns to such an investment are greater than those associated with involving children in work. Universal quality education promotes all children’s rights and helps break intergenerational cycles of poverty and reliance on child labour.

### APPROACHES

#### INVEST IN EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT, CARE, AND PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

**Getting children off to a good start is one of the most important strategies for ensuring that children transition successfully from early childhood to school rather than to the workplace.** Evidence shows that these programmes play a vital role in promoting learning readiness and in sensitizing parents to the importance of school participation, which in turn helps to ensure that children enter, persist, and succeed in school, at least up to the minimum age for employment.

#### REDUCING OR ELIMINATING SCHOOL COSTS

**Schooling must be affordable in order to be a viable alternative to child labour.** Yet in many cases a lack of public educational facilities can mean a reliance on costly private providers that are beyond the means of many of the poorest, while, in others, fees to attend schools or the cost of necessary items such as textbooks and uniforms can keep children out of the classroom.



Nearly a third of children in child labour up to age 14 are out of school.

#### Children in child labour and attending school



**78.3 million**

#### Children in child labour and NOT attending school



**36.1 million**

#### IMPROVED SCHOOL ACCESS

**There is a large body of evidence linking limited school access with child labour** and the impact appears especially strong for girls. Studies also suggest that even when school access constraints are limited to higher levels of schooling, they can be part of the reason why primary-aged children work rather than attend school. Parents may be less willing to send their children to primary school knowing that they will be unable to proceed to higher levels, where the seed of the initial investment in education bears greater fruit.

#### SCHOOL QUALITY AND RELEVANCE

Quality concerns can also play a role in pushing children out of school and into child labour. **Out-of-school children surveyed in a number of countries cite lack of interest in school** as an important motive, a response likely driven in important part by negative perceptions of school quality and relevance. Parents too frequently cite a lack of perceived relevance in their decisions to send their children to work prematurely instead of continuing to invest in their education.

## Policies to promote inclusive and equitable education for all as an alternative to child labour

Policy goals	Policy provisions
<b>Expanded access to early childhood development opportunities for vulnerable households</b>	Targeted introduction/expansion of local facilities offering preschool programmes, home outreach programmes on better parenting and care-giving, and comprehensive early children care programmes.
<b>Reduced direct and indirect schooling costs</b>	Elimination of school fees, provision of free uniforms, textbooks, and school transportation, and introduction of conditional cash transfer programmes and in-kind transfer schemes such as food for education.
<b>Improved school quality</b>	Recruit well-trained teachers, address their working conditions and academic freedom, and ensure gender balance in the teaching corps to help encourage girls to attend school. Promote the involvement of parents and communities in the life of the school. Ensure the protection of all children, girls and boys, against violence, including sexual violence, at school.
<b>Expanded school access</b>	Targeted school and classroom expansion based on needs assessment (including of children with learning difficulties or with physical disabilities). Expanded schooling hours and after-hours activities as an alternative to child labour.



## SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS, INCLUDING SOCIAL PROTECTION FLOORS

### RATIONALE

In the absence of other coping mechanisms, exposure to poverty and shocks can force households to resort to child labour as a fall-back survival strategy. **Continued progress against child labour will require policies that help mitigate the economic vulnerability of households.** A growing body of research and experience points to the relevance of social protection systems, including social protection floors, in this regard. Social protection measures providing income replacement and security to families that are dependent for part of their family income on the labour of their children have proved successful and must be extended.

### APPROACHES

#### CASH TRANSFER PROGRAMMES

**Programmes providing cash stipends to vulnerable families with children, sometimes conditional on school attendance or participation in preventive health programmes, are becoming an increasingly important part of social protection floors in a number of countries.** There is extensive evidence that these programmes lower both the prevalence and time intensity of child labour, principally by compensating families for children's time in the classroom and by helping families to weather unforeseen shocks without resorting to child labour.

## PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMMES

Evidence to date suggests that public works programmes providing temporary employment to adult members in poor households can lead to children having to replace adults in household work while the latter are participating in the programme, thus offsetting any positive programme effects arising from the increase in family income. **Child labour considerations therefore need to be incorporated into the design of these programmes to ensure that they do not have adverse effects on children.** Providing child care facilities at worksites to alleviate the burden on older children to care for their younger siblings is one example of this.

## OTHER SOCIAL PROTECTION INSTRUMENTS

The limited evidence available to date suggests that health protection, social protection for persons with disabilities, income security in old age, and unemployment protection are all also of relevance to efforts against child labour. The other main types of social security benefits identified in ILO Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102), while also potentially important, have not yet been evaluated from a child labour perspective.

### Social protection: mitigating the impact of poverty and shocks

#### Policy goals

#### Policy provisions

<b>Mitigate economic vulnerabilities associated with child labour</b>	Introducing or expanding unconditional cash transfer schemes, to help ease budget constraints and supplement incomes of poor households vulnerable to child labour.
	Introducing or expanding conditional cash transfer schemes, to help alleviate current income poverty (through cash benefits) as well as reduce children's time available for work (through conditionality based on children's school attendance).
	Introducing or expanding in-kind transfer schemes, including food for education schemes, in order to help reduce household food insecurity and provide an additional incentive for school attendance; school meals can also improve student concentration and performance, meaning greater benefit from classroom time.
<b>Mitigate the impact of other contingencies leading to a reliance on child labour</b>	Extending health protection to address the social distress and economic loss associated with ill health.
	Extending social protection for persons with disabilities to address household social and economic vulnerabilities associated with disabilities, including through contributory and non-contributory disability benefits, wage replacement for disabling injuries and illnesses, and provision of social care services for people with disabilities or who suffer long-term illness.
	Ensuring income security in old age through pension schemes or similar measures, to help offset the social vulnerabilities associated with ageing and help provide income security in multi-generational households.
	Extending unemployment protection, in order to secure the income needs of households buffeted by loss of work.

#### Complementary social finance schemes<sup>(a)</sup>

<b>Expand household access to credit</b>	Introducing micro-credit and micro-insurance schemes for vulnerable families to facilitate their access to the financial market and enable them to hedge against part of the risks they face.
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**Notes:** (a) Complementary social finance schemes are not technically part of social protection systems.





## DECENT WORK FOR ADULTS AND YOUTH OF LEGAL WORKING AGE

### RATIONALE

Decent, secure, and properly remunerated work for adults and youth of working age remains the cornerstone of combating family and community poverty, and **child labour is most prevalent where adults and youth of working age cannot access their rights to decent work** and where social protection fails to fill the poverty gap created by that absence of decent work. Decent work also implies the empowerment of working people, strong labour relations, and effective freedom of association, which in turn are inimical to child labour. Greater opportunities for decent work in the labour market often mean greater potential returns to education, and in such circumstances evidence suggests that families are more likely to postpone their children's involvement in work and invest instead in their education.

### APPROACHES

#### IMPROVING RURAL LIVELIHOODS AND INCOMES

**Most children in child labour are unpaid family workers in family farms and enterprises.** These families often depend on the additional income that their children's work generates, or the family enterprise depends on their work to be able to function. These basic facts underscore the importance of improving rural livelihoods and incomes, and the operation of small family farms and enterprises, reducing family dependence on child labour. Family enterprises need fair prices for what they produce, and those that are "functionally dependent" on the work of their children need to become viable enough to replace the unpaid work of their children.

#### ADDRESSING INFORMALITY

**The informal economy exposes working people to the risk of denial of their rights at work**, including of the right to organize and bargain collectively. It also exposes them to a lack of occupational safety and health assurances and to inadequate social protection. **All of these undermine access to decent work and increase the likelihood that working households must rely on children's labour as a negative coping strategy.** Labour market policies promoting the transition from the informal to the formal economy — which often overlap with efforts to improve rural livelihoods — are therefore also critical in the fight against child labour.

#### PROMOTING OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH OF LEGAL WORKING AGE TO ACCESS DECENT WORK

**Success early in working life is linked to better long-term career prospects and can move young people into situations of self-sufficiency, help them exit from poverty, and help them and their families break the cycle of child labour.** Youth employment efforts should be framed within a broader emphasis on ensuring young people's rights at work in order that they receive equal treatment, are free to organize, and are protected from abuse and exposure to hazards. They should not overlook the group of children of legal working age in hazardous work.

## Policies to promote decent work for adults and youth of legal working age

### Policy goals

### Policy provisions

<b>Promote decent rural livelihoods</b>	Promoting small producers associations and democratic cooperatives as means of pooling adult labour resources, as well as inputs, tools and other facilities.
	Strengthening the collective, representative voice of those who earn their livelihoods in the rural economy.
	Improving access to inputs and credit of family farms and enterprises, including through the development of community savings and credit unions.
	Introducing sustainable and appropriate technologies and alternative practices in family farms and enterprises, in order to improve productivity and viability.
<b>Promote transition from informal to formal economy</b>	Investing in food-processing and infrastructure, to add quality and value to locally grown produce.
	Promoting the development of sustainable micro, small and medium enterprises.
	Creating an enabling policy and regulatory environment that reduces barriers to formalization while protecting workers' rights.
	Enabling the self-organizing of workers from the informal economy and encouraging informal enterprises to join together in producers' associations, including cooperatives.
	Investing in skills development and training that is responsive both to the diverse requirements of informal economy workers and to the evolving demands of the labour market.
<b>Promote decent work for youth of legal working age</b>	Reforming skill accreditation systems to permit accreditation for skills acquired through work in the informal economy.
	Extending minimum wage protections to workers in the informal economy.
<b>Promote decent work for youth of legal working age</b>	Enacting active labour market interventions targeting young people, including training and skills development; public works; job search support and other labour market services; employment subsidies; and self-employment and entrepreneurship opportunities.
	Ensuring young people's rights at work, in order that they are free to organize, receive equal treatment and are protected from abuse and exposure to hazards.
<b>Promote decent work for youth of legal working age</b>	Developing systems for providing youth removed from hazardous work and worst forms of child labour with support services and second chances for education, training and securing decent work.
	Providing training and awareness-raising about occupational safety and health for employers and their young workers, master craftspersons and their apprentices, and trade union OSH representatives, including on adequate and consistent supervision.
	Mobilizing trade unions, business associations, chambers of commerce, community organizations, and social protection agencies in monitoring minimum age guidelines, the safety of the workplace and its adolescent workers, in conjunction with the labour inspectorate.



## LEGAL COMMITMENT TO CHILD LABOUR ELIMINATION

### RATIONALE

Legislation alone cannot eradicate child labour. However, it is equally impossible to eliminate child labour without effective legislation. A solid legislative framework offers many contributions to efforts against child labour: it translates the aims and principles of international standards into national law; it articulates and formalizes the State's duty to protect its children; it sets forth specific rights and

responsibilities; it provides sanctions for violators; and it provides legal redress for victims. Almost all children in the world are now covered by ILO Convention No. 182 and coverage of Convention No. 138 stands at 80 per cent. **But ratification by member States of the ILO's two child labour Conventions is not by itself sufficient to eliminate child labour. Much more has to be done to turn the commitment of eliminating child labour into reality.**

## APPROACHES

### TRANSPOSING RATIFIED INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS INTO NATIONAL LAWS AND PRACTICE

As one example of the challenges that remain, recent research has highlighted important incoherencies between laws governing the minimum age for admission to employment and those dealing with the age of completion of compulsory schooling. Currently, out of 170 ILO member States that have ratified ILO Convention No. 138, 44 set an age for the completion of compulsory education that is higher than the minimum age for admission to employment they specified upon ratification. Many countries are also lagging behind the commitment they made upon ratification of ILO Conventions Nos 138 and 182 to publish or review national lists of hazardous work prohibited to children under 18 years of age.

### MONITORING AND ENFORCEMENT OF CHILD LABOUR LAWS

**An adequate legal framework must be accompanied by sufficient institutional capacity to monitor and enforce it.** Labour inspection systems remain generally weak, owing to both capacity and resource constraints. Moreover, even where inspection systems are in place, they rarely reach workplaces in the informal economy where most child labour is found.

### SAFEGUARDING OTHER FUNDAMENTAL LABOUR RIGHTS

**It is critical that the legal architecture extends to other fundamental labour rights** such as freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining, and freedom from discrimination and from forced labour, as we know that the persistence of child labour and violations of other fundamental labour rights are closely related. More progress is also needed in integrating the application of child labour laws with those protecting other fundamental labour rights, in keeping with the 1998 ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, and the 2008 Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, and as reflected in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

#### Legal commitment to child labour elimination

##### Policy goal

##### Policy provisions

Policy goal	Policy provisions
<b>Strengthening legislative and policy frameworks as a foundation and guide for action against child labour</b>	Promote ratification of international legal standards concerning child labour.
	Establishment of national legal architecture based on the international legal standards concerning child labour.
	Determination of national hazardous work lists.
	Ensure coherence between laws governing the minimum age for work and those dealing with the age range for compulsory schooling.
	Inclusion of child labour concerns in relevant development, education, social protection and other social policies and programmes.
	Strengthening systems for monitoring and enforcement of child labour laws.
	Extending the national legal architecture to other fundamental labour rights, including freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, and freedom from discrimination and forced labour.





## ADDRESSING CHILD LABOUR IN SUPPLY CHAINS

### RATIONALE

While global supply chains can be an “engine of development,” failures of governance at all levels within global supply chains have contributed to decent work deficits, and the presence of child labour in some global supply chains is acute in their lower segments. Research on child labour has been conducted in a number of supply chains such as cocoa and tobacco, at times following media reports exposing child labour in supply chains. However, to date it has not been the subject of systematic, quantitative research covering all major affected supply chains. **While reliable numbers are therefore difficult to come by, it is safe to say that the issue of child labour in supply chains extends to most sectors and most regions of the world, although it is also true that child labour in the production of goods for family and local consumption represents the majority of child labour in the world.**

### APPROACHES

#### AREA-BASED APPROACHES

Rather than focus specifically on supply chains, area-based approaches address factors driving all types of child labour in a given geographic area.

**This broader approach helps prevent children simply moving from one supply chain to another, or into a more hidden form of child labour, or, if they are below the minimum age for work, from moving from hazardous to non-hazardous child labour.** There is a growing number of industries and enterprises adopting area-based approaches; such approaches have also been deployed outside the enterprise realm under names such as “child-friendly villages” in Africa and South Asia.

#### ESTABLISHMENT AND ENFORCEMENT OF AN ADEQUATE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

An adequate regulatory framework is critical to the creation of an enabling environment for addressing child labour in supply chains and, more broadly, to ensuring sustainable supply chains. Such a framework should set out clearly the expectation that all business enterprises domiciled in the national territory or jurisdiction respect human rights

throughout their operations. **Labour inspection services everywhere still need greater resources —** and in some cases, capacity — to fulfil their essential role of transposing the authority and obligations of the State into practical measures to ensure the prevention of child labour and the enforcement of a regulatory framework.

#### PROMOTING INDUSTRY COMPLIANCE

Translating the relevant international frameworks and national regulations into concrete progress against child labour in global supply chains will require continued support to the efforts of enterprises and others to ensure compliance. A number of interventions have emerged in recent years in this context. Business-led, voluntary initiatives focused on child labour in supply chains help ensure a level playing field in which compliance is not a source of competitive advantage. Cross-sectoral collaboration initiatives between industries take such collaboration a step further to seek to ensure that when child labour is tackled in one supply chain it is not simply displaced into another. Global framework agreements between multinational enterprises and sectoral global trade union federations have the critical added value of being the outcome of social dialogue and reflect the integrated deployment of all fundamental rights at work to combat both the symptoms and the root causes of child labour.

Public-private partnerships help promote more effective interaction between private compliance initiatives and public enforcement activities; too often these efforts are disconnected, resulting in fragmentation and inefficiency. The issue of child labour in global supply chains concerns a variety of parties — government, industry, international buyers, employers’ and workers’ organizations, and civil society — and bringing these parties together through multi-stakeholder engagement initiatives to identify and coordinate actions can help ensure their ultimate effectiveness and sustainability.

## Policy options for addressing child labour in supply chains

### Policy goals

### Policy provisions

<b>Addressing root causes</b>	Area-based approaches addressing factors driving all types of child labour in a given geographic area.
<b>Strengthening regulation and enforcement</b>	Establishment of an adequate regulatory system setting out clearly the expectation that all business enterprises domiciled in the national territory or jurisdiction respect human rights throughout their operations. Building capacity of labour inspection services.
<b>Promoting compliance</b>	International framework agreements between multinational enterprises and sectoral global trade union federations, which include all fundamental rights at work. Business-led, voluntary initiatives focused on child labour in supply chains to ensure a level playing field. Cross-industry collaboration initiatives to ensure that when child labour is tackled in one supply chain it is not simply displaced into another.
<b>Public-private partnerships and multi-stakeholder initiatives</b>	Public-private partnerships to promote more effective interaction between private compliance initiatives and public enforcement activities. Multi-stakeholder engagement to bring all parties concerned – government, industry, international buyers, employers' and workers' organizations and civil society – together to identify and coordinate actions.



## PROTECTING CHILDREN IN SITUATIONS OF FRAGILITY AND CRISIS

### RATIONALE

Armed conflicts and natural and climate-change related disasters during the 2012-2016 period have dislocated economies, communities, and livelihoods, creating the greatest flows of refugees — including of children — seen for decades. **Some 535 million children (almost one in four children in the world) live in countries affected by conflict or disaster, while children comprise more than half of the 65 million people presently displaced by war.** Whether children affected by conflict and disaster are trapped in their home communities or on the move in search of safety and refuge, they are more vulnerable to child labour.

### APPROACHES

#### MAINSTREAMING CHILD LABOUR CONCERNS INTO HUMANITARIAN ACTION

Child labour concerns must be prioritised and integrated into all phases of humanitarian action — in crisis preparedness and contingency plans, humanitarian responses, peace processes and demobilization efforts, and in post-crisis reconstruction and recovery efforts. Humanitarian responses addressing child labour should, to the greatest extent possible, engage public authorities and build upon existing national systems. Collaboration among development and humanitarian actors in addressing child labour needs to be made more effective and rapid in emergencies, so that short-term emergency measures are consistent with, and help support, longer-term efforts to combat child labour.

## ADDRESSING WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOUR SUFFERED IN SITUATIONS OF ARMED CONFLICT

Some of the most egregious violations of children's rights occur in contexts of armed conflict. Children can be recruited as combatants, used as human shields, sexual slaves, and suicide bombers, or be forced to commit acts of extreme violence. In addition, children in conflict zones may be forced to perform extremely hazardous child labour in the production of conflict minerals. More attention is urgently needed to these worst forms of child labour suffered in situations of armed conflict.

## ACCESS TO LIVELIHOODS

The sudden loss of livelihoods and heavy economic burdens faced by families in crisis situations can make them extremely vulnerable and lead to child labour as a negative coping mechanism. This is particularly the case with the growing global population of forcibly displaced persons, which now exceeds 65 million. The sooner affected populations are provided with access to livelihoods the more effectively child labour can be prevented and addressed.

Policies to protect children from child labour in situations of state fragility and crisis	
Policy goals	Policy provisions
<b>Mainstreaming child labour concerns in all phases of humanitarian action</b>	Prioritising child labour in crisis preparedness and contingency plans, humanitarian responses, and in post-crisis reconstruction and recovery efforts.
	Development and updating of rapid assessment tools to quickly determine the risks of child labour and other fundamental labour rights violations in crisis situations.
	Development and testing of intervention models to address child labour in crisis or in fragile situations.
<b>Children in armed conflict</b>	Ensuring that child soldiers and other children caught up in armed conflict are prioritized in peace plans and processes and in demobilization efforts.
	Continuing special advocacy efforts directed towards armed groups aimed at the release of these children.
	Providing sustainable work opportunities for young people of legal working age formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups.
<b>Improved access to livelihoods to reduce reliance on child labour as a negative coping strategy</b>	Providing psychosocial counselling and other interventions to address anti-social behaviour and post-traumatic stress among children and young people formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups.
	Development of public employment measures and income-generation opportunities for affected population groups and individuals.
	Addressing the legal and regulatory impediments facing refugees in accessing the labour market and gaining decent work in host communities.
<b>Build humanitarian responses on national systems</b>	Building the resilience and strengthen the capacity of host communities by investing in local economies and promoting full, productive, freely chosen employment and decent work, and skills development of the local population.
	Engage public authorities and build to the extent possible upon existing national systems to avoid the creation of parallel systems.
	Seek agreement from national authorities to accommodate refugees or internally-displaced groups of children within national systems within the limits of national resources and capacity and with acknowledgement on the part of the international community of the importance of equitable sharing of burdens and responsibilities.
<b>Strengthened coordination and collective action</b>	Promote clear delineation of roles and mandates so that each humanitarian actor addresses elements of the response for which it is most competent.
	Promote improved coordination among development and humanitarian actors in order that short-term emergency measures are consistent with, and help support, longer term efforts to combat child labour.





# The road forward to 2025

## **An emerging consensus to address child labour through an integrated and rights-based approach**

The extensive body of knowledge and experience reviewed in this report underscores the importance of an active policy response to child labour and sheds important light on its contents. **Measures in four main policy areas — education, social protection, labour markets, legal standards and regulation — emerge from the review as especially important pillars of a policy response to child labour.**

The rationale for these four pillars is straightforward: international standards and national labour laws and regulations define and formalize the State's duty to protect children. Well-designed labour market policies focused on where most child labour persists — in the rural economy and the informal economy — can help curb the demand for child labour and promote decent work for youth of legal working age and adults. Social protection helps prevent households from having to rely on child labour as a negative coping strategy in the face of poverty and economic insecurity. Universal quality education promotes all children's rights and helps break intergenerational cycles of poverty and reliance on child labour.

This emerging policy consensus reflects a recognition that child labour cannot be eradicated in isolation, with a narrow sectoral or product focus, or through limited project interventions. Rather, accumulated evidence and experience underscores the importance of a wider focus on systemic change and the eradication of root causes, through the integration of child labour concerns into coherent, integrated economic and social development policies.

**An implicit recognition of the limits of enforcement also underlies this consensus.** With most of the 152 million children in child labour performing unpaid contributing work in their own families, enforcement must be directed appropriately and not victimize children or parents and families who are themselves

victims of poverty, inequality and social exclusion.

Policy responses to child labour are most effective when underpinned by social dialogue, which in turn requires the realization of freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining. The exercise of those rights and well-functioning social dialogue means not only that people and communities affected by child labour can use their collective, representative voice to exercise influence over public policy and ensure its relevance to their needs, but also, in the words of the 1998 ILO Declaration, that people can “claim a fair share of the wealth they have helped to create”.

Partnerships and international development cooperation remain critical to achieving the eradication of child labour. In this context, Alliance 8.7 — a global partnership to end forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking, and all forms of child labour in accordance with SDG Target 8.7 — was launched in 2016 as a vehicle to promote active collaboration and leverage expertise across a wide range of like-minded stakeholders.

In many countries, the cost of required action far exceeds available government resources, and governments will not be able to achieve child labour targets if they are left to act unassisted. International development cooperation is therefore imperative within the spirit of Article 8 of ILO Convention No. 182. UN agencies, other multilateral and bilateral organizations, international non-governmental organizations, and a variety of other groups all have an important role to play.

The human and economic returns on the investment in ending child labour are incalculable. Children who are free from the burden of child labour are able to fully realize their rights to education, leisure, and healthy development, in turn providing the essential foundation for broader social and economic development, poverty eradication, human rights — and human wellbeing.



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