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WORLD DAY  
AGAINST  
CHILD LABOUR



END CHILD LABOUR IN

**SUPPLY  
CHAINS**



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International  
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## BUSINESS COLLABORATION TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOUR

### BACKGROUND

**T**o eliminate child labour in supply chains, collaboration between companies is vital. Companies need to learn from each other's experiences, adopt good practice and work together to ensure that complex systems of suppliers and sub-suppliers effectively prevent and eliminate child labour. When companies act collaboratively and in concert with governments and social partners, progress can be accelerated and more durable changes can be achieved.

Companies need to adopt policies that effectively address the issue of child labour in their supply

chains, in accordance with ILO Convention No. 138 on Minimum Age and Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour. This creates a level playing field between companies, and sends a strong message about the company's values to their suppliers, governments, workers' and employers' organizations and other key stakeholders.

In the mid-2000s, the El Salvadoran sugar cane industry and the Government of El Salvador joined forces in a ground-breaking partnership to tackle child labour in sugar cane harvesting.



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Regular visits to sugar cane fields by Ministry of Labour inspectors and private monitors were conducted to ensure there were no children working. Accompanied by the establishment of non-formal education “bridging” schools and other education services supported by the ILO and the Salvadoran Ministry of Education, the incidence of child labour in sugar cane harvesting dropped sharply—by some 70% over five years. However, because of the single-industry focus of the actions, child labour in coffee harvesting, which was grown nearby but not monitored as intensively as sugar cane, rose -albeit not nearly to the same degree as the reduction in sugar cane.

This example highlights the importance of cooperation among enterprises regardless of the sector in which they operate, and the need for targeted support for affected children. Children in poor households are typically vulnerable to several forms of child labour; if the underlying causes are not addressed, after being removed from a given supply chain they may begin to work in another supply chain, or become involved in child labour in domestic work (where girls are particularly at risk) or other form of child labour.

## ACTION AND RESULTS

Overcoming longstanding reticence to discuss child labour in supply chains is critical if progress is to be made, and exchange among companies from diverse industries is particularly important. For this reason, the ILO and UN Global Compact host the Child Labour Platform, the first cross sectoral, business-led initiative to tackle child labour in supply chains.

Co-chaired by the International Organization of Employers (IOE) and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), the Platform identifies and develops state of the art approaches to the elimination of child labour in supply chains, drawing on ILO’s vast experience and that of the member companies themselves. This includes the development of practical tools and action-oriented research on key topics such as effective age verification, databases of national child labour legislation and policy, and child labour remediation.

The Platform also harnesses the collective knowledge and experience of its members, who hail from industries such as telecommunications,



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cocoa, garments, mining, tobacco, fast moving consumer goods and cotton, and the ILO, to make a difference on the ground. With support from the Governments of the Netherlands and France and member companies themselves, the CLP works with members to tackle child labour in countries and communities from which two or more members source goods or services. The first such initiative is in Myanmar, where member companies in close collaboration with the ILO Yangon Office are developing a joint strategy to address child labour in tea shops through support for education and child labour monitoring (CLM). Such cross-sectoral collaboration represents a new and potentially powerful model for employers to contribute to child labour elimination.

Accelerating and disseminating learning about what works, and what doesn't, in preventing and mitigating child labour in supply chains is a key objective. Members discuss "hard questions" related to eliminating child labour in supply chains: what can be done when governments fail in their duty to protect children? How can companies know when child labour is present in their supply chains, particularly when it occurs several "tiers" down, where there is no contractual relationship? When child labour is detected, what

is the best response? How can companies engage effectively with governments for prevention and remediation of child labour?

Frank discussion of such issues is critical to accelerate progress toward child-labour free supply chains. Companies with long experience addressing child labour in the supply chains share insights and successful approaches with others, who can then adapt and adopt good practices, saving time and resources.

To facilitate this, the Platform has created a "peer review" mechanism in which member companies make in-depth presentations on their policies and programmes designed to tackle child labour in their supply chain, and in return receive feedback and suggestions from the other companies. For selected sessions, governments, affiliates of the ITUC and IOE and other key stakeholders are invited to share their perspectives. Given the interconnected nature of all four categories of fundamental principles and rights at work, the Platform also seeks to address the connections between child labour, forced labour, non-discrimination and freedom of association and collective bargaining.







**TACKLING  
CHILD LABOUR  
IN SUPPLY CHAINS**

**Child Labour  
Platform (CLP)**

**A BUSINESS-LED FORUM  
FOR TACKLING CHILD LABOUR  
IN SUPPLY CHAINS**

**[www.ilo.org/clp](http://www.ilo.org/clp)**

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