



International
Labour
Organization



Checkpoints for Companies

Eliminating and Preventing
Child Labour

The designations employed in ILO publications, which are in conformity with United Nations practice, and the presentation of material therein do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the International Labour Office concerning the legal status of any country, area or territory or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers.

The responsibility for opinions expressed in signed articles, studies and other contributions rests solely with their authors, and publication does not constitute an endorsement by the International Labour Office of the opinions expressed in them.

Reference to names of firms and commercial products and processes does not imply their endorsement by the International Labour Office, and any failure to mention a particular firm, commercial product or process is not a sign of disapproval.

About

This is the complete text of the mobile app *Checkpoints for Companies – Eliminating and Preventing Child Labour*, available for download from the Apple Store and from the Google Play Store.

This Checkpoints app allows you to create interactive checklists to help you eliminate child labour in your company. There are 18 checkpoints in total, divided into six different categories. Each checkpoint provides best practice recommendations for taking action. This document aims to ensure that the content of the app is available to all users, including those who do not own smartphones or tablets.

Checkpoints for Companies – Eliminating and Preventing Child Labour was created by the [International Labour Organization](#), a specialized agency of the United Nations. Its main aims are to promote rights at work, encourage decent employment opportunities, enhance social protection and strengthen dialogue on work-related issues.

Contents

Concepts and definitions	1
Analysis of the situation	4
1. Review national laws regarding child labour	4
2. Refer to your buyers' requirements	5
3. Check the age of your employees	6
4. Identify hazardous work	7
5. Carry out workplace risk assessment	9
Immediate actions	11
6. Stop hiring children below the minimum age	11
7. Remove children from hazardous work	12
8. Reduce the hours for children under the minimum age	14
Strategic actions	15
9. Apply a safety and health management system	15
10. Use collective bargaining agreements	17
11. Use the link between labour inspection and workplace Occupational Safety and Health Committee	18
12. Compose a code of labour practice	19
Support of child household and welfare	20
13. Provide support to children found in child labour	20
14. Support education	22
Elimination of the need for child labour	24
15. Adapt your business to a child labour-free reality	24
16. Let your suppliers know your requirements	25
17. Ensure your new suppliers do not use child labour	26
Monitoring	28
18. Establish one or more monitoring systems	28

Concepts and definitions

Child

Anyone under the age of 18 is considered a child, according to the United Nations.

Child labour

Child labour is work that children should not be doing because they are too young, or if they are old enough to work, because it is dangerous or unsuitable for them. Whether or not work performed by children is defined as child labour depends on the child's age, the hours and type of work and the conditions in which the work is performed.

Decent work

Decent work sums up the aspirations of people in their working lives. It involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.

ILO Convention

An ILO Convention is an international agreement on an important labour-related issue that has been reached by governments, workers and employers meeting at the annual International Labour Conference of the ILO. After the adoption of a Convention at the Conference, each country is then asked to ratify the Convention through its legislature (parliament, congress, etc.). Ratification may involve the inclusion of provisions specific to the circumstances of the country. Once ratified, the country is bound to carry out the provisions of the Convention (as ratified). The ILO reviews the implementation of Conventions and holds countries accountable.

Hazard/risk

A hazard is anything that has the potential to cause harm. Risk is the chance or probability that a hazard will actually result in injury or illness along with an indication of how serious the harm could be.

Therefore, risk = severity of harm x probability of harm.

Even if workers are exposed to the same hazard, risks may be greater for young workers than for adult workers because of high severity (e.g. immaturity of immune system) and high probability (e.g. lack of experience).

Hazardous work

Hazardous child labour is work in dangerous or unhealthy conditions that could result in a child being killed or injured/harmed (often permanently) and/or made ill (often permanently) as a consequence of poor safety and health standards and working arrangements.

Light work

Light work may be permitted for those between the ages of 13 and 15 (or 12 and 14 in developing countries). The Convention No.138 on Minimum Age for Work defines light work for these children as that which is:

- a) unlikely to be harmful to their health or development
- b) not such as to prejudice their attendance at school, their participation in vocational orientation or training programmes approved by the competent authority, or their capacity to benefit from the instruction received.

Microfinance

Microfinance refers to financial services offered to low-income individuals who, otherwise, would be excluded from market transactions. Financial services that the working poor need and demand include different types of credit, savings, guarantees, insurance, transfer payments, remittances and other transactions; these services must have a sustainable basis.

Minimum age for work

There isn't just one minimum age for work; in general, it should not be less than 15 years, with light work permitted from the age of 13. In countries with insufficiently developed economies and education systems, those ages may be provisionally set at 14 and 12 respectively. But there is no age distinction when it comes to the Worst Forms of Child Labour. No child under 18 should be engaged in a Worst Form of Child Labour: hazardous work; forced labour; commercial sexual exploitation; or criminal activities. It is important that the minimum school-leaving age and the minimum age for full-time work are the same.

Social auditing

A social audit is undertaken by a company to evaluate the working conditions existing in a facility or supply chain. Unlike monitoring, it lasts anywhere from a few hours to a few days. The performance of a social audit tends to involve three related processes: the document review, the site inspection and interviews with workers, management and third-party stakeholders. An auditor or team of auditors generally conducts the document review, site inspection and interviews. Social auditing does not involve continuous monitoring, although follow-up procedures are not uncommon.

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) helps learners to acquire skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to enter the world of work.

A quality TVET programme plays an essential role in promoting a country's economic growth and contributing to poverty reduction as well as ensuring the social and economic inclusion of marginalized communities.

Worst Forms of Child Labour

The term “Worst Forms of Child Labour” comprises:

- All forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including recruitment of children for use in armed conflict.
- The use, procurement or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances.
- The use, procurement or offering of a child for unlawful activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties.
- Work which, by its nature or the environment where it takes place, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children (referred to as hazardous child labour).

Youth employment

Not all work done by children under the age of 18 is classified as child labour. Participation in decent work which does not affect their health, personal development or education can be a very positive experience for children or adolescents who have reached the required age. Indeed, millions of young workers around the world between the ages of 14 and 18 are desperate to find decent youth employment.

Analysis of the situation

1. Review national laws regarding child labour

Why

It is essential to know how your national law defines child labour. An employer needs to understand the content of the national Labour Code and other laws that relate to child labour. It is against the law for a company to break the rules concerning minimum age and hazardous work.

The international definitions of child labour define the minimum age for different types of work, the worst forms of labour for those under the age of 18 and the criteria for light work. These definitions are set out in two International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions on child labour: Convention No. 138 on Minimum Age for Work and Convention No.182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour.

How

1. Obtain information from the website of the Ministry of Labour on the national law regulating employment of children, more specifically:
 - provisions regarding the minimum age for employment that will enable you to meet legal requirements;
 - a hazardous child labour list that will enable you to revise the tasks for children above the minimum working age and reassign them to work in safe, non-hazardous conditions while securing their access to appropriate education or training.
2. Obtain information on national policies and programmes about child labour. You can get this information from the Ministry of Labour and also from local government authorities.
3. Consult your national employers' organization or your Trade Association office for information about specific buyers' requirements regarding child labour.
4. Obtain information from ILO experts on child labour at your country's ILO office or on the ILO's website.

More

Ensure that all workers in your business know how child labour is defined: in international standards, in the law of the country and in the sector in which your business operates. For example, you can look at the Constitution, child labour laws, regulation and ordinances, forced and bonded labour laws, occupational safety and health laws and regulations, minimum age legislation, etc.

2. Refer to your buyers' requirements

Why

Buyers may expect you to have strict policies about child labour (perhaps stricter than national law and international standards). International buyers and brands want to meet accepted international labour standards and also avoid bad publicity and potential damage to brand image and share value. Foreign companies, or local plants and plantations owned by multinational companies, may use other suppliers if you fail to meet their requirements.

How

- Ask buyers or an industry representative body to state their requirements.
- Look for international industry codes or initiatives that relate to child labour.
- Comply with industry codes, local law or international standards – whichever provides the higher protection for children.
- In order that employment for children above the minimum age will be of benefit to them, promote transition to youth employment, ensuring adolescents are employed in decent conditions (e.g. decent pay, job contract, working hours, etc.).

More

Brand name companies no longer produce – they buy. Many common brand name companies in footwear, clothing and other sectors have stopped manufacturing their own products. For example, in the mid-1990s, a clothing and sporting goods company changed from being primarily a producer of goods, to a marketing company buying from local firms located mainly in Asia. It currently sources from hundreds of independent businesses. International buyers look for producers in developing countries that do not use child labour and that have worked hard to ensure that child labour is not used in turn by their own suppliers.

3. Check the age of your employees

Why

The International Labour Organization's (ILO) Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), obliges ratifying States to set a minimum age for employees, in line with the minimum school-leaving age. This must not be less than 15 years of age (or 14 in developing countries).

Almost all countries have set a minimum working age of 14, 15 or 16 years of age, in accordance with this international standard.

Without proof of age, you cannot decide if a certain type of work is suitable for an individual. Beware: sometimes it is not possible to obtain a birth certificate to confirm age (and falsified documents may be easy to get on the black market).

For example, in Cambodia, two types of documents (family book and birth certificate) have no photos attached; and voting cards, which have photos, are easily falsified. The labour code of the country requires companies to ask for a medical check-up before hiring anyone. Even so, sometimes companies hire children who are underage.

How

Reliable techniques to check age include the following:

- medical examination prior to employment;
- multiple written documents and affidavits;
- culturally sensitive interviews with employees and applicants who appear to be too young;
- end of compulsory schooling certificate for those above minimum age;
- school enrolment certificate for those in light work.

More

In some cases, families may have been unable to register a birth (distance from the village to the district capital, transport and document fees). This is a serious issue, both for employees who need proof of age, and for children who are too young to work and should remain in school. In these circumstances, you could contact the relevant authority to help your young employees gain their birth certificates.

Often national law requires employers to keep records that document the age of workers and/or to keep a register of young workers under the age of 18. Such documentation is required under the relevant international standards. These practices can provide evidence to show that the employer is complying with laws against child labour.

4. Identify hazardous work

Why

Identifying hazardous work in your company is an important step in preventing child labour. If young people (of a legal working age) work in safe, non-hazardous conditions, then this is called youth employment.

Each country creates a list of hazardous activities by consulting with workers' and employers' organizations (social partners). This list describes types of work that must not be carried out by children, focusing on work that is likely to harm their health, safety or morals. When this list has been finalized, it is usually attached to the country's labour law.

There are reported cases of children doing hazardous work with grave consequences. For example, in the United States, a 15-year old farm worker was fatally electrocuted when a 30-foot section of aluminium irrigation pipe he was moving came into contact with an overhead power line.

How

1. Obtain the list of hazardous work. If you are unclear how the law applies to your company, you can consult national employers' organizations and labour inspectors.
2. If a list of hazardous activities is not available, you can consult the International Labour Organization (ILO) website, medical personnel or safety and health experts. Guidance can be found in ILO's Recommendation 190 supplementing the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).
3. Consult with your workforce. Your employees and their elected representatives are best placed to assist you in understanding what hazardous work is in your workplace.
4. Consider pursuing a workplace safety and health risk assessment to determine hazards at the workplace.

More

Guidance for governments (and social partners) on work that may be hazardous for children, and could therefore be included on a national list, is given in the ILO's Worst Forms of Child Labour Recommendation, 1999 (No. 190), Paragraph 3:

In determining the types of work referred to under Article 3(d) of the Convention [No. 182], and in identifying where they exist, consideration should be given, inter alia, to:

(a) work which exposes children to physical, psychological or sexual abuse;

(b) work underground, under water, at dangerous heights or in confined spaces;

(c) work with dangerous machinery, equipment and tools, or which involves the manual handling or transport of heavy loads;

- (d) work in an unhealthy environment which may, for example, expose children to hazardous substances, agents or processes, or to temperatures, noise levels, or vibrations damaging to their health;*
- (e) work under particularly difficult conditions such as work for long hours or during the night or work where the child is unreasonably confined to the premises of the employer.*

Children up to the age of 18 who work in hazardous conditions or perform hazardous tasks are considered to be child labour.

5. Carry out workplace risk assessment

Why

Businesses have a key role to play in the elimination of child labour, in particular by assessing and controlling safety and health risks in the workplace. Risk assessment plays an important part in protecting workers and businesses, as well as complying with the laws of many countries.

Risk assessment plays an important part in protecting workers and businesses, as well as complying with the laws of many countries. These assessments can prevent accidents from happening. In Zambia, when the Zambia Federation of Employers (ZFE) conducted an assessment in Kaoma Farming areas, one confirmed case of food poisoning was reported by the Kaoma District Environmental Health Specialist. A farmer from Kamuni, being unaware of the hazards associated with farming, had stored pesticides close to an area where food was also kept. The food became contaminated and was later consumed by a family of 23 people. Of the 23 who were poisoned, 12 children aged below the age of 13 had to be hospitalized.

How

A risk assessment is simply a careful examination of what, in the workplace, could cause harm to people. Its purpose is to make sure that no one gets hurt or falls ill.

An employer can carry out a risk assessment, involving all workers and their representatives, using the following five steps:

1. Identify the hazards by walking around the workplace, asking workers for their opinions and checking manufacturers' instructions (e.g. exposure to wood dust in a furniture factory).
2. Identify who might be harmed and how (e.g. all workers in the factory risk lung diseases with machine operators at higher risk of exposure, and dust can cause cancer).
3. Evaluate risks by identifying them and deciding on safety and health risk control measures. List what is already in place and focus on practical, achievable measures (e.g. sweep up dust regularly; install washing and shower facilities; provide disposable dust masks; organize training).
4. Record the name of the person responsible for putting each control measure into action and the date when it should be completed. Prioritize actions (e.g. "action by manager by March").
5. Record findings, monitor and review the risk assessment. Update it when necessary.

More

When carrying out step 3 of risk assessment analysis, be aware that safety and health risk control measures take the following order of importance:

1. Removal or substitution of hazards with non-hazardous processes (e.g. stop using agrochemicals for organic farming).

2. Safe use of tools, equipment, technology and engineering (e.g. use of an automatic chemical spray system to replace human operation).
3. Use of safe work methods, practices, organization, information and training (e.g. training on the safe practice of a chemical spray).
4. Hygiene and welfare (e.g. instalment of shower/washing facilities).
5. Personal protective equipment (e.g. use of special masks, gloves, boots and outside clothing).
6. Health/medical surveillance (e.g. specific medical exam for chemical exposure every six months).

Immediate actions

6. Stop hiring children below the minimum age

Why

It is unacceptable for businesses to employ children in conditions of child labour. Companies of all sizes need to ensure that they do not use child labour anywhere in their operations. Youth employment, i.e. children who are above the minimum age for work, but under the age of 18, must have decent working conditions. This will ensure you are not adding to the problem.

How

Immediately stop hiring children below the relevant minimum age. This does not mean you cannot recruit workers above the minimum age into decent youth employment. But there should be a permanent ban on underage recruitment. This should be understood by all employees responsible for hiring.

More

Some parts of the agricultural industry have dealt well with hazardous work issues in youth employment. Large industry associations (e.g. cocoa, tobacco, sugar, tea and coffee), as well as more localized industries (e.g. flower production and palm oil and rubber plantations) have tackled this issue successfully.

As rural agriculture is still the largest form of employment in the world, it is necessary, wherever possible, to keep employing children of legal age in this sector, but only in decent, non-exploitative conditions.

El Salvador is an example of a country which has made significant progress in removing hazardous child labour from the sugar cane industry. Harvesting cane is dangerous: workers use sharp machetes to cut the cane, fires are set to clear the fields, and workers have to drag heavy loads for long hours in the hot sun, breathing air that is thick with smoke. In 2002, the Sugarcane Producers Association signed a memorandum of understanding with the Government of El Salvador to put an end to child labour in the sugar cane industry. Its strategy included raising awareness, improving education and training, and organizing community-based monitoring schemes. As a result, it was able to reduce the number of child labourers in sugar cane production from 12,380 children in 2004 to 1,559 children in 2009.

7. Remove children from hazardous work

Why

In general, hazardous work can have an immediate and long-term impact on the safety and health of workers, including children. This may include injury (e.g. wound from a blade), ill health (e.g. respiratory disease by breathing toxic chemicals or dust), disability (e.g. crushed limb from a machine) and even death (e.g. from pesticide poisoning).

Children and adolescents are especially vulnerable to hazards because they are still developing physically and mentally. They are less aware of risk than adults and therefore are more likely to be hurt. Exposing children to dangerous chemicals or physical stress can seriously harm their health.

Some of the physical or psychological impacts of hazardous work may only begin to appear at a later stage in their lives (e.g. musculoskeletal problems from carrying heavy loads as a child; cancer or reproductive problems resulting from exposure to pesticides; industrial chemicals or heavy metals).

How

1. Control the risks identified through a workplace risk assessment. Young employees (i.e. those of legal working age) could perform the same tasks in the same workplace if those risks are reduced or removed.
2. Remove children from tasks and environments that are considered dangerous for them but not for adults (e.g. heavy loads, night work, heavy machinery).
 - If possible, transfer them to different tasks and/or to a different location where the work is more suitable for their development.
 - Identify children at potential risk and prevent them from having to start hazardous work (i.e. improve the income of adult workers so children can stay at school rather than help their family to earn a living wage).
3. In all situations, make sure children below the minimum working age have access to appropriate education. When possible, children of legal working age should combine their work with formal Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET).

More

Children are also at greater safety and health risk in the workplace because they:

- Lack work experience – children are less able to make informed judgements.
- Want to perform well – children are willing to go the “extra mile” without realizing the risks.
- Learn unsafe health and safety behaviour from adults.
- Might not be carefully trained and supervised.

- Lack power in terms of organization and rights.

The safety and health of adult and young (child) workers are linked. You cannot adequately protect the safety and health of the children you employ unless you also protect adult workers in the same workplace. The dust particle or pesticide droplet that may harm the child worker can also harm the adult worker, and vice versa.

8. Reduce the hours for children under the minimum age

Why

In many countries, national legislation allows children between the ages of 13 and 15 (or 12 and 14 in developing countries) to do light work of up to about 14 hours per week. Children can often do some work while also attending school regularly.

It is difficult to describe what is meant by “light work” and it is rarely given a legal definition. It is important to make sure that children do not work more than the legal maximum number of hours per week.

How

- Reduce the hours of part-time child workers (who are below the minimum age but above the age for light work), making sure they do not work beyond the legal limit (in general, 14 hours per week). Sometimes reducing their hours may be enough to allow children to go to school and do homework. This is especially helpful when children work for their parents in a family business.
- If possible, do not reduce a child’s income as well as their hours. This will ensure they bring home the same amount of money to support their family. They will also be less likely to look elsewhere for extra work instead of going to school.

Strategic actions

9. Apply a safety and health management system

Why

An Occupational Safety and Health Management System (OSHMS) helps employers prevent accidents, injuries and diseases in the workplace in a continuous manner. It provides a logical, step-by-step method to help you decide what needs to be done, how best to do it, how to monitor and evaluate progress and identify areas for improvement.

How

OSHMS is based on the principle of the “Plan-Do-Check-Act” Cycle (PDCA Cycle).

Plan

1. Set an occupational safety and health policy (a written form stating the company’s objectives and commitment to protect the safety and health of all workers) with full participation of workers.
2. Allocate responsibilities, accountability and authority for safety and health activities in the workplace.
3. Plan the provision of skills and organization of the system including resource allocation.
4. Plan risk assessment.

Do

Put the occupational safety and health programme into action.

Check

Measure how your occupational safety and health policy affects your business and how workers respond to it.

Act

1. Review the system.
2. Get the system ready for the next cycle.

More

A workplace safety and health policy should be set out by the employer, in consultation with workers and their representatives. It should clearly state the arrangements that have been put in place to ensure the safety and health of all workers. In particular, it should:

- share out responsibilities for occupational safety and health amongst people in the company;
- make every worker, supervisor and manager aware of the policy;
- decide how occupational safety and health services are to be provided; and

- state which measures are to be taken to protect and promote safety and health at work.

Occupational safety and health management systems cannot function properly without workers' full participation at every stage, i.e. through joint safety and health committees, or through meetings with workers and their representatives.

Some functions of joint safety and health committees include:

- investigating injury and ill health reports and relevant trends;
- receiving reports of internal inspections/checks, as well as reports from labour inspectors;
- ensuring liaison with the local labour inspector or local labour officer;
- developing risk assessment procedures;
- developing policies to ensure that contractors and subcontractors working for the employer/company follow the correct health and safety procedures;
- developing policies to ensure that the employer/company prevents the use of child labour at any point along the company's supply chain.

10. Use collective bargaining agreements

Why

The collective bargaining agreements are important tools which can be used to address child labour. They cover all negotiations between an employer, a group of employers or one or more employers' organizations and one or more workers' organizations with the following objectives:

- determining working conditions and terms of employment, including wages and benefits;
- managing relations between employers and workers;
- managing relations between employers or their organizations and a workers' organization or workers' organizations.

Collective bargaining agreements are crucial mechanisms to enable workers to improve terms and conditions of their employment. Sometimes the government is involved as a third party; however, the independence of workers' and employers' organizations must be respected. Issues such as occupational safety and health, hours of work, wages and skills training are often negotiated in a collective bargaining agreement. In some cases, these agreements have also included clauses banning the use of child labour.

How

Through collective bargaining agreements the trade unions and employers may agree to:

- work jointly to eliminate hazardous child labour from the business;
- conduct a study to find out the cause of the problem;
- remove child labour and, together with community leaders, consider possible solutions;
- ensure that plans proposed by the government, trade unions and employers are brought into effect to solve the problem of child labour.

11. Use the link between labour inspection and the workplace Occupational Safety and Health Committee

Why

Labour inspectors play an important role in eliminating child labour. They work under the authorization of the state and have access to workplaces where child labour can be found. They can effectively enforce national labour legislation, providing advice and information to help employers meet legal requirements.

How

- Check if the creation of safety and health committees is a legal requirement in your country.
- Check if Labour Inspectorates in your country organize and conduct training for safety and health committee members (such as in Cyprus, Greece, Kenya and Lithuania).
- Apply the labour inspection recommendations on safety and health in the workplace.

More

The establishment of a workplace safety and health committee is a legal requirement in many countries. For example, in Kenya, every employer must establish a safety and health committee at a workplace with 20 or more employees. In Barbados, companies employing 25 or more people should consult with workers via a health and safety committee, while companies with fewer than 25 employees should hold discussions with one or more safety delegates appointed by workers. In the Philippines, a health and safety committee must be organized in every workplace.

Even if a business does not fall under the inspectors' mandate (e.g. it has very few employees), employers should still seek advice from the Labour Inspectorate on safety and health issues.

12. Compose a code of labour practice

Why

A code of labour practice helps a company show it is refusing to employ child labour or use suppliers that do so. Such codes promote a company's standards and improved productivity, enhance their reputation, attract investors and make it easier to recruit qualified and motivated staff.

Small businesses focused on the domestic market may decide not to have a written code of labour practice, but still have an unwritten policy against the hiring of children, as well as informal procedures for handling the situation if an employee is found to be underage.

Internally, all employees, particularly those involved in recruitment, can be made aware and reminded of the company's child labour policy, of screening procedures in recruitment and how to remove children from work or young workers from hazardous conditions. Having such codes reduces confusion and makes it easier to see when rules are broken.

How

- Create a code or statement detailing your policy on employing children. Bear in mind that reference to international conventions, such as the ILO Conventions, will increase your organization's credibility. You may find that a sectoral code already exists which you can follow.
- A code that is negotiated with workers' representatives will carry more weight.
- Promote the behaviour set by the code both inside and outside your company.

More

Actions count more than words. While codes can encourage good behaviour and show you have thought about the challenges, your actions are the most important thing. Therefore, businesses that have a code of labour practice are not necessarily better than those that do not.

Fix the problem before setting the code. Failure to follow a code will have a greater negative effect than not creating the code in the first place.

It is important to inform all staff about policy statements and train them on its implications.

Support of child household and welfare

13. Provide support to children found in child labour

Why

Taking immediate action, e.g. banning the hire of underage workers, may reduce the problem of child labour in your business, but not remove it. Getting children into school and compensating for the loss of their wages could cost your company in the short term. However, you may be able to offset these costs by negotiating with adult workers for improved productivity.

Companies share the responsibility of bringing child labour to an end. They rely on governments and donors to provide services (especially education) to help them do this. Companies should ask for support identifying services to help affected children and their families.

Many local and international organizations or coalitions have been formed to fight child labour. Employers' organizations or sectorial bodies may also have active programmes on this issue. All of these groups may be able to help your company design a responsible programme.

How

Support is most effective when it involves the following:

- decreasing the costs of schooling (e.g. lowering or removing school fees and related expenses, providing regular sums of money for children);
- providing midday meals at school;
- providing transitional schools (“catch-up classes”) for children who have fallen behind their peer group;
- offering vocational training programmes for older children;
- organizing credit and other income-generating activities for parents and family members of legal working age.

More

- Encourage microfinance and skills training. Microcredit and savings and credit cooperatives can provide one or both parents with the start-up capital for an income-generating activity and protect them against sudden major expenditure. The added income can reduce the need for

wages earned by a child. If the parents are the employees you might consider encouraging them to set up a savings and credit scheme. You can also provide or guarantee soft loans (i.e. at low rates of interest) to your employees to help them cover education expenses, especially at the start of the school year when school fees are due.

- Improve wages and hire family members. Consider how your company operates and how your decisions about recruitment and salaries can help families. Alternatively, if adult members of the family or youth above the minimum age for work are unemployed, they might be hired instead of the children, or recruited to fill vacancies available in your company.

14. Support education

Why

According to Convention No. 182, States (Parties) shall take measures to ensure access to free basic education, and wherever possible and appropriate, vocational training for children withdrawn from the worst forms of child labour.

Removing children from child labour does not mean that they will attend school. Schooling can be unaffordable, or of very poor quality, and so some parents think sending their children to work is the obvious alternative. Larger companies sometimes decide to pay for children's education as a way of keeping them out of the labour market. Both large and smaller businesses can make their contribution by raising awareness about the importance of education in their workplaces, communities, industries or sectors.

Some companies, like Ghana Rubber Estates Ltd., directly support education. This African company – which employs about 2,500 people on its plantations – has established a school for pupils from Grade 1 to junior secondary school and helps to keep it running.

How

- Provide support for children's education, in agreement with the public education authorities, by paying to improve (or set up) schools near a plantation or factory, or by helping families pay for their children's school fees.
- Pay an allowance for schooling to parents. This could be a small sum of money given to all adult workers who have school-age children. Or you could pay the entire costs of schooling for all children below the minimum age for work.
- Pay wages while children attend school. The quickest way to reduce the number of full-time child workers is to continue to pay them while they attend school.
- Develop and offer apprenticeship programmes in your business. In many countries, only a small minority of young people have access to formal Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). In developing countries, workplace apprenticeships offer many more young people an opportunity to learn a trade and enter the world of work.

More

You can help older children who do not have a basic education by combining training in the workplace with life and literacy/numeracy skills.

Support children who are moving from training into decent work by providing:

- Life skills and informal basic education.

- Vocational training, including: centre-based vocational training in urban areas; community-based mobile and outreach training, vocational training in rural areas; and formal and informal apprenticeships. Formal apprenticeships usually take place in large companies in the formal sector, and informal apprenticeships are mostly found in micro and small companies in the informal economy).
- Entrepreneurship training.

Elimination of the need for child labour

15. Adapt your business to a child labour-free reality

Why

The elimination of child labour, in most cases, will not affect the ability of your business to operate and earn a profit. Evidence suggests that the majority of businesses, particularly larger companies, will continue to operate and be profitable after eliminating child labour.

International buyers note that obeying child labour laws does not damage a supplier's bottom line. Suppliers that hire children are usually not well-managed. The two problems – child labour and poor management – tend to occur together. Therefore, savings can usually be found in other areas of the business, (e.g. through better organization). This can offset increases in the cost of wages when older workers replace children.

How

- Mechanize operations. Smaller businesses may rely on savings made from paying low wages to children. Investing in mechanization, especially in smaller tasks, will remove the need for child labour and can increase production efficiency.
- Improve production layout. Every company can analyse the work carried out by children and consider whether these tasks can be removed by improving/adapting the layout of the workplace or by adding to machinery.
- Look at the difference in wages paid to children below and above the legal working age. The costs of eliminating child labour are often misunderstood. There may be little difference between paying a 14-year-old and paying a 16-year-old. With regards to hazardous work, the wages of a 17-year-old and a 19-year-old may be very similar. Slightly older workers are also likely to be more productive.

16. Let your suppliers know your requirements

Why

Contracts help businesses make unbiased decisions. Breaking the terms of a contract regarding child labour can result in some buyers ending relationships with suppliers. However, most prefer to have a practical and positive discussion to improve the situation and ensure the children are protected.

If the contract is verbal, the terms need to be explained clearly and repeated at future meetings, e.g. when a mid-chain buyer purchases from a home-based producer, and where literacy is a problem.

Telling your suppliers that eliminating child labour is important for your business can help you respond to international and domestic buyers who are checking on the use of child labour in production.

In India, for example, carpet firm Obeetee Ltd. raised the income paid to weavers at the same time it demanded they did not employ children. To complement this action, the company launched an awareness campaign in the villages where the carpets were woven; and, among other measures, made loom owners provide written assurances declaring they would not employ children under 15 years old.

How

There are six main points you should inform your suppliers of:

1. National legal minimum age of employment or work and national list of hazardous work.
2. Your standards as the buyer, if they are higher than the national legal standards.
3. Reasons why suppliers must meet your standards that are higher than those required by national law.
4. The agreed period of change and the steps the supplier must take to remove child labour.
5. Your monitoring procedures.
6. The consequences of breaching the conditions, including the possible termination of the contract.

More

A company may adopt a code of labour practice that reflects its business principles. The following is the example from Samsung Electronics Code of Conduct.

Protection of Minor Workers. Samsung Electronics adopts a zero-tolerance policy for child labour and suspends transaction with suppliers in the case of violations. When hiring new workers, suppliers are required to comply with the procedure involving age verification, ID card check, and face-to-face ID checks. When hiring minors, suppliers are required to abide by local laws and regulations including prohibition of hazardous work.

17. Ensure your new suppliers do not use child labour

Why

Preventing child labour does not only mean that children will not be used in the parent company or even by its immediate suppliers. A company at the top of the supply chain must also make sure that all supply channels are free from child labour. Without a fully developed labour relations system, it is both difficult and costly to make sure that suppliers are meeting child labour standards. This is particularly true when a high number of suppliers are involved (e.g. in the garment and agriculture sectors) and when the supply chain is long.

How

- For existing suppliers: make them aware of your requirements.
- For new suppliers: check their processes and working conditions before entering into a business partnership.
- Write the conditions in the contract.
- Explore alternatives to piece-rate payment systems which often encourage child labour.
- Share your company policy on child labour with others, including those in your supply chain.
- Monitor your suppliers to ensure compliance.
- Work with suppliers to improve conditions/support to remove children.
- Provide credible warnings that you are serious about child labour.
- As a last resort, drop suppliers who fail to comply.
- Shift production to your company's home base.

More

A global retailer that manufactures goods in different countries has been criticized recently after reports found poor working conditions and alleged exploitation of children in its supply chain. It has since dropped several suppliers and adopted a code of labour practice in which the retailer commits to:

- inspect every one of its suppliers against its code of labour practice to make sure all workers are of legal working age;

- raise awareness and promote children's rights by working with suppliers, workers and communities to ensure that the benefits of children's education are understood;
- work with international organizations and local partners to understand and identify risks in the supply chain and also help build programmes to remove child labour.

Monitoring

18. Establish one or more monitoring systems

Why

It is important for companies to be sure they are not using child labour and to meet the expectations of consumers, governments, workers and society. To do this, they sometimes use social auditing.

Some companies use internal or first-party social audits to check if business units are following company policy on child labour. Another approach might be to monitor suppliers; this is known as buyer or second-party monitoring. Although used by both international buyers and domestic producers, second-party monitoring can be difficult when there are many sub-producers involved in production. A company can employ an external organization to monitor its worksites or, more commonly, those of its suppliers.

It may be difficult to trust this external audit assessment because it has been paid for by the company. Monitoring child labour means doing reliable and regular checks on workplaces. It is rarely possible to employ someone to do this full time for you. However, your managers and workers are present every day and can report any use of child labour. They can do this via trade unions if available, and through the use of collective bargaining agreements.

How

- Internal auditing: a system in which the company inspects itself. Also known as first-party auditing, it is the easiest to manage but may lack credibility.
- Buyer auditing: a process in which a buyer inspects its suppliers (also known as second-party auditing). It is used both by international buyers to check on their producers and by domestic producers who subcontract to other companies.
- External auditing: an external organization inspects your company's worksites or, more commonly, those of your suppliers. Their audits will be more trustworthy if this organization has a good reputation and has received full training on child labour.
- Monitoring led by trade unions and managers: a system where people in the workplace keep a daily watch on the situation, effectively preventing child labour from happening and identifying any cases that do occur.

More

All auditing and monitoring systems must overcome several key issues: the problem of finding out a child's age; the falsification of documents; and the possibility that children may be taken out of the workplace temporarily during an inspection visit.

Furthermore, suppliers can put on a false show for inspectors by hiding their child workers or moving them from export production to domestic production worksites. Carrying out surprise checks and looking at all the company's worksites can get around this problem.