



International
Labour
Office



Ending child labour
by 2025:

A review of policies
and programmes

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



**CONTRIBUTION
TO ACHIEVING
SDG TARGET 8.7**

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Executive summary

The international community has declared 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 that endeavour by offering an analysis of trends and an evidence-based discussion of policy solutions. As we show, available evidence suggests that investments 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 particular promise in the fight against child labour, offering an important recipe for efforts in the lead-up to 2025.

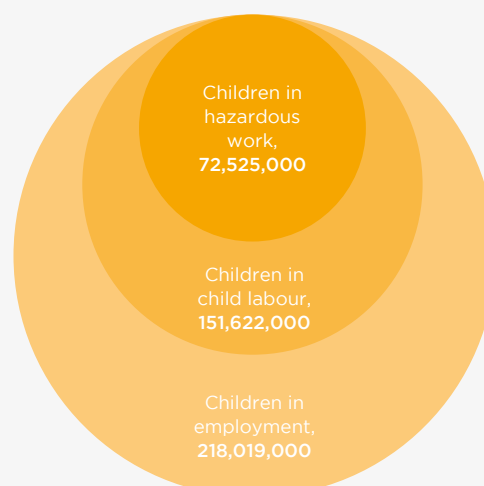
1. The global child labour situation

The challenge of ending child labour worldwide remains formidable.

The latest Global Estimates, compiled in 2016 and released this year,¹ indicate that 152 million children – 64 million girls and 88 million boys – are in child labour globally, accounting for almost one in ten of all children worldwide. Seventy-one per cent of children in child labour work in the agricultural sector and 69 per cent perform unpaid work within their own family unit. 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 employment, a broader measure comprising both child labour of children under the age of 18 and permitted employment of children above the legal working age, number 218 million. Children in forced labour, a worst form of child labour that is estimated using a separate methodology, number 4.3 million.²

Figure 1

Absolute number of children in employment, child labour and hazardous work, 5-17 years age range, 2016

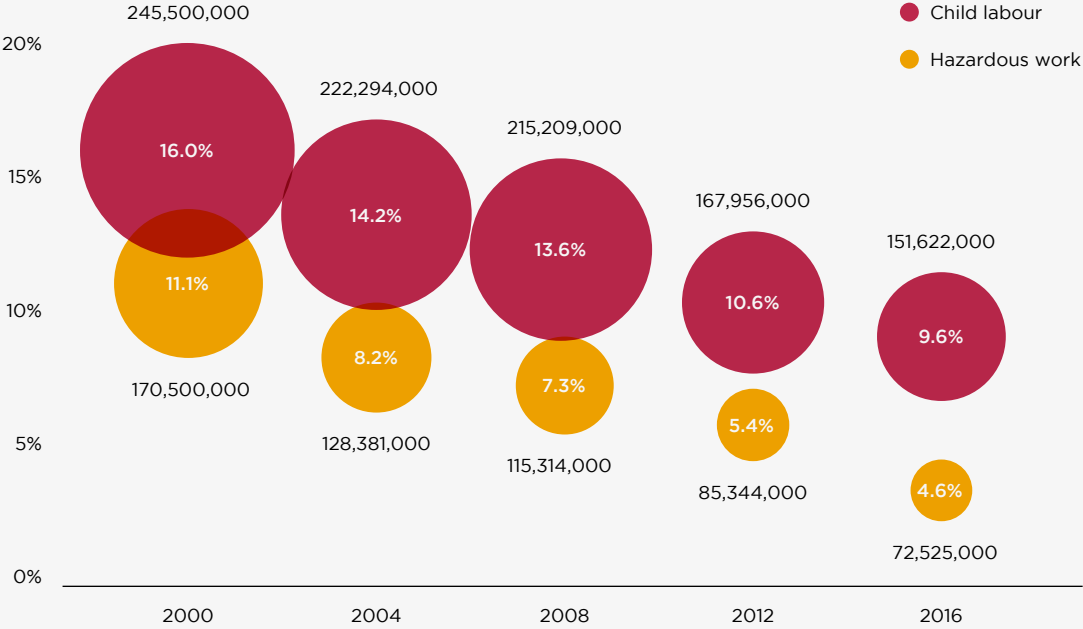


The 2016 results show that child labour has again declined worldwide, continuing a trend seen since the publication of the ILO’s first global estimates of child labour in 2000. But progress slowed significantly in the most recent four-year period. The reduction in the number of children in child labour amounted to 16 million for the 2012 to 2016 period, just one-third of the 47 million reduction recorded during 2008 to 2012. Expressed in relative terms, 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.

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

Figure 2

Percentage and absolute number of children in child labour and hazardous work, 5-17 years age range, 2000 to 2016



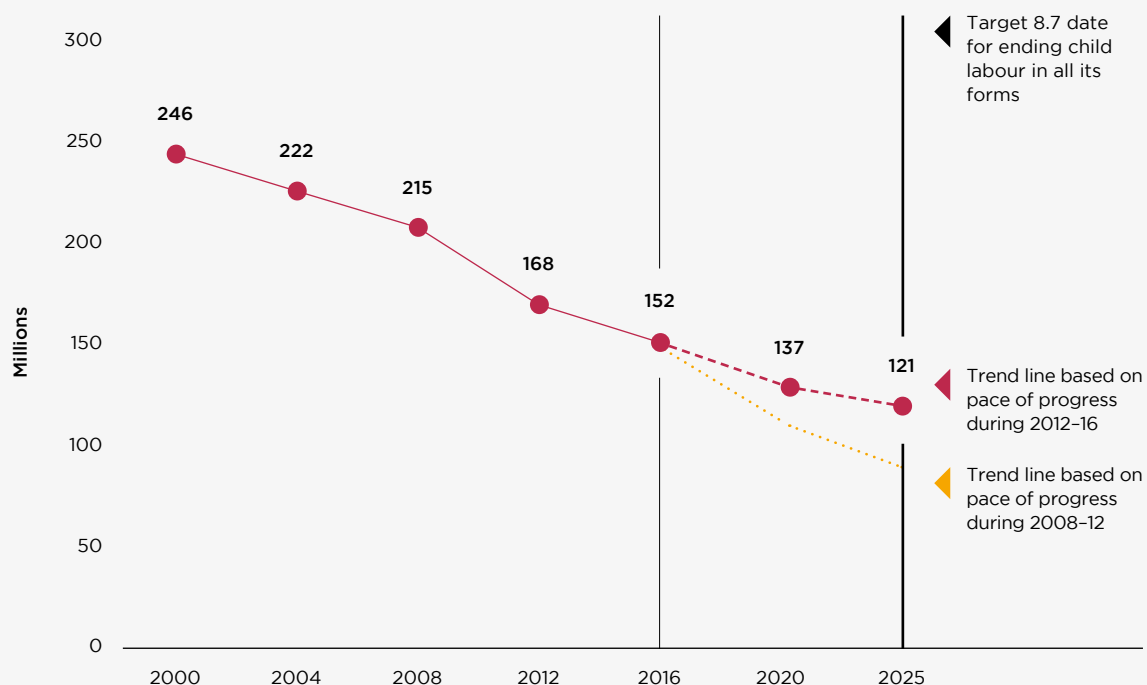
Beyond this general slowdown in progress, the 2016 results highlight a number of specific areas of concern. Child labour increased in Africa despite the fact that many African countries have taken strong action to combat it. A closer look at the patterns during 2012 to 2016 indicates almost no progress among children under the age of 12. The overall decline during 2012-2016 involved only a half million children in this group – there are still 72.5 million children aged 5-11 years in child labour. Gender differences in recent progress are another concern; the decline in child labour among girls was only half that of boys between 2012 and 2016 and the gender gap in child labour involvement has therefore narrowed. Moreover, estimates of children’s involvement in household chores in their own homes show that girls shoulder disproportionate responsibility for this form of work.

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

How much faster do we need to go in order to realize SDG Target 8.7, which calls for the end of child labour in all its forms by 2025? A simple projection based on the pace of progress achieved during 2012 to 2016 clearly indicates the challenge ahead. As reported in Figure 1, maintaining the current rate of progress would leave 121 million children still engaged in child labour in 2025, of whom 52 million would be in hazardous work. A similar calculation, also shown in Figure 1, 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 of progress.

Figure 3

Number of children involved in child labour, 5-17 years age range, actual and projected trends lines



Authors' calculation based on ILO: *Methodology of the global estimates of child labour, 2012-2016*, Geneva, 2017.

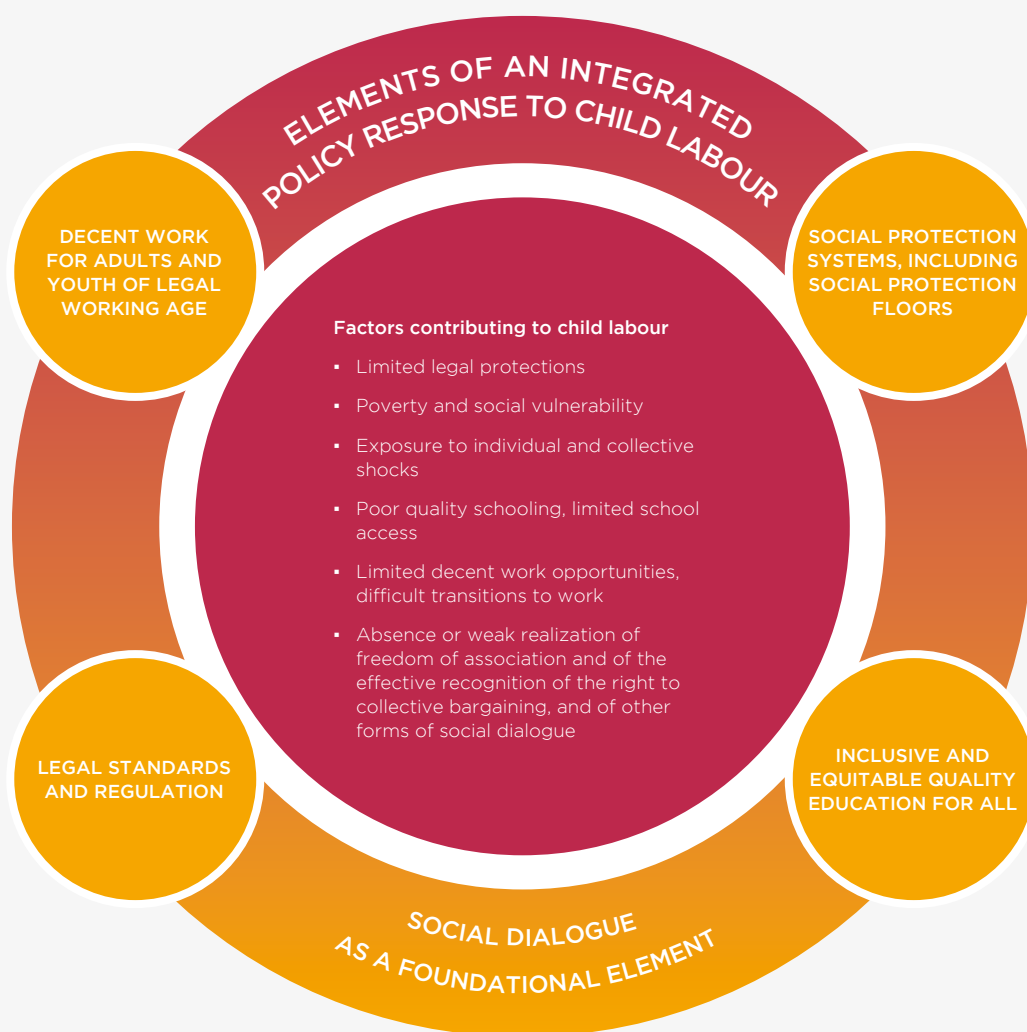
2. Identifying a policy response to child labour

How do we get from where we are now to where we want to be by 2025? Thanks to a growing body of practical experience, research, and impact evaluations, we know progress relies 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 will not, in other words, happen by itself, and 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.

Progress relies on an active government policy response that addresses the array of factors that push or pull children into child labour.

Table 1

Elements of an integrated response to child labour



We also know a lot about *what* policies are most relevant. The accumulated evidence and experience suggests that four principal policy areas stand out in this regard – legal standards and regulation, social protection, education, and functioning labour markets – all underpinned by social dialogue that ensures their relevance. These priority policy areas were highlighted by the international community in The Hague Roadmap agreed at The Hague World Child Labour Conference of 2010 and reaffirmed at the 2013 Brasilia Global Conference on Child Labour. Addressing the specific groups for which progress has been slowest – youngest children and girls – is a key priority across all of these policy areas.

2.1 LEGAL COMMITMENT TO CHILD LABOUR ELIMINATION AND THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL DIALOGUE

Legislation consistent with international legal standards formalizes the State's duty to protect its children and provides a framework for action.

The ILO's Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), with 181 ratifications,³ is the most, and most rapidly ratified Convention in the history of the ILO. More than 99.9 per cent of the world's children aged 5-17 years are now covered by it. And with 170 ratifications, the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) now covers 80 per cent of the world's children.

Legislation alone cannot eradicate child labour. However, it is also impossible to eliminate child labour *without* adequate and 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. With India's ratification of Convention Nos 138 and 182 in June 2017, almost all children in the world are now covered by Convention No. 182, while coverage of Convention No. 138 has risen to 80 per cent. But ratification by member States of these two 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.

Transposing international standards into national laws and concrete policies

Important challenges remain in transposing these ratified international standards into national laws and practice. Recent research, for instance, 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.⁴ Comments by the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations⁵ suggest that 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

Ensuring effective monitoring and enforcement of child labour laws is an even greater challenge. 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.

Ensuring other fundamental labour rights

It is also critical that the legal architecture extends to safeguarding other fundamental labour rights – including 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 violations of these rights are closely related to the persistence of child labour. This remains a major challenge in many countries. More progress is 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, the 2008 Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, and the 2012 and 2017 ILO Conference resolutions on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, and as reflected in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Table 2

Legal commitment to child labour elimination

Policy goal	Strategies and measures
Strengthening legislative and policy frameworks as a foundation and guide for action against child labour.	Promote ratification of international legal standards concerning child labour.
	Establish national legal architecture based on the international legal standards concerning child labour.
	Determine national hazardous work lists.
	Ensure coherency between laws governing the minimum age for work and those dealing with the age range for compulsory schooling.
	Include child labour concerns in relevant development, education, social protection, and other social policies and programmes.
	Strengthen systems for monitoring and enforcement of child labour laws.
	Extend the national legal architecture to other fundamental labour rights, including freedom of association and freedom from discrimination.

2.2 DECENT WORK FOR ADULTS AND YOUTH OF LEGAL WORKING AGE

Decent, secure, and properly remunerated work for adults and youth of working age remains the cornerstone of combating family and community poverty. 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 the absence of decent work. Decent work also implies the empowerment of working people, strong labour relations, and effective freedom of association, which are in turn 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 schooling.

Work that delivers a fair income, security in the workplace, and social protection means that households do not have to resort to child labour to meet basic needs or to deal with economic uncertainty.

Improving rural livelihoods and incomes and the functioning of small family farms and enterprises is vital to reducing family dependence on child labour.

Promoting decent livelihoods in the rural economy

Most children in child labour are unpaid family workers on family farms and in family enterprises. Typically, these families depend on the additional income that their children's work generates, or the family enterprise depends on their work in order to function. These basic facts underscore the importance of improving rural livelihoods and incomes and the functioning of small family farms and enterprises in order to reduce family dependence on child labour.⁶

Alongside the need for fair pay for waged work to redress the family poverty gap, family enterprises need fair prices for what they produce. And those that are "functionally dependent" on the work of their children for the enterprise to operate also need to become viable enough to replace the unpaid work of their children. Pooling adult labour resources, as well as inputs, tools, and other facilities, can assist in those efforts; small producers' associations, including well-functioning cooperatives,⁷ are important vehicles for achieving this. Other relevant measures include the upgrading of skills; improving access to inputs and credit, including through the development of community savings and credit unions; introducing sustainable and appropriate technologies to raise productivity; and investing in food-processing and infrastructure, which add quality and value to locally grown produce.

Addressing the informal economy

Informality is another critical obstacle to decent work and to progress against child labour.

The ILO's recently-adopted Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204) has placed a renewed focus on informality as a barrier to decent work for all.⁸ Child labour is concentrated in the informal economy, which is comprised of numerous sectors, urban and rural, and in which workers are commonly among the most vulnerable and least protected groups. The informal economy exposes working people to the risk of denial of rights at work, including of the right to organize and bargain collectively, and thus to a lack of social dialogue; absence of sufficient opportunities for quality employment and assurance of occupational safety and health; inadequate social protection; and low productivity. 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 formal economy – which often overlap with efforts to improve rural livelihoods – are therefore also critical in the fight against child labour.

Current policy initiatives around the world, reviewed in an ILO report prepared for the 103rd Session of the International Labour Conference in 2014, show that there is no one-size-fits-all policy approach to promoting transition from the informal to formal economy, but rather a set of multidimensional approaches that can be adapted to each specific country context. The policies adopted most often target, simultaneously, the following objectives: promoting formal employment through pro-employment macroeconomic and sectoral policies focusing especially on the development of sustainable micro, small, and medium enterprises; reducing informal employment by lowering the cost of transitions to formality; and increasing progress towards decent work for those presently working in the informal economy by developing national social protection floors for all, implementing a minimum wage, and establishing health and safety incentives.⁹

Promoting the self-organization of women and men who earn their living in the informal urban and rural economies is also critical to furthering this transition. In addition to wage workers, who need to be able to exercise their rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining, this group also includes, for example, own-account workers, smallholder farmers, and artisanal fishers. Several innovative approaches have proven effective, not least among domestic workers, who now have an international federation of their trade unions. Widening the collective, representative voice, sometimes also

through the establishment of cooperatives, enables those who are not in employment relationships with an identifiable employer to influence their working conditions, productivity, and incomes. At the community level, too, it can help strengthen the “village voice” in dealings with public authorities, for example, about the provision of public service obligations, including education for all.

Promoting decent work opportunities for youth of legal working age

Ensuring a successful start to working life by expanding opportunities for youth of legal working age to access decent work is of particular importance. Prolonged periods of unemployment or underemployment during this critical period of life can permanently impair productive potential and therefore influence lifetime patterns of employment, pay, and job tenure. Negative work-related behaviours and attitudes established during this period can also persist into later stages of working life. The benefits of successful transitions from education to decent work are equally clear. Success early in working life is linked to better long-term career prospects. More broadly, it moves young persons into situations of self-sufficiency and helps them exit from poverty.¹⁰

While again there is no one-size-fits-all approach, an extensive body of evidence and policy experience points to a set of core policy areas that need to be considered in relation to national and local circumstances. Besides pro-employment macroeconomic policies, relevant active labour market interventions include training and skills development; public works; job search support and other labour market services; employment subsidies; and self-employment and entrepreneurship promotion.¹¹ Youth employment efforts should be framed within a broader emphasis on ensuring young persons’ rights at work in order that they receive equal treatment, are free to organize, and are protected from abuse and exposure to hazards.¹²

Addressing child labour among adolescents

There are more than 37 million children – 23.5 million boys and 13.6 million girls – in the 15-17 years age range in child labour. An integrated strategy is needed aimed at removing youth from intrinsically hazardous jobs or, when appropriate, removing the hazardous conditions encountered by youth in the workplace. In instances in which adolescents in the 15-17 years age range are working in sectors or occupations designated as hazardous or where there is no scope for improving working conditions, the policy requirement is clear: they must be removed from the hazardous job. In these cases, it is imperative that there be a strategy in place for providing withdrawn youth with adequate support services and second chances for education, training, and securing decent work. Risk mitigation is a strategic option in instances where youth are exposed to hazards in sectors or occupations that are not designated as hazardous in national hazardous work lists and where scope for changing working conditions exists. Such a strategy involves measures to remove the hazard, to separate the child sufficiently from the hazard so as not to be exposed, or to minimize the risk associated with that hazard.

Expanding decent work opportunities for youth is critical to combating child labour.

Efforts to promote decent work among youth should not overlook the group of children of legal working age in hazardous work.

Table 3

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

Policy goal	Strategies and measures
<p>Promote decent rural livelihoods.</p>	<p>Promote small producers' associations and democratic cooperatives as means of pooling adult labour resources, as well as inputs, tools and other facilities.</p> <p>Strengthen the collective, representative voice of those who earn their livelihoods in the rural economy, including for collective bargaining with employers, not least in plantation agriculture, and for product price negotiations to improve adult incomes.</p> <p>Improve access to inputs and credit of family farms and enterprises, including through the development of community savings and credit unions.</p> <p>Introduce sustainable and appropriate technologies and alternative practices in family farms and enterprises, in order to improve productivity and viability.</p> <p>Invest in food processing and infrastructure, to add quality and value to locally grown produce.</p> <p>Develop strategies to mitigate the loss of agricultural land due to urban expansion and desertification.</p>
<p>Promote transition from informal to formal economy.</p>	<p>Promote the development of sustainable micro, small and medium enterprises.</p> <p>Create an enabling policy and regulatory environment that reduces barriers to formalization while protecting workers' rights.</p> <p>Promote a greater awareness among informal entities of the advantages and protection that come with formalization (business development services for micro, small and medium enterprises, access to the market, productive resources, credit programmes, and training and promotional programmes to upgrade informal economy units).</p> <p>Enable the self-organizing of workers from the informal economy and encouraging informal enterprises to join together in producers' associations, including cooperatives.</p> <p>Invest in skills development and training that is responsive both to the diverse requirements and levels of informal economy workers and to the evolving demands of the labour market, including informal apprenticeship schemes.</p> <p>Reform skill accreditation systems to permit accreditation for skills acquired through work in the informal economy.</p> <p>Extend minimum wage protections to workers in the informal economy.</p>
<p>Promote decent work for youth of legal working age.</p>	<p>Enact 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.</p> <p>Ensure young persons' rights at work, in order that they receive equal treatment and are protected from abuse and exposure to hazards.</p> <p>Ensure the participation of young people in employers' and workers' organizations and in social dialogue.</p>
<p>End child labour among adolescents aged 15-17 years.</p>	<p>Develop systems for providing youth removed from hazardous work with second chances for education, training, and securing decent work.</p> <p>Develop systems for providing youth removed from worst forms of child labour with necessary social services: emergency shelter, medical care, psychosocial counselling, legal support, family tracing and assessment and post-reintegration follow-up.</p> <p>Provide 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.</p> <p>Mobilize trade unions, business associations, chambers of commerce, community organizations, social protection agencies in monitoring minimum age guidelines, the safety of the workplace and its adolescent workers, in conjunction with the labour inspectorate.</p> <p>Institute "strategic inspection plans" to help in identifying workplace hazards facing adolescents and that require follow-up</p>

2.3 SOCIAL PROTECTION

The relevance of poverty and shocks to child labour is straightforward. 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.¹³ Continued progress against child labour will require policies that help mitigate the economic vulnerability of households. There is a growing body of research and experience pointing to the relevance of social protection systems, including social protection floors,¹⁴ in this regard.¹⁵ Social protection measures providing income replacement and security to families that are dependent for part of their family income on the child labour of their children have proved successful and must be extended. The ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202) provides a key framework for this. Cash transfer schemes appear to hold particular promise, but the ILO Recommendation also identifies other instruments that should be implemented in a way that enhances their capacity to address child labour.

Child labour is driven in large measure by household vulnerabilities associated with poverty and shocks; social protection is critical to mitigating these vulnerabilities.

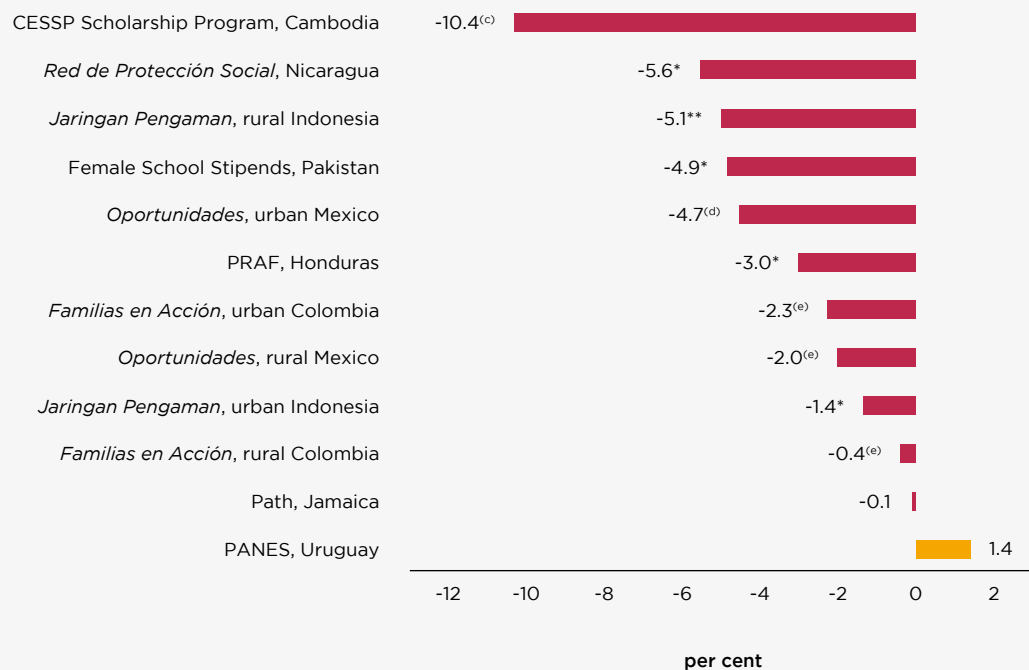
Transfer programmes directed at families with children

Cash and non-cash transfer programmes are becoming an increasingly important part of social protection floors in a number of countries. These programmes can be either conditional or unconditional; that is, they can require households to fulfil certain behavioural conditions in order to be eligible for benefits, or they can make these benefits available without regard to the activities of household members. The extensive evidence on conditional cash transfer (CCT) schemes indicates that they tend to lower both the prevalence and time intensity of child labour and to mitigate the effect of economic shocks that may push children into work.¹⁶

Cash transfer schemes appear more effective when coupled with complementary supply-side interventions; they appear less effective, on the other hand, in instances where transfers are invested in productive activities.

Figure 4

Average percentage point impact^(a) of conditional cash transfer programmes on child labour,^(b) by programme and country



Notes: (a) * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$; (b) The definition of child labour is not consistent across studies; (c) Imputed estimate based on non-significant disaggregated estimates; (d) Imputed estimate based on partly significant disaggregated estimates; and (e) Imputed estimate based on significant disaggregated estimates.

Source: *World report on child labour: Economic vulnerability, social protection and the fight against child labour* / International Labour Office. Geneva: ILO, 2013.

However, impact evaluation studies indicate that the magnitude of their impact varies substantially from one programme and location to the next, as reported in Figure 5. In what circumstances do cash transfer schemes appear most effective? Most impact evaluation studies show that children from poorer backgrounds exhibit stronger reductions in child labour than those from wealthier households,¹⁷ underscoring the importance of ensuring that poorer children and families are effectively reached by cash transfer schemes. The evidence also suggests that the impact is larger when cash transfer schemes are coupled with supply-side interventions such as provision of after school education or of generalized benefits like health and education facilities.¹⁸ The evidence suggests that transfers may be less effective, on the other hand, in instances where they are invested in productive activities such as land, livestock, or micro-enterprises, as these investments create opportunities for children’s involvement in family production.¹⁹

Public works programmes

Public works programmes are popular policy tools aimed at fighting poverty in developing countries. They serve the primary goal of providing a source of employment to adult members of the household and the secondary goal of helping rehabilitate public infrastructure and expand basic services. The effectiveness of public works programmes

in reducing child labour remains an open question. We have to date studies of the child labour impact of five separate major public works programmes.²⁰ Overall, the results from the available impact evaluations seem to indicate that public works programmes do *not* generate any relevant reduction in child labour. On the contrary, the evidence indicates that in some instances these programmes actually increase child labour, such as when children end up performing activities, such as household chores, that previously were undertaken by parents participating in the public works programme.

Accordingly, programme design is of utmost importance. Social protection instruments must anticipate and address possible unintended negative consequences and be designed to avoid creating new opportunities for child labour in the family enterprise or to replace work that would have otherwise been undertaken by adults in their household. These results points to the importance of integrating child labour concerns into the design of public works programmes in order to guard against adverse programmatic effects on children. Complementary measures, for example, to address the need for household labour while the adult beneficiary is employed and to support school leavers' transition into long-term employment could potentially alleviate the reliance on children. In addition, some public works programmes provide child care facilities at worksites, which could reduce the burden on older children to care for their younger siblings.

Other social protection instruments

We know much less about the child labour impact of the other social protection instruments, so more empirical research is called for. The limited evidence available to date, however, suggests that health protection, social protection for persons with disabilities, income security in old age, and unemployment protection are all of relevance to efforts against child labour.²¹ The other main types of social security benefits identified in ILO Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102), namely sickness benefits, employment injury benefits, maternity protection, and survivors' benefits, while also potentially important, have not yet been evaluated from a child labour perspective.

Initial evidence on the impact of public works programmes suggests that they do not lower child labour; indeed, in some instances, they can have the opposite effect.

The limited evidence relating to other social protection instruments suggests that they, too, are relevant to efforts against child labour.

Table 5

Social protection: policies for reducing household risk and expanding household social protection

Policy goal	Strategies and measures
Mitigate economic vulnerabilities associated with child labour.	<p>Introduction or expansion of unconditional cash transfer schemes, to help ease budget constraints and supplement incomes of poor households vulnerable to child labour</p> <p>Introduction or expansion of 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)</p> <p>Introduction or expansion of 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</p>
Mitigate the impact of other contingencies leading to a reliance on child labour.	<p>Extending health protection to address the social distress and economic loss associated with ill health</p> <p>Extending social protection for persons with disabilities to address the 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</p> <p>Ensuring income security in old age through pension schemes or similar measures, to help offset the social vulnerabilities associated with aging and help provide income security in multi-generational households</p> <p>Extending unemployment protection, in order to secure the income needs of households buffeted by loss of work</p>
Complementary social finance schemes^(a)	
Expand household access to credit.	Introducing of 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

Notes: (a) Complementary social finance schemes are not technically part of social protection systems.

2.4 EDUCATION

Education – and, in particular, education of good quality at least up to the minimum age of employment – is a key element in the prevention of child labour.

The international community's efforts and the obligations of member States towards ending child labour and ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education for all (Sustainable Development Goal No. 4) are inextricably linked. 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. At the same time, child labour is one of the main obstacles to achieving SDG 4, as involvement in child labour generally hinders children's ability to attend and perform in school. 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." Yet the continued overall decline in child labour masks a stagnation of progress among children of primary school age. Simply put, the withdrawal of children from child labour is not being matched by the prevention of their entry into child labour. We must ensure that the 36 million children aged 5-14 engaged in child labour and not attending school are able to go to school, stay at school, and complete their education; and that the 78 million who are combining child labour and school are able to devote their childhood to their education and no longer have it undermined by child labour.

There is an urgent need for massive investment in what we know works in getting children out of work and into the classroom and preventing them from entering child labour in the first place. This includes ensuring a good start by promoting early childhood development, care and pre-primary education; facilitating transition to primary school; offsetting the direct and indirect costs associated with schooling, above all by abolishing school fees; and by providing cash transfers to poor families, as well as textbooks, transport, uniforms, and school meals. Other priorities include ensuring a professional, competent teaching force with rights at work and decent working conditions; that all girls and boys have a safe and quality learning environment; and education and vocational training opportunities for older children who have missed out on formal schooling. Coherence of laws on child labour, school attendance, and the minimum school leaving age is critical.

Expanding early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education programmes

Getting children off to a good start through appropriate early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education programmes is one of the most important strategies for ensuring that children transition successfully from early childhood to school rather than to the workplace. These programmes play a vital role in promoting learning readiness and in sensitizing parents to the importance of school participation. These benefits can in turn help to increase school enrolment, reduce grade repetition and dropout from school, and reduce the flow of children into child labour. In Cambodia, for instance, availability of preschool facilities is consistently associated with lower rates of involvement in economic activity and with higher rates of school attendance.²² Similarly in Mozambique, a pre-school programme implemented in 30 villages resulted in a substantial increase in preschool participation as well as a reduction in hours worked on the family plot.²³

Early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education programmes can play an important role in promoting learning readiness, which in turn is critical for avoiding premature dropout and early entry into work.

Reducing direct and indirect school costs

The high costs associated with schooling need to be addressed to ensure that school is affordable as an alternative to child labour. In some instances, a lack of public facilities can mean a reliance on costly private providers that are beyond the means of many of the poorest.²⁴ In other cases, out-of-pocket costs for school fees and necessary items such as textbooks and uniforms can keep children out of the classroom. Evidence also underscores the *positive* effect of reducing or eliminating school costs. The elimination of school fees in many countries at the beginning of the new millennium, for example, contributed to a large rise in enrolment; this was especially the case in sub-Saharan Africa.²⁵

The direct and indirect costs associated with schooling need to be addressed to ensure that school is affordable as an alternative to child labour.

Also critical is reducing *indirect* schooling costs associated with children's time in the classroom; in other words, the value of children's foregone earnings or production arising from studying instead of working. Programmes that provide monthly cash transfers to households conditional on children's school attendance are one way of offsetting indirect schooling costs. As discussed earlier, the extensive evidence on these schemes indicates that they generally succeed in lowering child labour. The much more limited evidence suggests that in-kind transfers, such as food for education programmes, can also affect child labour by reducing the indirect cost of sending a child to school.²⁶

Extending school access

Other children are unable to go to school instead of working because of a lack of nearby schools. There is large body of evidence linking improved school access with reduced child labour (e.g., Bangladesh, rural Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Yemen, Morocco, and Cambodia²⁷). The impact of school access appears especially strong for girls. In Guatemala, for instance, distance to primary school has an influence on girls' time allocations but not on those of boys.²⁸ 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 (e.g., in Tanzania, Ghana, and Vietnam²⁹), as parents have less reason to send their children to primary school rather than to work if they know that their offspring will not also have access to (lower) secondary education, where the seed of the initial investment in education bears greater fruit.

Factors that compromise education quality can also play a role in pushing children into child labour.

Improving school quality

While access to schooling certainly matters, in many countries it is only a part of the child labour problem. Evidence suggests that quality concerns can also play a role in pushing children out of school and into child labour. In countries such as Tanzania, Ghana, and Ecuador, for instance, out-of-school children cite lack of interest in school as an important motive, a response likely driven by negative perceptions of school quality and relevance.³⁰ It follows that policies designed to raise education quality are an important part of the solution to child labour. Empirical evidence also bears this out. A study covering Cambodia and Yemen, for instance, indicates that the impact of improved school quality on reducing child labour is significant even when compared to the impact of expanded school availability.³¹

Raising school quality requires as a first step an investment in quality teaching, starting with national teacher policies adopted in consultation with teachers' trade unions and other relevant stakeholders. Quality teachers are one of the most important factors in achieving education outcomes, and clear policies on training, recruitment, deployment, and decent working conditions for teachers are essential for developing a workforce that can provide quality education.³² Involving parents more directly in the life of the school can also produce important quality benefits with minimal resource costs. And protection of all children, girls and boys, against violence, including sexual violence at school, is not only a human rights obligation but also a prerequisite for ensuring that children are able to stay the course and complete at least compulsory education. Moreover, buildings must be safe and be able to protect children against natural disasters.

Fundamental shifts in the nature of work have profound implications for the education and skills needs of tomorrow's school leavers.

Education and the future of work

Even with the vast backlog of deficits in education access and quality that must be overcome to ensure quality education for all children, it is also timely, given the ILO's Centennial Project on the Future of Work, to ask questions about the future of education in the context of a changing world of work. Technological innovation, changing production modes, and economic restructuring are just some of the global forces that are causing fundamental shifts in the nature of work. These changes have profound implications for the education and skills needs of tomorrow's school leavers. Flexible skills and lifelong learning, conducive to what we have called "lifelong employability", are growing in importance, particularly in light of accelerating changes in the nature of productive employment. And if, as predicted, the world's children will soon become adults in a world in which many will not have productive work as it has long been understood, a "business as usual" approach to school to work transition needs to be widened. An open and thoughtful debate is needed about the purpose and nature of education – as a human right and as a preparation for a fulfilling adult life – beyond the world of work as it has previously existed.

Table 6

Education: policy options for strengthening education as an alternative to child labour

Policy goal/targets	Strategies and measures
Expanded access to early childhood development opportunities for vulnerable households.	Targeted introduction/expansion of local centre-based preschool programmes.
	Targeted introduction/expansion of home outreach programmes on better parenting and care-giving.
	Targeted introduction/expansion of comprehensive early children care programmes.
Reduced direct schooling costs.	Elimination of school fees.
	Provision of free uniforms and textbooks.
	Provision of free school transportation.
Reduced indirect schooling costs.	Introduction of conditional cash transfer programmes.
	Introduction of in-kind transfer schemes, including food for education schemes.
Improved school quality.	Address teachers' working conditions, academic freedom, violence affecting teachers, teacher migration and mobility, and institutional independence.
	Recruit well-trained teachers and teacher assistants from the local community, 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.
	Curriculum reform aimed at improving relevance.
Expanded school access.	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.

2.5 ADDRESSING CHILD LABOUR IN SUPPLY CHAINS

While global supply chains can be “engines of development” – promoting technology transfer, new production practices, and a way for enterprises to move into higher value-added activities that bring increased productivity, skills development, and enhanced competitiveness – 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.³³ Research on child labour has been conducted in a number of supply chains such as cocoa and tobacco, at times following media exposés. However, to date it has not been the subject of systematic, quantitative research covering all major affected supply chains. Reliable numbers are therefore difficult to come by, but it is safe to say that the issue of child labour in supply chains extends to most sectors and most regions of the world.

Reliable numbers are difficult to come by, but it is safe to say that the issue of child labour in supply chains extends to most sectors and most regions of the world.

Addressing root causes – area-based approaches

A recognition that there are a common set of root causes underlying child labour is the logic behind integrated area-based approaches for addressing child labour in supply chains. 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 simply from hazardous to non-hazardous child labour. It is also consistent with government policies and commitments under ILO child labour Conventions, which are not limited to child labour within a specific sector. The growing number of industries and enterprises adopting an area-based approach is a positive sign for the future. And these approaches are not restricted to the global supply chains of multinational enterprises. They have been deployed through similar strategies with other names such as “child-friendly villages” in Africa and South Asia, and could be replicated on a wider scale. Development assistance targeted only at internationally traded goods also needs to be recalibrated to support the human rights of all children in child labour. This wider vision can also support strategies to address child labour in the production of goods for family and local consumption, which represents the majority of child labour in the world.

The establishment and enforcement of an adequate regulatory framework is critical to the creation of an enabling environment for addressing child labour in supply chains.

Strengthening regulation and enforcement

The establishment and enforcement of 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 clearly set out the expectation that all business enterprises domiciled in the national territory or jurisdiction respect human rights throughout their operations. It should be part of a coherent policy approach designed to ensure that investment treaties and corporate governance law encourage and enable, rather than hinder, business respect for these rights. Adequate means of enforcement is also critical. 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 prevention, enforcement of the law, and protection of adults, youth, and children in the world of work.

Translating the international frameworks and national regulations into concrete progress against child labour in global supply chains will require continued support to industry responsibilities to ensure compliance.

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. Several promising models for intervention have emerged in recent years, offering an important foundation and guidance for future efforts in this regard.

International Framework Agreements. Of relevance are the increasing number of global framework agreements between multinational enterprises and sectoral global trade union federations, which include all fundamental rights at work. These agreements rely on the ILO’s principal means of action – social dialogue between those that represent the economic actors – for their effectiveness, and they reflect the integrated deployment of all fundamental rights at work to combat both the symptoms and the root causes of child labour.

Industry-wide collaboration initiatives. Business-led, voluntary initiatives focused on child labour in supply chains demonstrate the value of industry-wide collaboration to ensure a level playing field in which child labour in supply chains is not a source of competitive advantage. A prominent example is the International Cocoa Initiative.

Cross-industry collaboration initiatives. Cross-sectoral collaboration between industries goes a step further in seeking to ensure that when child labour is addressed in one supply chain it is not simply displaced into another. This approach can be especially

useful in accelerating progress deep in supply chains in the informal economy, where monitoring and follow-up can be a particular challenge. One prominent example is the ILO-UN Global Compact Child Labour Platform.³⁴

Public-private partnership. Public-private partnerships should help promote more effective interaction between private compliance initiatives and public enforcement activities; however, too often these efforts are disconnected, resulting in fragmentation and inefficiency. They should address the urgent need for remedy while at the same time laying the foundation for improved governance and enforcement. The public-private partnerships established in the cocoa-growing areas of Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire are successful examples.

Multi-stakeholder engagement. 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. Bringing these parties together to identify and coordinate actions can be critical to the sustainability and effectiveness of efforts to drive child labour out of supply chains.

Table 7

Policy options for addressing child labour in supply chains

Policy goal/targets	Strategies and measures
Addressing root causes.	Area-based approaches addressing factors driving all types of child labour in a given geographic area.
Strengthening regulation and enforcement.	Establishment of an adequate regulatory scheme 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.
Promoting industry compliance.	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. 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.

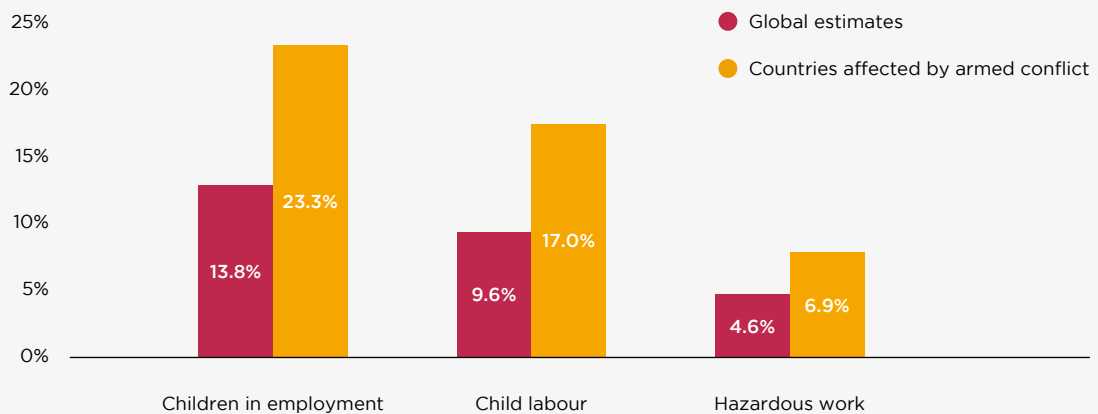
2.6 PROTECTING CHILDREN IN SITUATIONS OF FRAGILITY AND CRISIS

There is a strong positive correlation between state fragility and child labour; the link between child labour and situations of armed conflict appears especially strong.

Globally, more than 1.5 billion people live in countries that are affected by conflict, violence, and fragility. At the same time, each year disasters affect around 200 million people, a third of whom are children, and these figures are likely to grow in the future. These fragile situations – characterized by income shocks, a breakdown in formal and family social support networks, migration, and disruptions in basic services provision – create the conditions for further violations of fundamental labour rights, including an elevated risk of child labour. In view of these facts, it is not surprising that there is a correlation between child labour and state fragility.³⁵ The link between child labour and situations of armed conflict appears especially strong. A recent ILO analysis, for instance, indicates the rates of children in employment, child labour, and hazardous work are significantly higher in countries affected by armed conflict than global averages (Figure 2).

Figure 5

Percentage of children in employment, child labour and hazardous work, 5-17 years age range, globally and in countries affected by armed conflict, 2016



Note: countries classified as “affected by armed conflict” are taken from the Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, submitted to the UN Security Council in 2015. The category “countries affected by armed conflict” includes Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, Colombia, Iraq, Mali, Nigeria, the Philippines, South Sudan, Ukraine, Yemen, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Countries affected by armed conflict for which child labour data is not available in the current global estimates include Libya, Myanmar, Somalia, Sudan, and the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mainstreaming child labour concerns in all phases of humanitarian action

The ILO's founding motto "if you want peace, cultivate justice" is more relevant than ever. 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) live in countries affected by conflict or disaster. 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. Ensuring the livelihoods of families in crisis situations is essential to avoiding their reliance on child labour as a negative coping mechanism.

Child labour must be treated as a priority in all phases of humanitarian action.

Child labour concerns, including the specific needs of children associated with armed forces and groups, must be treated as a priority 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 – and should be subject to close coordination according to the respective mandates of relevant agencies. Governments, workers' and employers' organizations, and humanitarian actors all have a critical role to play in this context. In evolving and increasingly complex crises, rapid assessment tools need to be regularly updated to determine quickly the risks of child labour and other violations of fundamental labour rights. At the same time, new intervention models need to be developed and tested to address child labour in crisis or in fragile situations and to strengthen protection and remedies for children and other affected groups. The Child Labour in Emergencies Toolkit, produced by the Child Labour in Emergencies Task Force co-chaired by the ILO and Plan International, represents an important resource.³⁶

Building on national systems

Humanitarian responses addressing child labour should, to the extent possible, engage public authorities and build upon existing national systems. Parallel systems targeting only those communities affected by the crisis, with minimal involvement of the actors who have traditionally taken the lead on the issue of child labour (e.g., ministries of labour, agriculture, and education, and employers' and workers' organizations), tend to be difficult to reconcile with time and to contribute less to post-conflict recovery and development. Where the children concerned are refugees or internally-displaced persons, agreement from national authorities is required to ensure that these groups of children are accommodated within national systems.³⁷

Collective efforts and coordination

The complexity of situations of crisis and fragility, and the many overlapping mandates for responding to them, makes close coordination concerning child labour another important priority. Multiple existing mechanisms and forums are playing important roles, including the Alliance 8.7 Action Group on Conflict and Humanitarian Settings, but attention must be paid to their respective mandates so that each addresses elements of the response for which it is most competent. Collaboration among development and humanitarian actors in addressing child labour also 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.³⁸

The sudden loss of livelihoods faced by families in crisis situations can lead to child labour as a negative coping mechanism; providing affected populations with access to livelihoods is therefore critical.

Link 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. The sooner affected populations are given access to livelihoods the more effectively child labour can be prevented and addressed. With the global population of forcibly displaced persons exceeding 65 million – a significant percentage of them refugees who have moved to another country – addressing the legal and regulatory impediments facing refugees in accessing the labour market and gaining decent work in host communities is of particular importance. These measures should take place as a part of broader efforts to strengthen the resilience and capacity of host communities by investing in local economies and promoting full, productive, freely chosen employment and decent work.³⁹

More attention is urgently needed to the worst forms of child labour suffered by children in situations of armed conflict.

Children in 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. Efforts should be made to ensure that children associated with armed forces and groups and other children affected by armed conflict are prioritized in peace plans and processes and in demobilization efforts. Special advocacy efforts directed towards armed groups aimed at the release of these children must also continue. Providing sustainable work opportunities for young people of legal working age who were formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups can be critical to their successful reintegration into society. The provision of psychosocial counselling and other interventions to address anti-social behaviour and post-traumatic stress is also vital in many instances.

Table 8

Policies to protect children from child labour in situations of state fragility and crisis

Policy goal	Strategies and measures
Child labour concerns mainstreamed in all phases of humanitarian action.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritize child labour in crisis preparedness and contingency plans, humanitarian responses, and in post-crisis reconstruction and recovery efforts. Develop and update rapid assessment tools to quickly determine the risks of child labour and other fundamental labour rights violations in crisis situations. Develop and test intervention models to address child labour in crisis or in fragile situations.
Humanitarian responses addressing child labour are built into national systems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage public authorities and build to the extent possible upon existing national systems to avoid the creation of parallel systems that are difficult to reconcile with time and contribute less to post-conflict recovery and development. 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 burden- and responsibility-sharing.

Policy goal	Strategies and measures
Strengthened coordination and collective action.	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.
Improved access to livelihoods to reduce reliance on child labour as a negative coping strategy.	Develop public employment measures and income-generation opportunities for affected population groups and individuals.
	Address the legal and regulatory impediments facing refugees in accessing the labour market and gaining decent work in host communities.
	Build 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.
Improved responses to the urgent needs of children in armed conflict.	Ensure that children associated with armed forces and groups and other children trapped in armed conflict are prioritized in peace plans and processes and in demobilization efforts.
	Continue special advocacy efforts directed towards armed groups aimed at the release of these children.
	Provide sustainable work opportunities for young people of legal working age formerly associated with armed forces and armed groups.
	Provide 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.

2.7 BUILDING KNOWLEDGE TO GUIDE ACTION

Filling key knowledge gaps is critical to informing and guiding actions on the road to 2025.

Coherent, comprehensive policies to address the systemic root causes of child labour require, among other things, a clearer understanding of the nature of the income and functional dependence of family enterprises on the unpaid child labour of their children and of the support such enterprises require to be able to replace that child labour by adults engaged in decent work.

Today, fewer girls than boys are in child labour and fewer are in hazardous work, but the decline of child labour among girls has slowed. In light of this, we need to improve statistical research and measurement to better capture the hidden child labour that girls perform, as well as our understanding of the threshold at which domestic chores become analogous to child labour.

With the exception of cash transfers, too little is known about the effectiveness of interventions in policy areas of relevance to child labour. This knowledge gap is impeding policy development³⁸ and makes it difficult to demonstrate to development partners that money is well spent, thus hampering future resource allocation.

In addition, we need to know more about the implications for child labour of broader global challenges, including climate change, migration, inequality, and the future of work, as well as about how child labour is linked to other violations of fundamental labour rights, including discrimination in the workplace and restrictions on freedom of association and collective bargaining. Using existing measurement tools³⁹ and building on previous research on child forced labour, we urgently need to gain more and better information about children in worst forms of child labour other than hazardous work,⁴⁰ who are often among the hardest to reach.

Data on child labour is now available for much of the less-industrialized world, but in many countries there is still a need to ensure the regularity and consistency of data.

These needs extend to some middle-income countries, which have ceased to collect or publish data on work below the minimum working age, and to many high-income countries that have never collected data on child labour, despite the fact that we know child labour persists in them.

2.8 THE IMPORTANCE OF PARTNERSHIP

In 2016, Alliance 8.7 was launched as a global partnership to end forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking, and all forms of child labour, in accordance with SDG Target 8.7. The ILO has supported Alliance 8.7 since its inception, with the understanding that no single actor can solve these challenges and that accelerated eradication requires the leveraging of expertise across a wide range of like-minded stakeholders. As the secretariat for Alliance 8.7, the ILO has supported the partnership's meetings around the world and is working with Alliance 8.7 members across all four of their shared goals: accelerating action towards compliance with the target, conducting research and sharing knowledge, driving innovation, and increasing and leveraging resources. The ILO's involvement with Alliance 8.7 is part of its broader commitment to partnerships in efforts to end child labour and achieve related goals.

Other key partnerships are playing important roles. The International Partnership for Cooperation on Child Labour in Agriculture brings together the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, the ILO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF), and a variety of other stakeholders in global efforts to eliminate child labour in the agricultural sector. The World Bank Group and ILO Universal Social Protection Initiative promotes universal social protection to ensure that no one is left behind. The SDG-Education 2030 Steering Committee is the global multi-stakeholder coordination mechanism for education in the 2030 Agenda. The Child Labour Platform, co-chaired by the International Organisation of Employers and the International Trade Union Confederation, is a forum to tackle child labour in supply chains. And the Child Labour Task Force of the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, co-led by the ILO and Plan International, is a response to the widely recognized need to improve responses to child labour in emergencies. The Global Partnership to End Violence against Children and the UNWTO World Tourism Network on Child Protection also contribute to the elimination of child labour.

3. The road forward to 2025

With 152 million children – almost ten per cent of the world’s children – still engaged in child labour, achieving a world free of child labour remains as urgent a task as ever. Through Sustainable Development Goal Target 8.7 to eliminate all forms of child labour by 2025, the global community has renewed its commitment and its acknowledgement that the persistence of child labour in the 21st century is unacceptable. Our shared goal of a world free of child labour is urgent, and accomplishing it will require that we hasten our pace and strengthen our efforts.

A growing consensus to address child labour through an integrated rights-based approach

Addressing child labour is critical to the achievement of broader social development goals, which in turn are critical to addressing child labour. The extensive body of existing knowledge and experience underscores the importance of an active and effective policy response with four crucial pillars – legal standards and regulation, labour markets, social protection, and education – underpinned by social dialogue to ensure their relevance. They are linked not only to the SDGs on poverty eradication, quality education, and decent work, but also to the foundational objective of the 2030 Agenda to achieve “peaceful, just and inclusive” societies.

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.

These four pillars 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 amid well-functioning social dialogue means 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. They can, in the words of the 1998 ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, “claim a fair share of the wealth they have helped to create” through fair wages for their labour, fair prices for the what they produce, and through the “social wage” of public services and social protection to which they and their children are entitled.

Global consensus on these policy pillars has advanced significantly since the 2008-2012 period, which saw the greatest acceleration of progress against child labour since the ILO began collating global statistics. This reflects both a recognition that child labour cannot be eradicated in isolation, with a narrow sectoral or product focus, or through limited project interventions, and that instead there must be a major shift towards pursuit of systemic change and eradication of root causes through the integration of child labour concerns into coherent, integrated, and broader economic and social development policies.

This emerging consensus also reflects growing recognition of the role and limits of enforcement. With most of the 152 million children in child labour performing unpaid contributing work in their own families, adequate resources must be devoted to combating root causes. Enforcement must be directed appropriately and not victimize children or parents and families who are themselves victims of poverty, inequality, and social exclusion.

We must also ensure that the consensus around a common set of policy priorities does not lead to one-size-fits-all approaches and the belief that they can be applied to child labour everywhere. Policy responses need to be tailored to the variety of contexts in which child labour persists, based on existing “policy building blocks” that emerge from national and local level social dialogue.⁴³ These contexts, which present special challenges, include state fragility and armed conflict; natural disasters, including those related to climate change; the rural and informal economies; and global supply chains.

International development cooperation remains critical to achieving the eradication of child labour. In many countries, the cost of required action far exceeds available government resources, and in many cases even those governments that make the best policy choices will not be able to achieve child labour targets if they are left to act unassisted. UN agencies, other multilateral and bilateral organizations, international non-governmental organizations, and a variety of other groups involved have an important role to play.

The human and economic returns on investments 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.



End notes

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 33. ILO: *Report of the Committee on Decent Work in Global Supply Chains: Resolution and conclusions*, submitted for adoption by the International Labour Conference, ILO, 2016.
 34. The ILO-UN Global Compact Child Labour Platform (CLP), chaired by the International Organisation of Employers and the International Trade Union Confederation, is comprised of companies from a wide range of sectors including telecommunications, garments, cocoa, cotton, and mining.
 35. The Fragile States Index (FSI), produced by the Fund for Peace (FFP), is a tool for measuring the array of social, economic and political pressures contributing to state fragility. A simple plotting of composite FSI scores against child labour rates across countries indicates a strong positive correlation between fragility and child labour. See the Fund for Peace, Fragile States Index 2016, data available at <http://fsi.fundforpeace.org>.

36. *Inter-agency Guidance: Supporting the Protection Needs of Child Labourers in Emergencies*, ILO and Plan International, Child Labour Task Force of the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, 2016.
37. ILO Recommendation 205 in this context acknowledges that such accommodation should be within the limits of national resources and capacity and with acknowledgement on the part of the international community of the importance of equitable burden- and responsibility-sharing. ILO: R205 - Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience Recommendation, 2017 (No. 205), adopted 106th ILC session, Geneva, 16 Jun 2017.
38. The relevant mechanisms include the Inter Agency Standing Committee, the Paris Principles Steering Group on children associated with armed forces and groups, the Child Labour Task Force of the inter-agency Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, and the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children.
39. ILO: R205 - Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience Recommendation, 2017 (No. 205), adopted 106th ILC session, Geneva, 16 Jun 2017.
40. For further information on impact evaluations relating to child labour, see J. de Hoop and F.C. Rosati, *The Complex Effects of Public Policy on Child Labour*, Understanding Children's Work Programme, working paper series, Rome, 2013.
41. See ILO: *Hard to see, harder to count: Survey guidelines to estimate forced labour of adults and children*, the ILO Special Action Programme to combat forced labour (SAP-FL) and the ILO International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), Geneva, 2012; and ILO: *Sampling elusive populations: Applications to studies of child labour* (<http://www.ilo.org/ipecinfo/product/download.do?type=document&id=25535>), Geneva, 2013.
42. The worst forms of child labour other than hazardous refer to Article 3(a) (c) of ILO Convention No. 182: "(a) 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 forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict; (b) the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances; and (c) the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties".
43. The ILO has taken the lead in this area through the development of National Action Plans and, through its Understanding Children's Work project, of Policy Appraisal reports.

