



Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations



PROMOTING PRODUCTIVE
EMPLOYMENT
AND DECENT WORK IN
RURAL AREAS

Lesson 5

Preventing and reducing child labour in agriculture

Text-only version

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Learning Objectives

At the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- define what is and what is not child labour;
- describe how the problem of child labour affects agriculture;
- explain the role of agricultural stakeholders in preventing and reducing child labour in agriculture;
- illustrate how to make policy and programmes effective in fighting child labour.

Introduction

The story of Diego...

Diego is 7 years old. Each morning he has to wake up at 4 o'clock to help his father at the coffee plantation. Travelling to the plantation takes one hour in the cold of the morning. Diego's main task is to pick the coffee berries. In the plantation, he is exposed daily to harsh conditions, such as glaring sun and pesticides. After a whole day of work, Diego must carry heavy bags and load them on the truck. The awkward postures and repetitive movements damage his small body day after day. He comes back home every day after sunset. Every night, he goes to bed tired and hungry. He dreams of playing with his friends and going to school.

Child labour in agriculture is a **global problem**, present in both developed and developing countries. It is a violation of children¹'s rights and is also impeding sustainable agricultural and rural development across the globe. The elimination of child labour in rural communities is a crucial priority within the decent work agenda, and requires action from agricultural stakeholders.

This lesson will provide an overview of the problem of child labour in agriculture and explain why and how to address this critical issue.

¹ According to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, a child is any person under the age of 18. The United Nations (UN) generally defines youth as persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years, so there is an overlap for 15-17 year olds, who are considered both children and youth.

What is and what is not child labour?



The Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), sets the general minimum age for admission to employment or work at 15 years.



The minimum age for admission to work

The **Minimum Age Convention, 1973** (No. 138), set the general minimum age for **admission to employment or work at 15 years**, with a possible exception for developing countries, who could choose at the time of ratification to set the minimum age at 14 years.

The Convention also approved the possibility of light work from 12/13 years for countries who define it in their national legislation.

The concept of **minimum age** for admission to employment is closely **linked to** that of completion of **compulsory schooling**. Art. 2.3 of the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), states that "the minimum age specified [...] shall not be less than the age of completion of compulsory schooling [...]."

Child labour refers to work that:

- interferes with compulsory schooling;
- is hazardous;
- engages children below the national minimum employment age;
- is mentally, physically, spiritually, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children.



Categories of children's work

Child labour is a subset of "children engaged in economic activity", a broad concept that encompasses most productive activities carried out by children, including unpaid and illegal work, as well as work in the informal economy. It includes both work that is acceptable and work that is considered child labour.

Child labour includes hazardous work (and the worst forms of child labour), as well as children in employment below the minimum age, and in some countries, children engaged in hazardous unpaid household services.

Worst forms of child labour (C182) are one form of child labour. These are:

- slavery and forced labour, including child trafficking and forced recruitment for armed conflict;
- the use of children in prostitution and pornography;
- the use of children in illicit activities; and
- any activity or work by children that, by its nature or conditions, is likely to harm their health, safety or morals - often referred to as "hazardous work".

Key international standards for child labour

The **Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138)** sets the minimum age for admission to different types of work, including light work, regular work and hazardous work.

The **Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182)**, defines the worst forms of child labour, which include hazardous work, generally prohibited for all children under the age of 18.

The **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Article 32, 1990**, states that it is "the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development".



Not all activities carried out by children are considered child labour.

Some activities may stimulate children's development and acquisition of skills and help to prepare them to be productive members of society during their adult life. Such activities can also contribute to their survival and food security.



Age appropriate tasks that are not hazardous and do not interfere with a child's education are not considered child labour.

These tasks include activities such as helping parents around the home or in the garden, assisting in a family business or earning pocket money outside school hours and during school holidays - as long as they do not go beyond the set limits.

Example: Are these children engaged in child labour?

 My name is Mosi. I am 15-years-old, and I have completed compulsory education. This summer I worked as a fisher on a deep-sea trawler, where I was responsible for shovelling ice onto fish and helping the cook.

 My name is Irene, I am 13-years-old and we live on the edge of a forest. I help my mother gather fruits and berries and collect medicinal herbs for one or two hours from time to time. I have understood how to recognize plants and learned their uses. I attend the village school regularly.

Mosi, despite having completed compulsory education and therefore being above the minimum age of employment, can be considered to be in child labour because his work is likely to be hazardous; ILO recommends the minimum age for employment in fishing vessels to be 16, given the specific challenges of this occupation. Irene seems to be engaged exclusively in non-hazardous tasks, for a few hours from time to time, and without jeopardizing her schooling: for her, this is a good way to learn important skills. From this information, we can say she is not engaged in child labour.

Summarizing, three criteria related to children and their tasks determine whether or not a child is engaged in child labour:

1. The age of the child (depending on the country and type of work);
2. Interference with education;
3. If the activities performed, or conditions under which they are undertaken, are hazardous (likely to harm the health, safety or morals of the child).

Child labour and agriculture

In agriculture, which is one of the most hazardous sectors, children work on farms, fishing boats, in plantations, mountain areas and raising livestock.

Rural children, especially girls, may also toil as domestic servants. These **children face many health and safety hazards** and are often **unable to attend school**. Exposure to hazards has a more severe impact on children's immature minds and bodies than on those of adults.



Agriculture is one of the most hazardous sectors to work in

Agriculture is one of the three most dangerous sectors to work in, in terms of work-related injury, illness and death. It is especially hazardous to children and young workers.

Agricultural work is physically demanding, often involving long periods of bending over, repetitive movements and carrying heavy loads over long distances. **Children may also operate machinery** built to be run by adults, and may **be exposed to hazardous chemicals**. Children often work in extreme temperatures, without appropriate protection, and lack access to safe drinking water.

Nearly 60% of child labourers worldwide – around 98 million boys and girls – are working in agriculture.

Child labour in agriculture exacts a massive economic and social cost on children, their families and society. This issue **requires urgent attention**, because it violates children’s rights. It also undermines the foundations of decent work and perpetuates rural poverty and food insecurity.

Child labour undermines the foundations of decent work

Today’s children are tomorrow’s young adults. Without adequate education, children are likely to be trapped in unskilled work and poverty when they grow up. Hazardous work can have lifelong health repercussions, affecting productivity and the ability to work. Child labour undermines workers’ rights, youth employment and adult wages. The abolition of child labour is a core labour standard. It is one of the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. Therefore, if it is child labour, it is not decent work.

How the four pillars of the decent work agenda can contribute to the elimination of child labour

Each one of the four pillars of the decent work agenda can contribute significantly to the elimination of child labour. Let’s see how:

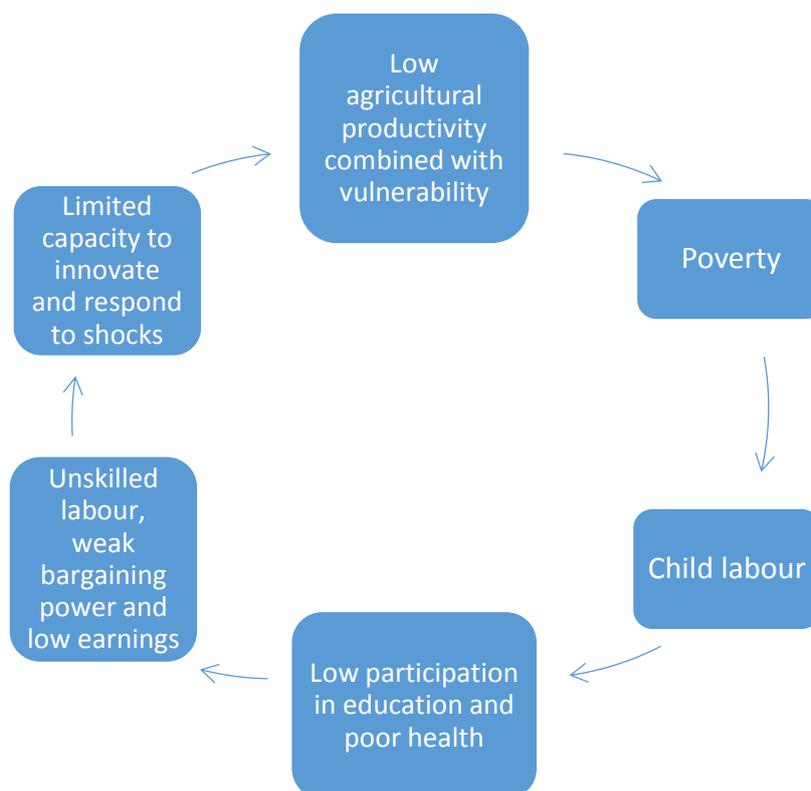
Employment creation and enterprise development

Access to employment opportunities for youth and adults contributes to reducing poverty and food insecurity – the root causes of child labour.

Social protection	Access to social protection ensures that households and children are better protected against shocks and other vulnerabilities that can impact school attendance and engagement in child labour.
Standards and rights at work	Respect for core labour standards ensures that legislation on child labour is enforced.
Governance and social dialogue	Effective social dialogue ensures respect for core labour rights, including collective bargaining agreements that ban child labour.

Child labour perpetuates rural poverty and food insecurity

Child labour harms children’s health, education and development, which impairs the human capital that is necessary to improve productivity for agricultural and rural development, perpetuating the **vicious cycle** of child labour.



Low agricultural productivity combined with vulnerability	Lack of innovation and ability to respond to shocks results in lower agricultural productivity and performance, as well as stagnant agricultural economies , which in turn perpetuates rural poverty.
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Poverty	While poverty is a main cause of child labour in agriculture, it is also a consequence of it.
Child labour	Low incomes and poverty often mean that children need to work to supplement family incomes and help meet basic household needs. As a result, they may be engaged in child labour.
Low participation in education and poor health	Child labour negatively impacts children’s school enrolment, attendance and educational achievement . Children’s short- and long-term health can also suffer . Agriculture is one of the three most dangerous sectors in terms of occupational safety and health, and the risks and hazards are even greater for children.
Unskilled labour, weak bargaining power and low earnings	Due to the negative impact on their health and education, former child labourers can find it harder to obtain decent work as youth or adults . They can be trapped in unskilled labour, where they have low wages, weak social protection and limited bargaining capacity.
Limited capacity to innovate and respond to shocks	Communities and agricultural and economic growth also suffer, as agricultural producers with poor education are less likely to adopt new technologies and practices , adapt to shocks such as food prices or climate change, allocate resources efficiently or manage the use of agrochemicals. Low levels of education may also lead to human resource shortages in key areas linked to agricultural production, processing or marketing.

Agricultural stakeholders have an important role to play

Although the Ministry of Labour and its authorities have the main responsibility for addressing child labour, **agricultural stakeholders**, such as such as Ministries of Agriculture and Rural Development, producers' organizations, researchers, and those advising such institutions, **have an important role to play**. This is because of their **unique characteristics**:

- wide network of institutions and staff at district and local levels, such as extensionists, agricultural researchers and producers' organizations;
- sectoral and technical knowledge on practices and solutions that could address the root causes of child labour;

- the capacity to communicate well to an agricultural audience, with arguments based on the economic and social costs of child labour, and the benefits of eliminating it;
- the ability to integrate child labour into sectoral policies and programmes, with the subsequent potential to achieve larger-scale interventions.

Agricultural stakeholders should work with other actors who are mandated to address child labour, such as education and labour stakeholders.

No single agency, organization or institution can resolve all challenges related to child labour.

Collaboration and coordination are essential between governments, employers' and workers' organizations, donors, community groups, businesses, producers' organizations and NGOs.



Why are collaboration and coordination important in fighting child labour?

Collaboration and coordination among different stakeholders are critical in fighting child labour because:

- consultation and input from various stakeholders help to ensure that actions at all levels (national, district and community) are coordinated in an integrated and coherent manner;
- coordination helps to maximize complementarities and linkages between different areas and strategies, such as encouraging the introduction of child labour-saving technologies, raising awareness of the importance of education in rural areas, and informing families, employers and communities of the risks and occupational hazards that children face;
- clarification of roles and responsibilities is fundamental (e.g. lead institution versus support institutions), and early establishment of coordination mechanisms can help to overcome common challenges.

The International Partnership for Cooperation on Child Labour in Agriculture.

Since 2007, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), on behalf of the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) and the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied

Workers' Associations (IUF) have worked together to scale up action to prevent and eliminate child labour in agriculture.

Since child labour is a complex issue, it is important to address it from a range of perspectives. **The Partnership brings together diverse areas of technical expertise to address child labour in agriculture and its root causes**, and to promote decent work for youth and adults as part of sustainable rural development.

How agricultural stakeholders can intervene

Agricultural stakeholders address child labour in agriculture by:

- participating in national and local mechanisms and initiatives to address child labour, so as to make them more responsive to agriculture.
- incorporating child labour into national agricultural and rural development policy, in line with national policy on child labour and international labour standards.
- designing and implementing agricultural programmes that address child labour in agriculture (maximizing benefits while minimizing negative side effects).

Participating in national and local mechanisms and initiatives to address child labour, so as to make them more responsive to agriculture

Agricultural stakeholders can participate in National Steering Committees on child labour in agriculture and contribute to National Action Plans and Hazardous Work Lists, to make them more effective in addressing child labour in agriculture.

The National Steering Committee on child labour is generally convened by the Ministry of Labour. In some countries, this function is carried out within child protection committees convened by the Ministry of Social Welfare, or the Ministry for Women's and Children's Affairs. The National Steering Committee's tasks include:

- establishing local/provincial multisectoral committees to promote collaboration and inform on communities' priorities;
- ensuring that child labour concerns are integrated into institutional policies, plans and programmes;
- guiding the implementation of the National Action Plan;

- supporting cooperation between partners and stakeholders; and
- guaranteeing policy coherence.

More than 50 countries have established **National Action Plans** on Child Labour to translate international and national standards on child labour into concrete policies, programmes and activities. National action plans:

- direct efforts across a range of thematic areas (e.g. decent work and youth employment, gender equality, education, agriculture, social welfare and child development);
- coordinate government actors, workers', employers' and producers' organizations and NGOs;
- identify priority areas for action and set targets; and
- mobilize resources towards the goal of eliminating child labour within a given time frame.



How to evaluate the effectiveness of a National Action Plan

When assessing the effectiveness of a National Action Plan (NAP) from the perspective of agriculture, consider the following:

- Was a consultative process adopted to draw up the NAP, involving participants concerned with agriculture?
- Is the NAP based on up-to-date information and statistics on the magnitude and characteristics of the child labour problem in agriculture and the geographical areas where different types of agriculture exist? Is it rooted in the realities of agriculture, as experienced by farmers and fishers of variously sized enterprises?
- Has a budget been formally allocated by each party?
- Is there a distinct strategy for child labour in agriculture? Are farming, fisheries and aquaculture, forestry and animal production treated separately - especially when they represent important economic sectors or secure livelihoods in the country?
- Do mechanisms exist for engaging and making links with other NAPs or strategies?

Hazardous Work Lists define what activities should be prohibited for children under the age of 18 and form part of national legislation. Countries are required by child labour conventions 138 and 182 to have, and periodically revise, national Hazardous Work Lists. The Hazardous Work Lists **include**

activities that are likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children. Risks to children's body, mind, morals and healthy development should all be taken into account.



How to ensure that agriculture is well covered in a Hazardous Work List

Ensure that the following stakeholders are involved:

- agricultural ministries;
- producers' organizations, including cooperatives;
- agricultural and rural workers' organizations, including plantation and informal workers in farming, forestry, livestock, fisheries and aquaculture.

Check that the list includes:

- formal and informal work, paid and unpaid work;
- types of work that are inherently dangerous, as well as working conditions that make it dangerous;
- tasks in farming, fishing, livestock and forestry, from production to marketing.

Check agricultural work activities that are often overlooked in laws and policies, for example:

- informal or small-scale farming or fishing enterprises, including subsistence or family agriculture;
- traditional livestock-raising economies (e.g. camel or yak-herding);
- newer forms of agriculture (e.g. fish farms, seaweed farming);
- occupations that support agriculture (e.g. fodder chopping, collecting manure);
- forestry (e.g. cutting or hauling brush, cutting wood to make charcoal).

Remember: avoid including whole occupations, but rather list the specific activities or tasks within the main occupations that pose a substantial risk.

Examples from Hazardous Work Lists of countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America

Work fishing at sea and in lagoons; night fishing, deep-sea diving in lagoons and coastal areas or rivers; handling and application of chemical products.

Work in slaughterhouses or abattoirs; work in barns, stables or corrals without adequate sanitation; work in contact with animal waste, decaying animals, glands, viscera, blood, bones or hair.

Transporting or handling toxic products, applying chemical fertilizers, treating seeds, threshing.
Work before 5.00 a.m. or after 6.00 p.m. (or 9.00 p.m. if the child is over 15 and does not have school the next day); working over 40 hours a week, or 20 hours a week during school term; any activity involving dangerous machinery; handling plants or soil immediately after application of agricultural chemicals or during any other period specified on chemical labels; handling tobacco.
Uprooting trees with a diameter of over 40 cm; felling big trees, cutting high branches; transporting trunks of wood, loading and unloading them by hand; floating rafts on rivers with waterfalls; felling, catching and lifting timber from under water by hand; gathering and rolling timber over shore.

Incorporating child labour into national agricultural and rural development policy

A useful starting point is to **assess agricultural policies** to evaluate if they 1) **explicitly address child labour** and 2) are conducive to **reducing** child labour.



How to evaluate if agricultural policies are conducive to reducing child labour

To evaluate if agricultural policies are conducive to reducing child labour, consider the following questions:

- Do agricultural policies aim to improve rural livelihoods or reduce vulnerability to risk?
- Do policies promote practices or technologies to reduce the labour demand for tasks typically undertaken by children or to make agricultural work safer?
- Are youth of legal working age supported in accessing productive resources?

Policy coherence is particularly important in order to adopt a comprehensive and holistic approach to child labour. Policies concerning education, social protection, labour markets, labour legislation and enforcement, sustainable agriculture and rural development are all relevant.

Child labour in agriculture is a cross-cutting issue and national legislative responsibility often lies with many different line ministries and institutions.

Example: A Cambodian government initiative against child labour

The Government of Cambodia serves as an example of a successful approach to mainstreaming child labour issues in fisheries and aquaculture policy. In October 2011, a National Consultation to Combat Child Labour in the Fisheries Sector was held, involving representatives from relevant ministries and employers' and workers' organizations, to identify strategies and areas for action and develop a draft National Plan of Action (NPA) on Eliminating Child Labour in the Fisheries Sector of Cambodia. The plan outlines specific steps to address child labour in the fisheries and aquaculture sector and indicates who is responsible for each of them.

In addition, the Government has included child labour elimination targets in fishing communities as part of the 10-year Strategic Planning Framework for Fisheries and incorporated child labour concerns in the Cambodia Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CAMCODE). The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries is now developing a Policy and Strategic Framework on Childhood Development and Protection in the Agriculture Sector 2016 - 2020, which will address child labour beyond fisheries and across agriculture



See Annex 1: Checklist: Have child labour issues been integrated in an agricultural policy or strategy?

See Annex 2: Checklist: Are agricultural policies supportive of child labour elimination efforts?

Designing and implementing agricultural programmes that address child labour in agriculture

Agricultural programmes can have an important impact in addressing the root causes of child labour, because they can address the factors of supply and demand, as well as the hazards associated with agricultural work.



Supply factors

Supply factors, also known as **push factors**, refer to the household situations and decisions that result in children becoming available for work. They commonly include:

- **Household poverty:** in order to meet basic needs such as food security, families may rely on children to supplement household income;

- **Limited access to schools:** with a shortage of schools in rural areas, children may not be able to access education. Where schools do exist, commutes may be long and dangerous. Limited access to schools pushes children into other activities, such as work;
- **Perceived irrelevance of education:** perceived irrelevance of education for future employment and income prospects may convince parents or households not to make long-term investments, such as schooling or training, but instead to engage in short-term income-generating solutions through labour;
- **Coping with shocks:** to cope with shocks, such as a failed harvest, death of livestock or the illness or loss of breadwinners, children can be pushed into work earlier than planned, to deal with the economic impact or loss of labour;
- **Way of life and poor awareness of hazards:** children's participation in agriculture is considered a way of life - necessary to pass on skills and knowledge and characterized by a poor awareness of hazards.

Demand factors

Demand factors, also known as **pull factors**, contribute to the creation of employment opportunities for children. The main pull factors are:

- **Cheap labour:** employers seeking cheap labour increase the demand for children, as they are often unpaid or their wages are lower than adults;
- **Insufficient adult/youth labour supply:** insufficient labour supply (of youth and adults) at peak times (e.g. for weeding, transplanting crops, or harvesting fish) increases the demand for child labour;
- **Quotas or piecework:** quotas or piecework based on family work units put pressure on parents and guardians to involve children in production to meet targets;
- **Low productivity:** low productivity of small farms and rural enterprises operating with very small margins increases the demand for cheap or free labour. Children may be used and assigned hazardous tasks;
- **Housing requirement:** on some plantations, it is a requirement that children work in order to live with their families in plantation housing;

- **Nimble fingers:** the perception that children's nimble fingers are suited to delicate tasks, such as flower cutting or fixing fishing nets, makes their labour seem desirable;
- **Docile workers:** children are considered to be more docile than adult workers. Since they seem to be more easily managed, they can be in greater demand.

In every agricultural programme, entry points can be identified.



How to identify entry points to address child labour in agricultural programmes

A prerequisite for choosing the best entry points to integrate child labour in different types of agricultural programmes should be an analysis of the child labour situation in a given agricultural context, taking the scope of the programme into account. Below are some possible entry points and recommendations for this purpose:

- **Consider child labour concerns in programme targeting:** when considering child labour concerns in targeting, include households whose children are in child labour, or at risk of being engaged in child labour, in the criteria for beneficiaries. Consider rates of child labour prevalence when choosing the geographical areas or type of agricultural production that the programme is to target, and draw on available secondary data, or the programme baseline survey, to target these areas or households;
- **Address factors that lead to a supply of child labour** (i.e. cause a household to send a child to work): by improving rural livelihoods and promoting decent work for youth and adults in rural areas, agricultural programmes can address 'push' factors (e.g. poverty, vulnerability and food insecurity). Social protection interventions to promote schooling, or make education more accessible and attractive to rural communities, can also reduce the supply of child labour;
- **Address labour market or technology factors that create a demand for child labour:** by promoting access to labour-saving technologies and practices, agricultural programmes can reduce the need for human power to carry out agricultural tasks and, as a consequence, lower the demand for child labour;
- **Reduce hazards for children of legal working age:** by promoting safer agricultural technologies and practices and safer organization of agricultural production

processes and workplaces, agricultural stakeholders can help to reduce child labour and create a safer, healthier work environment for all, which will also be more efficient and productive;

- **Raise awareness of child labour among producers and communities:** in many communities, especially in remote areas, there may be low levels of awareness of child labour and its consequences, as well as of what can be done to prevent and reduce it. This is the case for producers and others along the value chain, such as processors and suppliers of agricultural inputs, as well as for families. Integrating awareness raising of child labour into a programme's activities can be an important first step in mobilizing action;
- **Build capacity of extension agents or facilitation teams on child labour:** strengthening the capacities of rural institutions and those involved in agricultural extension and facilitation can help them to raise awareness of child labour, provide advice to producers and families seeking to develop solutions and participate in monitoring;
- **Do no harm:** this entry point aims to ensure that the agricultural programme does not inadvertently encourage or provide incentives for child labour. To achieve this, the programme must implement effective mitigation measures;
- **Integrate child labour in the programme's monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system:** in order to measure the programme's impact on child labour elimination, child labour must be integrated in the programme's M&E system. M&E and data collection of other sectoral programmes can also be an entry point for understanding the wider scope of impacts on child labour in agriculture;
- **Support participation of agricultural stakeholders in local child labour monitoring systems:** agricultural programmes and stakeholders may already be involved in monitoring activities - for example, monitoring natural resources or food quality, or may visit remote areas to provide extension services. By keeping an eye out for child labour, in collaboration with local committees or social services, they can make an important contribution.

Using these entry points, **child labour considerations can be integrated into each stage of an agricultural programme:** problem analysis and identification, formulation, appraisal and approval, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.



Considering child labour from the outset when developing the Theory of Change and the Logical Framework will provide the programme with a strong start.

Example: How an agricultural programme can address child labour

Let's consider a **programme that supports irrigation** and involves a large water storage tank. Before, the only water source was a long way from the villages, and households used children to fetch water for domestic use, provide drinking water to animals and irrigate the fields and home gardens. This programme wanted **to raise awareness of child labour** by including it as a topic in its farmer training sessions, and by providing advice on how to include child labour in the by-laws of producers' organizations.

During the design stage, the **programme considered** geographical areas where children and their families were a long way from water sources and reviewed the available data to see **to what extent child labour** in these areas **was linked to water**. The programme design took into account not only technology for the transportation of irrigation water to the fields, but also **the provision of safe drinking water closer to household and animal watering points**. This both reduced the need for children to herd animals and cut the time spent by children collecting water for crops and household use.

FAO programmes have to comply with **FAO's Environmental and Social Management Guidelines**, which include a specific section on child labour prevention and reduction. Programme managers should take this into account when designing and implementing their programmes.

Requirements of policy and programmes to be effective in fighting child labour

Let's see what the main conditions are for making policy and programmes effective in fighting child labour.



Policies and programmes should be based on sound information

Reliable and rigorous data are fundamental for formulating policy and programmes that address child labour, and for providing arguments for policy action and budgeting for child labour programmes. Data should answer the following questions:

- What is the extent of children's involvement in child labour in agriculture?
- Who are these children and what do they do?
- When do children work? (e.g. time of day, season)
- Where do these children work? (e.g. geographical location and type of production)
- How does work in agriculture affect children's health, education and learning?
- Why do children work in agriculture?

Databases, sources of statistics and information on child labour in agriculture are available online or by request. In some cases, data on child labour in agriculture may already be processed and analysed in reports and studies. In other cases, only raw data may exist, and further processing and analysis will be necessary to generate the information required. When existing data are inadequate to inform policy and programming, new information on child labour in agriculture must be generated. This can be done by analysing existing data, Integrating child labour into existing data collection mechanisms and including child labour components in new research.

Analysing existing data

In some cases, you can generate information on child labour in agriculture without needing to embark on additional data collection, simply by processing data already contained in survey datasets. Countries commonly collect socio-economic and demographic data through periodic household-based sample surveys, which may contain the data needed.



Existing data and data collection mechanisms

In most countries, socio-economic and demographic data are periodically collected through population censuses, labour force surveys, living standards measurement surveys, household budget and expenditure surveys and demographic and health surveys.

Likewise, countries often undertake periodic agriculture censuses, integrated agriculture surveys, agricultural baseline studies or enterprise surveys covering

agriculture entities. Sub-sector specific surveys in fisheries, livestock and forestry are also carried out.

Databases for multiple countries are also available. For example, the Statistical Information and Monitoring on Child Labour (SIMPOC) and Understanding Children's Work child labour survey datasets can be used to generate statistics on child labour in agriculture.

Responses on children's engagement in agricultural activities can be matched with responses to other questions in the survey. This can help to gain insight into, for example, the background factors associated with agricultural child labour, exposure to hazardous conditions and the health and educational consequences of agricultural child labour. Such information is valuable in its own right, and is also useful for identifying priority areas for follow-up qualitative research.

Integrating child labour into existing data collection mechanisms

Regular national data collection activities may already contain the necessary data that can be fully exploited. In other cases, they may require adaptation to be used as entry points for collecting additional data on child labour in agriculture. This can be achieved by introducing child labour questions and child labour modules. Gathering data on child labour through regular collection instruments can be helpful in obtaining time series and being able to track changes in child labour statistics over time.

Including child labour components in new research

Sometimes, analysis using existing data sources and the integration of child labour related questions into regular data collection activities is not enough to provide sufficient information on the child labour situation. Also, such analysis may not provide information on viable alternatives to children's engagement in agricultural activities. In these cases, additional research and data collection is needed.



Viable alternatives to children's engagement in agricultural activities

Research is needed not only on the child labour situation, but also on viable alternatives. Agricultural researchers can:

In their research on technology and innovation:

- look into child labour-saving technologies and practices, or safer technologies and practices;
- include the impact on child labour in their impact assessments;
- prioritize the adaptation of labour-saving technologies for tasks that children are typically engaged in, and which prevent them from going to school.

In their evaluations of programmes and policies:

- evaluate programme impact focusing on assessing whether a particular technology/practice/programme/policy had an effect on different outcomes in a target group; and,
- identify agricultural practices that are 'good' from a child labour standpoint.

Integrating child labour concerns into agricultural and rural development and poverty research would be a valuable step forward in providing a knowledge base for the development of socially sustainable agricultural policy and coherent, multi-stakeholder action.



How to evaluate or conduct a study on child labour

When evaluating or conducting a study on child labour in agriculture, it is important to:

- clearly identify the definition of child labour and of children in employment adopted in a given study;
- understand which data source(s) the report is based on, and whether the data are representative of the country as a whole, or of specific regions/provinces/cities or other subnational areas;
- ensure that the study provides a detailed profile of the children working in agriculture;
- ensure that data are disaggregated (e.g. by age and sex);
- examine the findings in detail and do not rely only on the summary, since here the findings are more likely to be presented with an unintended bias. For example, the author may highlight one cash crop as an example, whereas children may actually be heavily involved in other agricultural activities that receive less public attention;
- look carefully into details when gender dimensions are discussed. Statements such as "boys are more involved in X and girls in Y" often gloss over the involvement of

each in agricultural or domestic activities. For example, more boys may work in agriculture than girls, but agriculture might still be the primary economic activity of girls. If the statistics on each are not taken into account, one might miss the substantial involvement of girls in agriculture. As another example, more girls may undertake domestic activities and for longer hours than boys, but boys might still be involved in specific activities (e.g. water and fuel collection).



Individual and institutional capacity should be developed

Enhancement of individual and organizational capacities is essential to promote sustainable and productive agriculture, improve livelihoods and ultimately break the cycle of poverty and end child labour in agriculture.

Capacity development on child labour in agriculture is necessary at all levels (national, regional and local), and should involve **public and private entities**.

Community awareness and buy-in are also essential for achieving sustainable solutions and to ensure monitoring. Sustainable elimination of child labour in agriculture requires **having all stakeholders on board**, and their being sensitized and better equipped.



How to organize capacity development for stakeholders and institutions

While all stakeholders need to understand similar messages, such as the difference between child labour and tasks that are acceptable for children, and recognize good practices to address the issue, you should **customize the learning objectives** based on the role, responsibilities and influence of different organizations.

After defining the learning objectives, it is important to outline the learning path and **identify the training materials available** to fill the gaps between existing capacities and capacity needs. In recent years, FAO and ILO have developed a range of useful knowledge and training materials on child labour in agriculture.

Remember: developing capacity is an ongoing process. It does not end with a stand-alone training initiative or intervention. It is a cycle of improvement and empowerment, which requires follow-up to ensure that skills learned can be applied.

To maximize cost-effectiveness, identify opportunities to integrate child labour into existing capacity development interventions. When including child labour issues in existing curricula:

1. review topics and materials used in training initiatives and identify how to integrate child labour issues.
2. choose training tools and adapt them to cultural and economic contexts, social norms, and to farming, fishing and aquaculture, forestry, livestock production.
3. mentor or coach child labour focal points in agricultural ministries, producers' organizations or other development or community-based organizations.
4. identify and implement strategies for expansion and sustainability.

In addition to integrating child labour concerns into capacity development activities for individuals, it is important to transform this knowledge into **institutional mechanisms** to address child labour in agriculture in the long term. Sustainability can only be achieved if child labour concerns are institutionalized in the operational procedures of ministries (agriculture, labour, education) and in private businesses.

The knowledge should not disappear with staff turnover, but must become **embedded in policies and procedures**. To ensure sustainability and **institutionalization** of capacity:

- include guidance on child labour issues in operational procedures of the ministry or organization;
- incorporate child labour concerns in guidelines and training for agricultural extension workers, facilitators of Farmer Field Schools, inspection officers and occupational safety and health workers;
- introduce tasks related to child labour in job descriptions and related performance indicators in performance evaluation systems of staff and contractors;
- include child labour indicators in planning and monitoring systems of agricultural ministries, agricultural research institutes and project implementers (i.e. indicators on specific hazards and child labour situations, indicators on the impact of labour-saving technologies and practices on child labour and school attendance);
- establish child labour reduction targets and indicators in strategic national frameworks and programmes.



Communication should be effective

Presentation of convincing arguments is essential to integrate child labour concerns into policies and programmes of different organizations (e.g. government institutions, workers', employers' and producers' organizations, UN and donor agencies, NGOs). When designing an advocacy plan, consider the following steps:

1. **Identify your audience** and the different entry points and arguments you can use to convince them of the importance of preventing child labour in agriculture;
2. **Prepare arguments** to persuade audiences who are hesitant in addressing the issue;
3. **Adapt your communication approach** to different stakeholders;
4. **Identify potential champions** to support your advocacy work.

In addition to appealing to stakeholders' humanity and the desire to protect children and give them a better future, you can also refer to their interests or institutional mandate.



Refer to stakeholders' interests or institutional mandate

When talking to government officials, for example in the Ministry of Agriculture, you should highlight the **link between child labour prevention and labour productivity**.

The argument should focus on agricultural development, which requires that children receive an education which will allow them to run a more profitable farm or processing business, or be more skilled and safer agricultural workers. Low levels of education also limit the acquisition of higher level skills and decrease the pool of human resources available to provide key services, such as veterinary services, to agriculture.

Children working in agriculture are exposed to a range of hazards that are potentially harmful to their health and, as a consequence, to their short- and long-term productivity and development of the agriculture sector.

Child labour may also negatively impact investment and market access, because business and trade partners are often reluctant to purchase products made using child labour.



The results and impact of agricultural initiatives on child labour in agriculture should be monitored and evaluated

Including child labour in M&E systems helps agricultural programmes to make an early evaluation of the impacts of interventions. It also helps to ensure that corrective and preventive action is taken and to understand what works, what doesn't, and why. This is important for the social sustainability of programmes. In particular, M&E information can help agricultural organizations to:

- understand the social impacts of their programmes;
- report on the progress made towards meeting their commitments on child labour elimination;
- identify and document child labour smart practices in agriculture;
- provide evidence to support policy revisions, if needed.

M&E also helps to demonstrate the efforts made by agricultural stakeholders, such as producers and agricultural companies, in ensuring child labour free production. This may provide a competitive advantage in the context of increasing demand for labour rights compliance in consumer markets.

For guidance and tools, please consult the [FAO-SLE, M&E handbook on measuring the impact of agricultural programmes on child labour](#).



Impacts of agricultural programmes on child labour

Impacts of agricultural programmes and policies on child labour can be **direct or indirect, positive or negative**.

An intended result could, for example, be child labour reduction, achieved through the introduction of a child labour free certification scheme.

Another intended result could be a reduction in demand for child labour, resulting from improved management of an agricultural irrigation system.

An unintended result could be that a new irrigation system is poorly designed, leading to an increased demand for child labour to aid in water distribution or to support the expansion of agricultural activities

Conclusion

...the story of Diego

Each morning Diego has to wake up at 6 o'clock to go to school. On his way to school he meets his friends to ride their bicycles together, chatting about their game of football last night. Diego is one of the best students in his class. He really likes reading and he is a very curious student. In the afternoon, Diego goes back home. He does his homework, play with his brothers and helps mother fed the chickens. Diego dreams of being a farmer like his father, but he dreams of being innovative and maybe even inventing a new technology to improve the coffee harvest. His life seems promising and full of possibilities, building on a happy and healthy childhood.

Summary

Child labour in agriculture is a global problem. It harms children's health and wellbeing and also negatively impacts the agricultural sector and rural communities.

Agricultural stakeholders, including government officials, policy and programme advisors, producers' organizations, researchers and civil society, have a significant role to play in preventing and reducing child labour in agriculture, working together with others.

The main actions they can take are:

- participating in national and local mechanisms and initiatives to address child labour, so as to make them more responsive to agriculture;
- incorporating child labour into national agricultural and rural development policy, in line with national policy on child labour and international labour standards;
- designing and implementing agricultural programmes that address child labour in agriculture.

To make **policies and programmes effective** in fighting child labour, agricultural stakeholders should:

- base policies and programmes on sound information;
- develop individual and institutional capacity;
- develop an effective communication strategy;
- monitor and evaluate the results and impact of agricultural initiatives on child labour in agriculture.

Annex 1 - Checklist: Have child labour issues been integrated in an agricultural policy or strategy?

CHECKLIST	
National child labour statistics are considered in the problem analysis.	<input type="checkbox"/>
National child labour policies or legislation are included in the normative background.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child labour reduction objectives included in national overarching strategies (e.g. poverty reduction) are referenced.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child labour reduction is identified as a priority area.	<input type="checkbox"/>
A policy statement on child labour is included.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child labour is included as a cross-cutting issue.	<input type="checkbox"/>
If a cross-cutting issue, concrete objectives, actions, indicators and budget are included.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child labour concerns are considered in the corresponding implementation plan.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child labour indicators and targets are included in the monitoring and evaluation plan.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Budget allocation is sufficient to achieve child labour objectives.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Linkages are made with other relevant areas, including education. For example: in terms of location of schools, integrating agriculture into curriculum content and provisions for vocational training in agriculture (e.g. Farmer Field Schools).	<input type="checkbox"/>

Annex 2 - Checklist: Are agricultural policies supportive of child labour elimination efforts?

Does the policy:

CHECKLIST	
specifically target households vulnerable to child labour?	<input type="checkbox"/>
promote practices or technologies to make agricultural work safer?	<input type="checkbox"/>
promote practices or technologies to reduce the labour demand for tasks typically undertaken by children?	<input type="checkbox"/>
aim to improve rural livelihoods or reduce vulnerability to risk?	<input type="checkbox"/>
aim to improve rural infrastructure?	<input type="checkbox"/>
set minimum age limits for work in agriculture that are in line with ILO Conventions and in line with tasks included in the national hazardous work list?	<input type="checkbox"/>
provide for monitoring and inspection of all agricultural enterprises for instances of child labour?	<input type="checkbox"/>
outline where child labour cases may be reported, the judicial structures that will try such cases, and the penalties for utilizing child labour, especially in hazardous conditions?	<input type="checkbox"/>

It is also important to check whether policies might have a negative effect, indirectly contributing to an increase in child labour or undermining efforts to eliminate it. For example:

Does the policy:

CHECKLIST	
promote the use of substances, such as pesticides, which are hazardous to children's health?	<input type="checkbox"/>
provide inputs, subsidies or support for additional income-generating activities without considering the impact on labour demand?	<input type="checkbox"/>