



Work: No Child's Business – Framework of Collaboration November 2023

We hereby present our framework of collaboration; defined together as the Work: No Child's Business Alliance to make a strong and lasting contribution to the elimination of child labour.

Introduction

The Work: No Child's Business Alliance (WNCB) is run by Save the Children Netherlands, UNICEF Netherlands and the Stop Child Labour Coalition, together with partner organizations and country offices in Cote d'Ivoire, India, Jordan, Mali, Uganda and Viet Nam. Through our collaboration, we join hands to exchange our knowledge, network and methodologies where possible to strengthen local, national and global initiatives in our joint fight against child labour. We work together with communities, schools, governments, civil society organizations, trade unions and private actors, bringing sustainable solutions for children and their families.

WNCB sees the need for accelerated action to address the upward trend in child labour. 160 million children across the world are still in child labour and due to the COVID-19 crisis 8.9 million more children will likely have been engaged in child labour by the end of 2022¹. This makes the fight against child labour, linked to quality education for all children and decent work for youth and adults, even more important.

Shared vision

All children and youth are free from child labour and enjoy their rights to quality education and (future) decent work.

Overall goal

Collaboratively addressing the root causes of child labour and ensuring relevant stakeholders (civil society, governments and businesses) take their responsibility to protect and fulfil children's rights.

Definition of child labour

Any form of work performed by children under the age of 15 that interferes with their right to formal education, and/or that is mentally, physically, socially and morally dangerous and harmful to their health and development, as well as any form of hazardous work performed by children between 15 and 18 years old.

¹ Child Labour: Global estimates 2020, trends and the road forward - ILO and UNICEF, 2021

Mandate

We promote and strengthen children's rights based on the combined mandate of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and on the ILO Conventions 138 and 182.

- [The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child \(1989\)](#)
- [The ILO Convention 138 on the Minimum Age for Employment \(1973\)](#)
- [The ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour \(1999\)](#)

We take into account that in certain countries the legal minimum age for children to work is under the age of 15.

Rationale

Key reasons why children are working and not going to school are poverty, social norms and traditions, social exclusion and discrimination, poor functioning education and child protection systems, and weak laws and/or law enforcement by government. The lack of responsibility of (global) supply chain actors leading to poor labour conditions, low wages and low prices, the lack of decent work for adults and failing labour inspections also contribute to the persistence of child labour. Socio-political factors, crises (like COVID-19), inflation and natural disasters can further impact child labour and need to be addressed to tackle the issue.

We see that child labour and education are inextricably linked. Child labour acts as a major barrier to education, affecting both attendance and performance in school, while improving access to quality education has great potential to reduce child labour. Education can however also be a push-factor for child labour when the quality is insufficient. Therefore, it is important to not only focus on access to education, but also on improving the quality of education.

We underline that poverty is not only a root cause but also a consequence of child labour. Children who work and do not go to school and/or are not prepared to enter decent employment, will end up in low paid jobs, and so will their children – which means the vicious cycle of poverty continues.

Guiding principles

- No child up to the age of 15 is in child labour. Youth between 15 and 18 years old are protected from being engaged in hazardous labour.
- All children up to the age of 15 attend formal quality education. Youth between 15 and 18 years old are supported to pursue further formal education or vocational training leading to decent age-appropriate work. Bridge schooling or any other form of non-formal education for children up to the age of 15 should serve to prepare them to (re)enter the formal education system. Any form of non-formal education for children between 15 – 18 years old is only supported in case formal education is not available or viable.
- Governments remain responsible for protecting children's rights in their fight against child labour by developing and enforcing relevant laws and policies, by making sufficient budget provisions for education and child protection systems, and by expanding social services.

- Businesses should abide by the [UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#) and [OECD guidelines for Multinational Enterprises on Responsible Business Conduct](#).

Approach

We realize change by implementing an integrated area-based and supply chain approach:

The **area-based approach** is applied in high incidence areas to tackle child labour at the root. We work with all relevant stakeholders at the local level around the norm that 'no child should work – every child must be in school'. Children, youth, parents, teachers and community-based advocates organize themselves within their communities to claim their rights and call on local governments to strengthen child protection systems, provide public services including accessible and quality education and market relevant vocational training, as well as livelihood support.

The **supply chain approach** is applied in high incidence sectors to tackle child labour in international and domestic supply chains. We urge and support companies to display responsible business conduct and improve their due diligence processes to eliminate and prevent child labour throughout their whole supply chain, from first suppliers to deeper tiers, including sourcing and production areas where child labour is often more hidden and in informal settings as work is being outsourced and home-based.

To eradicate all forms of child labour we need to work together on all levels. Where possible and relevant, in areas where children are (also) working in (inter)national supply chains, we implement an **integrated area-based and supply chain approach**. This means that we engage with the respective (inter)national supply chain actors to take effective measures to ban child labour in their sourcing and production sites, while at the same time linking up to community-based efforts to tackle all forms of child labour, addressing the root causes and providing viable alternatives. We seek cooperation with national governments, who have an obligation to protect child rights and are key in setting and reinforcing relevant policies and legislation regarding child labour, responsible business conduct, education, youth economic empowerment and social security.

With this integrated approach we aim at systemic and sustainable change, ensuring that children are not moving from one sector to another, and/or start working in hidden or worst forms of child labour. We aim at protecting and fulfilling the rights of all children, offering better perspectives of entering decent employment when they have the appropriate age and breaking cycles of poverty for next generations.

Inclusion and gender equality

In our way of working, we ensure that girls and boys, women and men - without distinctions of caste, religion, disability or any other forms of discrimination and exclusion -- participate in and influence all programme activities including decision-making. We make sure they feel safe and empowered to share their views. We will engage men and boys as key stakeholders to promote gender equality and inclusion and to address gender-specific discrimination and disadvantages.

Reflection and learning

This integrated approach is tailor-made to best address specific problems in varied and diverse contexts. We continuously reflect, learn from evaluations and research as well as from each other and partners, adapt our strategies in response to crises and lessons learned and innovate to strengthen our programme. We seek to mobilize support and collaboration with other organizations to accelerate action and increase impact.

Strategies

Within our integrated approach we apply various complementary strategies:

- Change norms and mobilise all stakeholders.
- Strengthen child protection systems at all levels.
- Establish child labour free zones.
- Engage with government to ensure formal quality education for all children.
- Engage with government to ensure adequate laws and policies are in place to support business to eliminate child labour.
- Empower all stakeholders (schools, teachers, children and families) to increase enrolment and retention in education.
- Engage with private sector to ensure proper due diligence and application of the Children's Rights and Business principles.
- Support economic empowerment of youth.
- Increase livelihoods and self-efficacy of families and communities.
- Apply evidence-based lobby and advocacy.

Added value of the Alliance

As an Alliance we have developed good constructive collaboration, with each organization – UNICEF, Save the Children and the Stop Child Labour coalition² – working from its own experience and expertise. UNICEF and Save the Children work with holistic approaches as broader child rights organizations and Stop Child Labour has a specific focus on eliminating child labour. UNICEF adds value to the Alliance as UN organization and formal partner of the government in the countries where we work. UNICEF's dialogue with government is based on evidence, strong data collection and making use of practical examples of successful action at the community level. Save the Children has a strong presence in communities, and good relations with companies and governments, which ensures a solid position to act as linking pin and to bring cases from communities to feed lobby and advocacy at district and national level. UNICEF and Save the Children both work on strengthening child protection systems at local and national level, to reach more children and scale up action. In addition, Save the Children has a specific focus on youth between the age of 15 - 18, ensuring viable options to prepare them to enter decent employment. Stop Child Labour focuses on the younger age group of children until 15 years of age, enabling them to access formal quality education while working at the same time with their families to strengthen their socio-economic position. Stop Child Labour also has a strong presence in the communities, working with NGOs, trade unions and

² Stop Child Labour is a coalition of Arisa, Cordaid, the General Union for Education (Algemene Onderwijsbond), Hivos, Stichting Kinderpostzegels Nederland, and Mondiaal FNV (Mondiaal FNV is not participating in WNCB).

community-based organizations, and engaging all stakeholders, towards the creation of child labour free zones.

The Alliance partners as such can work in different locations, not necessarily all present, but still bound to the same guiding principles and aligned through linking & learning. They complement each other, join forces and scale up action e.g. by bringing cases from the communities to the national level. UNICEF, Save the Children and Stop Child Labour each implement their own unique set of strategies, together create synergies, have a greater reach and more power, and thus as an Alliance have a strong added value in the fight against child labour.

In sum

No child should work. Every child has a right to quality education and (future) decent work. A world without child labour is possible if everyone abides by these principles. By working together, seemingly insurmountable challenges can be overcome. We are committed and prepared to continue our efforts towards eradicating all forms of child labour, bringing about systemic and sustainable change.