

# Child Labour

## Principle:

*Child labour is a violation of fundamental human rights. The participation of children or adolescents below the minimum age for admission to employment in work that does affect their health and personal development or interfere with their schooling, is generally regarded as being something negative.*

## Key message:

*The interests of the child should be put first.*

## Definition

*“Child labour is defined as work that is hazardous to a child’s health and development, demands too many hours and/or is performed by children who are too young. Usually, child labour interferes with a child’s right to education and to play.”<sup>1</sup>*

## Defining child labour

Not all work done by children should be classified as child labour. Children’s or adolescents’ participation in work that does not affect their health and personal development or interfere with their schooling, is generally regarded as being something positive. Thus, child labour is often defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development.

It refers to work that:

- Is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and
- Interferes with their schooling by:

## Facts:

- Roughly 160 million children were subjected to child labour at the beginning of 2020, with 9 million additional children at risk due to the impact of COVID-19.<sup>2</sup>
- Nearly 1 in 10 children are subjected to child labour worldwide, with some forced into hazardous work through trafficking.<sup>3</sup>
- Child labour is mainly an agricultural issue in many countries.
- Worldwide 60% of all child labourers in the age group 5-17 years work in agriculture, including farming, fishing, aquaculture, forestry and livestock.<sup>4</sup>

## Hazardous Activity

Hazardous activity is work that jeopardises the physical, mental or moral well-being of a child, either because of its nature or because of the conditions in which it is carried out. The following

<sup>1</sup> International Labour Organisation. n.d. Child labour. <https://www.ilo.org/topics/child-labour#:~:text=Not%20all%20work%20performed%20by,to%20education%20and%20to%20play.>

<sup>2</sup> UNICEF. n.d. Child labour. <https://www.unicef.org/protection/child-labour#:~:text=Roughly%20160%20million%20children%20were,endangers%20their%20health%20and%20development.>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> International Labour Organization. n.d. Child labour in agriculture. <https://www.ilo.org/international-programme-elimination-child-labour-ipecc/sectors-and-topics/child-labour-agriculture#:~:text=In%20many%20countries%20child%20labour,98%20million%20girls%20and%20boys.>



- Depriving them of the opportunity to attend school;
- Obliging them to leave school prematurely; or
- Requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work.

## What is a child worker?

- This is the employment of someone under the age of 15, or under the national minimum age, whichever is higher.
- In certain cases, children above the age of 13 (if in accordance with the local minimum age) can be employed in some forms of light work.
- Where permitted under ILO C138, children aged between 15 and 18 may be employed – these are called ‘young workers.’
- Young workers cannot be employed in hazardous activity, and safeguards must be in place to protect their health and development.

## What is expected at sites?

### (a) Age verification

- Employers may check and ensure the age of their workers by requesting for copies of their identity cards, birth certificates, as well as school diplomas and further compare them with original documents.
- Perform a medical examination. However, care should always be taken to respect the person’s right to privacy.

(b) Site should have SOPs in place to ensure that everyone employed is over the required minimum age. These should include:

- Child labour and young worker policies;
- Procedures for proving worker ages before employment;
- Employment records, including evidence of worker ages;
- A child labour remediation action plan.

are examples of hazardous work according to the ILO:

- Work which exposes children to physical, psychological, or sexual abuse;
- Work underground, underwater, at dangerous heights, or in confined spaces;
- Work with dangerous machinery, equipment, and tools, or which involves the manual handling or transport of heavy loads;
- Work in an unhealthy environment which may, for example, expose children to hazardous substances, agents, or processes, or to temperatures, noise levels, or vibrations, damaging to their health;
- Work under particularly difficult conditions such as work for long hours or during the night or work where the child is unreasonably confined to the premises of the employer.

## Remediation

- (a) In case violations to this policy are found, the following steps must be followed:
- In case the worker is under 15 years of age or under the legal minimum age for employment, the labour agreement will be terminated as soon as possible as per local labour law. The company will:
  - Investigate the child’s overall situation, and in a particularly serious financial situation strive to recruit another adult family member of the child.
  - Ensure that the child continues to attend mandatory schooling and commits itself – per requires a supplier – to compensate all necessary expenses for school attendance (fees, books other expenses).
  - Seek to engage a governmental or non-governmental organization to support to

(c) Where young workers are employed, sites should:

- Keep a register of young workers;
- Keep a record of young workers' roles and working hours;
- Identify non-hazardous roles and activities;
- Make sure young workers are only employed in non-hazardous activities;
- Ensure that young workers' education is not disrupted;
- Ensure that young workers have at least 30 minutes rest after four hours of work;
- Make sure that young workers don't work over seven hours/day;
- Ensure that young workers do not work during the hours between 8pm and 6am;
- Ensure that all child labour is prevented from entering hazardous working environment and family accommodation should be separated from these areas.

monitor that the child completes their education.

- (b) In case of young workers, the company will immediately terminate any involvement in hazardous work. The company will:
- Determine whether the young worker is able to continue employment within a structure of traineeship or other framework where the working hours and other legal restrictions can be fully controlled.
  - Investigate the young worker's overall situation and, in a particularly serious financial situation, consider a reasonable level of compensation to the young worker or their family for any lost income.
  - Consider employing the young worker once they have reached the minimum age as described in this policy.

***Additional information and resources:***

*[\(c\) C138 – Minimum Age Convention, 1973 \(No.138\)](#)*

*[\(d\) ILO Handbook on Hazardous Child Labour](#)*

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