



# Tackling Child Labor:

An introduction for  
business leaders

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**Acknowledgments:** WBCSD is delighted to partner with UNICEF to advance business understanding and action in this important space. We would also like to express special gratitude to our consulting partner twentyfifty, for their expert review and contributions to this report. We extend our sincere thanks to all WBCSD member companies and Global Network partners who shared their insights, experience and recommendations throughout the ideation and review process. UNICEF is grateful for the financial support from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) that contributed to this report.

twentyfifty®



# FOREWORD

## **Eliminating child labor in all its forms by 2025 is a more ambitious task than ever.**

The world is failing on its collective commitment to eliminate child labor in all its forms by 2025, even though we have clear evidence on how to reach our goal. This target, enshrined in the Sustainable Development Goals, is now more urgent than ever. Recent estimates show that global progress has stalled, and that rates of child labor could increase as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. Without urgent prevention and mitigation measures, 140 million children will still be in child labor by 2025. 140 million children at risk. 140 million futures on the line. 140 million reasons to act now.

As we take stock during this International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour, we must ask ourselves some tough questions. Are governments and businesses working together in synergy? Is the private sector addressing the root causes of child labor, including by guaranteeing decent work and adequate wages for adults? How can we meaningfully serve those in the informal economy who are often the most vulnerable? And how can we combat harmful gender norms and stereotypes, and ensure access for women and girls to quality education and skills training?

We must find answers to these crucial questions and accelerate global efforts to end the practice of child labor once and for all.

We already know a great deal about how to protect children. We know from evidence and experience that success hinges firmly on reinforcing systems of prevention that ensure child labor does not occur in the first place. To that end, we must work to extend inclusive social protection coverage, promote decent work for adults, improve access to quality education, guarantee that every child is registered at birth, strengthen child protection systems, and ensure that the necessary laws and regulations are in place and enforced to safeguard the rights of children.

This vital work involves all of us – including businesses.

As powerful change agents, there is a unique and important role for CEOs and their corporations to play in building the world we want for children. The multifaceted nature of the challenge requires a comprehensive, immediate and unified business response.

Through their leverage, voice and actions on the ground, businesses can lead, implement and inspire holistic approaches to prevent child labor. These efforts include integrating child rights into core business operations, adopting zero-tolerance approaches, investing in the capacity of suppliers and partners throughout the supply chain to address root causes and supporting working parents with gender-sensitive family-friendly policies. Businesses should also advocate for enabling legal and regulatory frameworks, promote

programs to increase the accessibility of quality education, and strengthen data collection and transparency to make child labor visible and shameful.

We hope this report will contribute to a rethinking of what is possible, a reinvigorated faith in the power of collective impact and a commitment to *integrate, invest* and *inspire* for sustained and inclusive progress. Together, we can create a world free of child labor. One fit for every child. One fit for all of us.



**Henrietta Fore**  
Executive Director  
UNICEF



**Peter Bakker**  
President and CEO  
WBCSD

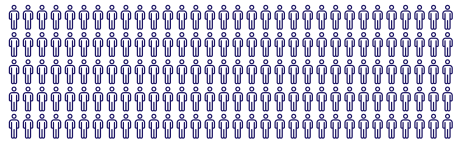
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# WHY URGENT ACTION IS NEEDED

**Child labor is a serious violation of multiple children's rights. It puts children at risk of physical and mental harm, compromises their education and limits their future opportunities. It also undermines economic development and creates a vicious inter-generational cycle of poverty.**

According to the latest global estimates, child labor has risen for the first time in two decades. At present, the world is not on track to meet SDG Target 8.7 to end child labor in all its forms by 2025. In order to meet this goal, global progress would need to be almost 18 times faster than the rate observed over the past two decades.

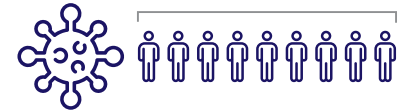
Latest studies by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNICEF have found that there are **160 million children** in child labor.



That's approximately **1 in 10 children worldwide**.



It is predicted that a **further 9 million children** are now at risk of being pushed into child labor by the end of 2022 as an impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.



## Global progress in eliminating child labor has stalled for the first time in 20 years.

Between 2016-2020 the number of children in child labor increased by 8.4 million.



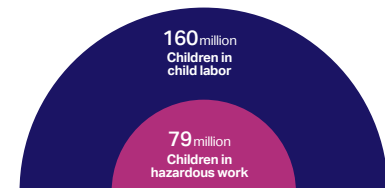
## 70% of all children in child labor are in agriculture.

More than three quarters of all children aged 5 to 11 in child labor are working primarily on family farms or in family microenterprises.



## 79 million children – nearly half of all those in child labor – are in hazardous work.

Hazardous work is defined as work that can lead to death, injury, illness or psychological damage.

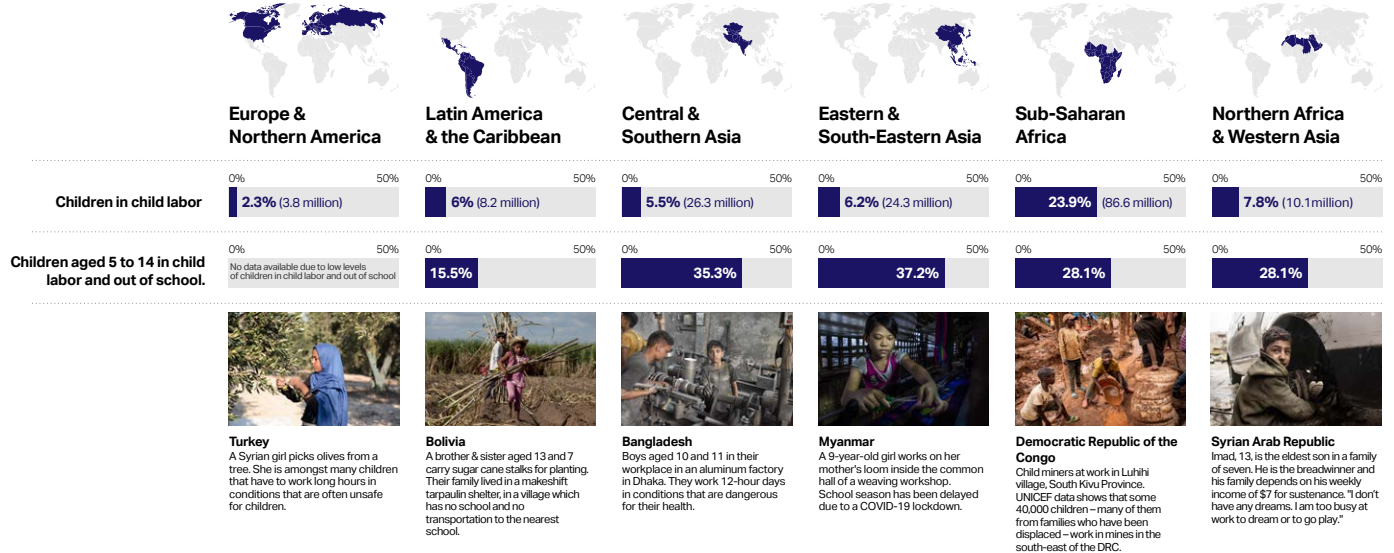


Source: [Global estimates 2020, trends and the road forward \(UNICEF/ILO, June 2021\)](#)

# CHILD LABOR - A GLOBAL ISSUE

**Although child labor is more prevalent in lower-income countries, it exists in almost every sector and region of the world.**

Whilst there is a high prevalence of child labor in sub-Saharan Africa, more than half of all child labor occurs in middle-income countries. This diagram below shows the percentage and number of children aged 5 to 17 who are engaged in child labor as well as the percentage of children aged 5 to 14 in child labor and out of school in each region. Evidence shows that children who are not in school are at higher risk of child labor.



Oceania: The region of Oceania is omitted due to low data coverage. For this reason, region-specific numbers do not add up to the global total.

# THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

## Without urgent mitigation measures, the COVID-19 pandemic threatens to push millions more children into child labor.

It is predicted that a further 9 million children may end up in child labor by the end of 2022 as a result of rising poverty, driven by the pandemic. Poor households who have suffered job losses and income reductions may increasingly turn to child labor to meet their basic needs. According to data from the ILO and UNICEF, a one per cent rise in poverty has the potential to lead to a 0.7 per cent growth in child labor.


Evidence from past crises shows that when faced with economic and labor market shocks, poor families grapple with increased vulnerability and struggle to make provisions for schooling. Tuition fees, including the costs of

textbooks, uniforms and transportation can become unaffordable for poorer families, forcing them to pull their children out of school to join the workforce or – particularly in the case of girls – support the household with unpaid domestic work such as caregiving.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, 90% of children globally have experienced some form of school closures. It is estimated that about 24 million children have dropped out of school for good. It has been observed that once a child leaves education to earn money, they seldom return.

For many vulnerable children, school feeding programs represent a significant part of their daily nutrient requirements. UNICEF and the World Food Programme estimated in January 2021 that a total of 39 billion in-school meals have been missed since the pandemic began. Increased food insecurity may drive more children to work to earn money for food, or to work on farms in exchange for food. Meanwhile, children already in child labor may be working longer hours or under worsening conditions, while many more may be forced into the worst forms of child labor.



A young girl in a colorful, patterned dress stands in a room, holding a purple notebook with the text 'CET CAHIER JOURNALIER' and 'CE2' on it. Behind her, a television screen displays the text 'mon École à la maison' in a colorful, child-friendly font. To the right, a boy is sitting at a table, looking down at a remote control. The room has wooden furniture, including a cabinet with glass doors containing various items.

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# WHAT IS CHILD LABOR?

**The term “child labor” is often defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity.**

It refers to work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and/or interferes with their schooling by: 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.

The term “child labor” does not encompass all work performed by children under the age of 18. Young people above the minimum working age should be able to engage in developmentally appropriate work, but still need protection from hazardous work and other worst forms of child labor.

International standards set the minimum age for work at 15 (14 for some developing countries). Children aged 15 and above can undertake general work as long as it is not hazardous, and does not interfere with the child’s education, health, safety or morals.

Child labor can result in extreme bodily and mental harm, and even death. It can lead to slavery and sexual or economic exploitation. And in nearly every case, it cuts children off from schooling and health care, restricting their fundamental rights and threatening their futures.

## Children’s rights

Every child has rights, such as the right to education, to health, to play, to an adequate standard of living, to be free from economic exploitation (e.g. child labor), to express their views, feelings and wishes and to have their views considered. The rights of children are enshrined in relevant [ILO Conventions](#) and the [Convention on the Rights of the Child \(CRC\)](#) – the most widely ratified human rights treaty in the world.

Children rely on adults to realize their rights. Children are more vulnerable than adults due to their developing immune systems, inability to access power structures and voice their opinions.

Child labor directly impacts and undermines a child’s ability to exercise and access a whole range of their rights.

## International Labour Organization (ILO) Terminology

**Child:** A 'child' is a person below the age of 18.

**Light work:** Children aged 13-15 (12-14 in some developing countries), can do 'light work' with adult supervision, to earn pocket money outside school hours or during school holidays.

**Worst forms of child labor:** When we talk about the "worst forms of child labor", this refers to children who are enslaved, separated from their families, exposed to serious hazards and illnesses and/or left to fend for themselves. This could include slavery, forced labor (including in armed conflict), prostitution and other illicit activities.

**Young worker:** A young worker is a person aged above the legal working age but still considered a child under international law (i.e. below the age of 18). In many countries, these are children who work and are between the age of 15 and 17.

**Hazardous work:** This is work that endangers the physical, mental or moral wellbeing of the child, either by its nature or by the conditions under which it is performed (e.g. working late, at night, carrying heavy loads, working with machinery, dangerous tools or chemicals).



# UNDERSTANDING THE ROOT CAUSES OF CHILD LABOR

**Child labor is rarely the consequence of a single event, action or issue. Instead, it is often the culmination of a complex array of factors at the individual, household, community, and broader economic and societal levels.**

Studies have identified a complex relationship between poverty, lack of access to quality education and child labor. Moreover, labor informality, absence of adequate social services and infrastructure, presence of violence and abuse, inadequate labor-saving technologies, climate change, harmful social norms and values, and gender and other forms of discrimination are key underlying factors.

Most children in child labor work within their own family unit. Recent child labor estimates suggest that this trend has grown in relative importance over the

last four years. Where families are indebted, have poor access to credit, rely on a single income, or have lost adults to illness or death, children may be driven into child labor to make ends meet.

Child labor is inextricably linked to a host of key child rights vulnerabilities and cannot be considered in isolation from them. This underscores the urgent need – for governments and businesses alike – to respond to child labor through holistic, multi-faceted, multi-sectoral and context-specific approaches.



## Root Causes



**Social norms and traditions**



**Natural disasters, crises and climate change**



**Environmental degradation**



**Conflicts and migration**



**Absence of decent work for adults and young workers**



**Gender inequality**



**Poverty and food insecurity**



**Lack of access to quality, affordable childcare**



**Irresponsible purchasing terms for suppliers**

## Common Children's Rights Issues in the Context of Child Labor



### Poor standards of living

Household poverty, unemployment, insufficient and/or volatile income make it difficult for families to achieve an adequate standard of living. This can force them to rely on child labor to meet their basic needs.



### Lack of child protection

Effective child protection systems are at the core of preventing, responding to and removing children from child labor. Child protection systems identify, provide support and coordinate social services for families and children at risk. A lack of such systems makes children more vulnerable.



### Exclusion from education

258 million children, adolescents and young people are out of school. Many of them are already engaged in or at risk from child labor. The COVID-19 pandemic and related school closures have exacerbated education exclusion, increasing child labor risks further.



### Inadequate laws and poor levels of enforcement

Inadequate laws, regulations and policies give rise to an environment that can perpetuate child labor. An adequate legal architecture regarding labor laws, age for compulsory schooling and other underlying factors (such as freedom of association, maternity protection and workplace non-discrimination) is essential to protect children from economic exploitation.

**Child Labor**

# ***BUSINESS AND CHILD LABOR: THE NEED FOR A CHILD-CENTERED APPROACH***

**While child labor may seem like a remote issue for many businesses, the reality is that it is rife in global supply chains and is still an integral part of the processes that bring a wide range of goods and products to market.**

**All companies have a critical role to play in tackling child labor** in their operations and by working with their suppliers and local communities to prevent and eliminate child labor in their supply chains.

**It is also important for companies to recognize their role in giving rise to child labor in the first place.** Several of the root causes of child labor can be directly linked to business models and practices that drive wider adverse societal impacts. For example a lack of decent work, living wages and family-friendly business practices for adults can significantly limit children's access

to adequate education and care. Economic and commercial pressures on suppliers can also play a key role in contributing to child labor and other forms of labor exploitation.

While by no means all drivers of child labor relate to business conduct, understanding broader root causes enables businesses to take targeted action. It also allows them to use their resources in a way that ensures efforts to address child labor are effective, scalable and sustainable.

**It is important for businesses to adopt a child-centered approach that takes into account the context-specific vulnerability of children.**

This requires assessing how the company may contribute to such vulnerabilities through its own conduct and relationships – and indeed how it could make a positive contribution to tackling these vulnerabilities.

Ensuring visibility and compliance with labor laws throughout the supply chain is essential, in addition to a focus on the most vulnerable.

Such an approach should always ensure that pursuing the 'best interests of the child' is the guiding star for any business decision or action – recognizing that **adverse impact cannot be offset**.

The decision-making process should also be premised on children's own perspectives – either by engaging them directly, where appropriate and with adequate safeguards, or their representatives who advocate for their best interests.

**It is important  
for businesses  
to adopt a  
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approach**



# ACTIONS FOR BUSINESS LEADERS

**Businesses have a critical role to play in positively changing the lives of children by addressing the root causes of child labor.**

This document focuses on 3 areas in which business leaders can take meaningful action to support the elimination of child labor:



## INTEGRATE

robust children's rights considerations into core business strategy, activities, processes, decisions and relationships.



## INVEST

in the company's capacity to address and prevent child labor, and in local community resilience.



## INSPIRE

others to take meaningful action: internally within the business and externally with partners, suppliers, industry peers, governments and local authorities.

The following section provides examples of key actions to integrate, invest and inspire others to eliminate child labor.



**Children are among the most marginalized and vulnerable members of society and can be disproportionately, severely, and permanently impacted by business activities, operations, and relationships.**



## John Ruggie

Former Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Business and Human Rights





# INTEGRATE

## Integrate child rights considerations into core business operations and strategy

### BUSINESS LEADERS CAN TAKE ACTION TO:

1) Embed children's rights into core business strategy and processes – backed up by strong governance structures and public reporting.

#### Questions to consider:

- Does the company systematically assess the risks of child labor and adverse child rights impacts in its operating context and relationships with business partners?
- Are child rights firmly embedded throughout the company's human rights due diligence processes? (See next page for more details.)
- Are employees aware, trained and furnished with the resources and support to address child rights in relevant decision-making processes?
- Does the company monitor, track and report on outcomes for workers and children affected in its operations and supply chains?

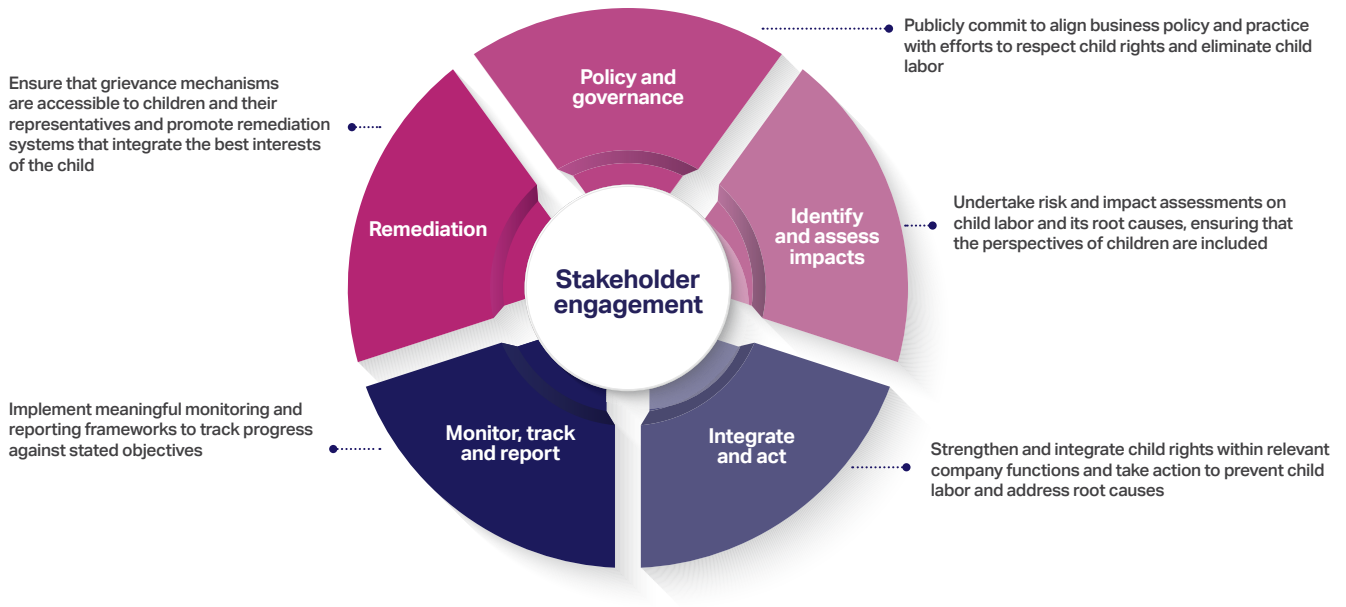
2) Identify opportunities to tackle the root causes of child labor and address them through core business activity.

#### Questions to consider:

- Does the company pay a living wage and support living incomes in supply chains that take into account the costs of family expenditures?
- Does the company provide and support family-friendly policies (e.g. paid maternity and paternity leave, support for breastfeeding and access to quality childcare)?
- Does the company support diversity and inclusion initiatives that mainstream non-discrimination and equity considerations?
- Does the company review and assess how its purchasing practices may contribute to risks of child labor?
- Does the company pay all local and national taxes to strengthen national revenue streams that can support public services for children?

# INTEGRATING CHILD RIGHTS IN POLICY COMMITMENTS, DUE DILIGENCE, AND REMEDY

The **UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs)** outline the business responsibility to respect human rights, including the rights of vulnerable groups such as children. The following diagram illustrates how business leaders can support the incorporation of a child rights perspective into the human rights due diligence (HRDD) processes that are laid out in the UNGPs.



## How Olam has integrated a child rights perspective into its business

Olam has outlined a commitment to respecting human rights in all its operations and across its value chains. In addition to complying with laws and statutory requirements, the company has embedded its commitment to human rights in its Code of Conduct and policies. It has also integrated children's rights and child labor considerations into its core business processes and broader human rights due diligence activities.

To better understand its operations and the associated issues in its markets, Olam undertook a global risk assessment reviewing its origins and commodity human rights risks, including child labor. It is also complementing this with field assessments in areas identified as high risk for child labor. This 'knowing and showing' approach enabled Olam to understand where its impacts and 'hotspots' exist. This aligns with the company's objective to contribute to the

greater realisation of respecting human rights in its supply chains.

To help achieve this, Olam is improving awareness and training for its 3,500-management team and implementing more robust outcome measures for all its programmes to better understand, identify and address the root causes of child labor.



**We have integrated child rights into our broader human rights due diligence across our business to ensure that we effectively address the root causes and focus our resources on interventions to tackle risks across agricultural supply chains.**

**Sunny Verghese**  
Co-Founder and Group CEO  
Olam international

## The Mars Wrigley 'Protecting Children Action plan' in action

In 2018, Mars launched their 'Cocoa for Generations Strategy' with a plan to invest \$1 billion over the next 10 years to reshape the future of cocoa by creating a more modern, inclusive and sustainable supply chain. This includes USD \$300 million to be invested into their 'Protecting Children Action Plan' which was launched in 2020.



The Protecting Children Action Plan (PCAP) sets out how Mars seeks to work with suppliers, governments, experts and others to identify, prevent and mitigate human rights issues. The strategic approach laid out in the PCAP comprises four main levers: (1) robust child labor monitoring and remediation systems; (2) women's social and economic development;

(3) access to quality education and children's development opportunities; and (4) increasing income. These are designed to be mutually reinforcing and to address the root causes of human rights issues. Mars believes there are strong and direct links between increased income, gender equality, and access to quality education, and reduced risk of child labor and forced labor.

**We are proud to see the results of our actions and efforts so far and we believe stronger collaboration is key as more remains to be done to reach our ambitions. Everyone involved in the cocoa supply chain must step up and help drive sustained improvements to the lives of cocoa farmers.**

**Andrew Clarke**  
Global President,  
Mars Wrigley



## VF Corp uses worker interviews to define its child rights programs and investments

VF is a portfolio company featuring active lifestyle brands such as The North Face and Timberland. The company's focus on child rights began in Asia in 2016 where most suppliers are based. Over time, VF's emphasis changed, from a risk-based approach to child labor, to addressing worker wellbeing and child rights in a more holistic way.

To understand the needs and living conditions of workers in VF's supply chain, the company undertakes biennial needs assessments globally across key sourcing regions by interviewing over 5,000 workers. The results define VF's Worker and Community Development program, which includes addressing the root causes of child labor. Based on the findings, VF prioritizes interventions in partnership with expert implementing partners, factories and local communities. Through these worker interviews VF learned that a key universal motivation for workers was to provide a better life for their children.

Child rights focused programs include child friendly spaces in factories where no childcare options are available and a recent commitment to launch a pilot program to create decent work and safe opportunities for young workers. In 2021, VF also announced a [Child Rights Pledge](#) in support of the International Year for the Elimination of Child Labor. In the pledge, the company commits to increased due diligence in the upstream supply chain and to review how purchasing practices, working conditions and wages in the supply chain may contribute to increased risks of child labor.



As we look to deepen our commitment to our purpose-led mission, children are a key stakeholder in the betterment of both people and the planet. Our new pledge embodies all of the important work VF has done to date and further demonstrates our aspirations to being a leading industry advocate for the rights of children.

**Julie Sutton**

Senior Director, Global Impact & Government Affairs, VF Corporation





# INVEST

## Invest in business capacity and community resilience to prevent child labor

### BUSINESS LEADERS CAN TAKE ACTION TO:

**1) Strengthen company functions and invest in the resources, support and capabilities to effectively implement the company's child labor commitments.**

#### Questions to consider:

- Does the company invest in internal capacity to ensure effective implementation of strategies to address the root causes of child labor (e.g. training procurement staff on child labor prevention strategies)?
- Does the company support suppliers to address the root causes of child labor (e.g. training and capacity building, awareness raising and financial support)?
- Does the company invest in efforts to increase leverage with business partners and suppliers to promote effective action to prevent child labor (e.g. through regular dialogues, multi-stakeholder collaboration and/or contractual incentives and rewards)?
- Does the company invest in systems that help collect data and report transparently on child labor risks?

**2) Harness company resources to support the strengthening of public systems, governance structures, industry partnerships and local collaborations.**

#### Questions to consider:

- Does the company invest in community or area-based social sustainability programs that address root causes of child labor (e.g. access to quality education, school to work transition, food security, alternative livelihood development)?
- Does the company support community programs that address harmful social norms and provide economic and gender empowerment to vulnerable families?
- Do the company's efforts reinforce and strengthen national and local government efforts on child protection and social protection, including in relation to local child labor remediation?
- Do the company's efforts prioritize most salient issues, with focus given to children most at risk?



## The Cargill-CARE partnership, working together to tackle the root causes of child labor

CARE and Cargill have been working together in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire for over a decade to combat the many challenges in the cocoa sector including child labor.

The partnership takes a community participatory approach, directly engaging with communities to co-design action plans to address their highest priority issues.

Programs that tackle some of the root causes of child labor include: awareness raising and training on its harmful effects, the creation of community development committees to enable villagers to build and plan for their own success, the establishment of micro-finance structures like Village Savings and Loans



Associations, building women's economic empowerment through entrepreneurship, improving household nutrition, and access to quality education for children.



**Addressing a critical issue such as child labor requires a holistic, multi-intervention strategy, which has been shaped by our partnership with CARE. Together, we are helping to tackle the root causes of child labor and enable better lives for cocoa farmers and their families.**



**Harold Poelma**  
President, Cargill Cocoa & Chocolate




## Boosting opportunities for young people in Assam

Twinings and UNICEF have been working together since 2010, to improve the lives of the most vulnerable women and children, across 63 tea gardens in Assam, India.


The program has reached over 34,000 young women directly and indirectly. It includes boosting opportunities for

13,987 young girls, through the project's Adolescent Girls Groups, helping them to become more confident and informed, creating access to better opportunities, teaching them to protect themselves and their peers from harm, and enabling a safe environment where they can thrive.

As part of their work investing in and empowering communities, UNICEF and Twinings have also formed 63 Child Protection Committees to protect children from violence, exploitation, and abuse.



**At Twinings, we recognize our responsibility to work towards ensuring the people who grow, tend, and harvest our tea and herbs, have a good quality of life. Children in remote tea communities often lack access to child protection measures and development opportunities, so we have introduced Child Protection Committees and support young people to have the best start in life. This is one of many interventions within our 'Sourced with Care' programme. We believe that by working with others, we can be a catalyst for driving the positive change that is needed.**



**Bob Tavener**  
CEO, Twinings





# INSPIRE

## Inspire employees, suppliers and industry peers to accelerate meaningful action

### BUSINESS LEADERS CAN TAKE ACTION TO:

**1) Make a public commitment to children's rights and the elimination of child labor.**

#### Questions to consider:

- Has the company made a public child rights commitment (standalone or as part of a wider human rights commitment)?
- Does the company communicate internally and externally about its commitment to support the elimination of child labor?
- Has the company defined objectives, targets and key performance indicators that enable meaningful monitoring, progress tracking and reporting?
- Does the company publicly report on progress on a periodic basis?

**2) Proactively communicate the importance of child labor prevention strategies.**

#### Questions to consider:

- Is the company taking a public stand and communicating the importance of governments and businesses collectively addressing the root causes of child labor?
- Is the company publicly supporting the messaging that a paradigm shift is needed in the way businesses address child labor – shifting away from a mere focus on compliance to collaborating and tackling its root causes?

**3) Advocate and act collectively as an industry to encourage effective action.**

#### Questions to consider:

- Is the company highlighting the importance of holistic action to tackle child labor in discussions with governments, policy-makers and industry peers?
- Is the company advocating for stronger public policies to protect and fulfil the rights of children?
- Is the company collaborating with industry peers to scale and promote good practices that have been proven to address root causes of child labor?



## **IKEA promotes its suppliers to provide decent work opportunities for young workers**

IKEA started tackling child labor in its supply chain in the 1990's through IWAY – the IKEA way of responsibly procuring products, services, materials and components. This year, as part of its public commitment in support of the International Year for the Elimination of Child Labor, IKEA has been accelerating its long-term program to provide decent work for young workers (under 18 and above the minimum legal working age).

By identifying where risks to youth unemployment and lack of educational opportunities are highest, IKEA is working with suppliers to implement programs that strengthen the inclusion of young workers in its supply chain. Since 2016, the company has undertaken several pilot programs in Vietnam and Indonesia to support the inclusion of young people in safe and decent work.

A key approach for IKEA is inspiring its suppliers to take ownership of the program. Through dialogue and training with supplier management teams, IKEA seeks to trigger their own interest in and understanding of the benefits of hiring young workers, whilst continuing to provide support and tools to enable them further.

Recent examples include supplier training on recruiting young workers and guidance on how to analyze opportunities and tasks that are safe and appropriate for them to deliver. In its 2021 public commitment, IKEA also announced plans to strengthen children's rights in its due diligence systems, to join the ILO Child Labor Platform and

to work with partners to advance family-friendly policies to tackle the root causes of child labor.





**All children have rights, everywhere and always. As a global business, we have a big responsibility to demonstrate leadership and be aware of our impact throughout the IKEA value chain and take action to address it.**



**Lena Pripp-Kovac**  
Chief Sustainability Officer,  
Inter IKEA Group

## Cross-sector collaboration to end child labor in the mica industry

The Responsible Mica Initiative (RMI), set up in India in 2017, aims to create a responsible and sustainable supply chain that is free of child labor. Its 76 members include representatives from the cosmetics, paint, pigments, electronics, automotive and plastics industries.

RMI's approach relies on close collaboration with partners and stakeholders, including the Indian Government, private companies, NGOs and CSOs. Their first challenge was to map the mica supply chain before implementing solutions to address the root causes of child labor, such as low wages, access to education, and promoting alternative sources of income.

In 2019, RMI introduced a 'Global workplace standard for Mica processors' and started supporting improved workplace practices through trainings and other dedicated tools.

RMI also play an important role in connecting its members to government programs that seek to tackle child labor and formalize the mica sector. Engagement has also now started in Madagascar.



# WHY TAKING ACTION MAKES BUSINESS SENSE

**While taking action to end child labor is a business responsibility, it can also ensure businesses:**

- 1. Avoid unlawful practice:**  
An increasing number of countries are in the process of adopting or implementing human rights due diligence measures for businesses, with some giving particular focus to labor rights and child labor.
  - 2. Retain and engage employees:**  
Policies addressing the root causes of child labor (such as family-friendly policies) can improve recruitment, retention and loyalty and reduce absenteeism. They can also support organizational targets on gender, diversity and inclusion.
  - 3. Increase productivity:** Working parents are more productive when they know their children are safe, cared for and have access to education.
  - 4. Mitigate reputational risk:**  
Actions addressing children's rights can enhance a company's reputation whilst practices negatively impacting children risk jeopardizing it, threatening the business' license to operate.
  - 5. Attract investment:** Investor confidence increases when there is evidence that a company is actively managing its environmental, social and governance (ESG) risks.
  - 6. Support economic development:** Supporting children to be free from child labor, to access quality education and to reach their full potential supports economic development that, in turn, creates long-term opportunities for business growth.
- Respecting children's rights is increasingly seen as an integral component of good ESG management.

## Emerging legislation on human rights due diligence

The momentum towards operationalizing responsible business conduct through mandatory human rights due diligence (HRDD) continues to gather force. At national, regional, and international levels, regulatory measures are being adopted or debated to embed HRDD into law. For example, Germany's Supply Chain Due Diligence Act (to come into force in 2023) requires companies to identify, prevent and remediate risks of child labor, and annually report on measures taken. Similar laws are currently underway or have been adopted in recent years in France, the Netherlands, Norway and Switzerland. The European Commission is currently preparing human rights due diligence legislation at the EU-level. The EU also outlined its commitment to eliminate child labor from the supply chains of EU companies in its EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child (adopted in 2021).



*Child labor remains a key concern for businesses and supply chains in many parts of the world. As an investor, we consider respect for children's rights as an inherent part of good business practice and risk management. Companies should take steps to identify, assess and manage their potential and actual negative impacts on children.*



**Carine Smith Ihenacho**

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**By integrating respect and support for children's rights into the core strategies and operations, they [businesses] can strengthen their existing corporate sustainability initiatives while ensuring benefits for their business. Such efforts can build reputation, improve risk management and secure their social license to operate.**



Children's Rights  
and Business Principles

# **FURTHER INFORMATION: A CHILD RIGHTS APPROACH TO CHILD LABOR**

**In 2012, The Children's Rights and Business Principles (CRBP) were co-developed by UNICEF, Save the Children and the UN Global Compact to provide businesses with an overview of where their operations and supply chains can impact on children.**

The CRBP can be used to help businesses understand how they interact with and impact the lives of children in the workplace, marketplace, community and the environment.

**Respecting children's rights means doing no harm to children throughout the company's business operations and supply chains.**

**Supporting children's rights means making a conscious effort to act and invest in programs that support children to thrive.**

Principle 2 of the CRBP calls on businesses to "Contribute to the elimination of child labor, including in all business activities and business relationships."



<https://www.unicef.org/media/96136/file/Childrens-Rights-Business-Principles-2012.pdf>



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**Disclaimer:** This report is the result of collaborative efforts by UNICEF and the WBCSD secretariat and executives from member companies and partners. The document represents the opinion of the majority of members and partners. It does not mean, however, that every member company and every partner agrees with every word.

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