

# Module 1. What is child labor

Understanding the root causes of child labor

*Draft Version, October 2020*



**RAINFOREST  
ALLIANCE**



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This module is the first in the series of six modules to support farms in their child labor due diligence efforts. For further information about other modules, please refer to below overview:

- [Module 1: What is child labor: Understanding the root causes of child labor](#)
- [Module 2: Assess and Address Child labor: How to implement child labor due diligence](#)
- [Module 3: Risk Assessment: How to assess the risk of child labor](#)
- [Module 4: Mitigation: How to prevent child labor risks](#)
- [Module 5: Remediation: How to respond to cases of child labor](#)
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- [Workbook: Risk Guidance and practical exercises](#)
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## MODULE 1. UNDERSTANDING CHILD LABOR

Whilst child labor is a widely used term, there are many misconceptions about what it is, and what it is not. This module aims to ensure greater understanding of the different types of child labor, its root causes and how child labor is defined by international and national law.

### CHILD LABOR AND CHILD WORK

#### What is child labor?<sup>1</sup>

Child labor refers to children's work that is banned by law because the task might harm the child or is dangerous, the child is too young, and doing the job stops the child going to school.

Children are more vulnerable than adults because their bodies and minds are still growing and developing, and they can suffer lasting physical and mental harm from doing tasks or working in conditions that are hazardous and not age-appropriate. This is why some tasks and working conditions are prohibited for children.

- Examples of child labor include a child under 18 doing a dangerous task like spraying pesticides or carrying a heavy load; a child of compulsory schooling age missing school to pick the family harvest; or a child aged 13 working more than 14 hours a week on her family farm; a child younger than 12 conducting light tasks on another farm (not on his/her family farm)

#### **The International Labour Organization (ILO) definition of child labor:**

*“Work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to their 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 depriving them of the opportunity to attend school or obliging them to leave school prematurely; or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work.”*

#### Why and when are children permitted to work?

Child work refers to work that is permitted by law for children. Under some circumstances, children are permitted to work, but they can only do specific tasks that are age-appropriate, do not negatively affect their health or development, and do not interfere with school.

- A minimum age for work of 15 is set out in international law (14 for some developing countries). Children aged 15 and above can do general work that is not hazardous for no more than 48 hours a week.

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<sup>1</sup> Rainforest Alliance’s definition of child labor and child work follows the ILO Conventions on Child Labour. See Rainforest Alliance Annex 1: Glossary for the precise definition Rainforest Alliance uses <https://www.rainforest-alliance.org/business/resource-item/annex-1-glossary/>



- Children aged between 13 and 15 (12 to 14 in some developing economies), can do 'light work' with adult supervision on other people's farms, to earn pocket money outside school hours or during school holidays for no more than 14 hours a week.<sup>2</sup>
- Children under 15 can do light chores at home or on the family farm with adult supervision as long as these do not interfere with compulsory education.

Under these conditions, child work is considered positive because it contributes to children's development and helps children learn skills and gain experience, which prepares them to be productive members of society during their adult life.

- Examples of work that is permitted for children include a 17 year old doing non-hazardous tasks on a farm, such as sowing or planting; a 13 year old doing light tasks for less than 14 hours a week after school hours, such as sorting beans with adult supervision; a 12 year old occasionally doing light chores at home or on the farm, such as sweeping or feeding the chickens, after school.

### **Key takeaway**

The law prohibits work for children if it harms the child or is dangerous, if the child is too young, and doing the job stops the child going to school. Under certain conditions, the law allows children to do non-hazardous, safe, age-appropriate tasks, with adult supervision.

## **How do girls and boys experience child labor?**

Girls and boys both work on family farms, but they often experience work in different ways. As a result, the risk of child work becoming child labor can vary for boys and girls:

- Girls often start working at an earlier age than boys, especially in rural areas
- Girls tend to do more work inside the household than boys
- Local norms may make it more difficult for girls to go to school, or continue secondary education
- Girls, just like their mothers, are more likely to suffer a triple burden of work (at home, at school and on the farm or elsewhere) and this may affect schoolwork
- Girls are less likely to be paid for their work and if they are paid, they get paid less than boys.

It can be more difficult to spot when girls are in child labor because their work can be less visible as it largely occurs in the household. Girls absence from school may also go unnoticed if it is not uncommon in the local context for girls to leave school early.

## **What is hazardous child labor?**

All over the world, children help out at home, looking after livestock or picking fruit and vegetables on the family farm, for a short period of time and in safe conditions. This work is allowed and can help their personal development providing useful skills for later in life. But children cannot do the same work as adults because some tasks can harm their physical and mental development.

A task that harms a child's health, safety and morals is considered 'hazardous'. It includes work in dangerous or unhealthy conditions that could result in a child being killed, or injured or made ill. As children's bodies and minds are still growing and developing, they are more vulnerable to work hazards than adults, and more likely to suffer lasting harm and lifelong disability.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See legal references later in this module

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ilo.org/ipecinfo/product/download.do?type=document&id=4048>



- When a child under the age of 18 performs hazardous work this is one of the worst forms of child labor.
- To help protect children, countries should publish a list of tasks that are categorised as hazardous and therefore prohibited for children.

**Key takeaway:**

Children are more vulnerable than adults to hazards at work, like carrying heavy loads or using dangerous tools, because their bodies and minds are still growing. They are banned from doing certain tasks in order to protect them from harm.

**Figure 1. What makes children more vulnerable to harm compared to adults**

**CHILDREN ARE AT GREATER RISK OF WORK-RELATED INCIDENTS AND DISEASES BECAUSE:**

Their immune systems are not as strong
They have thinner skins, and a higher skin to body ratio, so toxins are more easily absorbed
They breathe faster and more deeply, so can inhale more airborne pathogens and dusts
They lack work experience and may not make well-informed judgements
They might not be properly trained or supervised to do the work
They lack status and find it difficult to share concerns

Working in agriculture can be extremely hazardous. Using dangerous tools and machinery, carrying heavy loads and using pesticides all increase the risk of accident, injury and death, making agriculture one of the most dangerous sectors in which to work.

The table below gives examples of typical hazardous tasks in agriculture and how they can harm children. Use this list (and your country's list) to identify hazardous tasks associated with your crop.

**Figure 2. Impact of hazardous work on children**

Agricultural Tasks	Hazards	Harm to children
<b>Lifting and carrying</b>	Carrying heavy loads	Musculoskeletal injuries from repetitive & forceful movements
<b>Cutting crops</b>	Using cutting tools, incl. machetes (cocoa)	Injuries from skin abrasions to major wounds
	Unguarded machinery and motorized vehicles	Severe injuries from contact or entanglement in equipment, hearing loss from noisy machinery
<b>Working outside</b>	High levels of sun exposure and hot temperatures	Risk of developing skin cancer & heat exhaustion
	Snake and insect bites	Pain, nausea, paralysis
<b>Working on crops</b>	Exposure to pesticides	Poisoning and long-term health problems
	De-husking (coffee)	Eye-injuries
	Exposure to dust Long working hours	Respiratory problems No time for school
<b>Clearing, uprooting &amp; pruning</b>	Falling over, difficult work	Fractures, sprains, bruises, cuts and burns



<b>Accommodation</b>	Migrant worker groups living in substandard conditions	Safety risks (physical and mental impact) as well as sanitary conditions causing health issues
<b>Work environment</b>	Harassment from supervisors	Causing stress and mental health issues

Read these case studies to understand two examples of when child work becomes child labor.

**Figure 3. Child labor case studies**

<b>What is child labor?</b>	
<p><b>13 year-old boy</b>            “I’m 13 years old and I had to get a job because my dad cut his arm and he’s sick. It’s just me and my little sister and mum. I am quite big and strong for my age, so the farm manager never asked my age. I got work carrying sacks of coffee cherries. But they are so heavy, I can barely pick them up. My back and legs are so stiff and sore. I never see my friends from school anymore.”</p>	<p><b>14 year-old girl</b>            “I’m 14 years old and I’m the oldest girl in my family. I clean the house each day and help my mum with the cooking. I also have some daily chores on the farm as my sisters aren’t big enough to help yet. I also work with my mum and aunts picking the coffee. I’m exhausted when I go to bed. I haven’t been to school for a year now because my mum says there is too much to do at home. I miss it.”</p>
<p><b>This is a case of child labor because:</b>            He is 13 which is below the minimum age for general work            He is too young to carry heavy loads which are hazardous and he is suffering physical harm</p> <p><b>He is 13, which is below the age of compulsory schooling and he has dropped out of school</b></p>	<p><b>This is a case of child labor because:</b>            She is 14 which is typically below the age of compulsory schooling and she has dropped out of school</p> <p>Although each of these tasks alone could be ‘light work’ or family work, combined the burden is excessive</p>

## CHILD LABOR IN INTERNATIONAL LAW

National governments base their legislation on international child labor conventions, which have been developed by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the lead UN organisation working on improving labor standards globally. <sup>4</sup>

There are two ILO conventions which outline the fundamental ILO standards on child labor. The Rainforest Alliance’s definition of child labor and child work is aligned with the ILO definition of child labor. Most national law, company child labor policies and guidance documents are based on these standards.

- **The Minimum Age Convention (No. 138)**, which sets the minimum age for work
- **The Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No. 182)**, which prohibits hazardous work, and other worst forms of child labor, such as slavery, child soldiers and prostitution, and requires countries to publish a list of banned hazardous work for children; and the associated **Recommendation No. 190** which lists the characteristics of hazardous work

<sup>4</sup>The ILO is a tri-partite structure, including as members countries, employers and workers’ representatives. The ILO develops international labor conventions, provides guidance on national labor legislation and reviews the implementation of conventions by member states. ILO, International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC). Available here: <http://www.ilo.org/ipec/lang--en/index.htm>



Use the table below for an overview of international law on child labor. Analyse this table before reading the detail of the law in the next section.

**Figure 4. What does international law say about child labor?**

### The Minimum Age Convention (No. 138)

This convention has been ratified by approximately 173 countries, which all have to incorporate the Convention into national law. The key elements of the Convention are:

What is Child Labor?	
Work banned for children	Work permitted for children
<p><b>Hazardous child labor:</b> Children under 18 who work in hazardous conditions or do any task that is harmful to their physical and mental development</p> <p><b>Missing school:</b> When children who have not finished compulsory school, drop-out or miss school in order to work</p> <p><b>Under-age child labor:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Children under 15 (14 in some developing economies) who work more hours than allowed</li> <li>- children under 13 (12 in some developing economies) working on other people's farms</li> </ul>	<p><b>General work:</b> Children over 15 (14 in some developing economies) doing non-hazardous general work, for no more than 48 hours a week</p> <p><b>Light work:</b> Children between 13 (12 in some developing economies) and 15 doing safe, age-appropriate light work after school, with adult supervision, for no more than 14 hours a week</p> <p><b>Family work:</b> Children doing safe, age-appropriate chores after school on the family's small farm or in the home, with adult supervision</p>
<p>Rainforest Alliance farms are required to follow national law if national law is stricter than the ILO Conventions on child labor. E.g. if national law sets the legal minimum age for work at 16, you apply the minimum age of 16 on your farm.</p> <p>Rainforest Alliance farms are required to follow the ILO Conventions, if national law is less strict e.g. if national law sets the legal minimum age for work at 13, you apply the Convention minimum age of 15 on your farm.</p>	

#### General work:

- The minimum age of admission to general employment or work is set at 15 years.
- Governments of developing countries can lower that minimum age to 14 to help the economy, or raise that age to align for instance with the age of compulsory education.
- Children's work should be non-hazardous, safe and age-appropriate and not interfere with compulsory education.

#### Light work:

- Children aged 13-15 can perform light work, which includes tasks performed under the supervision of an adult, that are safe and age appropriate, and do not interfere with education
- Developing countries have the right to set the minimum age for light work lower, namely at 12, because of economic needs.
- Work during the holidays is not regulated by this Convention, but left to the discretion of each country.



Note. Convention No.138 does not specify hours for light work, but ILO guidance requires a limit of no more than 14 hours a week for light work.<sup>5</sup>

**Hazardous work:**

- The Minimum Age Convention sets the minimum age for hazardous work at 18 (16 under certain strict conditions).

**Figure 5. Minimum age for work and exceptions for developing countries**

	Minimum age for work	Minimum age for work in developing countries
<b>General work</b>	15 years	14 years
<b>Light work</b>	13 years	12 years
<b>Hazardous work</b>	18 years	18 years

**Key takeaway:** Children's work should be non-hazardous, safe and age-appropriate and not interfere with compulsory education. Children aged 14/15-18 can do general work that is not hazardous; children aged 12/13-15 can do light work under adult supervision.

**The Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No. 182)**

This convention has been ratified by most countries around the world and requires states to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. The key elements of the Convention are:

**Worst forms of child labor:**

- Requires governments to prohibit and eliminate the worst forms of child labor which include all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage, forced labor, recruitment of children into armed conflict, child prostitution and pornography, drugs, and any hazardous work which is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.

Note. Any child under the responsibility of an adult who is him/herself in a situation of adult forced labour is automatically considered in forced child labor, whether working or not.

**Hazardous work:**

- Prohibits any hazardous work that may harm the health, safety or morals of children
- Requires countries to publish a list of hazardous work that children are not allowed to perform.

**Worst Forms of Child Labour Recommendation (No. 190),**

When developing a list of hazardous work, countries draw on this Recommendation which accompanies Convention No. 182. The Recommendation describes the following characteristics of the types of work that can harm a child worker's health, safety, or morals:

**Hazardous work characteristics:**

- Work which exposes children to physical, psychological or sexual abuse;
- Work underground, under water, 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;

<sup>5</sup> ILO, IOE, 2015, How to do business with respect for children's right to be free from child labour: ILO-IOE child labour guidance tool for business. Available at: [https://www.ilo.org/ipec/Informationresources/WCMS\\_IPEC\\_PUB\\_27555/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/ipec/Informationresources/WCMS_IPEC_PUB_27555/lang--en/index.htm)



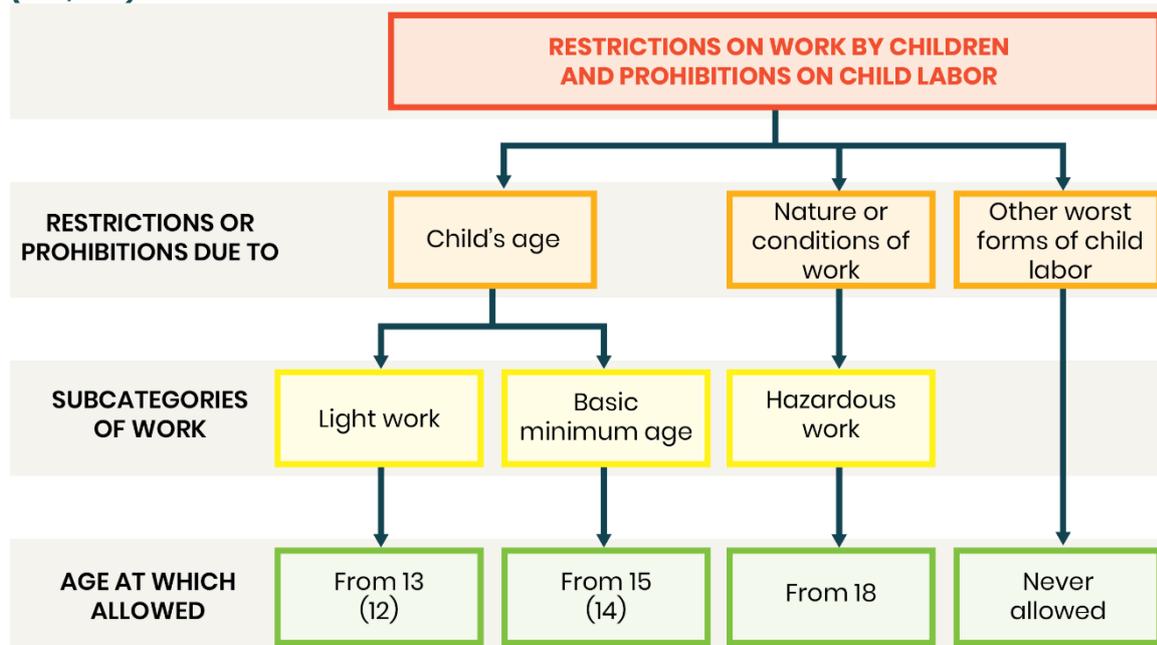
- Work in an unhealthy environment which may, for example, expose children to hazardous substances, agents or processes, or to temperatures, noise levels, or vibrations damaging to their health;
- Work under particularly difficult conditions such as work for long hours or during the night or work where the child is unreasonably confined to the premises of the employer.

The list of hazardous work differs from country to country and from commodity to commodity within each country. Specific tasks may be banned e.g. carrying heavy loads or working with dangerous machinery or tools, or spraying pesticide; sometimes all work in a certain crop is banned for children. The ILO provides guidance [here](#) on how to develop a list of hazardous child labor.

**Key takeaway:** Hazardous work is one of the worst forms of child labor. Each country is required to define hazardous work in national law, and to publish a list of banned hazardous tasks or work for children in each industry.

Use the diagram below to review how international law regulates the age at which children can work and the type of work they can do.

**Figure 6. Overview of the conditions under which work by children is restricted (ILO/IOE)<sup>6</sup>**



Using the diagram above and this checklist, make sure you have understood the international law on child labor:

Child labor checklist	Answer	Aligned with international standard
Is the child working?	Yes	Ok. Need to know more

<sup>6</sup> ILO-IOE, Child Labour Guidance Tool for Business, how to do business with respect for children's rights to be free from child labour, available at: [http://www.ilo.org/ipec/Informationresources/WCMS\\_IPEC\\_PUB\\_27555/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/ipec/Informationresources/WCMS_IPEC_PUB_27555/lang--en/index.htm)



Are they 15, or above the national minimum age for general work, if higher?	Yes	✓
Are they still going to school?	Yes	✓
Is the work hazardous? e.g. Are they carrying heavy loads, using dangerous equipment, spraying pesticides, working long hours, in very hot or cold conditions, or being harmed?	Yes	✗
Is the work safe? e.g. They are not doing tasks that are harmful to children's health, safety and morals	Yes	✓
Are they doing light chores on the family farm with adult supervision after school?	Yes	✓
Are they aged 13 and doing light work after school with adult supervision, no more than 14 hours a week?	Yes	✓

## UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1989)

The CRC enshrines the rights of children – all persons under 18 - that should be protected by states and governments and that businesses, individuals and other organisations need to respect and are encouraged to support.

### The Convention is based on four underlying principles:

1. The child's best interests,
2. Non-discrimination,
3. The child's right to participate in decisions that affect him/her; and,
4. The child's right to life, survival and development.

Article 32 of the CRC relates to child labor and states that children have the right:

*"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."*

The CRC also outlines the responsibility of states/governments to ensure this article is implemented through legal, administrative, social and educational measures such as setting a minimum age for employment, appropriate regulation on hours and conditions of employment and penalties and sanctions to ensure the enforcement of the article.

### Key takeaway

Children are more vulnerable than adults and need support and protection to be able to enjoy their rights fully. Adults therefore often take decisions for children and need to think about the impact this has on children's lives and whether the decision is in **the best interest of the child**.

For instance, if you remove a child from child labor and help the child to access education, without at the same time, guaranteeing an income for that child and his/her family, the child's right to survival might be at risk. This is why the CRC requires us to consider the best interests of the child when designing solutions to child labor.

are required to design a national policy to promote and guarantee equality of opportunity and treatment in respect of employment and occupation, of social security, of trade union and cultural rights and of individual and collective freedoms for persons who as migrant workers or as members of their families are lawfully within its territory. The Convention also requires states to take steps to prevent the abuse of legal and illegal migrant workers by employers and to prosecute those responsible for the abuse.

### Key takeaway:

As the convention applies to migrant children, it means for example, that young workers who are migrants should receive the same pay as workers who are non-migrants.



## ILO Fundamental Conventions

The child labor conventions are included in the ILO's 8 "Fundamental" Conventions, covering subjects that are considered to be fundamental principles and rights at work. All ILO members, regardless of whether they have ratified these principles, have an obligation "to respect, to promote and to realize, in good faith and in accordance with the Constitution, the principles," (ILO Declaration, 1998). The principles include the following:

1. Child labor (ILO Conventions No. 138 and No. 182)
2. Forced labour and slavery (ILO Convention No. 29, and No. 105)
3. Non-discrimination (ILO Convention No. 111)
4. Equal remuneration (ILO Convention No. 100)
5. Freedom of association and collective bargaining rights (ILO Convention No. 87 & Convention No.98)

All of the above Conventions apply to young workers as well and are reinforced in the Convention of the Rights of the Child and in the ILO Child Labour Conventions. A link to all other ILO Core Labour Conventions can be found [here](#).

**Key takeaway:**

Banning child labor is one of the ILO core principles. All of the ILO fundamental conventions on non-discrimination, trade union rights, equal pay, as well as forced labor and child labor, apply to young workers as well as adults.

## What happens if national law and international law differ?

The Rainforest Alliance 2020 Sustainable Agriculture Standard requires adherence to national child labor law when it is stricter than ILO Conventions; however, if national law is less strict than the Conventions, it requires certificate holders to follow the ILO Conventions.

Use the table below to work through some examples of what to do when there is a gap between national and international law.



**Figure 7. Gaps between national law and Rainforest Alliance's definition (and ILO definitions)**

Example: What to do when national law and the Rainforest Alliance's definition differ				
Example of national laws	Rainforest Alliance	Aligned	Follow stricter national law	Follow stricter Rainforest Alliance
Minimum age for work is 14, and they ratified ILO No. 138 on this basis	15 (14)	✓		
In Country B the minimum work age is 16	15 (14)	✗	✓	
In Country C the minimum work age is 13	15 (14)	✗		✓
Country D does not permit light work for children under 15	13-15 (12-14)	✗	✓	
Country E does not prohibit hazardous work for children under 18	18	✗		✓

**Key takeaway:**

If national law differs from the Rainforest Alliance definition, follow the stricter one:

- Where the national law is stricter than Rainforest Alliance's definition on child labor, follow the national law;
- Where the national law is less strict, follow Rainforest Alliance's definition.

A key element of child labor risk can derive from situations where national laws are less stringent than international standards. Conducting an analysis of the 'gap' between national and international law is therefore a key step in any risk assessment.

Go to the Legal Exercise (workbook & Module 3) to compare child labor law in your country and international conventions/Rainforest Alliance definition.

## CHILD LABOR RISKS

### Root causes of child labor risk in agriculture

Approximately 70.9% of the 152 million children in child labor are working in agriculture, and this includes some of the most hazardous forms of child labor.<sup>7</sup> Families face complex pressures that force them to send their children to work to supplement household income, or

<sup>7</sup> ILO, 40 million in modern slavery and 152 million in child labour around the world, available at: [http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS\\_574717/lang--en/index.htm?ssSourceSiteid=ipec](http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_574717/lang--en/index.htm?ssSourceSiteid=ipec)  
Also accessible through Alliance 8.7 <https://www.alliance87.org/the-challenge/>



attract children into work because of the profit opportunity available.<sup>8</sup> Understanding why child labor happens can help you to better assess and address risks on your farm.

Use the table to consider your local context. Which issues are relevant? Are there other issues particular to your local context that are missing?

**Figure 8. Overview of root causes of child labor**

<b>Root causes of child labor</b>	
<b>Poverty and crop prices</b>	<p><i>Is workers income too low or has it fallen recently? Have crop prices or wages suddenly increased?</i></p> <p>The relationship between poverty and child labor is complex. It can be direct, e.g. a sudden income drop for a family on the poverty line forces them to take a child out of school and send him or her out to work. It can also be indirect, e.g. an increase in the price of cocoa increases the opportunity cost for a family of sending their child to school; this can lead to a decision to withdraw a child from school and send them to work because cocoa pays more that year</p>
<b>Weak government</b>	<p><i>Is the government or local authority effective at protecting children? Is there a functional school and health system?</i></p> <p>Governments are responsible for the protection of children's rights, including the right to education, development and survival and protection from harm. In countries with weak governments, children's right to education and healthcare are often not realised, increasing risk of child labor</p>
<b>Lack of access to quality education</b>	<p><i>How far away is the nearest school? Is there anything making it difficult or stopping children from going to school e.g. cost, registration?</i></p> <p>Children might live two hours walk away from their nearest primary school and pre-schools are even harder to access, especially in rural areas. Non-formal education and vocational training programs for young workers who cannot attend formal education might not exist. Parents might not be able to afford schools fees or obtain birth certificates necessary for registration. Agricultural seasonal workers might take their children out of school for harvests.</p>
<b>Weak social services</b>	<p><i>How effective is social service support to families in the area?</i></p> <p>Governmental social services to support vulnerable families and young workers are often weak resulting in increased vulnerability.</p>
<b>Weak law enforcement</b>	<p><i>Is the law enforced in the country?</i></p> <p>Many producing countries do not enforce their labor laws, because of lack of resources (financial, staffing) and corruption. This can result in an increase in child and forced labor, as labor law violations are not detected or punished.</p>
<b>Poor health &amp; safety regulation</b>	<p><i>Are health and safety standards typically enforced and respected?</i></p> <p>Poor occupational health and safety result in children and young workers performing hazardous activities including handling pesticides.</p>

<sup>8</sup> ICI, 2020, The effects of income changes on child labour. Available at: <https://cocoainitiative.org/knowledge-centre-post/the-effects-of-income-changes-on-child-labour-a-review-of-evidence-from-smallholder-agriculture/>



<b>Legal barriers &amp; discrimination</b>	<i>Are many workers illegal migrants or people suffering from discrimination?</i>
	A family's (illegal) migrant status might impede access to formal jobs, employment protection, education, health and social care. Discriminatory laws and practices against minorities and indigenous groups can exclude them from education or economic opportunities, resulting in increased child labor risks.
<b>Gender discrimination</b>	<i>Do cultural perspectives stop girls from going to school?</i>
	Gender is another key determinant for child labor. Being a girl from an impoverished family in developing countries can result in her working in domestic labor from a young age. Cultural factors might limit girls' access to secondary school or increase young female workers' vulnerability to gender-based violence.
<b>Increased demand for labor</b>	<i>Have many workers migrated to the area to fill demand for labor? Have crop prices or wages increased recently?</i>
	Productivity increase, rise in crop prices or expansion of agriculture can increase demand for labor, and at the same time, attract families, children and young workers to the profit of child labor. Young boys and girls might (temporarily) migrate to find work as agricultural seasonal migrant workers.
<b>Migration/ refugees</b>	<i>Are there migrant workers on farms in the area? Does the law guarantee migrants the same wages as national workers?</i>
	Migrants and refugees are more vulnerable to child labor than others because they lack social protection and assets, and sometimes lack of access to education. This increases the chances of migrant and refugee children ending up in situations of child labor.
<b>Low mechanization of agriculture</b>	<i>How mechanised are the various stages of crop production? Are any tasks traditionally done by children? Is adult labor scarce?</i>
	When agriculture is not very mechanized it requires high levels of manual labor. When adult labor is expensive or not available, demand for child labor may increase
<b>Lack of awareness of hazardous work</b>	<i>Are workers aware of health and safety risks for children?</i>
	Lack of awareness on the dangers of hazardous work (e.g. pesticide use) by adults resulting in careless handling of agro-chemicals with or in the presence of children
<b>Cultural norms and traditions</b>	<i>Are workers aware of how children can be harmed by work? Are there cultural expectations that children work?</i>
	Farmers and families may believe that it is important for the socialisation of their children and their physical development to work hard (e.g. carrying heavy loads to build muscles)

### Useful resources

- To read more specifically about the link between income and child labor, see this link to an ICI report on this topic.
- The ILO, UNICEF and the World Bank, present information on percentages of children in child labor on country levels.
- The United States Department of Labor publishes an annual list of products that are made with child and forced labor.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> US DOL, List of goods produced by child labor or forced labor. Available at: <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/reports/child-labor/list-of-goods>



## Child labor risks by crop

Although the root causes of child labor are common across agriculture, risks can vary by crop because of the local context, methods of farming and associated tasks, or type of labour hired.

The table gives some examples of how child labor risks can differ in the farming of cocoa, coffee, hazelnut and tea.

Use this table to draw up a list of risks specific to your crop, and your local context.

**Figure 9. Crop specific child labor risks**

Crop	Crop specific child labor risks
	<p><b>Cocoa child labor risks</b> At farm level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of machetes, carrying heavy loads, land clearing, exposure to toxic plant protection chemicals such as pesticides.</li> <li>• In cocoa communities in Cote d'Ivoire, the risk of children dropping out of school and working in cocoa is high because of the lack of access to quality education.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Coffee child labor risks</b> At farm level during harvest season:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seasonal workers may bring their families with them to help earn a better income, potentially resulting in child labor.</li> <li>• In coffee growing areas in Cenral/South America, young workers migrate independently and are of greater risk of hazardous labor, unethical recruitment processes, sexual exploitation, labor exploitation and abuse.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Hazelnut child labor risks</b> At farm level during harvest season:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hired migrant labor moves in groups from orchard to orchard to perform the short harvest manually due to the mountainous terrain; these groups can include vulnerable young migrant workers including young workers and children.</li> <li>• Seasonal migrant work is considered hazardous for those under 18 by Turkish law, so young migrating workers are working illegally in Turkey.</li> <li>• Children sometimes accompany migrating working parents, increasing the risk that these children are involved in child labor to help their parents meet their picking targets.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Tea child labor risks</b> At farm level during growing and harvesting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During growing: Potentially hazardous tasks including preparing land for new bushes, transplanting seedlings, applying mulch around the bushes to conserve soil moisture, applying fertilizer, manual weeding and the increasing use of chemical herbicides (pesticides), and leaf plucking.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During harvesting: a large number of seasonal workers are hired, but often not legally registered, increasing the risk of low wages, long working hours and carrying too heavy loads.</li> </ul>
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## Child labor case studies

The following case studies highlight when children on your farms may be at risk of child labor. Each case explains what work is allowed and not allowed for a child in a certain profile, and identifies the different risks and vulnerabilities associated with these children.

Using the risk profiles in the tables, check whether you have understood the international standards on child labor, and consider child labor risks at your farm/s.

Figure 10. Child labor risk profiles

<b>FAMILY WORK</b> 	<b>Child family member under 15 years old working on their family farm</b>   <i>Pedro is 14 and occasionally he helps his dad after school with farm chores. His dad has told him he is not allowed to touch any pesticides, carry heavy sacks or use sharp tools.</i>
<b>PROFILE</b>	<b>Allowed:</b> A child family worker under 15 can help on family farms or in households; <b>Not allowed:</b> Any work that interferes with boys or girls' education (e.g. going to school, doing homework) or that is hazardous
<b>VULNERABILITY</b>	<b>Environmental hazards</b> including harmful chemicals in water, soil and air because of their incomplete development and growth. They are also more exposed because of their hand-to-mouth behaviour and inability to read warning and hazard signs. <b>Carry heavy loads:</b> Children's bodies are not strong enough to carry heavy loads and doing so might permanently damage them. <b>Dangerous tools:</b> They are also vulnerable to accidents with dangerous tools.
<b>RISK</b>	<b>Invisible:</b> Children's work on family farms is often invisible because they assist their parents or relatives on the farm or in the household, possibly interfering with education or including dangerous tasks.

<b>LIGHT WORK</b> 	<b>13-15-year-old children doing light work</b>   <i>Marta is 14 and she does one 8-hour shift on a Saturday on a local farm during harvest, sorting beans. She always works in a team with an adult supervisor. Marta is also doing well at school.</i>
<b>PROFILE</b>	<b>Allowed:</b> A child aged 13-15 (or in some developing countries 12-14) can be employed to perform light work. The ILO requires that all work undertaken by this age group should be supervised to ensure they are safe from harm. <b>Not allowed:</b> if this work harms the child's health or development and exceeds 14 hours per week or affect their participation in school or training programmes, the work is not considered light and is not allowed.
<b>VULNERABILITY</b>	<b>Lack of awareness:</b> Children might not know their rights or able to resist additional tasks and hours of work or changing circumstances.



	<b>Lack of supervision:</b> Adult supervision, training and guidance is essential to protect child workers at this age.
<b>RISK</b>	<b>Light work becoming hazardous:</b> If the hours increase beyond 14 hours a week, the conditions in which they work change and if the tasks become dangerous.

<b>GENERAL WORK</b> 	<b>Permanent young worker (aged 15-18)</b>  ✓ <i>Ibrahim is 16 and works full-time on a local farm. He is aware of the tasks he is not allowed to do because they are potentially hazardous.</i>
<b>PROFILE</b>	<b>Allowed:</b> A worker under the age of 18 but above 15 (or 14 in some developing countries) or the minimum school leaving age, can work in jobs where their health, safety and morals are fully protected and for which they have received adequate instruction or vocational training. <b>Not allowed:</b> This work cannot be hazardous and should be age-appropriate.
<b>VULNERABILITY</b>	<b>Lack of representation:</b> Few unions are willing to represent or support this age group. Therefore, special attention needs to be paid to ensure that young workers are aware and have access to their labor rights and work in a safe environment.
<b>RISK</b>	<b>Hazardous work:</b> Children of this age are more likely than younger children to engage in work that threatens their health and safety such as applying chemicals, carrying heavy loads, cutting crops or burning fields.

<b>GENERAL WORK</b> 	<b>Seasonal young worker (aged 15-18)</b>  ✗ <i>Nguyen Lu is 17 and has a seasonal job working on various farms over the harvest. Some farms explain what tasks he is not allowed to do because they are hazardous, but others don't bother. His accommodation also varies, and he works long hours.</i>
<b>PROFILE</b>	<b>Allowed:</b> A seasonal young worker has the same profile as a young worker; however they are often engaged in non-formal, temporary employment, and they may move around between different jobs. They may also be excluded from collective bargaining agreements or union representation. <b>Not allowed:</b> This work cannot be hazardous and should be age-appropriate.
<b>VULNERABILITY</b>	<b>Lack of contractual protection:</b> Seasonal young workers might not have formal contracts outlining their rights. <b>Lack of social support:</b> If they are moving for work, they may not have their family and community's protection and support, so are more vulnerable to exploitation.
<b>RISK</b>	<b>Exploitation:</b> They are more likely to work overtime, sometimes without extra pay, their living conditions could be inadequate and unsafe. Temporary workforce might be charged illegal or high recruitment, accommodation and substance fees, potentially leading to debt bondage <b>Hazardous work:</b> They might be asked to conduct hazardous tasks, without the personal protective equipment (PPE) provided to them. Often, temporary workers do not receive PPE or have to provide this themselves.

<b>GENERAL WORK</b> 	<b>Young migrant worker (aged 15-18)</b>  ✗ <i>Fatima is a 16-year-old migrant and has a seasonal job for the harvest. She does exactly the same work as over-18s, including hazardous tasks – no one has told her what jobs are banned for under-18s. She is paid less than workers who are citizens.</i>
<b>PROFILE</b>	<b>Allowed:</b> A young migrant worker has the same rights as a young national worker in term of hours and type of work, according to the CRC and the ILO Migrant Convention. A letter of consent from the young migrant workers' parents / carers for the employment s/he performs should be given. It is important to check the national legislation on the rights of migrant workers.



	<p><b>Not allowed:</b> Migrant workers should get the same remuneration as national workers and the same protection. However, this is often not the case. Like other workers between 15 and 18, they cannot conduct hazardous work, or work that is not age-appropriate.</p>
<b>VULNERABILITY</b>	<p><b>Exploitation:</b> Language barriers, possible discrimination and lack of protection of their rights, because of their immigration status (both legal and illegal immigrants are at risk), make young migrant workers vulnerable to exploitation.</p> <p><b>Informal employment:</b> Migrants in general are less likely to be in formal employment</p> <p><b>Unsafe and unhealthy living conditions:</b> moving around for work and without family or community protection, they are more exposed to substandard housing.</p> <p><b>Lack of support systems:</b> Few countries have support mechanisms for migrant workers in place, which increases the vulnerability of migrant workers to exploitation.</p>
<b>RISK</b>	<p><b>Increased vulnerability:</b> It is important to be aware that migrant workers are more vulnerable but more unlikely to raise grievances with their employers or with the authorities because they fear deportation and losing their income. It is therefore important that you take time to engage with them directly to understand their situation.</p>

To help you understand child labor risks, go to the [Risk Guidance in the Workbook](#) which contains a library of risk questions, guidance and mitigation actions.