

INTEGRATED SYSTEMS TO TACKLE CHILD LABOR

Assess-and-Address, CLMRS, and Child Labor Free Zones



Photo: Caroline Irby

More than 70 percent of all child labor cases are found in the agricultural sector. While banning child labor on farms is commonly perceived to be a silver bullet, it's simply not enough. Child labor is a highly complex issue with different social, economic, and political root causes. These can include lack of access to education, weak enforcement of labor laws, gender inequality, poverty, and insufficient social protection for the poor. On top of all that, a prolonged pandemic has now been added to the list.

The best way to eliminate child labor is to tackle its root causes. Importantly, key stakeholders, including civil society, governments, and companies, are increasingly working together and pooling their investments into joint programs to tackle this urgent issue.

ASSESS-AND ADDRESS

While no single organization or actor can eliminate child labor by itself, the Rainforest Alliance's "assess-and-address" system: (i) supports companies to identify the risks and root causes of human rights violations; and (ii) requires both companies and Certification Bodies to adjust their systems according to their specific risks. In this way, assess-and-address operates like a farm-based human rights due diligence system, which includes identifying and mitigating risks through risk assessments and awareness raising, and also by monitoring, identifying, and remediating human rights cases through an assess-and-address committee and a grievance mechanism. This approach is aligned with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the OECD's Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises.

CHILD LABOR MONITORING AND REMEDIATION SYSTEMS

Some companies have embedded a **Child Labor Monitoring and Remediation System (CLMRS)** in their supply chains in order to identify, address, and prevent, child labor. The Rainforest Alliance's assess-and-address system is a complementary mechanism that, together with CLMRS, can provide the necessary infrastructure required to tackle child labor effectively. A company's CLMRS can be a meaningful counterpart to our own assess-and-address system by providing a mechanism for

companies to focus on communities with higher child labor risks (and therefore require more rigorous monitoring). Companies can use CLMRS to monitor individual households for child labor, and, where needed, they can establish community-based child protection committees. Given that the Rainforest Alliance's assess-and-address system monitors a broad range of human rights issues, of which child labor is just one, there is significant potential to further integrate and expand the CLMRS model to incorporate and take on other high-risk human rights issues, such as forced labor and workplace violence, harassment, and discrimination. In this way, the focus of the CLMRS mechanism would depend on the findings of assess-and-address risk assessments. For example, if workplace violence, harassment, and discrimination are found to be common, then a company could consider including these additional topics under the CLMRS umbrella.

CHILD LABOR FREE ZONES

Ultimately, incorporating our assess-and-address system with the CLMRS model can create the necessary infrastructure to adopt a wider landscape approach—known as a **Child Labor Free Zone (CLFZ)**—which focuses efforts on a specific geographical area, rather than a specific supply chain, and ensures that all children in that area attend school and are not involved in child labor. Landscape-level approaches require collaboration between governments, companies, communities, and civil society in order to jointly identify root causes and tackle the issues found.

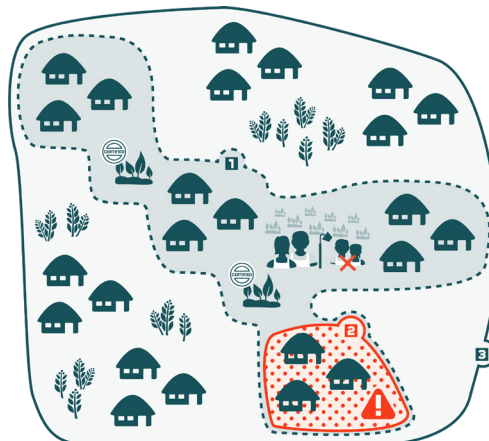
Through the CLFZ approach, all stakeholders—teachers, parents, children, community leaders, businesses, and local authorities—come together to not only change community norms and policies on child labor, but also to help improve the economic position of families, thereby addressing one of the main reasons why families rely on child labor in the first place. For this to happen, a diverse citizen's committee is established, acting as both a role model and a watchdog—and all while communicating one simple, unwavering message: **all children should be in school**. The Rainforest Alliance's assess-and-address system includes committees at the farm level that can later be expanded to the community level. These in turn can integrate the CLMRS model in high-risk areas of the community. Research has shown that landscape interventions are indeed more effective at reducing child labor than supply chain

ones. Furthermore, [our research](#) has concluded that the most cost-effective approach is to implement a full CLFZ model in one core geographical zone, with a lighter touch in surrounding areas. Visits between these areas greatly enhanced the transfer of norms and practices from the core zone to the neighboring regions. Limiting interventions to a company's supply chain can be less effective because it does not systemically address the root causes that drive child labor outside the supply chain and at the community level. This is why it is important to focus activities not just on households directly connected to supply chains, but rather on the entire community—from every household to school and local government.

“ALL CHILDREN MUST BE IN SCHOOL”

At the Rainforest Alliance, we have been working with and learning from rural communities for 35 years. Our research and experience have shown that without investing in the overall system, and the connection between supply chain efforts and government efforts, stakeholders run the risk of potentially building duplicative and inefficient systems. Some issues are too big to be taken on alone; collaboration is the key to eliminating the root causes of child labor. The CLFZ approach—with its consistent message that all children must be in school—provides an important framework for that collaboration. With assess-and-address and CLMRS as integrated mechanisms, CLFZ can offer an effective way forward to ensure that every child has access to free and quality education alongside age-appropriate work.

An integrated system:



- 1 Rainforest Alliance certification system in cooperatives:** identifying and mitigating risks through risk assessments and awareness raising, and by monitoring, identifying, and remediating human rights cases through an assess-and-address committee and a grievance mechanism.
- 2 Child Labor Monitoring and Remediation System (CLMRS):** in communities with high-risk of child labor, a more intensive monitoring approach, like CLMRS, is advised, to ensure quick identification and remediation of child labor cases.
- 3 Child Labor Free Zone:** a landscape level approach that focuses efforts on a specific geographical area, rather than a specific supply chain, and ensures that all children in that area attend school and are not involved in child labor.



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The Rainforest Alliance is creating a more sustainable world by using social and market forces to protect nature and improve the lives of farmers and forest communities.

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