



Labor Rights and Child Labor Brief



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Introduction

World Vision

About us

World Vision is a global Christian humanitarian organization dedicated to working with children, families, and their communities worldwide to reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice.

In countries around the world, we implement multiple programs funded by private donations and the U.S. government that promote the right to decent work and address the root causes of child labor, forced labor, and other forms of exploitation.

Our vision for work

World Vision respects the dignity, uniqueness, and intrinsic worth of every person, stands in solidarity in a common search for justice, and is called to serve the most vulnerable children and their families around the world. World Vision also believes protecting the rights of all people to have safe, dignified work and access to sustainable livelihoods is critical to family and child well-being. To realize this goal, World Vision partners with governments, the private sector, and civil society to raise awareness and uphold workers' rights.





Part 1

Why labor rights?

Supporting children and young workers

Workers' rights include the rights of children to be free from economic exploitation, hazardous work, or work that interferes with their education.

When workers' rights are not protected, the resulting low wages and economic conditions create a situation in which households must rely on additional income from children, putting them at risk for exploitation from employers and disrupting their development and well-being. The international Convention on the Rights of the Child clearly states that children must be protected from economic exploitation and any work that interferes with the child's education or disrupts their development.

Young workers and children of legal working age entering the workforce for the first time enhance their life trajectory when they are aware of, and can advocate for, their protected rights and age-appropriate opportunities to work.

Young workers and children of legal working age represent some of the most vulnerable members of the workforce given their tendency to fill low-wage, unskilled, and often dangerous jobs. They are exposed to potential abuse and exploitation in the workplace while often unaware of their rights. Conversely, where children's rights are protected, including their right to education, their life expectancy increases, along with their improved livelihoods and social well-being.



Supporting adult workers and families

Protecting workers and their rights to gain decent wages, access to social protections, acceptable working conditions, freedom of association, and collective bargaining is critical to the economic growth and sustainable livelihoods of families. Affirming these rights protects adult workers from forced labor and other forms of exploitation in the workplace, while positively impacting the economic, environmental, physical, and social well-being of children and their families.

Economic deprivation is one of the key drivers of violence in the home, child labor, and other forms of exploitation. It also contributes to environmental and health concerns and social problems. Families are more likely to access healthcare and education when they earn a living wage and are provided with safe work. When these basic needs are met within a family, a solid foundation can be built for a positive life trajectory for children, while creating the necessary environment for strong economic growth.

Supporting communities

Communities can either advance or hinder the development of children, young workers, and adult workers, while also impacting family dynamics. When communities are aware of workers' rights and children's rights to education and are mobilized to identify and respond to violations of these rights and to violence in the home, this creates a thriving community that is both protective and resilient.

When communities are unaware of workers' rights and children's rights to education, they are not able to cultivate a protective social environment for all. Communities and local civil society organizations are also often limited in their capacity and coordinated efforts to address issues of exploitation. However, a mobilized and robust civil society, working together with local government partners while holding them accountable, can strategically and holistically confront and address issues related to children's and workers' rights.

Our partners: World Vision collaborates and engages with governments, private sector actors, and workers' organizations—and works directly in communities—to advance the protection of children from the practice of child labor and to support the awareness of and compliance with labor rights. We partner with key private sector actors, the United States government, and

foreign governments to provide linkages to decent work opportunities for youth and their families. World Vision values private partners and works closely with employers, trade associations, and labor inspectorates to increase their commitment to upholding labor rights laws.



Our approach

► Civil society

World Vision's long-term community presence has enabled it to establish sustainable partnerships with civil society that prioritize education and reducing violence and exploitation.

We have seen children thrive when communities and civil society are committed to protecting workers' rights, strong child protection systems are in place, education is accessible and valued, schools are safe to attend, and age-inappropriate work is prevented. World Vision helps to mobilize local community structures centered around labor and child rights to build awareness and refer potential violations to local and/or municipal authorities.

For years, World Vision has worked with communities to ensure that young workers and children of legal working age are aware of their rights regarding:

- 1) Pay standards established by national law
- 2) Age-appropriate working hours
- 3) Continuing education
- 4) Acceptable working conditions
- 5) Reporting workplace rights violations

This increases the likelihood of young workers accessing grievance mechanisms and reduces their risk of being exploited or abused in the workplace. Through awareness-raising and outreach campaigns in communities, World Vision advocates for the rights of young workers in the workplace by crafting key messages for specific audiences.

In several countries where World Vision works, we also support civil society and government engagement with workers' organizations, such as federations, associations, and labor unions that defend workers' rights and provide accountability and transparency measures for employers. Civil society's efforts to protect workers and their rights reduce the risks of families falling victim to forced labor, child labor, gender-based violence, and other types of exploitation. Through direct trainings for workers, World Vision has often provided information and resources to them on how to claim and defend their rights.

Government

World Vision partners with and supports foreign governments to:

- 1) Create and enforce laws related to the protection of workers
- 2) Strengthen local and national systems to identify and respond to violations of children's rights
- 3) Advance social protection mechanisms
- 4) Increase access to education to create an environment for children to learn and thrive

As a nongovernmental organization, we have been able to successfully advocate and support interagency coordination among government branches and departments, keeping the focus on the well-being of children and their families.

World Vision provides technical assistance to government programs that:

- 1) Provide both formal and alternative education options to children and adolescents
- 2) Promote soft and technical skills development
- 3) Support youth in the transition to employment

- 4) Incentivize young workers to pursue safe and decent work, rather than leave school for lower paying jobs
- 5) Create and/or promote grievance mechanisms for an emerging young adult workforce

We have often partnered with schools to train teachers and establish peer-tutoring programming. In remote areas where traditional schools are not present, World Vision has linked children and adolescents to alternative education programs. We have also offered complementary education programs—such as reading camps, mobile libraries, and life-skills programming—within schools and around communities to increase literacy rates and interest in school.

Social protection programs can support the resiliency of families through periods of economic shocks. World Vision works to ensure these programs are accessible to families and communities to protect and promote their socioeconomic well-being.

Moreover, World Vision works closely with governments to support them in the enforcement of labor rights, including the eradication of child labor and the promotion of occupational safety and health (OSH) standards and decent wages. Specifically, World Vision has provided capacity-building support to ministries of labor and their inspectorate staff to improve inspection protocols and procedures.



➤ Private sector

World Vision engages with private sector stakeholders to improve their compliance with workers' rights and strengthen their due diligence processes. This leads to the responsible recruitment of workers, prohibiting children under the age of 14 to work, and eliminating child labor. This respect for workers' rights assures the protection of those entering the workforce, allowing them to exercise their rights without fear of reprisal.

Employers that build awareness of their workers' rights, protections, and entitlements create a fair and safe work environment, while allowing young workers to complete their education.

World Vision promotes and supports employers and private sector stakeholders to consider the well-being of young workers and children of legal working age and youth when creating social compliance systems and remediation mechanisms. This includes consideration of flexible schedules to accommodate ongoing education and the active prevention of young workers from being exploited or abused. The quality and sustainability of a workforce is improved when young workers can build technical skills and specializations within a single industry and have opportunities for internal advancement.

Through World Vision's youth programming, youth are equipped to pursue higher education, obtain employment, or start a small business. For youth who choose employment, strong partnerships are made with private sector companies to link them to internships and job opportunities.

World Vision provides resources and capacity building support to private sector businesses to comply with labor laws around decent work, decent wages, and OSH standards, and to promote due diligence and access to grievance mechanisms. Reducing economic pressure on the household diminishes the need for children to provide additional income to the household. And when workers are fairly compensated for their work and have safe work environments, they are less likely to be injured or to develop chronic illnesses. That's why World Vision partners with OSH experts to strengthen guidelines, protocols, and training manuals that can be used by companies to improve their compliance with labor laws.





Part 2

Our vision in practice

Campos de Esperanza – Mexico

➤ 2016–2025, \$11 million – U.S. Department of Labor

Project goal: To reduce child labor in migrant agricultural communities in Oaxaca and Veracruz by increasing the promotion and protection of labor rights and creating linkages for migrant children and their families to participate in existing education, training, and social protection programs.

Public sector engagement: Coordinate with the Mexican government to strengthen the compliance of labor rights and prevent child labor. Collaborate with several government agencies at the federal, state, and municipal levels to bring about change.

Key activities

- Train and support federal, state, and municipal authorities to address child labor, child, protection and Occupation, Safety, and Health (OSH).
- Establish an Interagency Commission for the Prevention and Eradication of child labor at the state and municipal levels.
- Improve inspection protocols and procedures for Mexico’s Ministry of Labor to identify and respond to violations of labor rights and child labor in the agricultural sector.

Private sector engagement: Strengthening the knowledge and skills of sugarcane and coffee sector stakeholders about labor law compliance regarding child labor and working conditions.

Key activities

- Train sugarcane and coffee sector producers and day laborers to understand child labor regulations, OSH compliance, and other forms of labor rights.
- Support private sector stakeholders in developing tools, mechanisms, and action plans to ensure labor law compliance that will improve working conditions and prevent child labor.

- Resume the research study to identify whether chronic kidney disease of unknown causes (CKDu) is prevalent among sugarcane workers.

Community-level awareness raising and mobilization:

Promote positive changes within communities to raise awareness among agricultural workers about their labor rights pertaining to acceptable working conditions and prevent child labor.

Key activities

- Carry out informational campaigns sensitizing communities and agricultural workers on the topics of labor rights, OSH, working conditions, and child labor.
- Conduct household visits for one-on-one information sharing and enrollment in the social protection program.
- Mobilize community-based action groups to identify and to take action in addressing issues in their communities. This can include labor rights, OSH, CKDu, child labor, access to quality education, training opportunities, and social protection programs.



PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS

- Trained 1,359 government officials throughout Oaxaca and Veracruz in either child labor, OSH standards, or labor rights in migrant agricultural communities.
- Promoted and supported the reactivation of the state-level commission to prevent and eradicate child labor, la Comisión Intersecretarial para la Prevención y Erradicación del Trabajo Infantil (CITI), in Veracruz.
- Developed a certification for labor competency standards and responsible recruitment guidelines for the sugarcane sector.
- Trained 4,503 sugarcane and coffee producers and other workers on the protocols for acceptable working conditions and child labor.
- Established 20 community-based dialogues and six child well-being committees as social accountability mechanisms to address child labor and labor rights at the local level.
- Vaccinated 2,414 sugarcane cutters against influenza and measles in Oaxaca (1,628) and Veracruz (786).
- Provided education services to 1,493 children in child labor or at risk of being in child labor.
- Delivered 9,348 kits with information on prevention of COVID-19 and care for those infected.

Puentes Project – Guatemala

➤ 2017–2024, \$60.6 million – United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

Project goal: To address the drivers of migration by empowering youth with information, knowledge, and skills and connecting them to support services to improve their access to employment, education, development, and improved well-being and quality of life.

PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS

- Over 34,000 youth completed the core skill curriculum course, including modules on worker rights and responsibilities and the legal obligations of employers as set by national labor laws.
- Over 17,000 youth accessed vocational and technical training
- Over 8,000 youth obtained new or better employment.
- Over 2,800 youth accessed technical support, mentorship, internships, and apprenticeships as part of the program.



Futuros Brillantes, Phase I – Honduras

➤ 2014–2025, \$11.65 million – U.S. Department of Labor

Project goal: To reduce child labor and improve labor rights in Honduras, work with the Honduran government, industry, and other stakeholders to build the Ministry of Labor’s capacity to identify and respond to child labor issues, and ensure remediation of labor law violations related to freedom of association and the right to organize and bargain collectively in the private sector.

PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS

- 750,000 people were reached by awareness raising campaigns on child labor and labor rights (workers, employers, parents, public servants and civil society).
- 1,340 adolescents once engaged in the worst forms of child labor are now in decent and age-appropriate work.
- 6,623 children engaged in or at high risk of entering child labor were provided with education or vocational training services.
- 402 labor rights cases were managed at Workers’ Rights Centers created by World Vision and local partners. Additionally, over 15,000 people received information regarding their rights as workers from these centers.
- World Vision formed 95 Child Labor Committees, which the Ministry of Labor institutionalized as an official reporting mechanism at the local level for child labor and labor rights.
- Over 200 Ministry of Labor staff were trained on OSH, freedom of association and collective bargaining, and child labor. The training modules created by the project were uploaded onto an e-learning platform, where now more than 1,500 government staff and the general population have taken these courses.

- 212 inspectors from the Ministry of Labor were trained to improve their inspection procedure and enforce Honduran labor inspection laws and regulations.
- World Vision managed the development of a new electronic case management system for the Ministry of Labor to monitor, track, and address labor rights violations in the country.
- World Vision served as mediator for tripartite dialogues between government, employers, and worker unions to help reach consensus in Honduras' new labor law and its regulations.
- More than 1 million people who were confined during the pandemic were reached through social and traditional media (radio, television, and newspapers) in a joint awareness-raising campaign about safety conditions, child labor prevention, and labor rights.
- More than 1,000 workers and employers' representatives were trained in topics related to working conditions, biosafety, and labor rights.



Youth Workforce Development Project – Honduras

- 2016–2019 (Phase I)
2019–2023 (Phase II)
\$5 million – U.S. private donors

Project goal: To enable young women and men ages 15 to 25 to find jobs, start businesses, and/or continue their studies through World Vision's Youth Ready Program, increasing their economic opportunities to sustain productive and fulfilling lives.

PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS

- 4,787 youth were certified in Youth Ready, equipping them with the knowledge, tools, and networks to find jobs, start a business, and/or continue their studies.
- 689 youth were able to obtain employment and 655 started a business.

Equal Access to Quality Jobs for Women and Girls (EQUAL) – Mexico

- 2019–2025, \$6.25 million – U.S. Department of Labor

Project goal: To address the causes of gender inequality and labor rights violations in the sugarcane and coffee supply chains by increasing the social and economic empowerment of women and adolescent girls vulnerable to child labor, forced labor, and OSH issues.

KEY INTERVENTIONS

- Women and girls participate in the "Prepared for Life" program, that includes life skills training, life planning, financial literacy, and job training.
- Men and adolescent boys are sensitized on, understand, and promote gender equality and women's economic empowerment.
- Collaboration with the public sector in the development of policies and coordination mechanisms that support the economic strengthening of women and girls and the referral and attention of cases of labor exploitation and gender-based violence.
- A due diligence system developed and implemented in sugar and coffee value chains that prevents child labor, forced labor, and other labor rights violations.



PROJECT TARGETS

- Community leaders, women, and girls are informed about the rights of women and girls, including the right to participate in labor, and are trained to address issues of child labor, forced labor, and other violations of labor rights.
- Coordination is improved among public sector stakeholders to respond to grievances and refer vulnerable women and adolescent girls to social services and programs in agricultural communities.
- Private sector capacity is strengthened to improve working conditions and labor rights compliance, particularly for women and adolescent girls in agricultural communities.

PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS

- 3,469 public servants trained in child labor, labor rights, and forced labor, with a special focus on women and adolescents of working age.
- 873 coffee producers and harvesters trained on labor issues that particularly affect women and adolescents of working age.
- 289 women (209) and men (80), both adolescents and adults, benefited from seed capital, supporting around 79 entrepreneurial ventures.
- 2,517 girls, boys, and adolescents provided with formal and non-formal educational services.

- 1,777 women and men completed at least one Technical Vocational Training or Entrepreneurship program.
- 3 complaint and referral protocols strengthened or promoted to address labor rights violations against women in agricultural communities.
- 14 public entities at the federal, state, or municipal level coordinated with the project to implement programs and protocols and to achieve common goals related to reducing the vulnerability of women and adolescents of working age, supporting entrepreneurship, combating child labor and forced labor, and promoting labor rights.
- 31 community committees independently implemented activities from their action plans to prevent child labor, gender-based violence, and to promote labor rights.



Engaged, Educated, Empowered, Ethiopian Youth (E4Y) – Ethiopia

➤ 2014–2018, \$11.1 million – U.S. Department of Labor

Project goal: To reduce child labor among youth ages 14 to 17 in target areas of Ethiopia by increasing retention and completion of formal education by youth, especially females, to help youth secure decent work, to improve the livelihoods of targeted households, to increase youth engagement and leadership on community issues

affecting their future, and to provide social protection systems with improved capacity to address child labor.

PROJECT OUTCOMES

- The percentage of participant children ages 14 to 17 engaged in child labor in target areas has decreased from 85% to 6.7%.
- The number of children engaged in, or at risk of, entering child labor who have been provided education and vocational services is 12,670, exceeding the original project target of 12,000.

Ethiopians Fighting Against Child Exploitation (E-FACE) – Ethiopia

➤ 2011–2015, \$10 million – U.S. Department of Labor

Project goal: To increase the incomes of families engaged in spinning and weaving in Addis Ababa, and to reduce the incidence of children and youth engaged in exploitative labor conditions in high-end textile shops and by exporters, key traders, and input suppliers.

PROJECT OUTCOMES

- 2,000 working youth participated in the project’s Keep Safe training, which focused on life skills and workplace hazards.
- The project launched Safe Threads, a child-safe certification standard with producers in the Ethiopian weaving and textile industry.
- 1,523 employers participated in OSH training to mitigate workplace hazards, including specific hazards for young workers. This training provided awareness, business development services, and appropriate financial products to support employers to assess and address workplace hazards.

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Livelihoods, Education, Advocacy, and Protection to Reduce Child Labor in Sugarcane Areas (ABK3 LEAP) – Philippines

➤ 2011–2016, \$19.4 million – U.S. Department of Labor

Project goal: To reduce hazardous child labor in sugarcane production across 11 provinces in the Philippines.

PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS

- Among the project’s 54,479 child participants, there was an 86% reduction in those who were participating in hazardous child labor connected to the sugarcane industry.
- Over 30,300 households received livelihood services, of which 55% have sustained increased income for longer than 6 months.
- 97% of provinces, municipalities, and barangays covered by the project have passed new policies and funded programs to reduce child labor.
- 73 sugar industry institutions or associations adopted policies and annual programs to reduce child labor.
- 23 municipalities have implemented functional child labor monitoring systems.
- 69% of 148 targeted communities adopted child labor ordinances that protect children from engaging in hazardous child labor.



World Vision 

To learn more, contact Matthew Stephens at mstephens@worldvision.org or visit evidence.worldvision.org/our-work/child-protection

34834 Weyerhaeuser Way S.
P.O. Box 9716
Federal Way, WA 98063-9716

World Vision is a Christian humanitarian organization dedicated to working with children, families, and their communities worldwide to reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice. Motivated by our faith in Jesus Christ, we serve alongside the poor and oppressed as a demonstration of God’s unconditional love for all people. World Vision serves all people, regardless of religion, race, ethnicity, or gender.

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