

WORLD VISION UK

Work in Progress: Effective approaches to end child labour

JANUARY 2015



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EVERY CHILD FREE FROM FEAR

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This report was prepared by Jonathan Blagbrough, a UK-based independent consultant on child exploitation.

**Cover image:** Children and their mother in Albania, going home after a day's work collecting plastics.

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Our child safeguarding policy prevents us from showing the faces of any girls affected by early marriage. All images used were taken with permission from similar contexts and are not linked to the specific stories in this report. All quotes from research respondents displayed in this report were given anonymously and are attributable by gender, age and location only.

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# Executive summary

WorldVision is the world's largest international children's charity, operating in nearly 100 countries. It is dedicated to the well-being of children, especially the world's most vulnerable children, their families and communities. It works to ensure that every child (under 18 years) has the chance to live life to the full, free from fear, and in a world where they are loved, protected and cared for, enjoying good health and an education.

Every day World Vision tackles child labour and its causes. It does this through a number of targeted child labour elimination projects in over 25 countries. It also forms part of World Vision's broader child protection strengthening work in at least 30 countries through its long-term Area Development Programmes (ADPs). It does so not only because child labour scars the physical and mental development of children, but because it also impairs their families, communities and ultimately societies in their ability to achieve economic and social advancement.

This report is based on discussions with 135 child labourers aged between nine and 17 years old during 2013 and 2014 in World Vision rural and urban project locations in Albania, Bangladesh, India and Malawi. In addition, 118 parents and 45 community stakeholders and others were interviewed. The study has also been informed by discussion with World Vision personnel engaged in tackling child labour and involved in wider child protection work in Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, India, the Philippines and the USA.

The report presents a snapshot of World Vision's work on child labour in order to reflect on 'what works,' as well as to consider what still needs to be done by governments and others to tackle this persistent and insidious threat to our collective development. Following an overview of child labour, the report describes World Vision's holistic child protection systems approach to tackling the issue. Using a variety of examples, it examines how World Vision works with children, their parents and their communities to end or mitigate child labour, as well as the role of government and the private sector in sustaining and expanding these efforts. The report ends by highlighting key areas of learning where concerted action is still needed if societies are to make progress in ending child labour once and for all. This learning is that

**Child labour is inextricably linked to other child protection issues and cannot be considered in isolation from them.** The causes of child labour often share their roots with other child protection issues. Economic and social deprivation, discriminatory beliefs and traditions, inequality and the lack of political will to invest more in the things that matter, including health and education services, are all contributory factors. This justifies and necessitates a re-doubling of efforts to respond to child labour using a holistic (inclusive, multi-faceted and multi-sectoral) child protection systems approach. This approach emphasises prevention as well as protection efforts, and focuses on strengthening the roles and capacities of families, communities and the State to take greater responsibility for the protection of children from child labour.

**The empowerment of child labourers is the cornerstone of sustainable efforts to protect them.** Child labourers' awareness about their rights is a prerequisite for their empowerment. This includes their meaningful participation in decisions and efforts affecting their wellbeing. Building child labourers' understanding of their situation, their entitlements and what constitutes unacceptable behaviour towards them is the first step towards building their self-respect and confidence. This is required for them to aspire to and take full advantage of opportunities to improve their situation. It further facilitates their ability to advocate for themselves and for others. At the same time their parents and carers should be similarly sensitised and empowered in order to better support their children.

**Education opens the door to a better life.** Education, in its various forms, is a vital alternative to child labour. Basic primary education is the foundation upon which productive and fulfilling lives can be built. Therefore, promoting access to good quality free schooling should be a key component of any child labour intervention. Keeping children in school requires tackling a number of critical barriers to their retention: ending violence (including corporal punishment) and discrimination (against girls and



“Parents should stop sending children to work instead of school” is the expectation of these youths and children in Leuk Daek, Cambodia. Nearly 250 children from three communities used banners, posters and spoke their messages through an amplifier to educate community members.

stigmatised children in particular), reducing the cost of schooling, and creating a more accessible and conducive learning environment are all crucial factors. Pre-school education and after-school support are proving to be important ways of helping children vulnerable to child labour to succeed and excel at school. Non-formal education offers important respite for child labourers and can facilitate their transition out of child labour. Supporting the acquisition of life skills helps older children to avoid being drawn into exploitation and worst forms of child labour situations.

**Advocacy and service provision go hand-in-hand.** They are indivisible and interdependent. Neither can effect sustainable change without the other. Multi-level advocacy, including at policy level, is essential to sustaining and building on tangible gains with children, their families and in communities. At the same time, services for the benefit of child labourers lay the foundations for effective advocacy by being a palpable force for progress in communities, and affording legitimacy to local and wider advocacy efforts as a result. WorldVision is aware that national policy and legislative reform is essential to underpinning and sustaining local gains in social attitudes and behaviour change. At the same time, engagement with local authorities and decision-makers supports these broader advocacy efforts. As a result, it is clear that advocacy at local and national levels is both necessary and mutually reinforcing.

**Supporting skills training and decent work for youth.** Adolescent child labourers who are legally entitled to work have tended to be somewhat neglected in responses to child labour. Many of these young workers are vulnerable to hazardous work and other forms of exploitation. They can fall through the cracks in State protection and require special attention, not least in light of national level skill shortages and a burgeoning global crisis in youth unemployment. Marketable skills training opportunities that lead to decent work are critical not only to their futures, but to the future of robust national economies. Engaging with employers and trade unions is crucial to maintaining and expanding decent work opportunities for youth, as well as promoting the enforcement of labour laws.

**Coordination and cooperation is critical to ending child labour.** Close coordination between government, the private sector and civil society at all levels is essential to preventing child labour and achieving holistic lasting protection for child labourers. Working with, for example, NGOs, local authorities, community and faith leaders, facilitates the identification of child labour. It galvanises political will and promotes governmental accountability. This in turn facilitates the efficient use of resources, encouraging the development of consultative advocacy planning at local, regional and national levels, thus enabling a wider range of people to become involved in tackling child labour.

**Engaging the private sector is key to curbing hazardous work for children.** Child labour is ubiquitous in agriculture, manufacturing and retail. Businesses, large and small, are rightly concerned about child labour involvement in their products and services. Such labour presents a threat to their image and the sustainability of their supply chains. World Vision and other child-focused organisations can play an important role in steering businesses away from exploiting children for short-term gain, and towards addressing the root causes of child labour. In addition to identifying and tackling child labour in their businesses, they can, for example, promote decent work opportunities for youths and support education and community-focused projects. They can also help influence government policy to improve educational standards and to eradicate poverty.

**Ending child labour is a long-term commitment.** Many projects designed to eliminate child labour or mitigate its effects play an important role in highlighting the issue and catalysing action. The length of most projects, however, including some of those run by World Vision, is too short to ensure that families no longer rely on their children's income in the long-term, especially where they might be subject to economic shocks such as the sudden loss of a breadwinner. For this reason, amongst others, it is essential that efforts to curb child labour are mainstreamed into wider governmental and non-governmental poverty alleviation strategies. In doing so, they should be embedded in broader long-term programmes, such as those relating to education, health, social protection and criminal justice.



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In the Matigara region of India, an area that is prone to child labour and trafficking, World Vision has established six non-formal education centres with the aim of providing classes for local children. Above, girls attend a session on child protection and child rights.

# I. Introduction

WorldVision is the world's largest international children's charity, operating in nearly 100 countries. It is dedicated to the well-being of children, especially the world's most vulnerable children, their families and communities. It works with families, communities and a range of local partners to ensure that every child (under 18 years) has the chance to live life to the full, free from fear and in a world where they are loved, protected and cared for, enjoying good health and an education.

The problem of child labour persists. It still affects over 160 million of the world's children, despite considerable publicity warning against the practice, including images of children in sweatshops in Bangladesh or being forced to beg on the streets in countries like Albania and Senegal. Recognising this, WorldVision continuously strives to tackle child labour and its causes through a number of targeted child labour elimination projects in over 25 countries. Tackling child labour also forms part of World Vision's broader child protection work through long-term Area Development Programmes (ADPs) in at least 30 countries. WorldVision engages in such work not only because child labour scars the physical and mental development of children, but also because it impairs their families, communities and ultimately societies in their ability to achieve economic and social advancement.

This report presents a snapshot of WorldVision's work on child labour in order to reflect on what works, and what still needs to be done by governments and others to tackle this persistent and insidious threat to our collective development. Following an overview of child labour, the report describes World Vision's approach to tackling the issue. Using a variety of examples, it goes on to examine how the organisation works with children, their parents and their communities to end or mitigate child labour, as well as the role of government and the private sector in sustaining and expanding these efforts. Reflecting on World Vision's experience, the report ends with summary learning points on areas where concerted action is still needed if societies are to progress in finally ending child labour.

## I.1 The research data

This study is based on interviews and focus group discussions with 135 child labourers during 2013 and 2014 in World Vision project sites located in Albania (Tirana, Lezha and Elbasan), Bangladesh (Chowfaldandi, Cox's Bazar, Khulna and Rangpur), India (Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh) and Malawi (Kayezi). Those participating in the study included girls and boys aged between nine and 17 years old from both urban and rural locations. As part of the study, 118 parents of child labourers and 45 community stakeholders and other key informants, were also interviewed at project sites. The study has further been informed by discussion with World Vision personnel engaged in tackling child labour and involved in wider child protection work in Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, India, the Philippines and the USA. A desk review of key documentation was also conducted, some of which can be found listed under 'Further reading' at the end of this report. It should be noted that quotations from children and others used in this report have been taken from the interviews and focus group discussions conducted as part of this research. Names have been removed or changed to protect individual identities.

### TYPES OF CHILD LABOUR\*

#### Children interviewed for this study have been engaged in:

**Albania:** street begging; construction; iron scrap and can collecting; car washing; hawking; shoe stitching; restaurant service (as waiters); and domestic work (raising siblings, cooking, washing and cleaning) in their own homes. *(It is estimated that more than 100,000 children aged five to 14 are in child labour in Albania\*\*)*

**Bangladesh:** shrimp processing; welding; steel workshops; road construction; portering; furniture painting; auto workshops; shoemaking and repair; selling cosmetics, engine parts, betel leaves, firewood;

tailoring; beedi rolling; garland making; market cleaning; local hotels/roadside eatery service; domestic work (own homes and homes of others); gem polishing; rickshaw driving. *(It is estimated that over 3.6 million children aged five to 14 years are in child labour in Bangladesh\*\*)*

**India:** service provision in local hotels, roadside eateries, tea shops; selling clothes, cosmetics, shoes; making iron brushes and utensils; domestic work (in their own homes and the homes of others); shoemaking; rag picking; tailoring; painting; construction. *(It is estimated that over 4 million children aged five to 14 are in child labour in India. However, this is likely to be a severe underestimate according to the Government of India's own statistics\*\*)*

**Malawi:** tobacco farming and other agricultural work; herding livestock; maize milling; collecting water; fetching firewood; charcoal burning; domestic work (in their own homes and the homes of others); market selling. *(There are an estimated 1.4 million five to 14 year-olds in child labour in Malawi\*\*)*

**Child labourers supported by World Vision in other study locations are involved in:**

Fishing, agricultural work, domestic work (in the homes of others), construction (brick factories), commercial sexual exploitation (e.g. Cambodia: which has an estimated 900,000 10-14 year-olds in child labour overall\*\*); weaving, agriculture, domestic work (e.g. Ethiopia: which has an estimated 5.5 million five to 14 year-olds in child labour overall\*\*); sugarcane production (e.g. Philippines: which has an estimated 2.1 million five to 14 year-olds in child labour overall\*\*).

\* It should be noted that not all of the forms of work listed above constitute "child labour." Some forms may meet internationally recognised standards for work that is acceptable for under 18 year-olds, taking into account age and working conditions (see section 1.2).

\*\* All prevalence figures are from: [www.dol.gov/ilab/reports/child-labour](http://www.dol.gov/ilab/reports/child-labour). Figures refer to all types of work undertaken by children in the country, not just those mentioned in the study. Figures are not directly comparable and exclude children above 14 years in child labour/worst forms of child labour situations.

## 1.2 What is child labour?

Children around the world are involved in a vast array of work. Some of this work forms an important part of healthy development, preparing the child for a productive adulthood. Nevertheless, many children are engaged in difficult and demanding tasks and activities that stunt their development, interfere with their education, and may even present a risk to life and limb. Distinguishing between work with a positive impact and work that is detrimental is critical to ensuring that children are appropriately protected.

### DEFINING CHILD LABOUR

Child labour can be defined as *"work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development."*

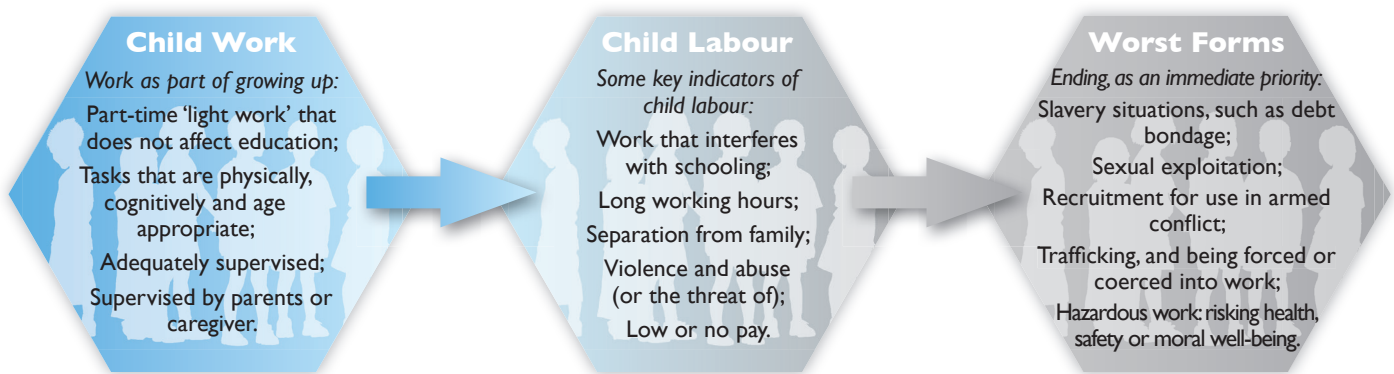
It refers to work that:

- is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and
- interferes with their schooling by: 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.

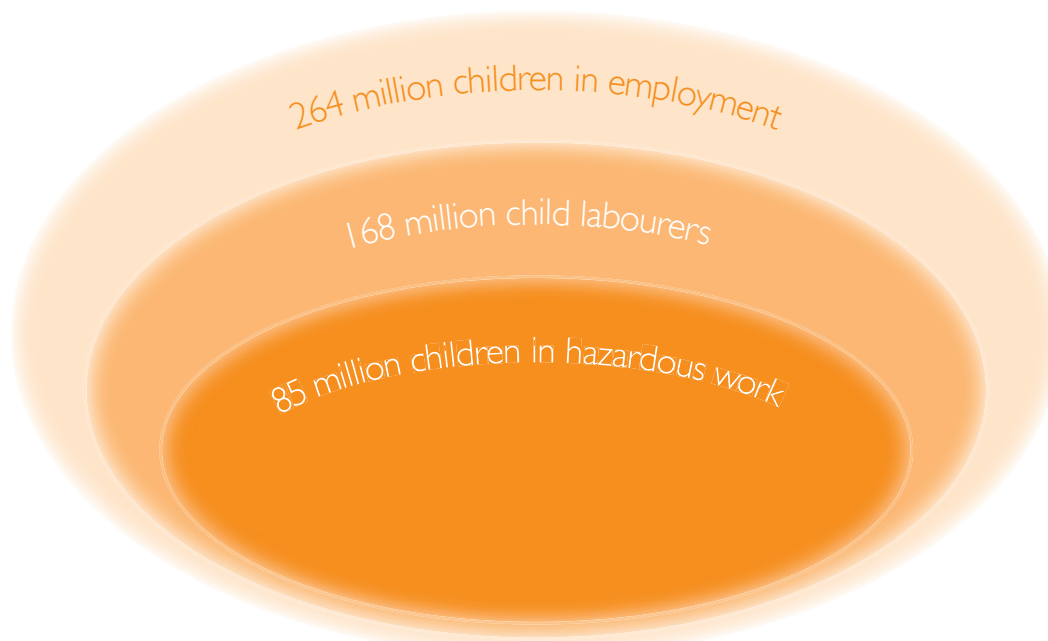
Source: International Labour Organization, "What is Child Labour", <http://www.ilo.org/ipec/facts/lang--en/index.htm> (accessed 10 September 2014).

A useful way of thinking about child labour is to understand it as a continuum in which the kinds of work that children do and the conditions in which they do it can potentially turn benign working situations into harmful





ones. There are many factors that can influence this progression, including the child's age, their working hours, their pay, whether they are free to leave or whether their education is undermined, etc. This understanding highlights the need to avoid generalising child labour situations and instead to try to understand children's individual circumstances to assist them effectively and sustainably. It also underscores the importance of addressing the worst forms of child labour as an immediate priority.



Note: Hazardous work is a subcategory of child labour, which in turn is a subcategory of children in employment (WVI 2014).

### 1.3 The scale and nature of child labour

Worldwide, there are an estimated 264 million children aged between five and 17 years old who are working (ILO, 2013). For many children, work contributes positively to their development and provides them with the skills and experience they will need for a productive future. However, a staggering 168 million under 18s – more than 10 per cent of the world's children – are below the minimum legal working age and/or are labouring at the expense of their health, education and development (ILO, 2013). While globally numbers of child labourers are on the decline, more than half (85 million) are in hazardous work – situations that directly endanger their health, safety and moral development.

The majority of child labourers are found in Asia and the Pacific (78 million). Sub-Saharan Africa, however, remains the region with the highest incidence – with more than 20 per cent (59 million) of the region's children in labour situations. Significant numbers of child labourers are also found in Latin America and the Caribbean (13 million), as well as over nine million in the Middle East and North Africa. Worldwide, the majority of child labour takes place in the informal economy (ILO, 2013).

Almost 60 per cent of all child labourers work in agriculture (including hunting, forestry and fishing). A further 26 per cent are in the services sector, engaged as domestic workers or in places such as restaurants and hotels, or in transport. Amongst the remainder, seven per cent are involved in industry, including mining and quarrying, manufacturing and construction (ILO, 2013).

Children between the ages of five and 11 years are by far the most numerous of all child labour categories (ILO, 2013). These 73 million children are a particular policy concern due to their heightened vulnerability to workplace abuse and education lapses. Older child labourers (15-17 year-olds) also require special attention, particularly in light of the lack of safe and 'decent' work for children of national working age, national level skill shortages, and a burgeoning global crisis in youth unemployment.<sup>1</sup>

While boys constitute 60 per cent of all children in labour, girls are disproportionately involved in less visible and often undercounted forms of child labour, including domestic service (ILO, 2013).

## 1.4 The international legal framework

Universally recognised international standards frame World Vision's approach to child labour. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which outlines the full range of rights belonging to all children under the age of 18, underpins and guides all that we do with children. The CRC provides a benchmark for determining the extent to which child workers' rights are being violated, or their vulnerability to such violations. In particular, Article 32 of the CRC recognises every child's 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 that is likely to harm the child's health or "*physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.*"

At the same time, the International Labour Organization's (ILO) core child labour Conventions (namely, Convention No. 138 concerning the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment and Convention No. 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour) provide a detailed framework for ending child labour and providing special protection for all under-18s. The 'worst forms of child labour' are those generally acknowledged as intolerable in any context. They include slavery and practices similar to slavery, such as trafficking and debt-bondage, commercial sexual exploitation, and involvement in illicit activities, including illegal drug production and distribution. Worst forms also include 'hazardous work,' which can either be inherently dangerous or risk children's health, safety or moral well-being because of the conditions in which it is carried out.

## 1.5 What is the impact of child labour?

We know that childhood is a critical time for safe and healthy human development. We also know that child labourers, who are still growing, are at particular risk of harming their physical, cognitive and behavioural development through the work they do and the conditions they work in. Using machinery, chemicals and working in unsanitary conditions, along with ergonomic hazards, long hours of work and poor living conditions not only has the potential to create illness and injury, but can result in life-long disability on developing bodies. Child labourers can also suffer psychological damage (including loss of self-esteem) from working and living in an environment where they are belittled, harassed or experience violence and abuse. In addition, child labour profoundly affects children's futures. Denied the right to a quality education, when they become adults they have little chance of getting decent work and escaping the cycle of poverty and exploitation.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The ILO reports that young people are three times more likely to be unemployed than adults and almost 73 million youths worldwide are looking for work, <http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/youth-employment/lang-it/index.htm>. (Accessed on 10 September 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from <http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/briefingpapers/childlabour/>. (Accessed on 11 September 2014).



A five year-old girl washes her face before a long day's work in the fields. Village of Nyaekia, in Malawi.

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Indeed, while it is generally accepted that poverty in large part contributes to child labour, it is less understood that child labour itself leads to poverty. Here, it can trigger a vicious cycle that creates inter-generational health, education and opportunity deficits at family, community and societal levels.

While constituting an abuse of children's rights on many fronts, child labour can also represent a serious challenge to societal development and economic growth. It is evident that child labour can be damaging to a country's economic success in the long-term, resulting in a stock of uneducated and low-skilled workers (WVI, 2014). Child labour has also been found to have a number of other macroeconomic impacts, including:

- decreased lifetime earning potential and increased likelihood of poverty in later life;
- depressed wages, constraints on entrepreneurship and the emergence of stagnant, low-wage economies;
- increased adult unemployment; and
- discouragement of inward foreign investment.<sup>3</sup>

Risks posed to international companies by association with child labour, modern slavery and other human rights concerns can include: "[detriment] to company earnings and shareholder value, through reduced sales or business opportunities. Major controversies can absorb substantial and seemingly disproportionate senior management and board time and effort, diverting efforts from value adding and strategic activities. Conversely, a strong reputation could enhance brand value and sales."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Citi Research Australia/NZ: Modern Slavery & Child Labour: Assessing Risks In Global Industries and ASX-Listed Companies (21 August 2014), p.15. Available online at: <<https://ir.citi.com/EOZnV0luNqaSHIK9nN1+PTZ34QANDDpmFwgQDTp877LtStgCBRn0Q==>> (Accessed on 20 October 2014)

## VOICES OF CHILD LABOURERS

Why are you working?

*“I started when I was around four. I used to study in school, but since my older sister got married my family went into debt and I had to leave the school and take care of the house.”* (Girl, child domestic worker, Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh, India)

*“I’ve been staying with grandpa and uncle, as both my parents passed away. Mother passed away last year in August, father when I was seven.”* (Girl, 17, tobacco farming, Kayezi, Malawi)

*“My relatives said to me – ‘you can see your mother needs help, just do some work in the summer when there is no school’. But after the summer I carried on working the same hours and dropped out of school. I asked them about school and they told my mother that these government schools were no use, that the children were just wasting their time. ‘It is better he continues to work with us.’”* (Boy, 16, construction, Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh, India)

*“My elder brother left the house when he got married, and my father is old and can’t work as much anymore.”* (Girl, 15, shrimp processing, Khulna, Bangladesh)

*“I started piece work by myself, just to have some extra money, thinking maybe my mother just doesn’t want to support me. But looking at the situation I see my mother loves me, but she is handicapped and she can’t afford what I need. So I came to accept that I need to work so that we can share our resources.”* (Boy, 17, farming, Kayezi, Malawi)

## 2. World Vision's approach to tackling child labour

*"World Vision... uses a systems approach [to protecting children]... The main aims of a systems approach are to strengthen the protective nature of the environment around children and to strengthen children themselves, in order to ensure their well-being and fulfill their rights to protection from abuse, neglect, exploitation and other forms of violence" (WVI, 2011).*

As a holistic development organisation, World Vision adopts a multi-sectoral approach to addressing child labour through a child protection lens. This includes ensuring that vulnerable children and families, in communities where the organisation works, have access to education, economic development and social protection services, both to prevent children from entering harmful work and to reduce the numbers engaged in child labour.

Crucially, World Vision's approach affirms the role of parents and caregivers as the first line of support responsible for the care and protection of children. It also emphasises the duty on the State to guarantee that care and protection are provided.

World Vision's work on child labour, as with broader child protection concerns, is governed by several principles. These include the need to:

- always act in the best interests of the child;
- affirm the role of parents and caregivers as being primarily responsible for their children's care and protection;
- be comprehensive and sustainable;
- ensure state responsibility for the care and protection of children in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international instruments;
- strengthen the protective environment for **all** children.

### 2.1 Child labour in the context of child protection

Child labour is inextricably linked to many other forms of neglect, exploitation, abuse and violence against children that World Vision seeks to address through its child protection work. Child labour cannot be understood in isolation from other child protection issues. Not only do these issues share many of the same underlying factors (such as extreme deprivation, stigmatisation, exclusion and abusive relationships), they also require an integrated response that takes account of the multi-faceted range of vulnerabilities children can face.

For example, addressing the situation of children working on the street requires a focus on their home environment as well as on obstacles to their retention in schools, such as discrimination and corporal punishment. Children experiencing sexual exploitation may also be in conflict with the law, may have experienced violence in the home or be experiencing other difficulties; all of these issues need addressing holistically to ensure that action to improve a child's situation will stand the best chance of success.

Addressing the many vulnerabilities of child labourers therefore lends itself to a wider child protection systems approach. The strength of this approach lies in its community foundations and its reinforcement of the formal (government) and informal (community) systems and structures that can protect and support children, especially those who are particularly vulnerable and marginalised. It also recognises that children's well-being

depends on their relationships with others, as well as on the social, political, spiritual, physical and environmental contexts in which they live. Understanding who and what has the most influence over the child (such as parents, siblings, employers and peers, as well as school, church and clubs) helps in recognising potential entry points and targeting efforts.

### Advantages of a systems approach

The systems approach facilitates more systematic policy development and programming that considers the child, family and community as a whole. Better coordination of poverty reduction, social welfare, justice, labour, and education policies ensures cost-effectiveness and efficiency. A systems approach also addresses social drivers such as marginalisation and discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender or other characteristics. (Source: *Child Labour and UNICEF in Action: Children at the Centre*, UNICEF, 2014, p.4)

World Vision further understands that an effective child protection system requires action **at various levels** and with a **range of actors**. In practice, World Vision works with key stakeholders, namely children, their families, their communities, the State, global bodies and, particularly in the case of child labour, employers and trade associations. It works to strengthen particular elements of the child protection system such as caring and protective mechanisms and services, and policy implementation.

The **participation of child labourers** in protection efforts is central to a sustainable child protection systems approach. Child labourers' awareness about their rights is a prerequisite for their empowerment. Building child labourers' understanding of their situation, their entitlements and what constitutes unacceptable behaviour towards them is the first step towards building their self-respect and confidence. This is required for them to aspire to and take full advantage of opportunities to improve their situation, as well as their ability to advocate for themselves and for others. The effective participation of child workers relies on the development of root and branch participatory structures that, in turn, are supported and underpinned by their engagement and empowerment in their local communities.

Effective approaches to child labour require concurrent interventions with children and their families, with communities (including with local business and trade unions) and with state structures. This is critical to effectively and sustainably responding to the multi-faceted issues involved. There are several elements in particular that World Vision considers vital to ensuring a robust and lasting response to child labour within a wider child protection context:

1. A strong **legal and policy framework** that includes policies, standards and regulations that are in harmony with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, ILO child labour instruments, and other international standards and good practices – and that, importantly, are enforced at the local level.
2. **Services and service delivery mechanisms** that prevent and respond to child labour and promote awareness and action at family, community and state levels.
3. **The resources, infrastructure and human capacity** to deliver protection for all children, including those vulnerable to child labour.
4. **Coordination and collaboration** between: State and non-government actors; within government; as well as between different sectors (including the private sector) to ensure comprehensive child protection. This is particularly critical when it comes to reintegrating children back into their families, and in returning children to school and retaining them there.
5. **Accountability and oversight** to ensure effective responses to child labour that are legal, in the best interests of the child, and promote accountability.
6. **Positive and protective family and community attitudes, values and behaviours** towards all children.

7. A focus on **children’s resilience, life skills and participation** that strengthens their ability and opportunity to contribute to their own protection and the protection of others – whether they are working or not.

In short, World Vision supports efforts that empower child labourers to protect themselves, whilst engaging with their families, communities and governments to strengthen the structures and systems that protect them.

### Child labour and child, early and forced marriage

Vulnerability to child labour and child, early and forced marriage (CEFM) may often share the same root causes, such as poverty, tradition and beliefs, which can result in an abrupt end to a child’s schooling, poorer levels of health and a greater risk of violence. CEFM is also seen by many poorer families as an alternative to child labour for girls who may be viewed as an economic burden, and whose earning power is comparatively limited. Both practices are also viewed by many communities as traditional protective mechanisms for children, preventing them from experiencing sexual violence or involvement in gangs. However, in Bangladesh, for example, where two-thirds of girls will be married before they are 18 years old, CEFM is often a cover for girls’ unpaid labour in the homes of their new families.

*“Anika from Bangladesh was at risk of being married off at 14 years. She saw many other girls dropping out of school to be married – often into exploitative, violent and risky situations. However, Anika joined a child rights club supported by World Vision and gained the skills and confidence needed to make her community aware of the negative effects of early marriage. Children from these groups, which have the ear of influential community members, have been instrumental in directly stopping child marriages in many localities”* (Source: [www.worldvision.org.uk/our-work/child-protection/](http://www.worldvision.org.uk/our-work/child-protection/))

Responses to CEFM also mirror the actions needed to curb child labour. Improving the quality of education and children’s access to it plays a critical role in reducing both concerns, as does community education to change the social norms that accept and encourage their continuance. Local awareness and enforcement of law is also decisive in underpinning behavioural change in the longer term.



In New Delhi, India members of a World Vision child rights club, including former child labourers lead a procession to “Say no to child labour”.

## 2.2 Projects addressing specific forms of child labour

While the multi-faceted nature of child labour lends itself to a systems approach to child protection, it is important to note that 'one size fits all' is not always the most appropriate or effective way of assisting children whose particular needs may require a special focus or additional resources. In World Vision's experience, the systems approach does not preclude a specific focus on issues requiring special attention, as long as assistance is provided in ways that sustain and enhance community ownership and State responsibility. For example, in addition to its longer-term 'Area Development Programmes,' World Vision has utilised '**special projects**' to tackle child labour in a variety of contexts, particularly in response to situations where children are identified as having specific needs, or are particularly vulnerable. These projects are proving to be a useful way of focusing local as well as national attention on complex, extreme or prevalent child labour situations, and of drawing in resources and specialist support.

For example, in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), World Vision has been operating projects to reintegrate girls caught up in commercial sexual exploitation (CSEC) back into society since 2007. Escaping difficult home situations, with no other livelihood alternatives and little education, girls are highly vulnerable to this worst form of child labour. This situation is further exacerbated by conflict in the region. As one CSEC survivor relays: *"I left Butembo for Beni and joined the brothel when I was 13 as my mother was a widow and had no means to send me to school alongside my three older brothers."*

World Vision's "Rebound 2" project helps to reintegrate girls subjected to CSEC back into their communities. It promotes mutual support amongst the girls and assists them to develop alternative sources of income. Children from this project are intentionally mixed with others from children's clubs that World Vision supports too. This assists them to learn life skills collectively and achieve joint community sensitisation. Indeed, such projects, also facilitate the sensitisation of government officials, community members and leaders. In this way, the number of girls in local brothels in Beni has almost halved within two years. This success is attributed to the combined effect of this multi-pronged, holistic approach. Awareness-raising by the community's Sexual and Gender Based Violence Committee has helped to break the silence about CSEC and other issues, including rape and domestic violence. While some brothel owners have been arrested, a number of brothels have also closed down as a result of community sensitisation. For many of the girls concerned, the project has been an opportunity for a new start in life. As one girl reported: *"Rebound has made a big change in my life; now I am able to do tailoring, get my own customers and live by myself, not be dependent."*

World Vision recognises the particular vulnerability of children in conflict-affected countries to being recruited into armed forces and rebel groups. In addition to strengthening child protection systems to keep children safe from recruitment, World Vision has specific programmes in countries like Uganda, Myanmar and the DRC to support the reintegration of demobilised child soldiers back into their communities. World Vision also supports the global framework to end child recruitment and the UN's Children Not Soldiers campaign. In Myanmar, World Vision is part of the Country Task Force implementing the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism. It provides information on grave violations against children and engages with the Government to ensure it implements an Action Plan for the release and reintegration of children recruited into Government armed forces.

In 2011, the Rebound 2 project also extended its remit to work with former child soldiers. Despite violating international humanitarian and child rights laws, children continue to be involved in armed conflicts around the world, in both government armies and non-state armed groups. Vulnerable children can be 'recruited' into armed forces for a number of reasons; some are abducted, others may see it as a means to earn an income and escape poverty; others join to simply feel part of a 'family.'



As with the girls caught up in sexual exploitation, former child soldiers are provided with psychosocial support and vocational training. World Vision also facilitates family reunification where possible or recommends fostering if family members cannot be traced. These former child soldiers are supported in their reintegration into their communities. Between 2011 and 2014, 91 former child soldiers and 119 ex-child sex workers were successfully rehabilitated, and all of those children were enrolled in vocational, literacy and life skills training, and received psychosocial support.

The Rebound 2 project helps both the children and the communities that it works with to recover from the impacts of conflict and move forward in building peaceful societies. Vocational training also enables former child soldiers and former child sex workers from brothels to develop practical skills, such as mechanical engineering, which they can use to help them to provide for themselves.

*“Since I have been in the vocational centre, my behaviour has changed positively and thanks to the psychologist’s advice, I can consider myself as valued in society and have faith that my life is being improved. I know how to repair cars and drive, as well as other things I learned in the vocational centre. This knowledge will help me to improve my life in the future”* (former child soldier, 15 years old).

## VOICES OF CHILD LABOURERS

What do you think about working?

*“We hate begging. It is painful and upsetting. People judge us in the streets and it hurts our feelings. People are always asking us ‘why aren’t you in school?’ Men ask us ‘how much do you charge?’ as if we are prostitutes. People insult us all the time on the streets.”* (Girls, begging, Tirana, Albania)

*“I don’t enjoy working. It’s hard work and it’s destroying my education. The work affects school because when I come late and classes have already started the teacher sends me away, and I don’t get any help to catch up.”* (Boy, 15, farming, Kayezi, Malawi)

*“I feel sad because I can’t go to school like other children. I feel pain when carrying a load on my head. When the wood shop owner catches me [taking wood scraps] he beats me and it is painful.”* (Boy, 9, firewood seller, Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh)

*“The best thing is coming to the transit school and working for my family; I don’t care what the world thinks. I just want to help my family.”* (Girl, child domestic worker, Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh, India)

*“Work is tiring, but there’s nothing I can do about it. I’ve always done heavy work.”* (Boy, 17, construction worker, Elbasan, Albania)

## 3. Essential elements of a comprehensive approach to child labour

Children rely on their relationships with others for their wellbeing. This is particularly so for children in work, or other situations where they are vulnerable to exploitation. Whilst children themselves play a central role in their own protection, families, local communities, employers, the State and international actors all have a critical influence on the development and safeguarding of children. Identifying these actors and understanding the influence they have and the contribution they can make to securing children's development and protection are essential prerequisites to effective assistance.

This section looks at the key actors involved in protecting children from exploitation, starting with the decisive contribution made by child labourers themselves.

### 3.1 A focus on the child labourer

Child labourers have a significant role to play in protecting themselves and others in vulnerable situations. For World Vision, nurturing children's innate self-protection skills and developing their capacities to influence their environment and build resilience to difficult situations, is the foundation of solid and lasting child protection. As such, children, including child labourers, are key protagonists within World Vision's work.

#### 3.1.1 Developing confident and empowered children

Life skills – that is, the skills needed to lead a productive and fulfilling life – are the cornerstone of effective child protection. By developing these skills, vulnerable children have been able to: strengthen their sense



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A children's centre in Rupsha slum community, where almost two-thirds of children are married before they are 18, and 10 per cent of children drop-out of school each year.

of identity; enhance their self-confidence; improve their capacity to express, share and learn; strengthen their ability to identify risks and to rely on people they trust; and learn how to be responsible in protecting themselves and others. This has improved their career opportunities and their family habits as they become the next generation of parents.

Life skills are particularly important in both preventing child labour and helping children move away from hazardous work and back into education or decent work for children of legal working age. World Vision programming in Bangladesh offers child labourers a three-month life skills course over 24 sessions. Children who have taken this course have reported that life skills training has made them feel more valued and given them a greater sense of self-worth, as well as making them better informed about their rights and how to protect themselves. For example, adolescent girls working in one shrimp processing factory in Khulna considered that life skills training had enabled them to build their confidence and assert their rights:

*“Before joining I felt ashamed and I couldn’t talk to people because I was afraid. Now I have the confidence to talk to others. I can address elders. I can express my feelings.”* (Girl, 15)

*“Through life skills training I have learned about lots of different issues, including about child labour, early marriage, dowry and trafficking.”* (Girl, 17)

*“I had no expectations for my life, but now I feel able to stand on my own two feet and to start my own business – which I never thought I could do. I could even choose my own partner in marriage.”* (Girl, 17)

The less naïve and more critical approach that these girls are demonstrating is not only helping to end child labour, but plays a critical role in enabling them to safeguard themselves and each other from other risks. In an area where many girls are vulnerable to trafficking to India, some have reported being able to question and resist offers from brokers and convince their parents of the negative implications of child marriage. Life skills training has also given these girls more freedom. Not only do they feel more able to handle situations that may arise, but their mothers too have become increasingly comfortable about them leaving the house unaccompanied.

*“I used to worry when my daughter was going out alone, but I am now more confident that she will choose the right path due to the [life skills] training.”* (Parent, Khulna, Bangladesh)

Life-skills training is also having a knock-on effect amongst parents and communities. Parental skills training sessions have become popular due to the positive changes identified in children following the success of the life skills training. As a result, children are being heard and are better protected in families. They are increasingly able to influence parental decision-making.

*“I have learned how to behave with my children. I don’t beat them or use ‘slang’ [verbal abuse]. I try to motivate them in more positive ways.”* (Parent, Khulna, Bangladesh)

*“Previously, I thought she needed to get married off early. Now I know that this can be harmful (both for her health and socially) and I no longer want her to marry before she is 18.”* (Parent, Khulna)

### **3.1.2 Reaching out to child labourers through children’s centres**

Some World Vision national offices have established children’s centres in communities where children are vulnerable to a variety of protection concerns. These centres can take different forms according to local needs, but essentially they enable children and young people to meet their peers to play, learn to deal with risks, take part in educational activities and relax in a safe place. In this way, they can play an integral part in preventing child labour, as well as in protecting child workers from even greater harm. The centres also enable child workers to access non-formal education, where they can continue to build literacy skills despite dropping out of school.

In Khulna, Bangladesh, for example, 20 children’s centres have been set up to cater for working children, as well as children who have dropped out of school, children whose parents are sex workers (two have been located near brothel areas), unattended children, disabled children and children from very poor families.

One children's centre, located in the Rupsha slum community in Bangladesh, is a multi-purpose space that provides 25 pre-school education places in the mornings for boys and girls aged three to five years old. These children would otherwise be left unattended or with their older siblings while their parents work. This facility not only protects unattended children, but helps to create an expectation of education amongst them, whilst giving parents confidence in the potential for their children to succeed. Afternoon coaching support with homework is also provided for six to twelve year-olds, along with evening and weekend life skills-based education for community boys and girls aged between 13 and 18. The children's centre also acts as a venue for cultural and sporting activities as well as efforts to support basic health education.

*"This [child friendly centre] has really helped us. We used to be worried about our small children when we went out to work, but it has reduced our tension as we know they are being looked after"* (parent, Rupsha slum community, Bangladesh).

Key to sustaining this haven for children is the involvement of parents, local government officials, faith leaders and other community members, who monitor the space both informally (dropping in when they have time), as well as officially (by, for example, managing its activities through monthly parent meetings and a community-based Child Wellbeing Committee). Child Wellbeing Committee members also help to identify vulnerable families who might benefit from participation. In this way, World Vision acts as a catalyst for community change and ownership, helping to build child protection foundations that the community can sustain.

*"As we live near here we monitor the [children's centre] day-to-day, checking on things like whether the children are being fed properly, health and hygiene issues, and whether the teachers are supporting the children. We also help out in practical ways by helping run some activities, and meet monthly as a committee to take decisions and provide direction for the betterment of children at the centre"* (member of community-based Child Wellbeing Committee, Khulna, Bangladesh).

In Albania, World Vision works closely with local partners and government stakeholders, such as the State Agency for the Protection of Child Rights, to tackle issues relating to child labour. In particular, World Vision works with the Association for the Social Support of Youth (ARSIS), which runs two children's centres. One is a small drop-in centre in an urban area where street children often work. The other is a larger multi-disciplinary centre where children can access medical attention and receive psychosocial support. ARSIS also provides shelter for up to three nights until the best long-term solution for the child can be identified. The larger centre offers 24-hour emergency support – currently the only centre in Albania to do so. Both centres receive approximately 300 women and children a year for different support and services.

Staff at these centres work at multiple levels and in close collaboration with World Vision. Together, ARSIS and World Vision conduct outreach on the streets, where they have their first point of contact with children. From here, vulnerable children are referred to the children's centres. The centres ensure that children have a safe space to go to and have something to eat in the first instance. World Vision then works with ARSIS staff to find solutions that best support the child to find alternatives to a life of harmful labour. Staff in the centres particularly strive to find ways to get children back to school, although this can often be very challenging. As the Director of ARSIS explains:

*"It's difficult if they don't have proper clothes, if they are dirty and don't have books. Also, the children are always hungry. These factors prevent them from going to school."*

Staff are able to monitor the children's wellbeing, and provide assistance if needed on an ongoing basis through their attendance at the centres.

### **3.1.3 Building self-reliance**

Child forums, also known as children's clubs or children's 'self help groups,' provide an opportunity for children to learn and reflect together on their rights and educational development through democratic participation.



Girls studying at a World Vision non-formal education centre in Rangpur City, Bangladesh. The centre aims to reduce child labour amongst vulnerable primary school-aged children.

Members of child forums act as champions in raising awareness on various social issues such as child labour; regular attendance at school, early marriage and trafficking. These forums are designed to link to existing governmental and other structures in communities and at higher levels with a view to curbing child labour; amongst other protection issues. The forums also work to increase the awareness of peers, parents and other community members on issues affecting children and young people. In Ethiopia 'girls' rights clubs' promote continued education for girls and are motivating them to stay in school and avoid harmful alternatives of domestic labour; early marriage and trafficking.

In some villages in India, child protection work has been led by children's clubs, meetings with ex-child labourers, self-help group consultations and awareness campaigns. The leader of the Children's Club in Agravaram, a student in her late teens, explains that:

*"Our village is famous for beedi-rolling [cigarette-making], and many children used to work in the industry and not attend school. The children's clubs have helped them understand that education is more important, and also to help each other out."*

After her classes, she leads the children's club meeting, interacting closely with many of the participants. "They share with me many of their personal and family problems. I try to help them, and ask them to take their health and education seriously," she adds. Held for about an hour once every week, the children's club also teaches child members basic general knowledge, English and social awareness.

In addition to providing an opportunity for children to engage in and influence decision-making processes (including through representation in local Child Protection Committees), World Vision's experience has shown that child forums can benefit children and wider society in the longer term. They can help ensure respect for children's rights; reduce inequalities between boys and girls; develop youth leadership; ensure children's participation locally, nationally and internationally; create child friendly environments and support healthy child development.

### 3.1.4 Preventing child labour and supporting child labourers through education

Child labour and education are closely entwined. Child labour is a significant obstacle to education, affecting both children's attendance and performance in school. At the same time, improving access to quality education has been shown to reduce child labour, especially when implemented alongside poverty reduction and anti-discriminatory measures. While enrolment rates are on the rise around the world, drop-out rates remain stubbornly high. These are caused by: high levels of violence and discrimination; the poor quality of education provision in many schools; the cost of schooling; and inflexibility towards the particular issues faced by working children (ILO, UNICEF, World Bank and others).

World Vision has found that, in combination with other community-based initiatives, improving access to quality education and school facilities, as well as non-formal education, after-school support and vocational skills training all play an important part in enabling children to stay in school. In Ethiopia, World Vision is working with local schools to move away from rote learning and towards more creative learner-centred approaches, promoting a more conducive school learning environment. These efforts ensure that students are more interested and engaged in learning, and are less likely to drop-out as a result. Here too, a peer tutor 'little teacher' system is showing promise in helping children who have dropped out of school to return and stay in education.

In many locations, World Vision provides daily morning, afternoon or evening non-formal education classes for child labourers who would otherwise receive no schooling. The classes, which are usually linked to the formal curriculum to support children's re-entry into mainstream school, have an intrinsic developmental value. They have also proved to be a useful entry point for World Vision to advocate to children's families, as well as an opportunity to work with their employers to mitigate their conditions and/or remove them from hazardous situations.

For example, boys and girls selling goods on the street in Cox's Bazar (Bangladesh) attend afternoon non-formal education classes run by World Vision. None of those interviewed had received any kind of schooling before this. Through World Vision's support, they are now working towards public exams that will allow them entry into formal school in a class appropriate to their age.

### 3.1.5 Supporting skills training and decent work opportunities for youth

Until relatively recently, governmental and non-governmental efforts in respect of child labour have understandably focused predominantly on protecting children under minimum legal ages for work: that is generally, generally children below 15.<sup>5</sup> This has left policy and practice gaps in targeting and assisting adolescents in harmful work situations – also in part because child labour responses have traditionally prioritised schooling as the best alternative to child labour. For many adolescents wanting to earn to support themselves or their families and who are legally entitled to do so, the option of returning to school is often no longer feasible. In these cases, market-based vocational skills training, accompanied by functional literacy support, is usually a far more sustainable option.

Promoting decent work options for young people who are above the minimum working age is a major element of World Vision's work to combat child labour, including protection from hazardous work. In a number of countries, World Vision works closely with employers, trade associations and labour inspectorates to increase commitment to occupational safety and health standards and the enforcement of labour rights laws. In Bangladesh, a key focus of World Vision's anti-trafficking work has been to support youth employability by providing vocational training, combined with promoting the acquisition of basic literacy and numeracy skills. This has been aimed at young people who are neither able nor willing to return to school – often because they have missed too much or have been exposed to forms of child labour, such as commercial sexual exploitation, that have increased stigma towards them in their community. In Albania, where many

<sup>5</sup> ILO Convention no. 138 on the Minimum Age for Work (1973). This Convention allows children to do 'light work' for two years before they reach this minimum legal age (that is, when they are 12 or 13 years old, depending on the permissible minimum age for employment in that country).

children leave after the last year of primary school, at about 14 years of age, to work with their families, children being interviewed were keen to find out about 'professional schools' (for vocational qualifications) in order to develop trade skills.

One of the challenges facing World Vision and its partner vocational training providers has been to ensure the marketability of the skills being offered to young people. In addition to improving market analysis, World Vision staff in a number of countries have reported that more effort is needed to think creatively about what range of skills are on offer, as well as to break down gender barriers that serve to limit the skills pathways available to girls and boys. Opportunities on offer should reflect advancing technologies at the national and global levels.

Addressing functional literacy – that is, the basic literacy and numeracy skills required to function in the society where a person lives – can also be problematic. In some places, the acquisition of these skills is seen as a distraction from earning money. In Cambodia, for example, this has resulted in the redesign of some courses to keep them shorter and more engaging for young people. In other locations, providing options for vulnerable children to pursue artistic talents at a higher level has also been explored.

## VOICES OF CHILD LABOURERS

How does the work affect you?

*“I don't like this environment. I am freezing, I can't study, and I must sometimes work without food. If we are injured, we don't get paid, so we don't get injuries treated. People don't want to be around us because we smell of fish.”* (Girls, 14-17, shrimp processing, Khulna, Bangladesh)

*“When I go to pick the rags people come and say these things, like that I'm dirty. Sometimes I get cuts from nails, or thorns that go into my legs.”* (Girl, 12, rag picker, Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh, India)

*“It's difficult combining work with school – because I can't study enough. I'm really tired, I don't sleep enough. One teacher asked me if I was tired as he had seen me in the market but apart from that my teacher doesn't get involved.”* (Boy, 12, Tirana, Albania)

*“Sometimes the needles go into my fingers and my hands ache, and I'm always sitting so I get backaches and headaches and sometimes eye problems also because at times I have to do very different types of work and I have to stitch and look closely and sit continuously for a long time. The hardest thing is having to hold the machine with one hand [to operate it continuously] and then stitch the cloth with the other hand. I find it really hard.”* (Girl, 16, tailor, Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh, India)

*“It's difficult because it's tiresome. It affects my back because when we are farming we bow to farm. Yes sometimes it affects school. When I come back from the farm, I cook the lunch and then go to school without having rest, so sometimes I sleep in class because of tiredness. Sometimes my mother helps me to catch up.”* (Girl, 16, farming, Kayezi, Malawi)

## 3.2 Strengthening communities to guard against child labour

World Vision has found that strong communities, able to provide lasting protection to those in child labour or at risk of it, are born out of a long-term process of engagement. That process combines the raising of community awareness, sustained efforts to improve the livelihoods of economically vulnerable families, and strong children's forums. Communities also need effective community-based monitoring systems. These should be led by their members and actively track vulnerable children and their families to keep children in school and out of hazardous work situations.<sup>6</sup> Good relationships with local authority officials through community child protection committees, for example, are necessary to continue to protect children. This includes developing ways to access government structures, entitlements and support.

Measures that build the economic security and resilience of households, reduce poverty, mitigate economic shocks and provide families with a social safety net, play a major role in ending child labour. This is particularly so when they are linked to education and other child protection activities. An integral part of World Vision's work is in improving the livelihoods of families through income generating activities that lead to a steady income (including access to credit, building skills for small business and developing cooperatives). Social insurance schemes, accessible child care and 'social transfers' directly to families in cash or kind – usually implemented in association with government – are also proving effective (UCW, 2014).

### Changing prevailing social norms

*"Why is your daughter at home and not out working like the other children?"* (A teenage girl in Albania explains the pressure her parents received from neighbours during a focus-group discussion).

Addressing social norms founded on shared beliefs and attitudes that drive practices harmful to children is fundamental to sustainably improving child protection. Challenging harmful social norms is at the heart of World Vision's work with communities. This involves deterring those attitudes and beliefs that serve to harm children, as well as reinforcing behaviour that affords children real protection.

World Vision does this in several ways:

- Through **Channels of Hope** (see also section 3.2.4), World Vision harnesses the unique community authority of faith leaders to change social norms. Faith leaders are engaged in a process that explores and challenges the reasons behind certain practices that are harmful to children. Securing their leadership in engaging with individual and community attitudes and practices towards improved child protection promotes change.
- **The Community Change Model** is a change process facilitated in communities through a series of steps to identify concerns, build consensus and develop responses using local resources. The model not only enables communities to explore the harmful consequences of child labour and other practices on children's rights and wellbeing, but also leads community members to identify and support community networks that protect children.
- Knowing that children can be powerful agents of change within their communities, the **Peace Road Curriculum** supports children to be advocates for their own rights, enabling them to develop key life and advocacy skills so that they can negotiate risks faced in childhood and adolescence (see also 3.1.1).

<sup>6</sup> Birth registration also plays a critical role as a key prerequisite in preventing child labour by documenting children's actual ages, and facilitates access to government services, including education.



### 3.2.1 Children as community advocates

There are a number of ways in which children contribute to sustaining World Vision's child protection work at community level.

Child peer educators – also known as community-based facilitators – play a key role in the communities in which they live. They are critical to the sustainability of World Vision's work. These graduates of World Vision's child and family strengthening work take up the mantle for communicating protection measures to other children in the community, using tools, such as flipcharts, to deliver group education sessions. Operating through Child Wellbeing Committees established locally by World Vision, they also report and act on cases of child labour and other community protection issues.

*"I was able to prevent a child marriage because of my life skills training. I was able to convince the parents of the bad effects of child marriage and they did not go ahead with it"* (peer educator, 17, Bangladesh).

In India, World Vision has supported children to mobilise themselves by forming Children Panchayats (Children's Parliaments) and coming together as national and State-level assemblies. Direct services to child labourers have facilitated child-to-child peer group initiatives. These include skills training in journalism, photography and comic writing and drawing, and have given children various platforms in which to raise their voices.

In Bangladesh, child forums (or "self-help groups," as they are known in Rangpur), consist of ten child labourers drawn from local World Vision-run non-formal education centres. Supported by local World Vision staff, these groups look out for child labour in their communities, acting collectively when cases are identified. They have been highly successful in convincing other child labourers to study in the centres, and their leaders are now being empowered to raise their voices at Upazila (sub-district) level (see also 3.1.3).

World Vision India has found that one of the most significant catalysts of change has been initiatives to build the capacity of communities to prevent and address child labour, and make children aware of their rights.

**Citizens' Voice and Action (CV&A)**, a World Vision model to improve local governance, has also proved effective in bringing together local government and communities, to assess and address gaps in the services to which they are entitled. This has resulted in improved education quality in communities.

**The Child Protection Unit (CPU)** is an apex body designed to protect children from all forms of abuse in communities. It functions as an interface between community-organised protection mechanisms and formal (government) protection structures. The members are provided with awareness training that enables them to be vigilant in detecting violations of child rights, and in ensuring protection. Local leaders, self-help group members, teachers and children are all part of these units, which address child labour and child marriage, identify vulnerable families in need of support, resolve family disputes and impart skills to adolescent children.

Adapted from: World Vision India, *Eliminating the Practice of Child Labour: A World Vision India retrospective, 2014*.

### 3.2.2 Developing mutual support amongst parents and caregivers

Family is the primary unit in a community, and its wellbeing is critical to a child's healthy development. World Vision focuses on addressing the issues faced by families – one of the biggest being poverty. The livelihoods of child labourers' families are supported in a variety of ways, including through access to credit and by providing advice and material support (such as the equipment needed to start a business). Parent self-help groups in the form of savings groups, for example, provide mutual motivation and support. Assistance and business training is provided to carefully selected families to start and continue in occupations that they are familiar with. Such support has proved crucial in increasing family incomes, improving living conditions and, critically, curbing the family's reliance on its children's labour.

*“We need employment for women. We stay home all day long and our children are being forced to work instead” (mother of child labourer, Elbasan, Albania).*

Community self-help groups – usually comprising small groups of women – are a mainstay of World Vision’s community approach. In these groups, women learn to save money and develop new skills, motivating each other along the way. Working as a group has enabled many thousands of women to improve their productivity, raise their income (enabling their children to go to school), build their self-confidence, and provide mutual support to one another. Many mature groups have also taken the step of applying to become government-registered civil society organisations, affording them official recognition and opportunities to access funding and other forms of support.

### 3.2.3 Reinforcing community action

In Ethiopia and Malawi, the development of community by-laws is proving to be an effective way of safeguarding children from child labour and other community protection concerns. By-laws are government-authorized local rules established by communities to regulate themselves. In these cases, enforcement is the responsibility of the village chief. Indeed, the involvement of traditional leaders is critical to the effectiveness of by-laws, as their endorsement significantly increases the likelihood of community adherence.

Typically, these by-laws highlight the duties and responsibilities of everyone in the community to act against child labour, and give community structures the authority to fine parents, guardians and employers for child labour abuses as well as for not sending children to school.

Community ownership of the by-law drafting process is a big part of the success of these laws, making them more locally relevant and applicable. In Ethiopia for example, selected community members gather in each village twice a month for community conversation sessions to discuss and solve local child protection concerns. Where considered appropriate (i.e. usually where there is a gap in, or a lack of clarity concerning, formal legal provisions), by-laws are drafted within the community with the support of the local World Vision-established Child Rights Task Force. They are then sent to higher levels of government (ward and district levels) for consideration, legal review and final approval. This process has now been repeated in many of the communities where World Vision is active, resulting in some by-laws being consolidated into a single regulation covering a number of districts.

In Malawi, community ceremonies are utilised to introduce the new regulations to everyone. This not only ensures that there is community-wide knowledge of the rules, but the occasion also creates solemnity to ensure that they are taken seriously. While many of these by-law processes are still in their early days, there has reportedly been a marked increase in the numbers of children enrolled in school in places where relevant by-laws have been adopted.

### 3.2.4 Working with faith leaders

*“I have seen that World Vision is an organisation that values people and cares for children” (Muslim faith leader and member of Community-based Child Wellbeing Committee, Khulna, Bangladesh).*

**Channels of Hope** is an approach, developed by World Vision that recognises the potential of faith leaders to catalyse attitudinal and behavioural change. Not only do these leaders have deep and trusted relationships within communities, they also have the authority to model and lead behavioural change, as well as to resist injustice and protect the most vulnerable. The approach, which has been adapted for use on a variety of issues and in a range of settings, promotes a dialogue with faith leaders on sensitive and taboo subjects, including HIV and AIDS, gender issues, and child labour. During the course of the programme, faith leaders are encouraged to explore and challenge the meaning and consequences of accepted local practices that are harmful to children, such as child labour. With their unique authority, knowledge and understanding, these

leaders are able to play a principal role in shifting individual and community mindsets away from harmful practices, towards the more active protection of children.

In Bangladesh, Muslim faith leaders play a decisive role in World Vision's work at the community level. In the Rupsha community in Khulna, the head of the local Madrassa helps monitor and manage the children's centre from where World Vision conducts its community activities (see 3.1.2). In addition to helping maintain the children's centre's standards, the head of the local Madrassa has acknowledged that this relationship with World Vision has also benefitted children in his own Madrassa:

*"I have learned a lot about child rights and protection issues from being on this [Community Child Wellbeing] Committee, and I have raised children's rights amongst children in my Madrassa as a result. I often come to check on how children in the [children's centres] are doing. Some of them later enrol in my school and I can see the difference this head start gives them"* (Muslim faith leader and member of Community-based Child Wellbeing Committee, Khulna, Bangladesh).

Like other faith leaders interviewed, this faith leader recognised the difference that World Vision has made to the children in his community, particularly in raising awareness about the negative impact of child labour and early marriage. He was also optimistic that progress would be sustainable without World Vision's assistance:

*"There are many people like us who want to work for the community, so [if World Vision ever leaves] we will continue to motivate community members to take the initiative, to keep it going, and to help them."*

## VOICES OF CHILD LABOURERS

How have things changed for you since World Vision came?

*"After World Vision came into the community I started coming to the transit school and I picked up a lot. I am also a member of the children's club. As a result of the club we go to talk to parents together, about the need to go to school. If parents don't listen to us we take the World Vision community volunteers to sit and talk to the children about school."* (Boy, 17, Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh, India)

*"It was impossible to go to school as well as work, but World Vision has negotiated with my parents and employers to allow me to go to classes [non-formal education] for three hours a day. Now I can read and do maths. I can write, draw, spell and speak some English too. Now people respect me, because I am becoming educated."* (Boy, 13, fishmarket porter, Rangpur, Bangladesh)

*"Our behaviour has changed since we had the life skills training. We feel more confident. Our health has improved. The vocational training has given us hope for a better income at home, instead of having to walk along way to the shrimp factory. I am starting a mobile beauty parlour, and I am starting a tailoring business with the sewing machine I was given."* (Girls, 15-17, Khulna, Bangladesh)

### 3.3 Promoting action and accountability at State level and beyond

It is ultimately the responsibility of the State to guarantee the care and protection of all of its citizens, in line with the almost universally ratified UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. States are obliged to put formal systems and structures in place to protect children. Government authorities also have a duty to review, maintain and implement these systems at a number of levels. This includes down to the level of teachers, health workers and law enforcement officials, who are on the front-line of child protection. At the same time, international actors such as World Vision have an important role to play in supporting child protection both within and between countries, particularly by identifying gaps in policy and provision, and holding states accountable under their own laws and international standards.

#### 3.3.1 Advancing government accountability and good coordination

World Vision understands the vital importance of working beyond the local level, in order to underpin its gains with child labourers, their families and communities. Good links and firm working relationships with key government 'gatekeepers' are critical to building and sustaining organisational achievements. Close coordination at all levels is essential to maximising impact.

As a large and influential international aid agency, with strong community roots and a wide reach, World Vision is in an excellent position to help bring formal and informal child protection mechanisms and services together to ensure that the authorities implement a coordinated and comprehensive response to child protection at multiple levels. It does this in several ways. In Malawi, for example, World Vision is working to strengthen existing government child protection structures in an effort to make them operate more effectively. This is partly achieved by creating closer links between these structures and the communities they serve, including by encouraging the participation of children on committees. World Vision also works by complementing large-scale social protection inputs, such as education stipends and cash transfers to families provided by governments and agencies such as UNICEF. It also links up with the work of local organisations that fill niche gaps in service provision.

To promote Government responsibility for child protection in Rangpur, Bangladesh, World Vision has established two *Upazila* (sub-district) level committees chaired by relevant local government officers. These committees, which are the Education Cluster Committee and the Child Labour Task Force Committee, coordinate and inform World Vision's actions to improve primary education (including non-formal education) and the protection of children from hazardous and other worst forms of child labour, respectively. They have proven to be effective in supporting the local level implementation of World Vision's work by galvanising political will and cooperation. They also help to coordinate World Vision's actions with the work of other service providers. Using this collaborative approach, the Government is encouraged to take responsibility for the work being undertaken, whilst service providers feel that they are supported and that their work recognised.

Also in Bangladesh, World Vision has been convening a sub-district and district level pressure group of organisations to discuss and act on child protection concerns in the area, and to push local authorities to act. While the primary purpose of the pressure group is to promote governmental accountability on child protection, it also operates as a referral network to ensure the rapid and efficient provision of support to children in need of protection. Current plans to create closer links at the community level should ensure that the promises of *Upazila* and district level officers are followed up on and actually delivered at grassroots level.

Our initiatives in partnership with different stakeholders like the Government, NGOs and the media have enabled us to achieve a significant decrease in the number of children engaged in labour and an increased number of children enrolled in schools.

Source: World Vision India, *Eliminating the Practice of Child Labour: A World Vision India retrospective*, 2014.

### 3.3.2 The role of legislative and policy level advocacy

Advocacy with governments at the legal and policy level is critical to ensure that governments have the framework and resources in place to protect all children, particularly the most vulnerable. Legal reform is vital to effective action on child labour. There needs to be clarity on the types and conditions of work that are unacceptable, as well as on related child protection issues. At the same time, laws must be accompanied by policy action that leads to the provision of education and vocational training alternatives, as well as social protection measures that benefit children and their families. World Vision's experience has shown that public awareness about child labour laws is important to help promote changes in social attitudes. Such campaigns, in partnership with other civil society organisations, need also to provide a platform for the voices of children and communities on the national level. This enables a supportive policy environment for addressing child labour.

#### International advocacy with governments

The Group of Twenty (G20) is a forum for international economic cooperation and decision-making amongst the world's richest and most powerful nations. G20 members represent two-thirds of the world's population and more than 85 per cent of global economic activity.

In 2013/2014, World Vision worked with the G20 civil society engagement group (the C20) and the G20 Employment Taskforce to advocate for concerted international action on child labour. Highlighting the clear moral, legal and economic reasons as to why addressing child labour is "everybody's business," World Vision mobilised youth, business and faith supporters to demonstrate the breadth and depth of global voices. They called on G20 leaders to work together to protect children from economic exploitation.

In September 2014, G20 labour and employment ministers met in Melbourne, Australia, to discuss policies and strategies to address a wide range of labour challenges, nationally and globally. World Vision's work with the C20 and the G20 Employment Taskforce led to a G20 Labour and Employment Ministerial Declaration that strongly communicated the importance of ensuring core worker rights in formal and informal settings. It placed a particular focus on the most vulnerable. G20 labour and employment ministers unanimously declared that they would: *'take a strong stand against forced and child labour, and encourage the implementation of applicable international labour standards by governments and social partners... [and that they]... will explore the scope for further work on this issue.'* (Paragraph 16).

In presenting the Declaration, Australia's Minister for Employment said that the unanimity of the declaration shows that: *"in two-thirds of the world's populations, their governments are willing to sign-on to a document talking about child labour, forced labour... I think that one example sends a very strong message to send a strong message to all countries."*<sup>7</sup>

The commitment made by the G20 labour and employment ministers was an important first step towards further international action to influence the market conditions that allow child labour to continue. In the coming years, World Vision will continue to work with the G20 as that commitment takes shape.

### 3.3.3 Working with the private sector

Businesses of all sizes have an obligation to protect children, especially from child labour. This is particularly important in a world where the use of raw materials and the products of manufacturing are often consumed far from the localities in which they are produced, making it even easier to overlook how they were made and by whom.

<sup>7</sup> Transcript - Senator the Hon. Eric Abetz's joint press conference with Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Professor Numan Kurtulmuş, 11 September 2014, Melbourne.

Child labour exists in all stages of company supply chains, including in agriculture, manufacturing and retail. Companies large and small are rightly concerned about child labour involvement in their products and services, which many consider inconsistent with their company values. Indeed, it represents a threat to their image and the sustainability of their supply chains.<sup>8</sup> Employer relationships can also be individual, as in the case of workers who might themselves employ a child as a domestic worker in their home.

*"Many employers justify child labour by claiming to provide a livelihood to the child and the family. This false sense of provision numbs their conscience. We need to drum into them an understanding that nothing can compensate the lack of education or the deprivation of even the most basic rights of childhood – to play, to be heard and to live in freedom."*

Source: World Vision India, *Eliminating the practice of child labour: A World Vision India retrospective*, 2014.

Businesses of all sizes have responded to child labour in a range of ways. These efforts have included developing policies, codes of conduct and contractual agreements, as well as providing training, building supplier capacities to respond to child labour, and undertaking more rigorous monitoring. As part of the Rebound 2 project in the DRC (see 2.2), World Vision partnered with the owner of a local sewing shop to allow older girls to work in the shop as trainees to gain practical experience as part of their vocational training. The owner agreed to the scheme on the basis that, "in life we must help each other." Indeed, she saw the benefits that this opportunity could provide to the girls, particularly when they work together: they get training, share ideas and can resolve problems together.

World Vision seeks to advocate to governments and businesses locally, nationally and internationally about the need to address child labour, including at the 2014 G20 meeting in Melbourne Australia (see 3.3.2).

### **Partnering with employers**

World Vision in the Philippines has been working with the sugar industry, various government agencies and local communities to create a voluntary Code of Conduct aimed at reducing child labour in the sugarcane farms of Negros Occidental. The Code was formally launched in December 2013 following a series of consultations with planter federations, provincial government and others. While the Code is voluntary, it is proving to be significant in safeguarding the rights of children and protecting them from hazardous labour.

Founded on national laws and policies on child welfare, the Code reinforces that children below 15 years old should not work. It outlines permissible and impermissible work for children aged between 15 and 17 in sugarcane farms, agreed upon through consultations. The Code also underlines the commitments of different stakeholders and the strategies for its popularisation and implementation.

World Vision is at a relatively early stage in engaging with the business sector on child labour and other forms of child protection, both internationally and locally. It is clear, however, that there is huge potential in this area to find ways to protect children from harm and improve their lives. World Vision is looking at how it might engage in this area further. This may be through encouraging businesses to change the way they operate, manufacture products, or provide services. Businesses big and small can wield significant influence on local and national economic and social development, especially when acting collectively. World Vision views engagement with these entities as a complex but important area on which to focus future work.

<sup>8</sup> See for example a report by CitiGroup, examining the risks to global companies where modern slavery and child labour exist, and initiatives to tackle them: <<https://ir.citi.com/EOZnV0luNqaSHIK9nNI+PTZ34QANDDpmFwgQDTp877LtStgCBRn0Q>> (Accessed 20 October 2014).

## VOICES OF CHILD LABOURERS

What more could be done to help you?

*“Maybe I’d ask them [the Government] to lower the prices of things and create jobs.”* (Boy, 17, Elbasan, Albania)

*“I want to have a good job that gives a good salary. It’s better to have a proper profession and skills.”* (Girl, Tirana, Albania)

*“There’s just a need to educate the community and identify the children who are oppressed and discuss with them the goodness of education and try to discuss with parents about the rights of the child.”* (Girl, 16, Kayezi, Malawi)

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A 9 year-old girl lives in Albania. Every day after school she helps her family make shoes to sell to a local dealer. Each shoe takes about 20 minutes to make, her fingers are covered in warts from the work. World Vision is working in this area to raise awareness of the problem of child labour and unsafe working environments.

## 4. Moving forwards

It is striking that many in the development arena are working on issues core to preventing child labour, without even realising it. It is also striking how actions, taken in a seemingly unassociated area of development, can impact both positively and negatively on the situation of child labour. This should come as no surprise, however. Child labour is inseparable from poverty, discrimination, violence and the many other factors that harm a child's development or render them vulnerable. It perpetuates further poverty, inequality and lack of opportunity, as well as being caused by these factors. There is an inter-generational cycle of deprivation at family, community and societal levels. It therefore follows that greater prominence should be given to addressing child labour in our societies and that this should be done as an integral part of development policy and practice.

Several aspects of World Vision's work on child labour give rise to learning that we hope will resonate with, and be widely applicable to, others involved in the sector. This final section presents a summary of our learning so far. Its aim is to help World Vision and other organisations to continue to work on child labour issues, in such a way that strengthens families, communities and the State to enhance protection from child labour.

**Child labour is inextricably linked to other child protection issues and cannot be considered in isolation from them.** The causes of child labour share many roots with other child protection issues. Economic and social deprivation, discriminatory beliefs and traditions, inequality, and lack of political will to invest more in the things that matter, including health and education services, are all contributory factors. This justifies and necessitates a re-doubling of efforts to respond to child labour using a holistic (inclusive, multi-faceted and multi-sectoral) child protection systems approach. This approach emphasises prevention as well as protection efforts, and focuses on strengthening the roles and capacities of families, communities and the State to take greater responsibility for the protection of children from child labour.

**The empowerment of child labourers is the cornerstone of sustainable efforts to protect them.** Child labourers' awareness about their rights is a prerequisite for their empowerment, which includes their meaningful participation in decisions and efforts affecting their wellbeing. Developing child labourers' understanding of their situation, their entitlements and what constitutes unacceptable behaviour towards them, is the first step towards building the self-respect and confidence required to aspire to and take full advantage of opportunities to improve their situation. It facilitates their ability to advocate for themselves and for others. At the same time parents and carers should be similarly sensitised and empowered in order to better support children.

**Education opens the door to a better life.** Education in its various forms is a vital alternative to child labour. Basic primary education is the foundation upon which productive and fulfilling lives are built. Promoting access to good quality free schooling is a key component of any child labour intervention. Keeping children in school requires tackling a number of critical barriers to their retention. Ending violence (including corporal punishment) and discrimination (against girls and stigmatised children in particular), reducing the cost of schooling, and creating a more accessible and conducive learning environment are all crucial factors. Pre-school education and after-school support are proving to be important ways of helping children vulnerable to child labour to succeed and excel at school. Non-formal education classes offer important respite for working children and can help to facilitate their way out of child labour. Supporting the acquisition of life skills helps older children avoid being drawn into exploitation and worst forms of child labour situations.

**Advocacy and service provision go hand-in-hand.** They are indivisible and interdependent. Neither will effect sustainable change without the other. Multi-level advocacy, including at the policy level, is essential to sustain and build on tangible gains with children, their families and in communities. At the same time, services for the



benefit of child labourers lay the foundations for effective advocacy by being a palpable force for progress in communities, and affording legitimacy to local and wider advocacy efforts as a result. World Vision is aware that national policy and legislative reform is essential in underpinning and sustaining local gains in social attitudes and behaviour change. At the same time, engagement with local authorities and decision-makers supports these broader advocacy efforts. As a result, it is clear that advocacy at local and national levels are both necessary and mutually reinforcing.

**Supporting skills training and decent work for youth.** Adolescent child labourers who are legally entitled to work have tended to be somewhat neglected in responses to child labour, although many are vulnerable to hazardous work and other forms of exploitation. They can fall through the cracks in State protection and require special attention, not least in light of national level skill shortages and a burgeoning global crisis in youth unemployment. Marketable skill training opportunities that lead to decent work are critical not only to their futures, but to the future of robust national economies. Engaging with employers and trade unions is crucial to maintaining and expanding decent work opportunities for youth, as well as promoting the enforcement of labour laws.

**Coordination and cooperation is critical to ending child labour.** Close coordination between government, the private sector and civil society at all levels is essential to prevent child labour and achieve holistic lasting protection for child labourers. Working with, for example, NGOs, local authorities, community and faith leaders, employers and trade unions, facilitates the identification of child labour. It galvanises political will and promotes governmental accountability. This in turn facilitates the efficient use of resources, encouraging the development of consultative advocacy planning at local, regional and national levels, and so enabling a wider range of people to become involved in tackling child labour.

**Engaging the private sector is key to curbing hazardous work for children.** Child labour is ubiquitous in agriculture, manufacturing and retail. Businesses large and small are rightly concerned about child labour involvement in their products and services. It presents a threat to their image and the sustainability of their supply chains. World Vision and other child-focused organisations can play an important role in steering businesses away from exploiting children for short-term gain, and towards addressing the root causes of child labour. In addition to identifying and tackling child labour in their business, employers can, for example, help influence government policy to improve educational standards and eradicate poverty, promote decent work opportunities for youth and support education and community-focused projects.

**Ending child labour is a long-term commitment.** Many projects designed to eliminate child labour or mitigate its effects play an important role in highlighting the issue and catalysing action. The length of most projects however, including some of those run by World Vision, are too short to ensure that families no longer rely on their children's income in the long term – especially in the face of economic shocks such as the sudden loss of a breadwinner. For this reason, amongst others, it is essential that efforts to curb child labour are mainstreamed into wider governmental and non-governmental poverty alleviation strategies, and embedded in broader long-term programmes such as those relating to education, health, social protection and criminal justice.

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## Other useful resources

For an up-to-date selection of publications on child labour and working children from a range of sources see also: <http://resourcecentre.savethechildren.se/start/library>.

The Understanding Children's Work (UCW) programme is an inter-agency research cooperation initiative involving the International Labour Organization (ILO), UNICEF and the World Bank. It has produced a number of useful research papers on child labour: <http://www.ucw-project.org/default.aspx>.



An 11 year-old girl in Bangladesh breaking stones into grits that are then used in construction work. *“Children here face major health issues. There are frequent injuries and the inhalation of fine dust created while breaking stone, makes children more susceptible to respiratory illnesses”* says Sabita, a World Vision Volunteer, Bangladesh

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