



International
Labour
Organization



COVID-19:

**Protect children
from child labour,**

**► now
more than ever!**



**WORLD DAY
AGAINST
CHILD LABOUR**
12 JUNE 2020

COVID-19 presents unprecedented risks to the rights and safety and development of children. World Day Against Child Labour 2020 calls upon countries and organizations to focus on the needs of the most vulnerable during crisis management and recovery. We have a chance to not only defeat this pandemic, but to end all forms of child labour by 2025. But we have to act now, we have to act decisively, and at very large scale.

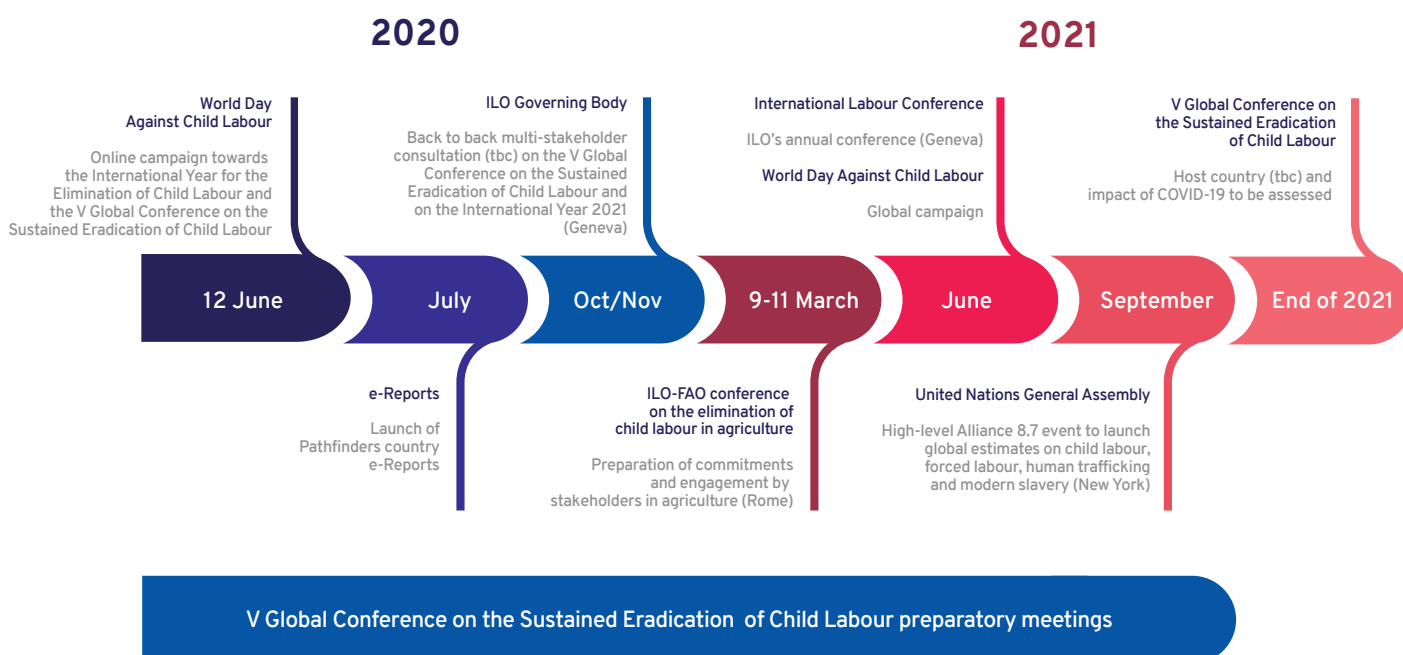
The COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting global economic and social crisis are having a huge impact on people's lives and livelihoods. For many children and their families, the fast-evolving situation means disrupted education, family illness and potential loss of household income. The absence of adequate social protection systems exacerbates the vulnerability of families – and hence their children. Before the spread of COVID-19, almost 100 million children had been removed from child labour, bringing numbers down from 246 million in 2000 to 152 million in 2016; 73 million of whom are in hazardous work. Many children in child labour are now at greater risk of entering more hidden or hazardous forms of work or working longer hours. The crisis can also push millions of vulnerable children into child labour, having to contribute to family income at too young an age. Girls are particularly at risk of taking on additional domestic work or home care, and are likely to be more exposed to accidents and physical or sexual abuse. Worst forms of child labour, including sexual exploitation, which primarily affects girls, often increases when job opportunities and family incomes are decreasing. Children from migrant families who have fled from conflicts and disasters, from extreme poverty or human rights violations, are much more affected. Inequality, social exclusion and discrimination, which are exacerbated by crises, make the situation even worse. This is particularly the case for indigenous people, ethnic minorities and internally displaced persons, people with disabilities, single headed households, and orphans.

Governments around the world are taking wide-ranging actions to contain and mitigate the pandemic. Building on best practices, the right policy choices, and quick action to implement them, a better future can be built for our children. The UN has declared 2021 the International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour. The events and campaign that will be organized during this year provide an opportunity for all UN Member States and partners to join efforts to tackle child labour.

The fight against child labour requires strong partnerships at global, regional, national and community level. The Alliance 8.7 is driving more effective coordination towards reaching SDG Target 8.7 to end child labour in all its forms by 2025. 21 pathfinder countries and 250 partner organizations have committed to accelerate action, implement innovative solutions and to share knowledge about best practice and lessons learned. The International Partnership on the Elimination of Child Labour in Agriculture (IPCCLA) and the Child Labour Task Force of the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, are other good examples for concerted action.

All over the world, regional organizations play a key role in coordinating efforts. The African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the South Asia Initiative to End Violence Against Children (SAIEVAC) have adopted regional or sub-regional action plans to eradicate child labour. The Regional Initiative Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labour is driving progress through its cooperation platform which includes 30 governments, as well as workers' and employers' organizations. Countries, communities and cities have also joined the global fight against child labour.

Roadmap for the International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour



Workers and employers and their organizations play a key role in preventing child labour by addressing the health risks at work and the economic consequences of the pandemic. Social dialogue has proven to be absolutely crucial for a balanced crisis management and response, ensuring protection of workers' rights, the rights of children as well as business continuity.

On this World Day, we call on all countries and partners to join efforts and prepare activities for the International Year on the Elimination of Child Labour. These activities should build on the respective ILO Conventions and Recommendations¹, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and protect all children in or at risk of child labour and ensure that they are a priority in the COVID-19 response. The following policy recommendations have proven to be effective for fighting child labour:

- ▶ **Protecting workers and their families and providing livelihoods support:** Most child labour occurs in agriculture (71 per cent of all child labour), as well as among families working in the informal economy where workers have no paid leave, access to health insurance, unemployment benefits and other forms of social protection. All workers and employers and their families should be protected from the health risks of COVID-19. Protective measures at the workplace and across communities should be introduced and strengthened, requiring large-scale public support and investment. Public investment in employment and income support is also vital in times of crisis. Measures are needed to cushion businesses, especially small and medium enterprises, and workers against immediate employment and income losses.
- ▶ **Strengthened social protection for all:** In times of crisis, social protection provides essential support that helps families weather health and economic shocks. In the COVID-19 pandemic, health insurance and social protection are of vital importance as they mitigate the pressure for families to send their children to work in case of sickness or death of a household member. Other social protection measures that have proven particularly effective in tackling child labour include cash transfer and in-kind programmes (direct cash or in-kind payments to families) that enhance income security for families and facilitate access to education and health care.
- ▶ **Public quality Education for all:** Education plays a major role in providing children with life skills and future job opportunities. Children who are in school are less likely to fall victims of child labour. In times of crisis, continuity of education is of crucial importance, be it in formal or non-formal settings. With COVID-19, in many countries, schools are closed, and children who were already working part of their time or who are at risk of child labour may never return to school. Many children who combined school and work have lost their learning and protective environment and may have to work longer hours to help their families. In light of COVID-19, distance learning has become crucial. However, the most vulnerable children do not

have access to distance learning as they do not have computers and access to the internet, and sometimes not even to electricity and thus need low-tech and no-tech solutions. Timely catch-up education for those who were unable to access any form of education during a crisis can help ensure that these children can go back to school. Free, universal access to basic compulsory education remains crucial, as are school meals, and subsidies for indirect costs such as school uniforms, books and transport.

- ▶ **Increased advocacy and partnerships:** In times of crisis, is it ever more important to keep the spotlight on vulnerable children and families and to work together with all concerned partners to ensure that the needs of children are at the forefront of the crisis response. Governments, employers' and workers' organizations, civil society organizations, UN entities, regional partners and the media play an important role to keep the fight against child labour high on the agenda, advocate for the "right" policies and mobilize political and financial support.

It is important to address the challenge with an integrated view on fundamental principles and rights at work, which becomes ever more important in times of crisis. These rights encompass the rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining that contribute to decent wages and good working conditions for the parents of children at risk of child labour. They include equality of treatment and opportunity so no worker suffers discrimination due to age, sex, race, migratory status or religious belief. They also consider forced labour a human rights violation to be abolished. All these fundamental labour rights are integral part of the wider human rights based and child-centred response that lays the foundation for an inclusive and sustainable recovery that leaves no one behind.



Areas of action

The ILO report "Ending child labour by 2025" sets out the following six areas of action:

- ▶ Advancing the **legal commitment** to child labour elimination and the central role of social dialogue.
- ▶ Promoting **decent work** for adults and youth of legal working age, especially through addressing informality.
- ▶ Building and extending **social protection** systems, to mitigate the economic vulnerability of households.
- ▶ Expanding access to free, quality public **education** as the logical alternative to child labour.
- ▶ Addressing child labour in **supply chains**.
- ▶ Protecting children in situations of **fragility and crisis**.

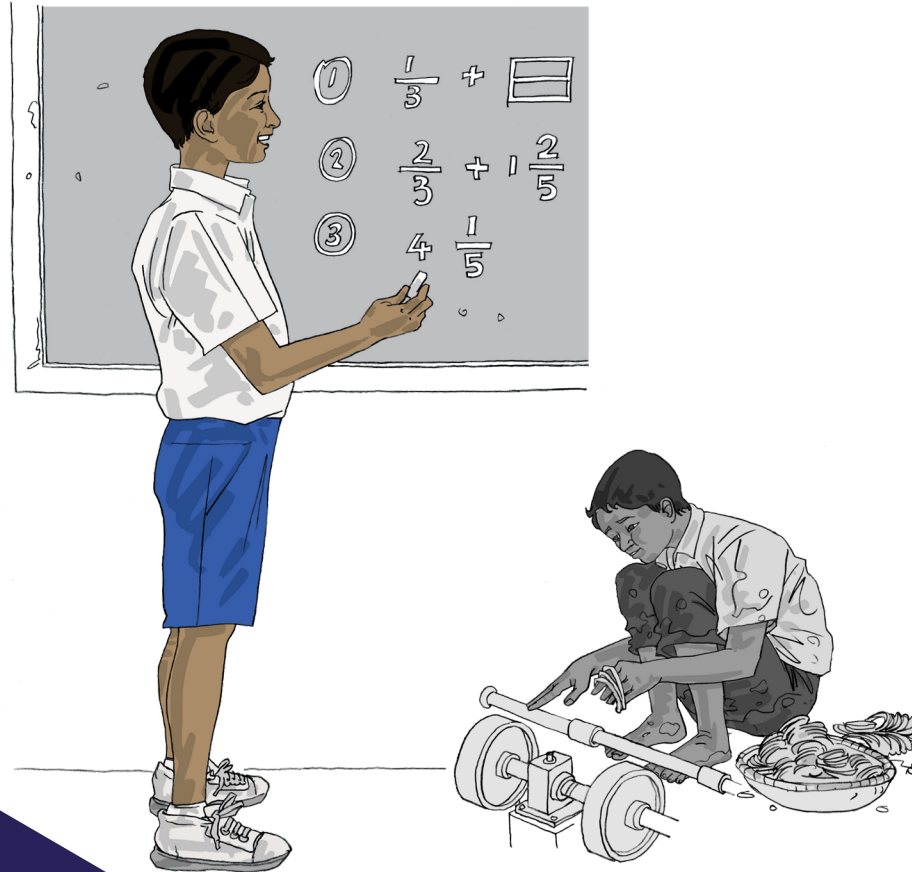
¹ ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138); ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No.182); and ILO Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience Recommendation, 2017 (No. 205).

► Join us

The World Day Against Child Labour is widely supported by governments, employers' and workers' organizations, UN agencies, and many others who are concerned with tackling child labour. We would like to invite you and your organization to be part of the World Day 2020.

Join us and add your voice to the worldwide movement against child labour. Consult our campaign page www.ilo.org/ChildLabourWorldDay to find out how to support the campaign on social media. Inform us about activities planned in your countries and send us your photos.

Contact: childlabour@ilo.org



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#nochildlabour



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