

CHILD LABOUR: THE SUPPLY CHAIN CONNECTION

Over the past 11 days, The Centre has been highlighting common business practices that amplify the likelihood of child labour in global supply chains. On this World Day Against Child Labour, we present a recap to demonstrate how companies can prioritise child rights in their supply chains, making child rights above all.

Pricing



A relentless focus on lowest available pricing can lead producers to cut wages and reduce social welfare protections for workers, leading to poverty, denying children and families their basic rights, and worsening child labour risks.

Assess how your pricing impacts income and wages of workers and families in your supply chains and make the necessary adjustments.

Visibility



Companies focus solely on the direct parts of their supply chains, overlooking child labour risk which exist deeper in supply chains.

Invest in bottom-up communication structures to get ongoing & accurate information on child labour risks.

Decent work for youth



Misguided policies in factories and farms exclude young workers, forcing them into poor quality and hazardous jobs in lower supply chain tiers.

Ensure your supply chain partners' hiring practices are not excluding youth but instead create decent work opportunities for anyone at working age.

Accountability



Companies focus investments in traceability systems which can create a false narrative of child labour free supply chains.

Transparently acknowledge areas of child labour risks linked to your supply chain and work to address these.

Prioritisation



Addressing child labour is deprioritised in boardrooms when companies face economic challenges and supply chain disruptions.

Maintain your commitment to address child labour even during the tough times to build more resilient child labour risk management structures which are fit to meet future challenges.

Access to remedy



Child labour deprives children of their basic rights. Companies lack robust systems and budgets to deliver effective child labour remediation.

Be ready for when child labour occurs in your supply chain with strong remediation to ensure the reinstatement of children's basic rights.

Reporting



Few companies report on child labour, which underestimates the extent of the issue and hinders effective solutions.

Be transparent, collaborate with peers and suppliers, and then address child labour heads on.

Risk-oriented approach



Many companies treat child labour solely as an ESG risk to be mitigated, prioritising solutions that push the problem down supply chains out of sight, missing opportunities to actually advance child rights.

Adopt child rights-centred remediation approaches, that reinstate the rights of affected children.

Poor working conditions



Companies are missing how poor working conditions are increasing the risks of child labour.

Support parent workers with living wages, decent hours, childcare, strong H&S and social security benefits, to reduce the risks of their children falling into child labour.

Skills



Companies, along with supply chain auditors and suppliers, often lack the expertise needed to identify and address child labour risks.

Build the capability of HQ teams, internal and external auditors, and suppliers to strengthen child labour prevention and remediation.

Engagement



When facing child labour challenges companies sever business relationships with suppliers. This might offer temporary respite from risks, but fails to tackle root causes.

Establish long-lasting partnerships with suppliers and work collaboratively with them to address child labour challenges.

If you need support conducting a child labour risk assessment or would like more details on our child labour remediation services, please contact us at info@childrights-business.org.