



CHILDREN, NOT ~~WORKERS~~

COMMUNITY-BASED RESPONSES TO CHILD LABOUR
IN THE WAKE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Spotlight on Ghana, Sri Lanka, Trinidad and Tobago

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report would not have been possible without the invaluable contributions of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and members of the Commonwealth 8.7 Network that work tirelessly towards the eradication of contemporary forms of slavery, including child labour. The following organisations helped us identify case studies to include in this report and provided vital information to support the case studies: Caribbean Umbrella Body for Restorative Behaviour (CURB), Child Line, Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) Uganda Chapter, Fifty Eight, Foundation for Innovative Social Development (FISD), FORUT, Living Water Community (LWC), Oasis India, Somero, Stolen Dreams, Ulula, Vanuatu Human Rights Coalition and Winrock. We also extend our gratitude to the Counter Trafficking Unit (CTU) of Trinidad and Tobago, the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development of Ghana, the Ministry of Education of Ghana, the Ministry of Labour of Trinidad and Tobago and UNICEF Ghana who affirmed their commitment to eradicate child labour during COVID-19 through collaborative efforts with other stakeholders, and who also provided key information to support this report.

From the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI), we are grateful to María Barraco, for leading the data collection and the drafting of this report, and to Sneh Aurora and Alankrita Singh for editing the text. We thank our interns, Mihika Poddar, Madhavi Narayanan, and Rushil Puri, who provided research support. We also extend our appreciation to those colleagues who took the time to review and share their reflections on the report, including Ugonna Ukaigwe, Malvika Rangta, Mahim Singh, and Laura Skadhaug Bloom. Thanks also to Catherine Lutman who designed the final publication.

Finally, we thank the T.U.U.T. Charitable Trust for their support in making this publication possible.



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ABOUT CHRI

The Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) is an international, independent, non-governmental organisation that works towards the practical realisation of human rights across the Commonwealth. CHRI has offices in London, UK; New Delhi, India; and Accra, Ghana. Since 1987, we have focused on human rights issues related to Access to Justice, Access to Information, Media Freedom and Freedom of Expression, and Contemporary Forms of Slavery, Forced Labour and Human Trafficking.

WORKING TO ERADICATE CONTEMPORARY FORMS OF SLAVERY

CHRI supports the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 8.7 through research, evidence-based advocacy, knowledge sharing, strategic engagement, and network and capacity building. CHRI began advocating for Commonwealth-wide action on contemporary forms of slavery, human trafficking and forced labour in 2016 which culminated in a commitment to end modern slavery reflected in the Communiqué of the 2018 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM).¹ This was reaffirmed by Commonwealth governments at the 2022 CHOGM where they emphasised the need for effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking, and eliminate all forms of child labour, by 2025.² CHRI works with frontline anti-slavery organisations, ensuring local issues and priorities are brought to international policy makers through advocacy at the United Nations and other fora.³

CONDUCTING RIGOROUS RESEARCH

CHRI's research on issues relating to contemporary forms of slavery, forced labour and human trafficking includes the following comprehensive reports: *Eradicating Modern Slavery: An assessment of Commonwealth governments progress on achieving SDG Target 8.7*, *Creating an Effective Coalition to Achieve SDG Target 8.7*, *The Commonwealth Roadmap to SDG Target 8.7*, and *Domestic Work is Work*, which raises awareness of the importance of ratifying the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189). Our research provides the basis for our advocacy efforts at international and regional levels and is used by other civil society actors in their campaigns and advocacy efforts.

STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS AND NETWORKS

CHRI founded, and is currently Secretariat to, the Commonwealth 8.7 Network, a global network of 70+ local civil society organisations (CSOs) that share a common vision to eradicate contemporary forms of slavery, forced labour and human trafficking. Together we raise awareness, strengthen skills, share good practice, provide support to survivors, and advocate for change to laws and policies. In 2019, the Commonwealth 8.7 Network received the Commonwealth Secretary-General's Innovation for Sustainable Development Award.

Working together with our partners, CHRI also founded and continues to support the Coalition on the Right to Information, Ghana, a network of 100+ CSOs and human rights activists working to promote

transparency and accountability of government, as well as greater participation of citizens in the democratic process through the mechanism of right to information legislation in Ghana.

ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE TO STANDARDS AND POLICIES

CHRI has special consultative status with the United Nations (UN) Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and is an accredited Commonwealth organisation. CHRI continues to monitor and report on Commonwealth States' compliance with their civil, political, economic, and other human rights commitments and obligations. We advocate for human rights when they are violated and abused and seek accountability for such breaches. We regularly engage with UN human rights mechanisms, including the UN Human Rights Council (UN HRC), via written submissions, oral statements, and side events on a range of issues, as well as monitor the performance of Commonwealth members of the UN HRC. CHRI also engages with the UN Treaty Bodies and Special Procedures. We also participate and provide inputs, both individually and collectively, in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process of Commonwealth countries. CHRI advocates for the eradication of contemporary forms of slavery, human trafficking and forced labour with Commonwealth States in Commonwealth meetings and fora, as well as at the UN, ensuring that international standards reflect the realities of those on the frontlines, including survivors. CHRI provides technical and capacity building support to civil society actors especially from small states

in the Commonwealth, to engage directly with UN mechanisms, amplifying their needs and priorities in international policy making fora.

More about CHRI:

<https://www.humanrightsinitiative.org/>

More about the Commonwealth 8.7 Network:

<https://www.commonwealth-87.org/>





INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the ILO, 160 million children were engaged in child labour in 2020.⁴ This means that approximately 1 in 10 children are engaged in child labour worldwide,⁵ a number that has been on the rise due to risk factors created and/or exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.⁶

ILO defines child labour as work that *'is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and/or 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.'*⁷

Source for the background map: <https://www.freeworldmaps.net/outline/maps/contour-world-map.gif>

ILO conventions which address child labour include the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138)⁸ and Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).⁹ Additionally, various international and regional human rights conventions include provisions on the prohibition of child labour, including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)¹⁰ and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (2009).¹¹ As recognised by the ILO and UNICEF, child labour also constitutes a form of modern slavery and forced labour that violates human rights, and is thus prohibited by the UN Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery (1956),¹² the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948),¹³ the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966),¹⁴ the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966),¹⁵ the ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29),¹⁶ the European Convention on Human Rights (1953),¹⁷ the American Convention on Human Rights (1978)¹⁸ and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981).¹⁹

Not only is child labour exploitative in itself, but it may also be the gateway to further exploitation and abuse. ILO and UNICEF note that *'child labour reinforces intergenerational poverty, threatens national economies and undercuts rights guaranteed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child.'*²⁰ Moreover, child labour can lead to further abuse of children through slavery and sexual exploitation,²¹ which have a lasting negative impact on their lives. Children are also more likely to face

harassment and abuse at places of work, including sexual violence.²²

Since the early 2000s, the ILO has coordinated international and multi-sectoral efforts to address issues related to child labour with the aim to reduce its prevalence.²³ These efforts include expanding social protections and support, improving living standards, and paying greater attention to adolescent welfare.²⁴ In 2016, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted, and these include Target 8.7 which calls for an end to child labour in all its forms by 2025.²⁵ This has led many States to form alliances and make commitments to achieve the eradication of child labour. For example, Alliance 8.7 was established as a global partnership to achieve SDG Target 8.7 by bringing together actors at all levels to collaborate, strategise, share knowledge, and ultimately accelerate progress towards the goals contemplated in Target 8.7.²⁶

The Commonwealth has an integral role in efforts to eradicate child labour, being home to 2.4 billion people across 56 countries, of which more than 60% are under the age of 29.²⁷ The Commonwealth's shared history and legal systems, young population, and established knowledge-sharing practices make it a crucial actor. Twenty-one of the 56 Commonwealth States are in Africa, the region in which child labour is most pervasive. In fact, sub-Saharan Africa has more child labourers than the rest of the world combined.²⁸ The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic imposed severe economic, health, and social challenges upon countries and its citizens, and has thus increased the risk of children being pushed into conditions of exploitative labour.²⁹

Against this backdrop, Commonwealth States reaffirmed at the 2022 CHOGM their previous

COVID-19
pandemic has
increased the risk
of child labour

“ Child Labour is a child’s worst nightmare; except some children, they never wake up from that fear, they live it every day and feel its effects in every possible way ... My one wish is their protection, every child is deserving of love and affection. ”

Renatta Ramlogan, 16 years old, 2nd place winner of the video competition ‘Child Labour, A Child’s Worst Nightmare’, organised by the Ministry of Labour of Trinidad and Tobago and supported by the International Labour Organisation, 2021.

commitment³⁰ to achieve SDG Target 8.7, specifically, to take effective measures to ‘*secure the prohibition and elimination of all forms of child labour by 2025, including the recruitment and use of child soldiers...*’.³¹ Most Commonwealth member states have also ratified the ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138)³² and the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).³³ Still, there is a need for the Commonwealth to strengthen the implementation of these commitments by developing and implementing plans of action, and highlighting innovative practices in the face of the global health and economic crisis facing the world today.

UNICEF notes that the progress to end child labour has stalled, reversing the trend that saw a reduction in child labourers by 94 million between 2000 and 2016.³⁴ The COVID-19 pandemic has added to the urgency, stagnating the global progress to end child labour.³⁵ If unaddressed, an additional 8.9 million children will likely become child labourers by the end of 2022.³⁶

Child labour is driven by various factors, including poverty, social norms, lack of decent work opportunities for adults, migration, emergencies, and social inequalities.³⁷ All these factors were made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic, further exacerbating the risk of child labour. With families struggling to earn enough money and children out of school, many felt that they had no choice but to send children to work.³⁸ Some businesses, too, deliberately recruited children to cut costs in order to boost their earnings.³⁹ Where schools offered

“ Imagine waking up [at] 1, 2 in the morning to go out to a job where I had to use all my strength just to survive ... I was always feeling used and exhausted... that ruined my future ... every child should enjoy their youth, get an education to be free and safe. ”

Victoria McLeod, 14 years old, 3rd place winner of the video competition ‘Child Labour, A Child’s Worst Nightmare’, organised by the Ministry of Labour of Trinidad and Tobago and supported by the International Labour Organisation, 2021.

online classes, children living in poverty and those in rural areas could not access learning and were further compelled to go to work. Child labourers were also less likely to be identified during the pandemic,⁴⁰ as governments stopped or reduced regular monitoring and enforcement of child labour laws.⁴¹ Notably, those particularly vulnerable to child labour included migrant children, children living in rural areas, those working in the informal sector, and girls.⁴²

Two factors in particular have increased the vulnerability of children to child labour during the pandemic. The first main factor was **disruption of education**. Access to education is considered to be a key tool to eradicate child labour.⁴³ Widespread school closures during the global COVID-19 pandemic removed this important safe space for children and families. Besides serving as learning spaces for children, schools often provide nutritious meals, childcare, protection from domestic violence, and social spaces.⁴⁴ As of September 2021, over 560 million learners were affected by school closures across the Commonwealth – the vast majority of them in Asia and Africa.⁴⁵ Moreover, over 133 million children missed out on school meals in the Commonwealth.⁴⁶ The sudden unavailability of these services exerted severe financial and psychological pressure on families, and was a factor which forced them towards child labour. This pressure was especially acute for families in poverty, whose children were unlikely to access

online learning during school closures.⁴⁷

Another major factor which increased the vulnerability of children to child labour during the COVID-19 pandemic was **reduced access to child protection services**, since first respondents and community actors no longer had access to vulnerable children and families due to lockdowns.⁴⁸ This resulted in the under reporting of child labour cases, especially for children in vulnerable situations. Social protection systems for some of the most vulnerable children, such as those internally displaced and/or in conflict settings, separated from their families, in institutions, or with disabilities who rely on face-to-face or regular contact, were compromised due to widespread mobility restrictions, leaving them unprotected.⁴⁹ This reduced access compounded the vulnerabilities created by the COVID-19 pandemic. UNICEF data on child helplines in the first few months of the pandemic showed a fourfold increase in calls from children in vulnerable situations in Bangladesh, and a 50% increase in India.⁵⁰ Other Commonwealth countries reported similar spikes.⁵¹

As most countries experienced an increase in child labour during the COVID-19 pandemic, several protection and remedial measures were introduced worldwide. 190 countries planned, introduced or adapted 937 social protection measures targeting children, including social assistance programmes and cash transfers.⁵² Studying and documenting these measures and sharing good practices is an important way to facilitate cross learning and step up efforts towards the eradication of child labour.

Alongside the global community, Commonwealth States implemented several measures to tackle child labour during COVID-19. Some

560
MILLION

learners were affected
by school closures across
the Commonwealth



of these are presented in this report. In June 2021, at an online discussion organised by the Commonwealth Secretariat's Human Rights Unit, it was recommended that states, businesses, and civil society organisations work together to end child labour by enforcing labour laws, improving internet access, and expanding social security and health coverage.⁵³ The Commonwealth Secretariat committed to taking several steps towards the eradication of child labour, such as briefing member States on becoming 8.7 Alliance pathfinder countries, encouraging current Commonwealth pathfinder countries to take the lead in supporting other states, connecting civil society organisations to resources via the UN Voluntary Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, and highlighting issues of contemporary forms of slavery within the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process for Commonwealth countries.⁵⁴

DEFINITIONS

In this report, the term **contemporary forms of slavery** acknowledges the complex variety of interrelated ways in which exploitation may manifest. Although contemporary forms of slavery is not specifically defined, it is an umbrella term used to cover practices which include slavery, human trafficking, forced labour, debt bondage, domestic servitude, forced marriage, child labour, and the sale and exploitation of children. Essentially, it refers to situations of exploitation that a person cannot refuse or leave because of threats, violence, coercion, deception, or abuse of power.

Specific manifestations of contemporary forms of slavery that are addressed in this report are defined below.

Human trafficking is defined in the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children (2000) (the 'Palermo Protocol') as involving three elements:⁵⁵

1. The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons;
2. By means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability, or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person;
3. With the intent of exploiting that person through prostitution of others, sexual exploitation, forced

CHILD LABOUR

harms development
and interferes
with education



labour, slavery (or similar practices), servitude, or removal of organs.

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of a *child* for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered 'trafficking in persons' even if it does not involve any threat, use of force, or coercion, or any of the other means listed above in paragraph 2.

Child labour refers to work done by children that deprives them of their childhood, potential, and dignity.⁵⁶ Child labour harms children's physical and mental development, is often mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and interferes with a child's education. Under international law, a **child** is defined as a person '*below the age of 18 years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.*'⁵⁷ States may set the legal age for employment below 18 years (but no lower than 14).⁵⁸ However, even if the child is legally allowed to work, it may still be classed as 'child labour' depending on the nature of the work.⁵⁹

It must be noted that not all work done by children is 'child labour', which must be eliminated. According to the ILO, '*The participation of children or adolescents above the minimum age for admission to employment in work that does not affect their health and personal development or interfere with their schooling, is generally regarded as being something positive.*'⁶⁰ To distinguish these situations from a harmful situation of 'child labour', various factors should be considered, including the child's age, working hours and working conditions.⁶¹

Worst forms of child labour is defined by the ILO as including '*all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of*

HAZARDOUS

child labour is the largest category of the worst forms of child labour



*children; (...) and (...) work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.*⁶²

Hazardous child labour is the largest category of the worst forms of child labour, defined as ‘work which, by its nature or the or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.’⁶³

For example, the worst forms of child labour include the sale and trafficking of children;⁶⁴ and hazardous child labour includes working underground, in confined spaces or at great heights.⁶⁵

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report documents good practices adopted in three Commonwealth countries to tackle the surge of child labour during the COVID-19 pandemic. With the spotlight on Ghana, Sri Lanka and Trinidad and Tobago, this report showcases policy responses and creative interventions designed and implemented by government bodies, civil society organisations, UN agencies, working together with communities and other stakeholders, with demonstrated impact on the prevention and redressal of child labour. These case studies include important learnings that can be adapted and applied to other jurisdictions and programs where multi-sectoral collaboration and a community-based approach can be utilised.

The report aims to:

- Highlight the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children in vulnerable situations, particularly the steep rise in child labour.

- Present a cross-section of local initiatives where civil society, governments, multilateral institutions, and other stakeholders stepped up to the challenge of tackling child labour in communities during difficult and uncertain times.
- Explore the factors which make these initiatives examples of good practice, including: the adoption of a multi-sectoral approach, prioritising preventative as well as responsive measures, institutionalising a collaborative approach, and genuine engagement with children and local community members in the design and implementation of initiatives.
- Inspire government, civil society, multilateral organisations, and the private sector to improve their child labour focused initiatives and programmes for greater impact.
- Spur innovation and collaboration within the Commonwealth to tackle child labour.

METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS

This report is based on original research conducted by CHRI on good practices implemented by various actors in the Commonwealth to tackle the surge in child labour during the COVID-19 pandemic. The primary research methods used in this study were interviews and questionnaires, and this was supplemented by desk research to provide general context. Potential case studies reflecting good practices were identified by members of the Commonwealth 8.7 Network across different countries and regions. Members of the 8.7 Network also helped to coordinate and facilitate meetings and interviews with a wide range of stakeholders involved in the initiatives, as well as with data collection.

The three case studies included in this report met the following criteria:

- The initiative represents an innovative response to the surge in child labour as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The initiative demonstratively contributes to the eradication of child labour.
- The initiative takes a collaborative and multi-sectoral approach.
- The initiative is informed by the voices of survivors and impacted communities.



■ The initiative contributes towards one or more of the five milestones identified in the *Eradicating Modern Slavery* report,⁶⁶ namely:

1. Survivors of slavery are identified and supported to exit and remain out of slavery.
2. Criminal justice mechanisms function effectively to prevent modern slavery.
3. Coordination occurs at the national level and across borders, and governments are held to account for their response.
4. Risk factors, such as attitudes, social systems and institutions that enable modern slavery are addressed.
5. Government and business stop sourcing goods and services produced by forced labour.

The research design focused on documentation of the initiatives, from the standpoint of the stakeholders. It did not include critical analysis or independent assessment of the impact of the initiatives. CHRI does not make any claim as to the exhaustiveness or accuracy of the facts, nor to the stated outcomes of the initiatives documented in the three case studies. The report relies primarily on the information provided by the interviewees and the documents shared by them. In addition, the documented initiatives being very recent, many of the outcomes would manifest in future, which is beyond the scope of this study.

GOOD PRACTICES TO TACKLE CHILD LABOUR

There is no ‘silver bullet’ to ending child labour. Rather, policies and interventions need to adopt a more holistic, multi-sectoral approach, and institutionalise collaboration. In addition, prioritising preventative as well as responsive measures, and ensuring genuine engagement with children and local community members in the design and implementation of initiatives.

The three cases studies presented here show how governments, businesses, unions, civil society

organisations, young people’s associations, and community leaders can work together to tackle child labour – an aim that is integral to setting the Commonwealth on the path to sustainable development. Though the case studies reflect initiatives implemented in different countries, with their own social, cultural and political contexts, they share several common success factors, which can be summarised as follows:

1. Community ownership and bottom-up approach to social change

The importance of community engagement and ownership in successfully tackling complex social issues like child labour is well documented, and these case studies demonstrate this well. Such an approach to policy implementation is in contrast to a top-down approach where interventions are designed by national or local governments or international organisations, which may not take cognisance of local circumstances, challenges, priorities, norms or social practices. The participation of local communities in decision making processes is indeed a right of the communities.

The case studies presented in this report outline practical methods to engage the community and build trust with its members, including women, children, families, and community leaders. Local sensibilities and traditional customs and practices that hinder access to some members of the community – such as women and children – need to be recognised and addressed.

2. Importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration

As a complex social issue, child labour can be tackled effectively through cross sectoral initiatives involving all relevant stakeholders, including government authorities, frontline responders, civil society organisations, multi-lateral agencies, unions, private actors, and others. The success of the initiatives rest on the ability to break silos, pool resources, share information, and collaborate, particularly across sectors such as education, health and law enforcement.

3. Institutionalising a collaborative response

Establishing permanent institutional structures to implement initiatives was also highlighted as a means to ensure collaboration, inclusion, and sustainability of programmes and outcomes. These structures are strengthened through capacity building and training, which are the foundation for continued activity over the long term. Local committees, which included members of the community, proved to be successful and continued to work beyond the project, building on their training, experience and ties with the community. A formal memorandum of understanding between government departments and with international agencies is a way to institutionalise cross office commitment, foster mutual cooperation, sharing of information, and promote a coordinated response to child trafficking and child labour.

4. Prioritising preventative as well as responsive measures – sensitisation and capacity building

As well as responsive measures, preventative measures such as sensitisation and capacity building initiatives have been successful in bringing about the desired shift in attitudes towards child labour. These initiatives also address some of the drivers of child labour by raising awareness and strengthening family ties. Awareness raising and sensitisation for communities, parents, and children themselves are key, as well as capacity building and training for relevant representatives of government, CSOs, private actors, and local structures set up to tackle the issues at community level. Learner-centred, inclusive, and participatory methodologies work best to ensure relevance and application of learning beyond the workshop.

5. Valuing children's voice and using digital media tools to increase engagement

The participation of children and young people in processes which inform policy and practice improved implementation outcomes. Participation in decision-making is a right of children and young people. Children should also be recognised as competent human beings with their own views, perspectives, ideas and understanding of complex social issues like child labour- capable of both analysing the problem, as well as proposing solutions. While government agencies and CSOs are able to leverage the creative energy of young people for awareness raising, they are also able to harness the power of children as role models for other children.

Social media and other digital platforms can be leveraged to maximise outreach and promote engagement with children and young people, seen to be particularly effective in COVID-19 times. Virtual modalities not only amplify the reach of messages, but may also be a preferred mode of communication for many children and young people. Message formats that are based on interactive and participatory pedagogy, stimulate friendly competition, and that are creative, work well to inspire the engagement of children and young people.

GHANA

Child Protection Committees: Tackling child labour through community outreach



COUNTRY

GHANA

Africa region. 8.7 Pathfinder Country⁶⁷

KEY THEMES⁶⁸

Support Survivors; Improve Coordination and Accountability; Address Risk Factors

MAIN ACTOR

Department of Social Welfare and Community Development (Department of Social Welfare)

RELEVANT CONVENTIONS RATIFIED BY GHANA

UN Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery (1956); ILO Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105); UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966); AU African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981); UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989); UN International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant workers and Members of their Families (1990); ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182); UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (2000); UN Protocol against Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air (2000); UN Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (2000).⁶⁹



“ The programme of formation of Community Child Protection Committees (CCPCs) has really been timely and it has encouraged parents to not engage their children in farm work during school contact hours. I commend the Department of Social Welfare and Community Development and UNICEF for implementing this special initiative. ”

Hon. Amesawu Andrews, Assembly Member, Wuruyie East, Adansi South District, from his statement during an Executive Committee Meeting, 14 September 2022.⁷⁰

ABSTRACT

The Department of Social Welfare in Ghana undertook a series of initiatives to tackle the surge of child labour during the COVID-19 pandemic in the Adansi South District, an area focused predominantly on cocoa production. These initiatives included workshops and community sensitisation activities, and the formation of 10 Community Child Protection Committees comprising members from the local communities. The Department of Social Welfare not only sensitised the local communities on issues relating to child labour, but also institutionalised the Community Child Protection Committees as a community based response mechanism, with members trained to identify and report cases of child labour.

CONTEXT AND ISSUE

According to the Ghana Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2017–2018, conducted by the Ghana Statistical Service, 27.9% of children between the ages of 5 and 17 years were engaged in child labour.⁷¹ The survey also showed that the rate of prevalence of child labour is higher among children from rural areas (37.1%), and children who are out of school (40.6%).⁷² In Ghana, child labour in the cocoa sector is rampant: estimates suggest that 667,800 children between 10 and 17 years old were engaged in child labour in cocoa farms between 2016 and 2017.⁷³ Estimates from 2019 indicated that one in every six children in Ghana was involved in child labour, of which 88% worked in the agriculture sector, including on cocoa farms.⁷⁴

The COVID-19 pandemic further increased the vulnerabilities of children to child labour,⁷⁵ due to the resulting food and economic insecurity, as well as school closures.⁷⁶ In the Adansi South District of Ghana, where the production of cocoa is predominant,⁷⁷ several children dropped out of school to work on the cocoa farms as a result of the pandemic.⁷⁸ There was a need to sensitise the cocoa growing communities in the districts⁷⁹ on the negative impacts of child labour on children and the importance of education.

THE INITIATIVES

In 2019, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection – which governs the Department of

27.9%
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child labour in Ghana



Social Welfare (DSW),⁸⁰ in collaboration with the Office of the Head of the Local Government Service and other Ministries, launched the Integrated Social Services (ISS) Initiative.⁸¹ This project aims to enhance the provision of social services in order to 'prevent and respond to violence against children and help address multi-dimensional poverty and vulnerability, with a strong focus on promoting linkages between health, child protection, sexual and gender-based violence, and social protection services'. UNICEF provided technical and financial support to this initiative,⁸² and also supported the development of the Social Welfare Information Management System (SWIMS) to streamline the management of cases of vulnerable children who



Asarekrom Community Durbar Ground, Ghana, 8 February 2022. Winrock Representatives and Director of Social Welfare and Community Development engage with community members during a training on child labour. Photo credit: Daniel Doe Akli, Adansi South District Assembly.

Opposite page: Kyerembabi Village, Ghana, 3 February 2021. The Ghana Education Office team meets with elders and opinion leaders of Kyerembabi village, stressing the importance of children, especially girls, returning to school. Photo credit: Bernard Osei-Bioh, Ghana Education Office.



Asarekrom Community Durbar Ground, Ghana, 8 February 2022. District Director of Social Welfare and Community Development sensitises community members on the role of the local authorities in protecting children. Photo credit: Daniel Doe Akli, Adansi South District Assembly.

suffer or are at the risk of violence, exploitation or other harmful practices.⁸³

The DSW began to implement the ISS initiative in the Adansi South District, deploying various interventions to tackle the rise of child labour cases in cocoa farms due to COVID-19. The DSW collaborated with different stakeholders, including the Ghana Education Service of the Ministry of Education (Ghana Education Service),⁸⁴ the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE),⁸⁵ and UNICEF.

The first step was to identify schools with high dropout rate, which was done based on data provided by the Ghana Education Service. The data revealed that most children in the Adansi South District were not attending school, as they were engaged in labour on the cocoa and rice farms of their parents.⁸⁶ Based on this assessment, the following collaborative interventions were designed and implemented by the DSW between January and December 2021:

- **Sensitisation through training and workshops:** With the aim of sensitising families about the impact of child labour on children, in-person training workshops were conducted at the community level. These workshops consisted of presentations and discussions in small groups on the harmful impact of child labour on children and its correlation with children's education

attainments. The workshops used sensitisation toolkits developed by UNICEF, which included interactive participatory educational games and flashcards on issues related to child protection.⁸⁷

- **Awareness raising through radio and community outreach:** Community outreach and sensitisation efforts were tailored to the needs and priorities of the communities. At the outset, local authorities conducted a needs assessment with community members, the findings of which were later presented to assemblies of community members, who prioritised and recommended the most effective outreach activities.

Based on these identified priorities, the DSW then partnered with the NCCE to implement a series of community outreach programmes,⁸⁸ which included vehicles with loudspeakers roving through the villages and communal spaces with information on child labour issues. Community radio was also utilised to air discussions with experts – these included experts from cocoa companies – to raise awareness of issues of child labour. During these live interactive radio programmes, listeners were invited to call in to ask questions of the experts.

During the consultations and training workshops, to counter the cultural norms that prevent women from expressing their views in the presence of men, discussions were held in women-only groups.

- **Community Child Protection Committees (CCPCs):** The DSW established 10 CCPCs in different communities,⁸⁹ each CCPC having the mandate to protect children, detect cases of school dropouts, and report cases of child labour to the DSW. The CCPCs were also tasked with monitoring the impact of the initiatives within their communities.

Each CCPC was composed of seven volunteers from the community, nominated by the community chiefs and opinion leaders. CCPC members received training on the identification and management of child labour cases, as well as on the Inter-sectoral Standard Operating Procedures for Child Protection and Family Welfare (ISSOP), a national guide for standardising case management.⁹⁰ Moreover,

the CCPCs were in charge of monitoring the results of the technical training and the sensitisation initiatives. The community was also sensitised about the work done by the CCPCs and how they could provide support to CCPC members in the fulfilment of their mandate towards tackling child labour.

In 2022, the DSW collaborated with the non-governmental organisation Winrock⁹¹, who organised and delivered capacity building sessions to members of the CCPCs. The topics of the sessions included: the concept of child labour; national and international framework on the prohibition of child labour; and the steps to report cases of child labour to the DSW.

In addition to these initiatives implemented by the DSW, the Ghana Education Service implemented in February 2021 an awareness campaign called 'Back to School' in the Adansi South District. The aim of the initiative was to ensure that children returned to school after COVID-19 related restrictions were relaxed. The DSW developed guidelines on community engagement and ownership to support the implementation of 'Back to School'. Based on these guidelines, the Ghana Education Service worked with the leaders of the communities, including the members of the CCPCs, to conduct consultations with parent groups, and to sensitise them on the importance of their children returning to school. They also conducted focus groups with children, to share with them the safety measures put in place in schools, including the provision of hand sanitisers, tissues, and nose masks.

OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

1. Sensitisation of 30 participants, including community members, local authorities and group leaders, through three workshops on the impact of child labour and the benefits of keeping children in school.
2. The CCPCs referred 56 cases of child labour, child maintenance, child custody and sexual and domestic violence to the DSW. Case management was conducted through case conferences between the complainant and the respondent,⁹² and referrals to the DOVVSU (police) and Health Services in cases of sexual and domestic violence.
3. The enrollment figures across all levels of school education (kindergarten, primary school, and junior high school) in the Adansi South Region District increased by 777 pupils (an increase of approximately 3.46%) in 2020/21, compared to figures from 2019/2020.
4. As a long-term institutional response, 10 permanent CCPCs were established with members from the communities trained to identify and report child labour cases to the DSW, as well as to facilitate community engagement in the implementation of child-centered initiatives.



KEY LEARNINGS

1. The **formation of community-based CCPCs and the training of its members was critical to promote community ownership** and to facilitate grassroots monitoring within communities. The work of the CCPCs helped to not only prevent and detect cases of child labour, but also highlight that the **protection of children depended upon the communities themselves.**

2. The CCPCs in the 10 districts were given permanent status as a result of their success, as evidenced by higher school enrollment ratios and an increase in the number of parents engaged in community sensitisation activities. **Establishing such permanent institutional structures ensures continued collaboration and sustainable programmes and outcomes.** The CCPCs were also composed of community members, and thus had strong ties with the community.

3. The **active involvement of community members was maintained** through monthly meetings and intermittent sensitisation workshops. These activities enabled an understanding of the needs of the community and helped to tailor the initiatives to meet those needs. The initiative utilised **methods focused on trust building and engaging various sections of the community**, including parents, women, children, and community leaders. Local sensibilities and traditional customs and practices that hindered access to some members of the community – such as women and children – were recognised and addressed.

4. The success of DSW's initiatives rested on their being able to break silos, share information and resources, and collaborate with actors across sectors, including education, child protection, social protection, health, and law enforcement. Child labour being a complex social issue – can only be tackled effectively through **cross sectoral initiatives and multi-stakeholder cooperation and collaboration**, rather than isolated efforts of various stakeholders. Apart from the different government departments, the strengths of other stakeholders, including UN agencies and international NGOs, were also leveraged to ensure the success of the initiative.



SRI LANKA

Focusing on the Family:
Addressing the root causes
of child labour through a
child-centred approach



COUNTRY

SRI LANKA

Asia region. 8.7 Pathfinder Country⁹³

KEY THEMES⁹⁴

Support Survivors; Improve
Coordination and Accountability;
Address Risk Factors



MAIN ACTOR

Foundation for Innovative Social Development (FISD)

RELEVANT CONVENTIONS RATIFIED BY SRI LANKA

UN Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery (1956); ILO Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105); UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966); UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989); UN International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant workers and Members of their Families (1990); ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182); UN Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (2000); UN Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (2000); UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (2000); Protocol against Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air (2000); ILO Protocol to the Forced Labour Convention, 2014 (PO29).⁹⁵

“ FISD introduced to us activities to do together with children after we became aware of the importance of spending time [together] with them. I now understand that there are risks for children and it is important to protect them. ”

Father of two children, who participated in the Family Boards Project, during an internal project review conducted by FISD, January 2021.

“ Village parents appreciated that FISD introduced the Home Gardening activity, because parents were able to experience how important it is to have quality time with children as it increases family bonding and unity with each other. ”

Mother of three children and member of the Child Friendly Committee in the Anuradhapura District, Sri Lanka, during an internal project review conducted by FISD, December 2020.

ABSTRACT

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, to tackle the increased vulnerability to child labour of children from marginalised communities, the Foundation for Innovative Social Development (FISD) set up Child Friendly Committees in Sri Lanka. These community-based 'vigilance groups' implemented both preventative and responsive measures to tackle the root causes of violence against children. Through these initiatives, including the Home Gardening project and the Family Story Boards project, FISD formed, trained, and coordinated grassroots child rights defenders in rural communities, with the aim of reducing harmful practices against children.

CONTEXT AND ISSUE

Notwithstanding the efforts implemented in Sri Lanka over the past decade to address child labour, such as establishing a 'child labour-free zone' in the district of Ratnapura in 2013, child labour continues to be a major social problem.⁹⁶ According to a 2016 survey, 43,714 children, comprising more than 1% of the child population in Sri Lanka, were engaged in child labour.⁹⁷ During the COVID-19 pandemic, school closures increased the vulnerability of children to child labour.⁹⁸ This particularly impacted children in rural areas and those living in tea plantation communities,⁹⁹ who faced multiple barriers in accessing online classes.¹⁰⁰ A vast majority of children in Sri Lanka are from families living in poor socio-economic conditions,¹⁰¹ and the rise of poverty during Covid further escalated child labour, as families struggled to make ends meet.¹⁰² The ongoing internal political strife in the country, and resulting economic and social conditions, also had serious repercussions for child protection, leading to increased cases of child labour.¹⁰³

THE INITIATIVES

In 2019, the civil society organisation Foundation for Innovative Social Development (FISD) set up community-based Child Friendly Committees (CFCs),¹⁰⁴ each with a mandate to exercise vigilance over child protection and to sensitise guardians and caregivers on the rights of children.

In the four rural districts identified for the intervention,¹⁰⁵ 14 vulnerable communities were

43,714
children were
engaged in
child labour in
Sri Lanka in 2016



selected for the establishment of Child Friendly committees. Each CFC was composed of 10 to 15 members from the local community, who were chosen based on specific objective criteria.¹⁰⁶ They were trained by FISD to raise awareness of child protection issues, as well as to detect cases where the rights of children were being violated, including cases of child labour. The first training session sensitised individuals on their responsibilities as members of the CFCs, and on conducting risk mapping in their respective communities (for example, how to identify environments that can be harmful to children).

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, FISD was in the process of conducting the training of CFC



Monaragala, Anapallama, Sri Lanka, 2020. Siblings engage in the FISD Home Gardening project. Photo credit: Manel Kumari.

Opposite page: Kandy, Sri Lanka, 2020. A family draws pictures of happy moments spent together, as part of the FISD Family Story Boards project. Photo credit: John Daniel.



Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka, 2020. Children engaging in the Home Gardening project. Photo credit: Foundation for Innovative Social Development (FISD).

members. The training was completed through teleconferencing, and the curriculum was expanded to include: identification of risks to children during a pandemic, particularly, child labour; reducing school dropout rates; and promoting positive parenting and relationship building within the families.

After completion of their training, from July 2020 to April 2021, the CFCs implemented both responsive and preventative measures within their local communities:

- **Responsive measures:** These included monitoring and reporting of violations of children's rights, by identifying families where children were at risk, for example, those families experiencing serious financial challenges as a result of the pandemic. The CFCs worked closely with these families by providing training on children's rights, including the perils of child labour and their children's right to education.
- **Preventative measures:** These included sensitising community members and parents on the rights of children, and the importance of strengthening family ties to promote a home environment that is favourable for the realisation of children's rights. To support the fostering of a healthy and conducive family environment, the

CFCs coordinated two projects: Home Gardening and Family Story Boards.¹⁰⁷

Piggybacking on the Sri Lankan government's plan to tackle food scarcity by providing plant seeds in rural communities, FISD established the **Home Gardening Project**.¹⁰⁸ Through this initiative, FISD distributed government seeds to children in local communities, while the CFCs promoted parental engagement in the activity. FISD also prepared and distributed an awareness booklet, which suggested family activities to accompany the home gardening.

The **Family Story Boards** project was implemented by CFCs in Kandy, and funded by the Family for Every Child.¹⁰⁹ Under this project, two popular board games (Ludo and Snakes and Ladders), were distributed to families, as well as materials for creative art (pens, boxes of colour pencils and card sheets for drawing), and a book which contained a number of suggested activities. For instance, one of the games asked the children and their families to draw twelve 'happy moments' – two of which were selected to be displayed at exhibitions in the communities.

These two initiatives had the impact of strengthening bonds between family members in a playful and fun way. By ensuring children's wellbeing in families, children were more protected from harm, and less likely to be vulnerable to child labour.

FISD and the CFCs monitored the results of these two projects through:

- videos and photos taken by community members themselves which evidenced the results achieved;
- site visits by the FISD district coordinators, organised when possible; and
- the inclusion of perspectives and views of the local community, translated and interpreted by youth volunteers.



Kandy, Sri Lanka, 2020. A child shows her parents a drawing of their family moments, as part of the FISS Family Story Boards project. Photo credit: John Daniel.

OUTCOMES AND IMPACT



1. 335 families with children between the ages of 5 and 18 years participated in the Family Story Boards project. This included a total of 612 children.
2. 450 families with children between 6 and 18 years of age participated in the Home Gardening project. This included a total of 690 children.
3. The CFCs ensured that the children started school as soon as the schools reopened after the pandemic closures. There were no cases of school drop-outs identified in the communities.
4. A total of 1,532 parents who participated in the Family Story Boards project and the Home Gardening project, received training and awareness on the importance of building good relationships with their children, as well as on child safeguarding.
5. As a long-term result, the CFCs were established in 14 communities permanently. There are now alert groups in four communities in Sri Lanka that function independently, with minimal supervision from FISS. CFC members have also received training to prevent and detect cases of violence against children, including child labour.

KEY LEARNINGS

1. This initiative adopted a child-centred approach, which acknowledges that the child is continually influenced by and influences the social systems around them, such as family and community, as well as significant events like the COVID-19 pandemic. The **holistic approach, ensured a comprehensive mapping of vulnerabilities of children**, including those leading to child labour. Stakeholders were thus able to design targeted interventions which involved parents, community members, the government, and children, and which worked to address some of the root causes of child labour. This also allowed for the coordination of collective efforts towards child protection.

2. Vulnerabilities of children may often be rooted in socio-structural factors and intersectional inequalities, particularly for those children from marginalised communities. **Social change, therefore, must be rooted in the community and owned by the community members.** The FISSD interventions succeeded as both parents as well as children actively participated in the activities, leading to introspection, reflection, understanding, and consequently behavioural change within the community. Success of the initiatives may be attributed to this **participatory, and bottom-up approach to social change.**

3. This initiative placed **children, parents, and ordinary community members at the centre.** These groups were involved in the implementation of the initiatives, including participation in the CFCs, rather than the local community leaders. This not only **ensured ownership by community members,** but also ensured that the presence of official leaders would not stifle contributions of local members.

4. It was found that **online training was not as effective in leveraging creative ideas and fostering mutual collaboration and communication, as were in-person exchanges.** This was due to lack of access to electronic devices, poor internet connectivity, and limited capability of community members to use digital devices and media.



TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Valuing Children's Voices:
Tackling child labour through
direct engagement



COUNTRY

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Caribbean and Americas region. *Latin America and the Caribbean Free of Child Labour Regional Initiative*¹¹⁰

KEY THEMES¹¹¹

Support Survivors; Strengthen Criminal Justice; Improve Coordination and Accountability

MAIN ACTORS

Counter Trafficking Unit of the Ministry of National Security (CTU) and Ministry of Labour

RELEVANT CONVENTIONS RATIFIED BY TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

UN Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery (1956); ILO Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105); UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966); UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989); ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182); UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (2000); UN Protocol against Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air (2000).¹¹²



“ I believe I have a right to education, and I want all other children under the age of 16 to make that stand with me. Let's put an end to child labour! ”

Hermione Doyle, 12 years old, 2nd place winner of the video competition 'Child Labour, A Child's Worst Nightmare', organised by the Ministry of Labour of Trinidad and Tobago and supported by the ILO, 2021.

“ Having to work in the evenings has me drained and tired. How am I supposed to do my school work? My education is very important because that is what will help me raise my standard of living ... Let's take a stand against child labour. ”

Mordecai Doyle, 15 years old, 1st place winner of the video competition 'Child Labour, A Child's Worst Nightmare', organised by the Ministry of Labour of Trinidad and Tobago and supported by the ILO, 2021.

ABSTRACT

Though child labour is prevalent in Trinidad and Tobago, especially in rural areas, there is a general under-reporting of child labour cases. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this situation, with pandemic-imposed lockdowns preventing proper labour inspections, and thus detection of new cases. This added to the already low number of reported cases due to lack of awareness amongst the population on child labour issues which hindered identification and reporting. To address these challenges, the Ministry of Security and the Ministry of Labour signed a Memorandum of Understanding to strengthen institutional cooperation in the detection and prevention of cases of human trafficking and child labour. The Counter Trafficking Unit (CTU) of the Ministry of National Security undertook several initiatives that engaged directly with children of school going age through virtual sensitisation sessions across the country. The Ministry of Labour organised a video competition inviting children to submit clips expressing their views on child labour, amplifying their voice through official platforms and through social media. As a result of these measures, detection and reporting of child labour cases has seen a gradual increase.

CONTEXT AND ISSUE

Child labour is prevalent in Trinidad and Tobago, especially in rural areas; however, the number of reported cases is low with only three cases of child labour reported in 2019, according to the Ministry of Labour.¹¹³ A possible reason for such low numbers is the cultural and social norms that prevent the population from identifying and reporting situations as harmful cases of child labour.¹¹⁴ Under-reporting was compounded by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic which increased the vulnerabilities of children to become victims of child labour. The economic crisis in the wake of the pandemic forced children to join the workforce to help their families,¹¹⁵ while school closures made children available for work.¹¹⁶

THE INITIATIVES

To combat the increase in cases of child labour as well as their under-reporting, the CTU and the Ministry of Labour designed and implemented

CULTURAL & SOCIAL NORMS

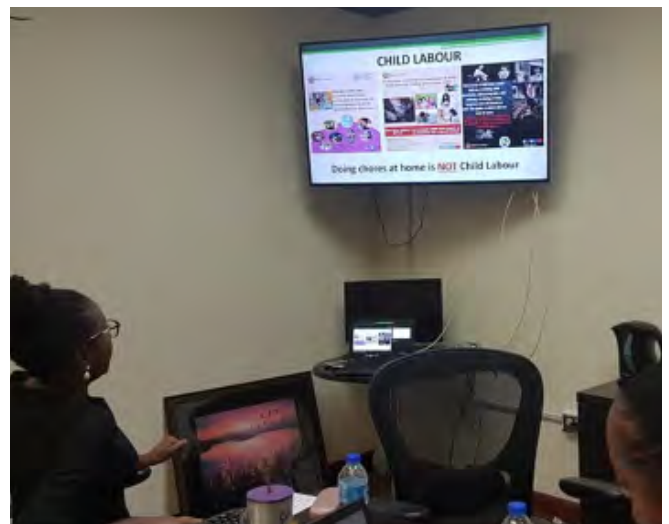
prevent the identification and reporting of cases of child labour



several awareness and sensitisation initiatives, which directly engaged with children and young people. They also entered into an institutional collaboration by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

■ Engagement with children and young people through virtual sensitisation sessions:

Between January 2021 and May 2022, the CTU delivered virtual sensitisation sessions to raise awareness on human trafficking and child labour, targeting children between 12 and 17 years of age. The sessions used a combination of resources, including short videos, powerpoint presentations, and interactive discussions,



Trinidad and Tobago, 10 February 2021. Employees of the Counter Trafficking Unit in a virtual sensitisation session on Human Trafficking for a school. Photo credit: Counter Trafficking Unit, Facebook Account.

Opposite page: Cipriani College of Labour and Cooperative Studies, Trinidad and Tobago, 10 December 2021. Prize giving ceremony of the Video Monologue Competition. Photo credit: Communications Officer, Ministry of Labour, Trinidad and Tobago.



Trinidad and Tobago, 9 March 2021. Signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of National Security cementing their collaboration. Photo credit: Communications Officer, Ministry of Labour, Trinidad and Tobago.

where children shared their thoughts and ideas.¹¹⁷ The aim of the sessions was to enhance children's knowledge and understanding of human trafficking and child labour, support them in identifying early signs of exploitation, and help them to access appropriate reporting and support mechanisms. The sessions helped children to develop self-protection strategies against labour exploitation, as well as to stay safe on social media and online gaming platforms.

To make the sessions engaging for children and young people, open-ended questions were asked, and children were invited to interact, also on social media. The facilitators noted that when children felt that they were being heard, they participated actively.

However, the digital sensitisation sessions were not accessible to all children. To address the challenge of digital poverty which particularly affected children from migrant communities, the CTU partnered with civil society organisations (CSOs) working with migrant communities. Face to face sensitisation workshops were delivered by members of the CSOs who had been previously trained on the workshop content by the CTU.

■ **Institutional Collaboration:** With the aim of promoting exchange and coordination between government departments to tackle human trafficking and child labour, the Ministry of Security and the Ministry of Labour signed an MoU in March 2021.¹¹⁸ Negotiations for this collaborative initiative had started pre-pandemic, with the MoU subject to a consultation process involving several stakeholders, including the National Steering Committee for the Prevention and Elimination of Child Labour,¹¹⁹ who provided input and feedback.

The COVID-19 pandemic had shut down joint inspections by both ministries, as its staff were forced to work from home during the lockdowns. Under the MoU, both Ministries committed to undertake a range of collaborative measures,¹²⁰ including the following:

1. Training of state officials from both ministries on identifying indicators of human trafficking, including child labour.
2. Sharing information, for example, the evidence gathered in the course of an investigation of a case, to ensure the prevention and eradication of human trafficking, including child labour.

3. Being proactive in the identification of cases, conducting joint inspections with the aim to identify cases of human trafficking, forced labour and child labour.

■ Use of participatory and creative methodologies to engage and raise awareness:

The Ministry of Labour, supported by the ILO, launched a video monologue competition on the topic '*Child Labour, A Child's Worst Nightmare*', with the aim of raising awareness among children and parents.¹²¹ To leverage the greater presence of children on social media in order to maximise reach, the National Steering Committee for the Prevention and Elimination of Child Labour promoted the competition on major social media platforms. The competition invited students from primary and secondary schools across the country to submit a 60-second video representing their views on child labour. They were invited to define child labour and describe how it impacts different

aspects of their wellbeing, in a child-friendly and relatable manner.

Between October and November 2021, more than 30 children participated in the competition, in two age categories: 9 to 12 years and 13 to 16 years. The participants came from diverse socio-geographic backgrounds, and included children from rural communities. Civil society representatives were invited to sit on the pre-screening committee for the competition. The prize giving ceremony took place on 10 December 2021 – Human Rights Day – where the winners of the competition received awards consisting of laptops and books. The winning videos representing children's voices against child labour were later disseminated on social media and on national television as part of the awareness campaign to reach an even wider audience.¹²²

OUTCOMES AND IMPACT



1. Sensitisation and awareness raising activities were implemented in over 10 schools across the country, reaching approximately 500 students between 12 and 17 years of age, who were sensitised on issues relating to child labour, how to detect it, and how to report any potential cases.
2. More than 30 children participated in the video monologue competition, six of whom were declared winners – three from each of the two age categories (9–12 years and 13–16 years). The winning videos were shared more than 10,000 times on social media.
3. The reporting of child labour cases increased from 3 in 2019 to 34 in 2022, as of 30 September 2022.
4. The Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of National Security and the Ministry of Labour has institutionalised the coordination and synthesis of efforts of both ministries and their respective departments. The MoU remains in force and further collaboration is expected to identify child labour cases and train state officials, amongst other initiatives.

KEY LEARNINGS

- 1.** **Inclusion and engagement of children at all stages of planning and implementation** not only ensured relevance of the sensitisation initiatives, but also contributed to raising their own awareness of their rights. This approach valued children's knowledge and perspectives as change agents.
- 2.** Using **participatory and inclusive methodologies** ensured that the workshops were effective to raise awareness and understanding amongst children of child labour issues. In order to keep children (aged between 9 and 16 years) engaged during the sensitisation sessions, it was important to implement a workshop methodology that was creative, particularly considering the difficulties imposed by a virtual environment. To achieve this, methods that touch upon children's creativity proved to be effective, such as using art, music, and video as a medium. The **competition format served as a participatory model of engaging children and young people** as it provided full freedom to children to design and develop key messages for raising awareness on child labour. Displaying winning entries also enabled children to be seen as role models for peers.
- 3.** The **use of social media** to disseminate information proved to be an effective way to reach and engage both young people and the wider community. This was done by promoting short video clips and interacting with children via a question and answer session on digital social media platforms. Using social media was particularly important given the mobility restrictions during COVID-19. Notably, as is necessary for online initiatives, the government was conscious of the 'digital divide', and used targeted hybrid measures to ensure outreach to less privileged communities who may not have access to digital technology. However, **in-person training was still considered to be a more effective** learning tool, as it facilitates audience engagement through direct interaction, sharing and feedback.
- 4.** **Institutionalised cooperation**, for example, through a Memorandum of Understanding between specialised government offices that combat child labour, was found to be effective to promote and support the sustained coordination of aims, efforts, and resources towards the common aim to tackle child labour. Such collaboration allowed for the breaking of silos, pooling of resources, avoiding duplication, and wider sharing of information. Collaborations with other specialised bodies like the Committee for the Prevention and Elimination of Child Labour, as well as ILO and civil society, also helped to leverage available strengths and resources.



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- 103 National Action and Coordination Group Sri Lanka to End Violence Against Children (2022). *Trends of Child Labour in the Changing Context of Sri Lanka, CSO Assessment Report*, p. 5.
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- 106 The criteria included the following parameters: willingness to engage in social work; ability to organise work and take the lead; ability and willingness to act responsibly; willingness to learn; ability to be friendly and patient with children; not acting in a way that harms children; ability to devote time to fulfilling committee responsibilities; ability to interact with villagers in a friendly manner; acting in a way that does not harm the privacy of others; and maintaining confidentiality.
- 107 To read more about these initiatives, see Family for every child. *Model 1: Family strengthening*. Available at: <https://familyforeverychild.org/resources/how-we-care-domestic-violence-prevention-covid-19/>
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