

Child labour

The ILO [Minimum Age Convention 138](#) and the ILO [Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention 182](#) both make it clear that child labour must be abolished. Children, understood as all human beings below the age of eighteen years, must be protected from all forms of exploitation, including child labour. According to the ILO standards, hazardous work is prohibited for anyone under the age of 18, and labour is generally prohibited for anyone below 15 years of age.

According to the conventions no form of labour should interfere with a child's education, and the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development must be protected.



▼ Read more

The publication [Global Estimates of Child Labour 2012-2016](#) by the ILO highlights that 152 million children aged 5-17 are estimated to be in employment. Child labour is particularly prevalent in Africa and in the Asia-Pacific (total of approx. 134 million), with almost 1 in 5 African children engaged in child labour. The largest number of working children are found in the agricultural sector, with [70.9 per cent of incidents of child labour](#).

Businesses can have negative impacts in various ways that work to bring about child labour, e.g. by paying insufficient wages to sustain families or setting high production targets, which may lead to children dropping out of school and working to help supplement family income. Companies may also cause, contribute to, or otherwise be directly linked to child labour, by e.g. having children working for

the company, by directly benefitting from the low cost of child labour in the supply chain, or by not conducting sufficient human rights due diligence and thereby failing to detect child labour in the lower tiers of the supply chain.

Companies should have a special focus on the risk of child labour and on children, as [one of the most vulnerable and marginalised groups](#), as they conduct human rights due diligence, and they should be transparent about their activities and findings. In order to prevent child labour, companies [should develop robust age-verification mechanisms](#) that can be integrated into their recruitment processes. Since suppliers may lack their own policies, companies should also ensure that these age-verification systems are used there. If children in hazardous working environments are identified, they should be removed from the workplace immediately, e.g. with the support of child rights NGOs, while they should also be protected against the loss of income.

Considering the widespread issue of child labour in certain regions and the root causes thereof, companies will rarely be able to address the occurrence of child labour by themselves. As such, companies should work with other businesses, industry organisations, trade unions, governments, intergovernmental organisations and civil society organisations, including child rights organisations to address the root causes of child labour. This can be through multi-stakeholder initiatives such as the [Child Labour Platform](#), comprising of businesses, governments, workers’ and employers’ organisations and civil society, and other forms of collective action.

▼ Links to SDGs and targets

The SDGs, namely the goals of quality education (SDG 4) and decent work (SDG 8), and their corresponding targets have clear links to company actions aimed at preventing and mitigating the incidence of child labour.


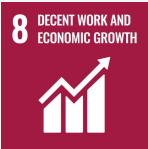

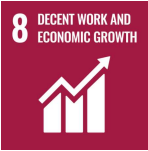


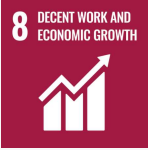
For instance, when companies verify the age of its suppliers’ workforce, in order to see to it that no children are working there, they contribute to eliminating child labour. Through the same actions they can also contribute to ensuring that all children remain in school to finish their primary and secondary educations (4.1) and thereby possess literacy and numeracy (4.6). Further, when companies accommodate their workers’ educational pursuits, e.g. by reduced shifts, they can help provide decent work for women, men and young people (8.5).

These are merely examples of ways in which actions to address child labour can contribute to certain SDGs and is not an exhaustive list of such links.

Cases on Child labour

Case brief	Goals	Targets	Due diligence
Sportswear brand addresses child labour in supplier's factory When Adidas-Salomon (acquired by Amer Sports in 2005) found children working at a supplier’s factory in Vietnam, it developed a programme with Verité and an educational coordinator. The programme required the supplier to continue to pay the monthly wages of the children as well as their school fees and other costs for them to attend school full-time until the end of compulsory schooling (15 years old), provided the children were enrolled at a school. The programme also required the supplier to allow young workers aged 16–17 to work reduced shifts and to provide jobs for the younger children once compulsory schooling was completed.	<div><div>4</div><div>QUALITY EDUCATION</div><div></div></div> <div><div>8</div><div>DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH</div><div></div></div>	<div>4.1</div> <div>4.5</div> <div>4.6</div> <div>8.5</div> <div>8.7</div> <div>8.8</div>	<div>Integrating and acting upon findings</div> <div>Stakeholder engagement</div> <div>Access to remedy</div>

Case brief	Goals	Targets	Due diligence
<p>Shoe manufacturer develops remediation guidelines for child labour</p> <p>In 2016 Clarks developed a Child Labour Remediation Guidance to be applied in all areas of its own operations. It requires all of its suppliers to have effective remediation procedures in place in accordance with the standards outlined in the remediation guidance, for any case where child labourers are found to be employed by Clarks' suppliers. The guidance requires Clarks suppliers to have effective procedures for age verification, and to retain valid age verification records for all workers. If child labour is found, the supplier should seek support from child rights and protection specialists and a remediation plan should be developed together with the child and his/her parents.</p>	<div>4 QUALITY EDUCATION</div> <div>8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH</div>	<div>4.1</div> <div>4.5</div> <div>4.6</div> <div>8.5</div> <div>8.7</div> <div>8.8</div>	<div>Integrating and acting upon findings</div> <div>Access to remedy</div>
<p>Companies join forces to address child labour in cocoa</p> <p>Through partnerships with member companies such as Hershey's, Ferrero, Mars, Olam Cocoa and Mondelez, along with civil society organisations and communities themselves, the International Cocoa Initiative (ICI) operates in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire to promote the protection of children in cocoa-growing communities. The ICI works with communities, cocoa suppliers, national governments and international organisations to further this mission. At the community level, the ICI carries out awareness-raising campaigns to inform community members of children's rights and the negative impacts of child labour while also providing communities with the means to produce community action plans. ICI has reportedly promoted child protection strategies in 656 cocoa-growing communities since 2007.</p> <p>Within supply chains, the group organises training sessions and institutes its own Child Labour Monitoring & Remediation System (CLMRS) to ensure these provisions are adhered to. Seven of the ICI member companies are currently using CLMRS to prevent child labour.</p> <p>The ILO partners with many of the same companies for its International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC). Through this programme they work to establish an integrated, area-based, approach that tackles all forms of child labour within a given geographic area.</p>	<div>4 QUALITY EDUCATION</div> <div>8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH</div>	<div>4.1</div> <div>4.5</div> <div>4.6</div> <div>8.5</div> <div>8.7</div> <div>8.8</div>	<div>Corporate commitment</div> <div>Assessing impacts</div> <div>Integrating and acting upon findings</div> <div>Tracking and monitoring</div> <div>Communicating and reporting</div> <div>Stakeholder engagement</div> <div>Access to remedy</div>


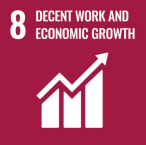
Case brief	Goals	Targets	Due diligence
<p>Site visits highlight company's need to address child labour</p> <p>Fairphone, a social enterprise, organises on-site visits to cobalt mines in the Democratic Republic of Congo and workshops with local and international stakeholders to better evaluate the child labour and human rights risks in its supply chain. In 2017 the company carried out one of its visits and paid particular attention to better practices of supply chain management and transparency, as well as training of local miners on the pressing issue of child labour. The on-site visits and interactions during the 2017 visit highlighted the need for more collaboration in order to address the existing challenges, including the issue of child labour. Proposed improvements to deal with the issue include increasing incomes for miners and communities, and more training for local miners.</p>	 	<div>4.1</div> <div>4.5</div> <div>4.6</div> <div>8.5</div> <div>8.7</div> <div>8.8</div>	<p>Assessing impacts</p> <p>Integrating and acting upon findings</p> <p>Stakeholder engagement</p>
<p>Trekking company addresses risk of underage workers</p> <p>Fair Wear Foundation (FWF), an organisation that cooperates with its member companies to improve workplace conditions in the garment sector, has developed a guidance document on good practices on age verification for garment factories in Myanmar.</p> <p>This guidance includes measures such as document checks, interviews with the worker candidates, medical checks (when age cannot otherwise be corroborated), a checklist to ensure that human rights are respected throughout the age verification process, and comprehensive training of all human resources staff within the group. After an underage worker was found at a factory supplying Mammüt, a Swiss mountaineering and trekking company, the company, together with other FWF brands, helped the worker to continue with training until the worker's 16th birthday, instead of working at the factory. The underage worker's salary was also covered by Mammüt and other FWF brands working with the factory during this time. After the incident, Mammüt reports that it had “in-depth discussions about child labour with its suppliers” and trained them in the FWF guidance on age verification.</p> <p>The company reported that it also conducted a follow-up audit in 2017 to see whether the guidance had been implemented.</p>	  	<div>4.1</div> <div>4.5</div> <div>4.6</div> <div>8.5</div> <div>8.7</div> <div>8.8</div> <div>16.9</div>	<p>Corporate commitment</p> <p>Integrating and acting upon findings</p> <p>Tracking and monitoring</p>
<p>Textile company's anti-child labour policy</p> <p>Textile company Bestseller introduced a standalone policy on child labour in 2014. The policy was revised and updated in 2018 and states that no child below the age of 15 can be employed in factories manufacturing for Bestseller. The policy also includes provisions on how to ensure that child labour does not occur in its factories and</p>	 	<div>4.1</div> <div>4.5</div> <div>4.6</div> <div>8.5</div> <div>8.7</div>	<p>Assessing impacts</p> <p>Integrating and acting upon findings</p> <p>Communicating and reporting</p>

Case brief	Goals	Targets	Due diligence
<p>what kind of actions should be taken if child labour is found.</p> <p>Requirements of supplier factories for Bestseller include that they have a hiring policy that maintains a minimum age of 15, should establish age verification procedures, and restrict access to the workplace to only persons over the age of 15.</p> <p>If cases of child labour are found in factories, the child is immediately removed from the workplace and given an appropriate option for education. Their position in the factory should be given to a member of the child's family, and the child and the child's family shall receive regular compensation from the supplier in question.</p> <p>In 2017 Bestseller reported that its own internal auditors and third-party auditors visited suppliers and factories more than 1,100 times to assess the effectiveness of the child labour policy and other human rights-related policies.</p>		8.8	Stakeholder engagement

Collaboration creates industry-wide leverage to address child labour

The [Responsible Cobalt Initiative \(RCI\)](#) – a multi-stakeholder initiative that includes member companies such as Apple, Beijing Easpring Material Technology, Hewlett-Packard, Huawei Device, Samsung, Sony and Dell – works with the government of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the OECD to address the worst forms of child labour (defined as 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) in the cobalt supply chains in the DRC and to align their supply chain policies with OECD guidance.

[Dell states that](#) it has joined RCI since a complex issue like responsible sourcing of cobalt requires increasing leverage through industry-wide collaboration. In an effort to identify risks, Dell engaged suppliers and benchmarked their policies related to responsible sourcing of cobalt. Through engaging its suppliers, Dell has identified more of its second tier suppliers, information that it has shared with the Responsible Minerals Initiative (RMI).

 	4.1	Assessing impacts
	4.5	
	4.6	Integrating and acting upon findings
	8.5	
	8.7	Stakeholder engagement
	8.8	

DISCLAIMER The case briefs featured on this site are not an endorsement of a particular company, their approach to human rights as such or their business model in general. Case briefs serve only as isolated illustrative examples for inspiration. The case briefs do not reflect all commitments or actions by any given company. In developing the case briefs DIHR has NOT evaluated the actual human rights and developmental outcomes or impacts of mentioned policies and activities. As such cases have been included for their ability to conceptually illustrate the link between human rights due diligence and sustainable development, not due to their verified impacts.