

Child Labour

Thematic Programme

Child labour is work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development. It refers to work that:

- is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and/or
- interferes with their education 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.¹

The Challenge: Facts & Figures

Child labour is nearly **3X** higher in rural areas (13.9%) than in urban areas (4.7%).²



160 million children worldwide are in child labour or **1 in 10 children** are engaged in child labour worldwide.⁴

1/3

of all children in **child labour** are **excluded from school** constraining their prospects for decent work in youth and adulthood as well as their overall life potential.⁶

Since 2000 the number of children in **child labour** has increased for the first time in two decades, with the most pronounced increase among young children aged between³

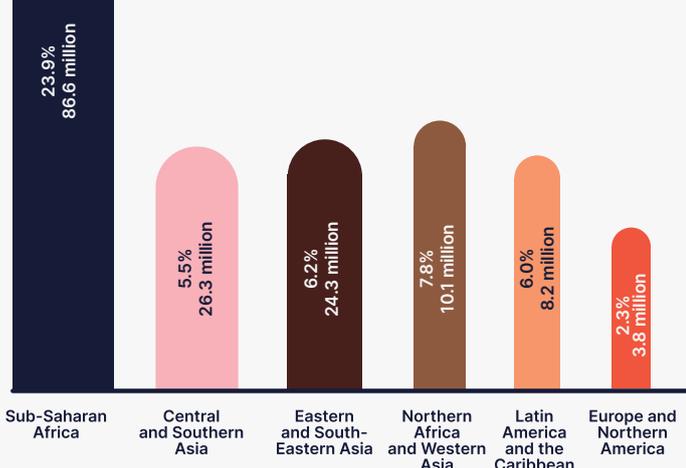
5 to 11 years old.

79 million children work in the Worst Forms of Child Labour (WFCL).⁵



1. (ILO, 2023 retrieved from <https://www.ilo.org/ipec/facts/lang--en/index.htm>) | 2. - 6. (ILO & UNICEF, 2021)

Percentage and number of children aged 5 to 17 years in child labour, by region



Source: ILO and UNICEF (2021). CL: Global estimates 2020, trends and the road forward.

Root causes

Factors contributing to the rise in child labour include poverty, harmful social norms, weak governance and failing protection systems. The impacts of COVID-19 and climate change exacerbate children's vulnerability to exploitation. The demand for critical minerals for 'green' technologies has also highlighted the risks of unethical practices, including child labour, in their extraction.

The development of the Child Labour Thematic Programme involved a comprehensive co-creation process, incorporating insights from a literature review, group workshops with children, and expert sessions to understand the root causes, stakeholder ecosystem, and evidence based effective interventions for combating child labour.

Tackling the Challenge

Terre des Hommes Netherlands has developed the Child Labour Thematic Programme to address the multifaceted issue of exploitation of children in child labour; leveraging expertise and evidence-based solutions and shaped by the views and lived experiences of children themselves. Recognising the blurred lines between child labour and sexual exploitation, Terre des Hommes Netherlands' approach underscores the complexity of addressing these issues, particularly for children exposed to polyvictimisation and those in crises.

Theory of change

The Child Labour Programme's vision is a world in which **all children are free from child labour, have agency and influence, and enjoy their rights**. To achieve this vision the Terre des Hommes Netherlands Child Labour Theory of Change is grounded on the recognition that integrated approaches are required to address the interconnected root causes which perpetuate child labour in all its forms. Along the pathways of change, the root causes will be addressed focusing on three main areas of change with children at the centre, namely:

1 Children have the confidence to claim their rights and influence decisions

The Programme empowers children to influence decisions affecting them by urging governments, communities and families to prioritise children's voices in policymaking, provide safe platforms for expression, and educate on children's rights and the harms of child labour.

2 Children are cared for and protected by duty-bearers, ensuring safe environments

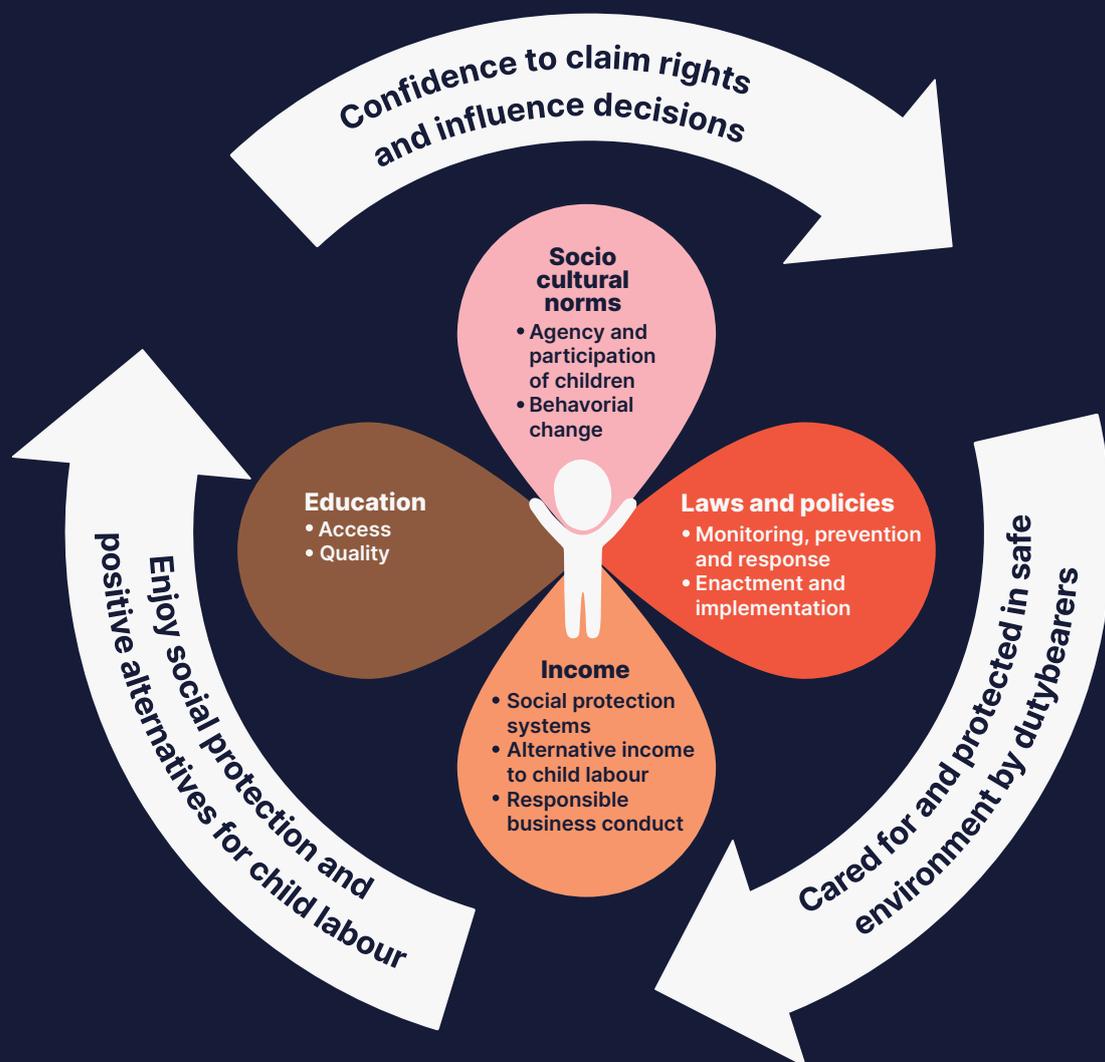
The Programme enhances child protection through community awareness and behavioural change interventions rooted in a shift to positive cultural norms. It prioritises peer support, and fostering protective family and community environments. Strategic partnerships with established organisations, combined with

efforts to influence duty bearers and the private sector, aim to establish a robust child protection ecosystem that is responsive to the diverse needs of children. The Programme advocates for enforcing child protection laws, promoting responsible business conduct, and strengthening community-based child labour monitoring and response mechanisms.

3 Children and their families enjoy social protection and have positive alternatives to child labour

The Programme stresses social protection and alternative livelihoods to fight child labour, aiming to protect families from poverty, environmental economic and social shocks, vulnerabilities and social exclusion. It calls for widespread social protection systems, including cash transfers and health insurance, to boost economic resilience and meet children's needs. The Programme also advocates for decent work and wages for parents through responsible business practices, highlighting education as a key alternative to child labour.





Leverage points: Education, Socio Cultural Norms, Laws and Policies, and Income alternative to child labour.

Enablers: Research for evidence, Multilevel Advocacy, Empowerment, Champions, Multistakeholder engagement, Institutional Strengthening.

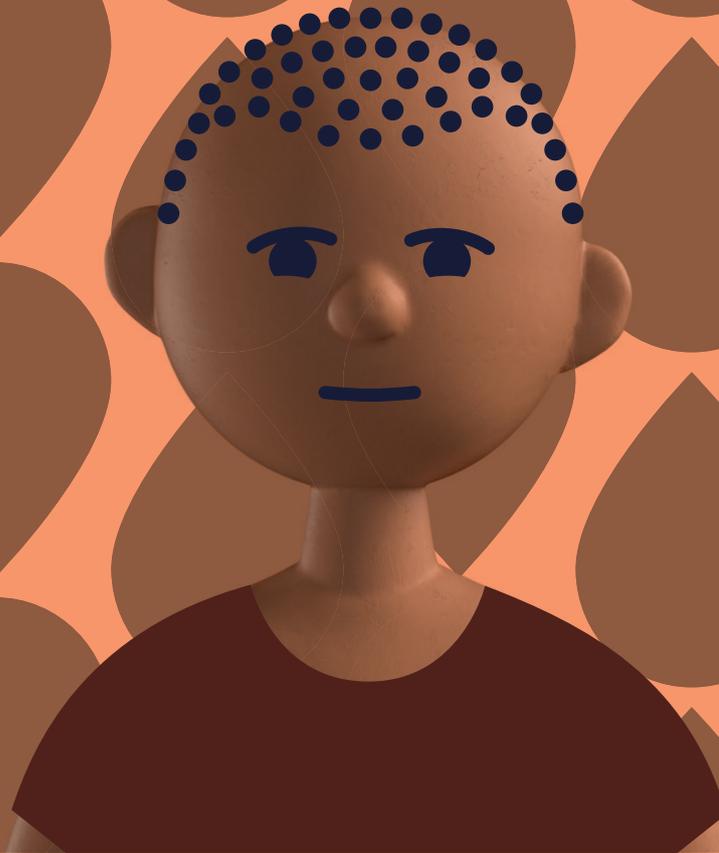
Intervention strategy

Acknowledging the complexity of child labour's root causes, the Programme adopts an integrated, systems change approach, fostering collaborative partnerships and advocating for the private sector's regulation. Central to the Programme is Terre des Hommes Netherlands' Listen Up! Strategy, which underscores the importance of listening to and prioritising children's experiences and voices by involving them directly in every project's lifecycle and ensuring their meaningful participation.

To prevent and protect children from child labour, the Programme's Core Project Model targets policy changes and interventions around key leverage points identified as *socio-cultural norms, laws and policies, education, and income alternatives to child labour*. These leverage points will be activated by *multi-level advocacy, research for evidence, multi-stakeholder engagement, empowerment of children, champions and institutional strengthening as catalysts of positive changes in the system*. Intervention models will combine area-based and supply chain approaches, targeting high-prevalence regions, promoting responsible business conduct to address child labour in specific supply chains, while leaving no child behind in the affected areas.

The primary focus of the Programme is children at risk of or currently engaged in child labour, including survivors of such exploitation. Special attention is given to children with disabilities and those from marginalised groups, ensuring an inclusive approach. Interventions aiming to address and eliminate the exploitation of children in labour target various actors within the ecosystem surrounding the child; from parents and caregivers to community leaders and government officials.

Priority locations for programme interventions include hotspot areas with high child labour prevalence, particularly in artisanal and small-scale mining communities and regions severely impacted by climate, social, and economic shocks. Through strategic selection of geographical areas, Terre des Hommes Netherlands aims to adapt its programming focus to evolving sectors, complement the efforts of other organisations, and effectively address the needs of marginalised children at risk of child labour.



Programme Principles

Terre des Hommes Netherlands protects children by preventing and stopping child exploitation, and by empowering children to make their voices count. As catalysts for systemic change, Terre des Hommes Netherlands **collaborates with diverse partners to build protective environments** for children and create lasting changes in children's lives. Through child-centred, trauma-informed, gender-responsive and intersectional approaches we empower children and their communities, **co-create solutions with and for children**, while ensuring their meaningful participation and influence.

A multi-level approach to advocacy is used to ensure local children's voices are amplified in regional and international advocacy platforms. At the national level, we **leverage government commitments to international human rights frameworks** and engage with the **private sector** both upstream and downstream of supply chains to encourage **responsible business conduct** and compliance with human rights standards.

We use our knowledge and expertise on child labour to **generate evidence through research and document learning** to expand knowledge, **co-create solutions that are proven to work**, and scale successful approaches through our networks. We work through **complementary partnerships** to leverage and complement the work of other agencies, NGOs, formal and informal community

We leverage government commitments to international human rights frameworks and engage with the private sector both upstream and downstream of supply chains to encourage responsible business conduct and compliance with human rights.

groups and government actors, based on an analysis of our optimal contribution to lasting changes in the lives of children at risk and survivors of exploitation. Terre des Hommes Netherlands adopts **a comprehensive approach** to combating the multifaceted nature of child exploitation.