



# FAO Guidance Note: Child Labour in Agriculture in Protracted Crises, Fragile and Humanitarian Contexts (Pilot version)

A review by Anjali Korala

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Natural hazards and humanitarian crises have become prominent factors that threaten human security around the world. Specifically, it has worsened the already dangerous plight of child labourers. 98 million child labourers work in agriculture, which represents approximately 60 percent of the total child labourers in the world. Pointing out how the socioeconomic vulnerabilities of a family can lead children to child labour in the agricultural sector, the guidance note *Child Labour in Agriculture in Protracted Crises, Fragile and Humanitarian Contexts* by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations provides a technical and operational guide to stakeholders to design and implement programmes on agriculture, food security and nutrition to promote decent work by reducing child labour for the vulnerable populations in protracted and humanitarian crises. Performing domestic tasks can help children's personal and social development. Unless the work hinders children's educational, social and personal development and/or threatens the health or safety of the child, it is not considered child labour. On this basis, the guidance note briefly explains the key concepts associated with child labour (decent work, worst forms of child labour (WFCL) and hazardous work), while indicating how to demarcate children who help with domestic work from child labourers (i.e. depending on the (a) age, (b) type of work and hours of work performed, and (c) the conditions under which the work is performed).

The guidance note is organized into three main parts focusing on (1) why necessary actions should be taken regarding child labour during crisis, (2) main types of agricultural crisis and typical forms of child labour associated with it, and (3) what the stakeholders can do to avoid such situations. The vulnerable situation of a child's family (e.g., due to loss of livelihood or means of production, or lack of food and clean water during crisis) affects the daily routine of the child as they may be either pushed by the unsafe environmental conditions to stay at home or forced by the family

to engage more in agricultural labour to reinstate their economic status. Moreover, the tasks they already performed may become more dangerous in post-crisis situations, since the environment might contain new forms of harm, such as remnants of natural hazards and armed conflicts. While identifying the social, cultural, economic and political facts which cause child labour in pre-crisis situations, this guidance note also draws attention to the necessity of addressing the use of child labour during crises.

The guidance note emphasizes the importance of intervention by stakeholders in order to break down the vicious cycle of poverty caused by the perpetuation of child labour from generation to generation within families. While the note recommends the use of programmes related to agriculture, food security and nutrition as means for this intervention, it also accentuates the importance of preventing the exacerbation of the prevailing plight of child labourers through these measures. An intervention which results in minimal harm and maximal positive impact to the affected population is possible by following the principles of doing no harm and non-discrimination, as well as by becoming a part of the solution, assisting with coordination, and creating partnerships with other governmental and non-governmental agencies.

The guidance note identifies three main types of agricultural hazards: food chain crisis, protracted crisis, and conflicts and natural disasters, which can have perilous consequences on child labourers, ranging from hindrance of education, displacement, loss of family members and becoming the breadwinner, to exposure to hazards such as land mines, toxic pesticides and chemicals, human trafficking, debt bondage, etc.

A larger portion of this guidance note is allocated to the process of designing and implementing the necessary pro-



grammes to promote decent work and reduce child labour, and stresses the use of the 'do no harm' theory as the cornerstone in designing and implementing the programmes. Accurate and timely situation assessment is the first important step the stakeholders can take in this regard. Data collection and proper analysis of data in order to understand and identify the nature of child labour is essential in any type of pre-assessment. The guidance note points out the five-phase assessment approach adopted by the FAO to conduct an accurate and timely needs assessment, and stresses the importance of incorporating the ideas of the vulnerable communities in the process of data collection.

In the stage of programme design and implementation, the guidance note furthermore emphasizes the importance of doing no harm. This becomes possible by incorporating the analysis retrieved from the needs and situation assessment. The note highly suggests the stakeholders place themselves in the context to design more practical programmes which cause minimal harm to the vulnerable population by increasing the coordination and partnership between clusters such as food security, protection and education.

The careful selection of direct beneficiaries of the programmes and monitoring and evaluation of the programmes are essential to the effective distribution of the expected outcomes to the vulnerable community. While specifically identifying more vulnerable groups to child labour, the guidance note stresses consideration of gender during the selection process. Monitoring and evaluation of the projects are mainly focused on assessing the results to determine the necessary changes to or continuation of the programmes. The guidance note points out the importance of monitoring by showcasing how to eradicate any type of harms induced by the programme to the vulnerable community identified at the evaluation stage. Apart from this, the guidance note uses several case studies from Lebanon, Niger and Uganda, during the explanation of the process of programme design and implementation in order to elaborate how the process takes place in a practical situation.

In conclusion, the content in the guidance note proves its suitability to be used as a handbook for stakeholders when designing and initiating programmes on agriculture, food security and nutrition in order to minimize the use of child labour in crises and humanitarian situations by incorporating the 'do no harm' theory. Nevertheless, since this note is aimed at providing necessary guidance to stakeholders, inclusion of more detailed case studies of FAO initiated projects on food security and nutrition in various regions (not only limiting to African and the Middle East), especially in which noticeable practical issues were dealt with during the process, would enrich this guidance note as a must-have handbook which can be used irrespective of different socio-cultural contexts around world.

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#### **Sources:**

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. (2017). *FAO Guidance Note: Child Labour in Agriculture in Protracted Crisis, Fragile and Humanitarian Contexts (Pilot Version)*. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization.