**Call for action: ending child labour in agriculture with the help of agricultural stakeholders**

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Description automatically generated**Agricultural stakeholders play a decisive role in the elimination of child labour in agriculture. This Call for Action provides an opportunity to **raise your voice** and express your concerns, commitments, and actions towards the elimination of child labour in agriculture, and to highlight the situation and reality of rural communities and the agricultural sector.

SDG 8.7 sets a target to **eliminate all forms of child labour by 2025**, however, this is an incredibly challenging target to achieve, and all stakeholders must upscale action to progress in the elimination of child labour. Given that 71% of all child labour is found in agriculture, it will not be possible to achieve target 8.7 without a breakthrough in the sector. Therefore, agricultural stakeholders are essential to upscale and mobilize action.

Please present **concrete and realistic actions** that you or your organization can or could take to reduce child labour in agriculture and **provide recommendations** to agricultural and other stakeholders.

**Guidance for contributions:**

The summary of the FSN Forum consultation held in 2020 is available online in [Arabic](http://www.fao.org/3/cb0644ar/cb0644ar.pdf), [Chinese](http://www.fao.org/3/cb0644zh/cb0644zh.pdf), [English](http://www.fao.org/3/cb0644en/cb0644en.pdf), [French](http://www.fao.org/3/cb0644fr/cb0644fr.pdf), [Russian](http://www.fao.org/3/cb0644ru/cb0644ru.pdf) and [Spanish](http://www.fao.org/3/cb0644es/cb0644es.pdf).

**Child labour** is commonly **defined as work that is inappropriate for a child’s age, affects children’s education, or is likely to harm their health, safety or morals. It is work that impairs children’s well-being or hinders their education, development and future livelihoods. When identifying or raising issues related to child labour in agriculture, take into account: i) age, as** not all tasks undertaken by children in agriculture are considered child labour, ii) gender, as girls and boys can engage in different labour activities and face different hazards and challenges, and iii) agricultural sub-sectors, as children are found in farming, fisheries and aquaculture, livestock, and forestry.

**We invite you to take the following key themes into account for your contribution to this Call for Action:**

* **Hunger and malnutrition**, as in some circumstances, children work to meet their food needs.
* **Climate change and environmental degradation** can make agricultural work more intensive and income less predictable, increasing the engagement of children to meet labour demand and support vulnerabilities of their families.
* **Agricultural investment programmes**: by integrating child labour prevention and risk mitigation measures in their investment designs, development partners and financial intermediaries, such as development banks and private sector investors, can become game changers in the creation of employment and livelihood opportunities to reduce family dependency on child labour. They can provide opportunities for adolescents and youth for decent rural employment, and reduce rural poverty that creates child labour in agriculture.
* **Family farming** relies on generational renewal as the main precondition of keeping agriculture viable and sustainable. This process implies the transmission of knowledges, skills, and capacities from the older generation, which also contributes to enhancing children’s sense of community belonging. However, low family incomes, household poverty, few livelihood alternatives, and inadequate access to education can lead to assigning children tasks that are age-inappropriate, hazardous and/or interfere with schooling. Exposing girls and boys to child labour not only puts their well-being at risk but also prevents them from acquiring the skills that would allow innovations in the agricultural sector, break the inter-generational cycle of poverty, and bring improvements to the households’ and communities’ livelihoods.
* **Humanitarian contexts** because child labour increases during conflict, food system crises, and when climate and natural disasters unfold.
* **Occupational safety and health (OSH) and pesticide exposure,** as children have special characteristics in terms of physical, cognitive, behavioural and emotional growth that make them more vulnerable to hazardous work and expose them to additional risks (i.e. long working hours, exposure to pesticides, dangerous equipment and tools, or abuse).
* **Decent youth employment (14/15-17):** children belonging to this age cohort are still children (below 18) but within the national working age. Therefore, they can be in situations of child labour or decent youth employment depending on the danger of the tasks that they are carrying out. Hence, by addressing the hazardous nature of agriculture tasks we can turn situations of child labour into situations of decent youth employment.
* **Digital innovation and blockchains**: scaling up traceability, transparency and sustainability along agricultural value chains, they provide a possible way to monitor farmers’ vulnerabilities in agri-food systems and allow for targeted remediation interventions for addressing the drivers of child labour.
* **Multi-sectoral approach:** social protection programmes that support livelihoods of vulnerable households and efforts to increase access to affordable and quality education can prevent child labour in agriculture.

**Proponent** (name/gender/institution)

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| **Maya Obeid – Female - Relief International** |

**Title of your contribution**

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| **Holistic Protection and Livelihoods Solutions to Reduce Child Labour in Agriculture Sector** |

**Mark your category of agricultural stakeholder/actor**

* Government official (/agricultural-line ministries)
* Employer organization
* Academia/research institution
* Private sector
* Farmer organization / cooperative / producer organization
* Worker’s organization or Union
* Civil society or NGO
* International Organization (UN, IUF, IFPRI, etc.)
* Development Bank

**If none of the above applies, please indicate which category of actor or sector you belong to (for example, labour, education, or social)**

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**Region/Country/Location**

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| **Middle East – Lebanon – North of Lebanon** |

**Agricultural sub-sector** (farming, fisheries and aquaculture, livestock, or forestry)

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| **Farming and Livestock** |

1. Please provide some background context to your contribution and proposal:
   * What is the issue of child labour in agriculture that concerns you? What are the main causes? And consequences? What direct/indirect or intended/unintended impact do you think your work is having on child labour in agriculture?
   * Has COVID-19 had an (in)direct impact on child labour in the agri-food system in your country?
   * If applicable, please describe activities and projects, previously implemented or ongoing, to address child labour in agriculture, as well as their impact/results:

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| Child Labour remains one of Lebanon's most intractable protection issues, with the rates of working children and severity of exploitative conditions accelerating following the Syrian refugee's crisis. The child labour rate dramatically increased among Syrian refugees and vulnerable Lebanese after October 2019, the starting of economic and financial crises in Lebanon, the devaluation of Lebanese pounds, and the significantly increasing prices of goods[[1]](#footnote-1). The combination of increasingly harsh economic conditions adding the consequences of COVID19, where 60%[[2]](#footnote-2) of Syrian refugees have been laid off, and the school closures have led to an increase in food insecurity and thus an increase in child labor as one of the negative coping mechanisms.  The percentage of child labour particularly among Syrian children have increased dramatically throughout the past few years. As per the VASYR data, the child labour rate has increased by 5 points in 2020 compared to 2019,[[3]](#footnote-3) this was also indicated in the findings of a study conducted by IRC, where 67% of children reported that they are the main income earner for their families after COVID-19[[4]](#footnote-4). Child labour has not only risen among Syrian children but also among Lebanese children. The prevalence of Lebanese working children has tripled between 2009 and 2016 from 1.9 to 6.0 percent[[5]](#footnote-5) and this rate is expected to be much higher with the continuous deterioration of economic and financial situations in Lebanon.  Among all sectors, the agriculture sector comprises the largest share of child labour, it is estimated that 60%[[6]](#footnote-6) of child laborers work in the agriculture sector and this percentage is increased in the agriculture areas such as Akkar and Bekaa.  Besides placing the children under immense pressure and responsibility to prevent hunger and homelessness within the household, which is a heavy psychological burden for a child, engaging children in the agriculture sector is another burden because of the multiple risks and dangers that the child is exposed to. In addition to exposure to fungal infection, poisoning, dehydration, allergies, respiratory disease, sunstroke, being bitten, long working hours, However, the musculoskeletal injuries and disorders, and the sexual abuse are the highly two risks facing children working in the agriculture sector in Lebanon particularly girls. As per the baseline analysis of RI that was conducted under New-Beginnings Project during the q4 2020 and q1 2021, 42% of the working children in agriculture sector are girls, the majority of them have been either sexually harassed or they faced attempt of sexual harassment.  Children, girls and boys, work in small, medium-sized, and large farms and greenhouses and usually pick beans, figs, and potatoes, bagging vegetables and fruits, picking rocks, cleaning fields where pesticides are present.  Relief International is currently implementing a project with the aim to address the child labour in all sectors including the agriculture sector since two of the three targeted areas (Al-Mina in Tripoli, Kfarmelki and Mhamara in Akkar) are considered agricultural areas and 32% of the project children's beneficiaries were engaged in the agricultural activities.  The overall goal of the project is to reduce child labour amongst vulnerable Lebanese and Syrian refugees Households (HHs) through a holistic approach, interconnected intervention between protection and livelihoods. The project takes two-pronged approach to reducing child labour:   1. By addressing economic vulnerability and protection concerns of working children and their families 2. By helping in change, the enabling environment that support the child labour through engaging local authorities and enforcement bodies   To ensure safe livelihoods opportunities for parents of working children, skills building training activities and job placement support are delivered to the project beneficiaries, those who removed their children form labour market, along with short-term emergency cash assistance to help compensate the loss of family income by taking the children out of work.  In addition to that, case management services, psycho-social and focused psycho-social activities are provided to the identified children and their families complemented by re-engaging the children in formal or non-formal education activities.  RI, works on improving the eRI and Himaya will work on improving the enabling and enforcement environment for child protection and child labor by directly building the capacity of local governance and legal enforcement institutions in the program area. For this purpose, employers and municipal officers will be trained and sensitized on the child rights, child labour law, consequences of work on children on holistic development, and the referral mechanism to combat child labour issue. Additionally, support on creating both employment and labor-intensive opportunities on a small scale (village-scale) for adults is one of the main pillars of the project. Job creation plans will be developed and implemented based on the market assessment findings, which was conducted at the beginning of the project, focusing on three value chains: horticulture and dairy.  This project is currently being implemented, however, 100% of our current beneficiaries whom were working in the agriculture sector were removed from labour market and 40 % were re-engaged in educational activities (formal and non-formal). |

1. **Please describe the action** you or your organization can or could take to address or increase efforts towards the elimination of child labour in agriculture. If this is not applicable, please explain in the next sections the challenges you or your organization face in addressing child labour in agriculture and present recommendations for agricultural and other stakeholders to upscale action.

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| To address or increase efforts towards eliminating child labour in agriculture, Relief International has the ability to work at a grassroots level by providing social protection and livelihood opportunities for caregivers to enter the labor market and enable them to improve their economic and social conditions. The provision of cash and skills development and raising awareness across communities on the consequences of working on children is a successful approach to combat child labour at a small scale. Additionally, promoting the social-behavioral change among communities and farmers is the main pillar of any action to be taken in this matter. Providing farmers with technical and financial support with the aim to decrease the cost and increase the crop yield will contribute to elimination hiring of children (as per RI collected field data in Akkar-north of Lebanon, the landlord/farmer most of the time does not accept to hire adults/caregivers without their children and that particularly in the cultivation season because of the low wage they are received); delivering assistance to the farmers who are not engaged in child labour or delivering conditional assistance to the farmers with the aim of eliminating child labour is necessary.  Enabling environment at area level is one of the key activities that RI is currently working on and would continue to invest in. |

1. **Challenges:** What are the main obstacles you, or agricultural stakeholders in general, face in addressing child labour in agriculture? How could these challenges be overcome or addressed (for example, through policy, legislation, capacity building, etc.)?

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| Working on eliminating the child labour issue, RI faces challenges that are more related to the legislation and the implementation of law at field level. The lack of inter-governmental coordination between the concerned ministries (Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Social affairs, Ministry of agriculture, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour), and other actors such as General Security Office, Municipalities, NSSF, etc. is resulting in a lack of enforcement the existing labour Law.  Another challenge is related to the weaknesses in implementing the monitoring, referral and response mechanism and the lack of Child Labour Unit capacity.  These challenges that impact the implementation of any action could be addressed through:   * Advocating to establish a specialized juvenile police which contributes to the prevention of recruitment of the children in the worst forms of child labour. * Activating the role of municipal officer and giving them the power to combat child labour in their coverage areas * Establishing a committee from ministries representatives and actors at district and coordination mechanism under the supervision of the committee between SDCs, Municipalities and NGOs to provide technical assistance and to report and monitor incidents of child labour in agriculture. * Empowering the child labour unit at ministry of Labour and strengthening labour inspection capacity and provide them with skills to carry their role in monitoring the implementation of the provision of the Lebanese labour law, especially Decree No. 8987, which prohibits using children in the worst forms of child labour and hazardous work. * Upgrading and digitizing the monitor, referral and response mechanism in a way to facilitate and accelerate the work. * Building the community awareness on the child labour by introducing a wide media campaign that will include live testimonies, true stories and exposure of actual dangers that encounter children (boys and girls) upon working in the agricultural land, and have the hosting community be involved and advocate for these rights. * Providing training and awareness session on the good usage of pesticides, alternate the usage with non-dangerous materials to inform the families of children on the dangers of these materials in Agricultural lands were children work, play and even live * Introducing awareness sessions and parenting skills to enhance awareness on dangers that can encounter their children regarding sexual abuse and harassment elevated among boys and girls working in the agricultural fields, and how to prevent it. |

1. **Recommendations for agricultural stakeholders:** What recommendations would you give to agricultural stakeholders to address the issue of child labour in agriculture you presented?

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| * To promote the fundamental social rights and decent working conditions, including core labour standards * To link any assistance to the farmers and food processing factory with the implementation of labour Law * To raise awareness on the occupational safety and health (OSH) in agriculture and ensure the availability and the usage of safety kit * To raise awareness on usage of pesticides and substate it's usage with non-harmful products * To raise awareness and parenting skills on sexual harassment and abuse of children that can happen in the Agri-land. |

1. **Recommendations for other stakeholders:** What would you recommend to other stakeholders addressing the issue of child labour in agriculture (labour, education, child protection, or social sector stakeholders, including ministries of labour, inspectors, educators, social services practitioners, etc.)?

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| The recommendations to other actors/NGOs are to include an activity/component in all project that support the elimination the child labour in agriculture  For Education actors: to design a specific curriculum/ program that helps limit dropouts and re-integrate children in school and the education system.  Child protection: PSS session and parenting skills on sexual abuse and harassment and good behavior with children.  Social sector: social workers to provide psycho-social support to survivors of abuse (Male or female)  MOL: To focus on application of legislation related to child labor and activate hotline to create a referral mechanism and enforce response through municipal police and local actors that will be considered as inspectors that will respond to any complaint from the field |

1. As per WFP**,** the consumer prices index (CPI) witnessed an annual inflation of 133% between October 2019 and November 2020, with Food Price Index (FPI) registered as inflation of 423% since 2007 <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000122981/download/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Impact of COVID-19 on Syrian Refugees and host communities in Jordan and Lebanon, Evidence brief for policy – 2020, ILO & FAO. <https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---arabstates/---ro-beirut/documents/briefingnote/wcms_749356.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/VASyR%202020.pd [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Working children in crisis-hit Lebanon: exploring the linkages between food insecurity and child labour, IRC, February 2021. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/workingchildrenincrisis-hitlebanon.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Baseline survey 2016 – UNICEF, <file:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/1468241418.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Child Labour in Agriculture: the demand side, FAO and UNICEF, 2019. <http://www.fao.org/3/ca2975en/ca2975en.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)