

## Terre des Hommes position on child labour

On 25 September 2015, Heads of State from 193 countries launched the Post-2015 Global Development Agenda, adopting 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 specific targets to be implemented worldwide over a decade and a half – 2015 to 2030.

Targets 8.7 and 16.2 directly focus on eliminating the worst forms of child labour by 2030:

- *Goal 8.7 Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms;*
- *Goal 16.2. End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.*

Our work to end the worst forms of child labour, contributes directly to the Sustainable Development Goals.

Terre des Hommes believes that all worst forms of child labour should be abolished and that no child (every person below the age of 18, pursuant to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)) should be involved in hazardous and exploitative forms of child labour, as defined in ILO 182. The mission of Terre des Hommes is that the rights of children and their families are respected, so that vulnerable children can develop to their full potential in a safe family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding. Terre des Hommes works to create a world in which all children can have a humane existence and can grow up to be independent adults. Therefore Terre des Hommes is fighting to protect children from exploitation and violence in the framework of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and ILO Conventions 29, 138, 182, 189.

In its fight against child labour, Terre des Hommes makes a distinction between child work and child labour, and gives top priority to eradicating the latter. Child work refers to the participation of children in any paid or unpaid economic activity, or activities to support families and family care givers which is not detrimental to their health and mental and physical development. It is light work for a limited amount of hours, according to their age and abilities, that doesn't interfere with a child's education or leisure activities. This work can even be seen as beneficial for the child's development. For example: Girls and boys support their parents and at home they learn the basic skills of house-keeping; by helping out in their parents' business they learn different mechanical skills or farming techniques and they impart important social values, e.g. cooperation and community commitment.

On the contrary, child labour refers to all kinds of labour which jeopardize a child's physical, mental, educational or social development. Hazardous child labour is prohibited for all children, in line with Convention 182 on the worst forms of child labour. Child labour in dangerous jobs, such as with toxics and dangerous substances, in prostitution and bonded labour should be directly eliminated.

Terre des Hommes fights child labour with an integrated approach consisting of policy influencing activities, awareness-raising and prevention - like education, health care and socio economic development - and direct assistance to victims of child labour and exploitation.

If no other alternatives are available, or if children are not willing or able to stop all their working activities immediately, Terre des Hommes ensures working children with a parallel school attendance. We don't disapprove evening schools, but only insofar as no other alternative can be offered to children and their families.

Terre des Hommes strives to an immediate improvement of labour standards and the regulation of working hours for adolescent children to decrease the direct danger for a child's health and development. Work in decent conditions (e.g. safe working environment, maximum working time, and fair wages) in combination with education is the first step towards our goal of eliminating child labour.

Terre des Hommes does not believe that a boycott of products made with child labour can be a single solution for abolishing child labour. An overall ban will not change any of the social and economic needs, which compel children to enter into employment. Trade measures should therefore always be combined with poverty reduction strategies, social and economic development aid, alternatives for child labourers and their families and the enforcement of labour laws and decent wages for adult workers.

## **Terre des Hommes promotes nine recommendations to eradicate child labour exploitation<sup>1</sup>**

### **1. Coordinate the work being done**

Fighting against child labour exploitation is a collective responsibility that rests primarily with the government, but social partners, Trade Unions, corporate sector, civil society, international organisations, families and the communities affected also have a role to play.

### **2. Apply international conventions**

A very large number of the world's States have ratified ILO Conventions 182 and 138, the key pillars in fighting child labour exploitation. Nevertheless, in many cases, the articles are not implemented nor enforced on a local level. A collective effort of all stakeholders and pragmatic, realistic solutions that correspond to local contexts and the labour market are necessary.

### **3. No impunity for child rights violations**

Those responsible for exploiting children must be prosecuted and convicted of criminal offences.

### **4. Implement a holistic approach**

The fight against child labour exploitation involves the implementation of long-term targeted legislation and public policies. However, it must also be integrated into the framework of a wider strategy and systematic approaches for child protection, because of the strong existing interconnections between the different causes of exploitation. The children's individual needs and opinions must be taken into account. The proposed solutions must be adapted to the situations and contexts encountered.

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<sup>1</sup> Referring to General Comments 14 (best interests of the child) , 15 (right to health) and 16 (impact of business sector on children's rights) of the Committee on the Rights of the Child

**5. Guarantee access to education**

Guaranteeing access to education for all children is the best way to prevent children from premature work and exploitation and strengthen their capacities to protect themselves against abuse. School is also a fundamental tool for supporting working children, including child domestic workers, provided that the educational system can be adapted if necessary to meet the needs of specific professions and guarantee effective access (modular courses, half-day attendance, etc.).

**6. Implement individualised measures**

Assisting and protecting children identified as exploited requires the implementation of realistic alternatives accompanied by access to basic services, a healthy environment and recreational activities. Children must be able to participate in solving their issues and be supported in exercising their rights.

**7. Define the “best interest” of the child**

The definition of the best interest of the child is very subjective. Within a working environment, determining the best solution for the child must be based on an analysis of the nature of the job, the working conditions and the respect of child rights, as well as the impact of the workload on the child's education, health, and physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.

**8. Guarantee fundamental rights**

The State has the responsibility to respect and uphold the fundamental rights of working children, who must be given the means to voice their opinions. Access to healthcare, sanitary accommodation, decent wages and acceptable working conditions must be ensured.

**9. Promote a responsible economy**

A dialogue between the private and public sectors should enable the implementation of child protection measures – an integral part of a genuine policy of social responsibility – in formal and informal businesses.