

STOP CHILD LABOUR

ENGAGING WITH
COMPANIES AND
CSR INITIATIVES



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School is the best place to work

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Child labour is a global problem that requires a global solution. Stop Child Labour aims to eliminate all forms of child labour and to ensure quality fulltime education for all children until the age of 15. Because every child has the right to a good education and to enjoy his/her childhood. Stop Child Labour calls on citizens and consumers, governments, international organisations and also on companies to be part of the solution.

Since the start of the coalition in 2003, Stop Child Labour has engaged with companies and CSR initiatives in a wide variety of forms and roles: from advocacy, campaigning and writing critical reports on specific sectors to dedicated engagement with companies, as well as various combinations of these. This document will provide more information on what is expected from companies, how SCL engages with companies, the different roles we play, the 'rules' that we use in our work, and what we have to offer.



Progress made on CSR in past decade

A growing number of international operating companies feel the sense of urgency in and importance of taking a more proactive role in preventing and eliminating child labour, including attention to the lower tiers of their supply chains.

Several companies are involved in Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives (MSIs) to improve labour standards in their supply chains. Auditing of first-tier suppliers takes place in most sustainability programmes, frequently combined with awareness-raising and capacity-building programmes. This has resulted in improvement in the first tier of production, but at the same time child labour has often moved further 'down' the supply chain. In many countries it is common for exporting companies to subcontract part of the production work to smaller factories, workshops and even home workers, thereby losing visibility and making monitoring more difficult.

Holistic approach

Stop Child Labour strongly believes that a more holistic approach towards prevention and remediation of child labour is needed. We believe and have experienced that eliminating child labour in all its forms can be achieved

by adopting an 'area-based approach' that focuses on the rights of all children in a specific area. No distinction is made between different forms of child labour in this process because every child has the right to education or (once above the legal working age) decent youth employment. Companies can also be involved in an area-based approach which often relates to parts of their supply chain that are difficult to reach through 'traditional' audit and remediation approaches.

Responsibility of companies

Companies have a responsibility to respect human rights and to undertake due diligence to identify, prevent and mitigate their impact. This responsibility to respect human rights is not limited to the level of their own business and first-tier suppliers; it extends to subcontractors, intermediary stages of production, and suppliers of materials. These responsibilities are made explicit in the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises and the UN Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights, the internationally agreed guidelines for companies to address human rights risks, including child labour.



Expectations towards companies

We realise that child labour is a complex problem that cannot be eradicated overnight and needs the involvement of various stakeholders. Furthermore, child labour can only truly be solved if an alternative is provided – often education, to begin with – that realises children's rights. Joint efforts with other companies and relevant stakeholders, including local NGOs and trade unions, are therefore crucial.

Specifically, we expect companies to:

- Undertake a proper due diligence process in their supply chain(s), including interacting with relevant local, national and international stakeholders;
- Go beyond the first tier of the supply chain and engage with suppliers and other actors to work towards effective improvements;
- Not withdraw orders or end contracts when problems are encountered, but to take responsibility – possibly jointly with other companies – for preventing and mitigating existing problems, phasing out only as a last resort;
- Engage with local stakeholders like unions, local government authorities, NGOs and communities to get real insight into the situation and to be able to implement and monitor improvement measures;
- Communicate and be transparent

about supply chains, traceability, improvement plans, progress and challenges.

More concrete recommendations for companies and multi-stakeholder initiatives on how to eliminate child labour are given in the Action Plan for Companies to Combat Child Labour.

Different interlinked roles and approaches of Stop Child Labour

- **Giving insight:** SCL frequently undertakes research into the risks and issues of child labour linked to specific sectors and/or companies. This research is essential to provide more insight into the occurrence and severity of child labour and to inform companies, the public and policy-makers on the 'gaps' in their corporate or political responsibility and accountability. Before publishing reports, SCL always gives the companies mentioned (whether in a positive, neutral or negative manner) the opportunity to verify the information and to provide feedback. The publication of reports might be combined with collective efforts (see below) with companies to work on solutions. Recommendations are given to help move companies, policy-



makers and other relevant stakeholders in the direction of increasing efforts to address child labour issues.

- **'Watchdog':** in several sectors SCL is monitoring companies' efforts to improve their policies and practices related to child labour and other labour rights. In particular, companies that SCL has identified as being in high-risk sectors or sourcing from areas with a high risk of child labour will be urged to provide information on their efforts to address these risks, and the results. In public communication, SCL names companies positively if progress is being made towards preventing and combatting child labour, but it may also mention companies that are lagging behind. Such mentions may take the form of public campaigns, particularly when there are still no solutions in sight. Political and media attention is often attracted to add to and support the public campaign and to create more of a 'sense of urgency' towards addressing the risks.
- **Individual engagement:** SCL is open to requests from companies to engage with them in providing feedback and advice on their child labour policies and practices. In particular, companies that are open to and interested in learning and improving will find it useful to contact SCL. However, SCL itself does not provide consultancy services; it can show companies various options for finding solutions, e.g. by joining existing or newly-developing/to-be-developed multi-stakeholder initiatives.
- **Collective efforts:** In recent years SCL has started co-operating more closely with companies and multi-stakeholder initiatives, building on the long experience of some of its partners. SCL partners in India and African countries have built up expertise in addressing child labour through implementing the area-based approach towards setting up Child Labour Free Zones. SCL is involved in a growing number of joint programmes combining the area-based approach with a supply chain approach from companies, multi-stakeholder initiatives and certification standards. These innovative projects make the difference by combining efforts from both sides: top down (certifying/verifying supply chain actors) as well as bottom up (area-based approach). SCL believes that this combined approach can be a sustainable solution to help eradicate all forms of child labour and to create and sustain responsible business.



Current efforts of Stop Child Labour involving the private sector:

• Textile & garments

SCL works with local organisations in India to create Child Labour Free Zones, as well as with companies to combat (bonded) child labour in their spinning mills. We are also partners in the new (Dutch) national covenant to tackle child labour in the full supply chain of companies operating on the Dutch garment and textile market. In the context of a predecessor of the covenant, SCL engages with the Fair Labor Association (FLA) and seven companies to identify and address the risks of child labour in their full garment and cotton supply chains in Turkey.

• Footwear

In Agra, India, SCL is working with the FLA, four international footwear companies, and local organisations including the MV foundation, on a collaborative action project to get more insight into the risks of child labour and to work towards a joint solution.

• Natural Stone

Stop Child Labour is working with local organisations and two stone importing companies in the Indian state of Rajasthan to create villages which are free of child labour and where all

children go to school. In addition to this project, we undertake broader research on the stone sector and work with trade associations in the Netherlands and on a European multi-stakeholder initiative to improve policies and practices in the sector.

• Coffee

In co-operation with certification programme UTZ, a Ugandan coffee company, a local NGO and an education union, a pilot project has been set up to prevent and eradicate child labour in a remote coffee-producing area of Uganda. In this area, the area-based approach complements a certification programme, with the intention of establishing a Child Labour Free Zone and child labour free coffee production.

• Seeds

Stop Child Labour's coalition member, India Committee of the Netherlands (ICN), has carried out research studies on child labour (and wages) in the cotton and vegetable seed sector in India. These studies, plus engagement with various companies, have led to successful programmes by multinational companies to tackle child labour in their sourcing areas. These efforts are still ongoing.



• Gold

In November 2015, Stop Child Labour started a public campaign on child labour in gold mining with the publication of the report *Gold from children's hands*. The report focuses on child labour in small-scale gold mining and the use of child-mined gold in the electronics industry. Stop Child Labour urges companies to do due diligence in their supply chain up to the mining level, and to take into account the effects of gold mining on children. Companies are requested to invest in and support improvement programmes for artisanal small-scale mines and to work towards responsible – child labour free – sourcing.

More information can be found on our website www.stopchildlabour.org

International treaties and guidelines

- The International Convention on the Rights of the Child (ICRC) recognises the right of every child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing work that is hazardous or harmful to their health and development or that interferes with their education.
- The most concrete international agreements on combating child labour are the conventions of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) concerning the minimum age for the admission to employment (138) and on the prohibition and immediate action for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour (182).
- The UN Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights contain the most important international guidelines on the role business is expected to play in eliminating child labour. The UN Principles are endorsed internationally and integrated in the OECD Guidelines.

The OECD guidelines give companies practical advice on cross-border business and corporate social responsibility.

Stop Child Labour

Stop Child Labour – School is the best place to work' (SCL) is a coalition of the Algemene Onderwijsbond (AOB), Mondiaal FNV, Hivos, the India Committee of the Netherlands (ICN), Kerk in Actie & ICCO Cooperation and Stichting Kinderpostzegels Nederland. The coalition is coordinated by Hivos and cooperates closely with local organisations in Asia, Africa and Latin-America.
www.stopchildlabour.org

Partners:



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