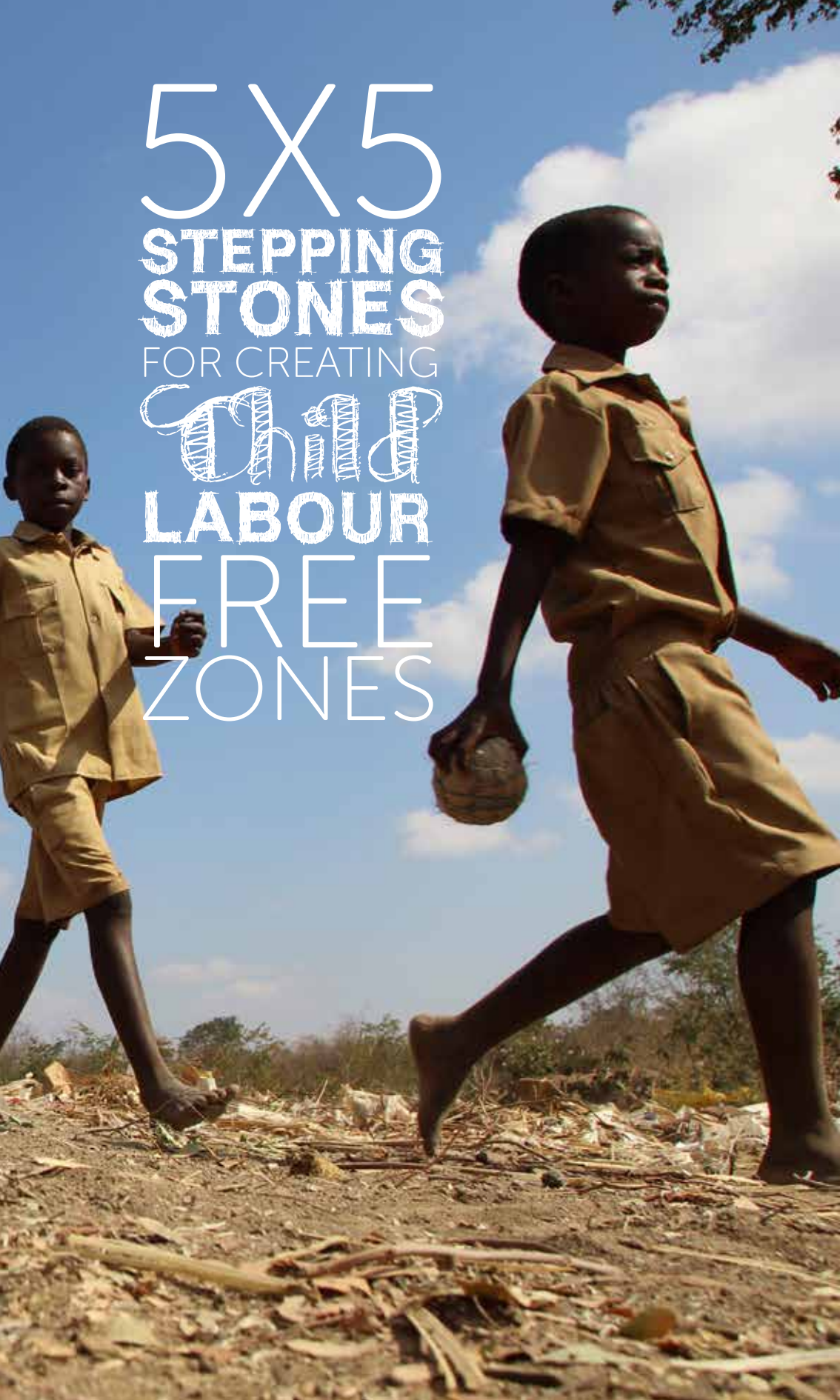

5X5 STEPPING STONES FOR CREATING Child LABOUR FREE ZONES

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STOP CHILD LABOUR
School *is the best place to work*

Coordinated by: Hivos people unlimited

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5X5 STEPPING STONES FOR CREATING Child LABOUR FREE ZONES

5 X 5 STEPPING STONES FOR CREATING CHILD LABOUR FREE ZONES

Imagine a classroom full of children. In the first row sits Monica from Uganda, 17 years old, who once was a street vendor and now is a great debater in senior 3. Next to her is Anxhela Ibrahimi, a 15-year-old from Albania who dropped out of school but has returned thanks to her teacher's efforts. All the way in the back is a shy boy named Dojojaja, who is now 12 and comes from Mali. He used to pull oxen every day and this is his first year in school. Across the room is little Jamal, 14 and from Ethiopia, a former cattle boy who has turned into an active student in the school club. This handbook is written on behalf of all these children – whose numbers grow every year and who were able to start a new life in school thanks to the child labour free zones.

What is a Child Labour Free Zone?

Child labour free zones are geographical areas – such as a village, plantation area, small island, urban neighbourhood, or cluster of communities – where all children are systematically being taken away from labour and (re)integrated into formal, full-time schools. No distinction is made between different forms of child labour, because every child has the right to education. The focus is therefore not only on children who work in a specific sector or on the worst forms of child labour, but on *all* children within that area who don't attend school. These include so-called 'invisible' children who work on their family's land or as domestic workers in the household. In the child labour free zone, people believe that poverty is not the main cause of child labour. Rather, child-unfriendly traditions and norms, the violation of workers' rights, and poor education systems explain why so many children don't attend school. The area-based approach towards child labour free zones involves all stakeholders, including teachers, parents, children, unions, community groups, local authorities, religious leaders and employers. The power comes from the people living in these communities who set the norm that 'no child should work; every child must be in school'.

Why this handbook?

In order to share experiences and inspire others to implement and support the area-based approach towards child labour free zones, the international *Stop Child Labour* movement has developed a handbook with experiences from around the world. The '5 x 5 stepping stones' presented in this handbook have been developed based on the stories and strategies of NGOs, unions and child labour free zone members worldwide. The handbook shows that – in spite of poverty – it is really possible to get children out of work and into school. The handbook serves as a source of inspiration for others in replicating and supporting the concept of child labour free zones.

Who should read this handbook?

Any organisation or group of organisations that wants to promote education and combat child labour can adopt the child labour free zone concept. This handbook can be used by community-based organisations, NGOs and unions, but is also insightful for donors, companies and policymakers who want to learn about this innovative approach to stopping child labour.

What is child labour?

'Child labour' is work performed by a child that is likely to interfere with his or her right to education, or to be harmful to his or her health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral, or social development. All work done by children under the age of 15, and dangerous work done by children under the age of 18, is illegal (Convention on the Rights of the Child). According to estimates by the International Labour Organisation, there are 168 million children working worldwide. India has the largest number of child workers. Sub-Saharan Africa has seen the largest increase in child labour in recent years.

How to use this handbook

The handbook offers practical advice and sparks of inspiration for creating child labour free zones. Although the concept of child labour free zones has universal characteristics, there is no one way to do it. Rural areas where most people are farmers need a different approach from urban areas where people work in factories or as street vendors. Areas where many migrant families work require a different strategy from more remote or 'stable' communities.

The handbook is divided into five chapters that each present five areas for thought and action: 5 x 5 stepping stones for creating child labour free zones. These stepping stones do not necessarily imply a chronological timeline or rigid rules on how to carry out the process. Rather, these stepping stones present a set of ingredients you can pick and choose from to make your own recipe that fits the circumstances of the area where you work.

The first chapter (*Start up*) lays the groundwork for future steps. What are the guiding beliefs of the child labour free zone? How to select an area? What angle to start working from? In the second chapter (*Communities in charge*) there are strategies and stories on how to involve and engage community leaders and members. The third chapter (*Time for school*) zooms in on how to improve the accessibility and quality of schools and teachers. The fourth chapter (*Stronger families*) shows how to sustain child labour free zones by strengthening the families – economically and socially – to make child-friendly decisions. The fifth chapter (*Bigger picture*) takes a broader perspective. How to move from a single child labour free zone to more child-friendly societies? The book ends with an invitation to you: join the international movement for strengthening and expanding child labour free zones worldwide.

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01 START UP

Where to start? This chapter provides you with five basic ingredients for creating child labour free zones. These ingredients are: a spark of inspiration, solid guiding principles, an overview of different starting points depending on your type of organisation, practical suggestions for area selection, and a graphic visualisation of the multi-stakeholder approach.

Play

1.1 FIRST SPARK

How it all began

In 1991, an Indian NGO called *Mamidipudi Venkatarangaiya Foundation* (MV Foundation) managed to release thirty children in Ranga Reddy district in central India from the grip of bonded labour. It was their first project on child labour. To date they have taken one million children out of work and helped them to integrate into full-time, formal schools. Over 1,500 villages have been declared child labour free zones. Perhaps the most unique aspect of the *MV Foundation* approach was that it challenged conventional beliefs about child labour, poverty and education. Until then, poverty was commonly believed to be the major cause of child labour.

MV Foundation took a different stand: it is not poverty, but deep-rooted social norms, the violation of workers' rights, discrimination against certain groups, and a poorly-functioning education system which are the main reasons why children weren't attending school. International research has now confirmed the fact that the majority of families can survive without the income of their working children. Parents, children and entire communities need to know their basic rights, so they can actively stand against child labour and demand education for their children. This will boost their confidence, and will change the attitude of passively waiting for poverty to end.

We can do this too

The child labour free zone concept originates in Ranga Reddy in India, but has by now developed into a worldwide *Stop Child Labour* movement with many faces and features. European, Asian, Latin American and African organisations have visited the Indian child labour free zones to observe, listen, learn, question, and experience how to put the concept into practice. They have returned to their homes and offices with a suitcase full of inspiration and one belief: 'if they can do it, we can do it'.

Stop Child Labour partners from Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Ghana, Mali, Morocco, India, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Albania, and Nicaragua began organising their own exchange visits, meetings and conferences in order to learn from each other. International linking and learning events can be a great impetus to the cause. However, the most important thing is to link and learn on the ground, in the communities that are involved.

1.2 GUIDING BELIEFS

Each child labour free zone is different. However, the concept itself is built upon a set of shared beliefs embraced by the *Stop Child Labour* partners and based on twenty years of experience. These beliefs are not dogmatic; they are guidelines that help to focus the project. The initiative starts in one specific area, is embraced by people in the selected communities and then spills over to neighbouring areas.

Area-based

The area-based approach towards child labour free zones involves all people who live, work and attend school within a specific area. Everyone in this area should be convinced that no child should work and every child must be in school. Every person within the area fulfils a specific task correlating with his or her role in making and keeping that specific area a child labour free zone: the teacher, the parent, the child, the employer, the neighbour. Making everyone a proud owner of the child labour free zone means that everybody in the community works together to eliminate child labour.

The area-based approach is like a magnifying glass that zooms in on every single child. For those children who are not in school, specific plans can be made to take them away from work and prepare them for integration into schools. Those children who are already in school can continue their education without disruption.

Positive principles

The area-based approach for creating child labour free zones is built upon the following set of beliefs:

- All children must attend day schools full-time.
- Any child who is not in school is a child labourer.
- All labour is hazardous and harms the growth and development of the child.
- All forms of child labour can be eliminated.
- Any justification that perpetuates the existence of child labour must be condemned.
- Not poverty, but harmful social norms, the violation of workers' rights, and poor education policies are the main causes of child labour.
- Parents want a better future for their children, and are willing to and capable of making the necessary choices or sacrifices to ensure that their child does not go to work but to school instead.

Mobility

A child labour free zone project may start very small. The number of Indian child labour free zones that were facilitated by *MV Foundation* grew from three to 6,000 in twenty years. For the successful expansion of child labour free zones, mobility of people and ideas is crucial. Talking to people and sharing stories and best practices is the best way to make the concept travel.

1.3 WHAT'S YOUR STARTING POINT?

Any organisation ready to promote education and combat child labour can adopt the child labour free zone concept. But no organisation can do it alone. The initiators of child labour free zones are often teachers' unions, workers' unions, development NGOs or children's rights NGOs. Each organisation has its own expertise. This expertise usually determines the first focus of the child labour free zone project. A teachers' union will naturally engage teachers first, while a farmers' association will start mobilising farmers. When you start with your unique selling point you are on the right track. Below are three examples of possible starting points.

For a development NGO

NGOs can help strengthen citizens' capacity to organise themselves and to claim better public services from their governments. Some NGOs provide health care and educational services in areas where the government is absent or dysfunctional. With these selling points NGOs can, for example:

- Organise meetings on the concept of child labour free zones for the (volunteer) staff of community-based organisations, to scan for enthusiasm for a local project.
- Organise events (marathons, football matches, mobile cinema or community theatre) to raise awareness and share views on child labour and education.
- Set up or strengthen local structures and leadership (such as parent-teacher associations, child rights clubs and child labour free zone committees) to work on the issues of child labour and low school attendance.
- Mobilise community members around the norm that 'no child should work – every child must be in school' and work together to make plans for change.
- Start a dialogue on the problem at hand (eg, poor school attendance, street children, child marriages) with local authorities, and explore ways to work together to get all children to school.

For a workers' union

An agricultural union, for example, represents farmers. Well-organised and well-informed farmers who have confidence in themselves and their markets are the biggest contributors to development. Unions have multiple starting points:

- Strengthening workers' bargaining skills for higher wages and better working conditions, and taking a strong stand against child labour. Adults should not have to compete with cheap child labour, which affects their position in the labour market.
- Training farmers in efficient farming and marketing strategies and raising the issue of child labour during these trainings.
- Supporting farmers in organising themselves as local union branch.
- Lobbying national government for investment in schools near plantations, to make it easier for farmers to take their children to school.

> 'We really have to think out of the box. As a trade union, we normally have a different role to play: we negotiate with our traditional partners: the government and employers. But this goal to end child labour requires something different from us. We now work with new partners, like NGOs, churches, and chiefs, which is very exciting.'
>
> **Andrews Tagoe** –
> *General Agriculture Workers Union (GAWU)*, Ghana

For a teachers' union

Unions are mobilisers. They have the power of members, whereas most NGOs do not. A teachers' union advocates for the interests and rights of their members as well as for the quality of education, which are closely linked. A teachers' union which has the ambition to work on child labour in general and child labour free zones in particular has a range of strategic options, including:

- Organising meetings for teachers about children's rights, child labour in the region where they work, and the potential that teachers have to help solve this problem.
- Training teachers in 'soft skills' such as how to talk about sensitive issues with children and parents, and how to reach out to children who are working and not in school, children with a disability, or who are marginalised for other reasons.
- Training teachers to make their classes more appealing and child-centred to prevent dropouts and attract new pupils, with a specific focus on former working children and first-generation learners.
- Connecting teachers to local community-based organisations that offer services to children, eg, social and health care, sports classes, and cultural activities.
- Lobbying national government not only for better pay, but also for more and better schools and for funds to invest in teacher trainings like those mentioned above.
- Informing the public about teachers and schools that have played a central role in preventing dropouts or attracting new pupils.

> 'The very first thing we did in Safi was look for partners to combat child labour collectively. A covenant was subsequently formed with the Regional Ministry of Education, schools, teachers, NGOs and parent associations and research was conducted into the school dropout rate and child labour in our city.'
>
> **Mohammed Garmim** –
> teachers' union SNE, Morocco

1.4 AREA SELECTION

Although every context has its own characteristics, the following recommendations can be useful when selecting an area for creating a child labour free zone.

Context analysis / Baseline study

Before starting a new child labour free zone project, it is wise to research the current state of child labour and school enrolment in your country. What data are available on the type of work children do? What explains the high school dropout rates of boys and girls? Why is the incidence of child labour higher in some regions than in others?

Your organisation's expertise and network will affect your choice of area to begin in: rural, urban or suburban. An industrial mining area where many migrant families work is very different from a remote rural town populated by farming families who have lived together for decades. But despite the differences, the approach is similar: area-based, and in partnership with all the stakeholders in that area (see 1.5).

The purpose of a *baseline study* is to provide a data base against which to monitor your project's progress. In other words, a baseline study shows the size of the problem when you start (low school attendance, incidence of child labour) and it shows the direction the project should take (full school attendance, no incidence of child labour).

A baseline study can have many questions, but the most important are:

- How many children live in this village or area?
- How many children go to school and how many do not?
- If children are not in school, what do they do instead?

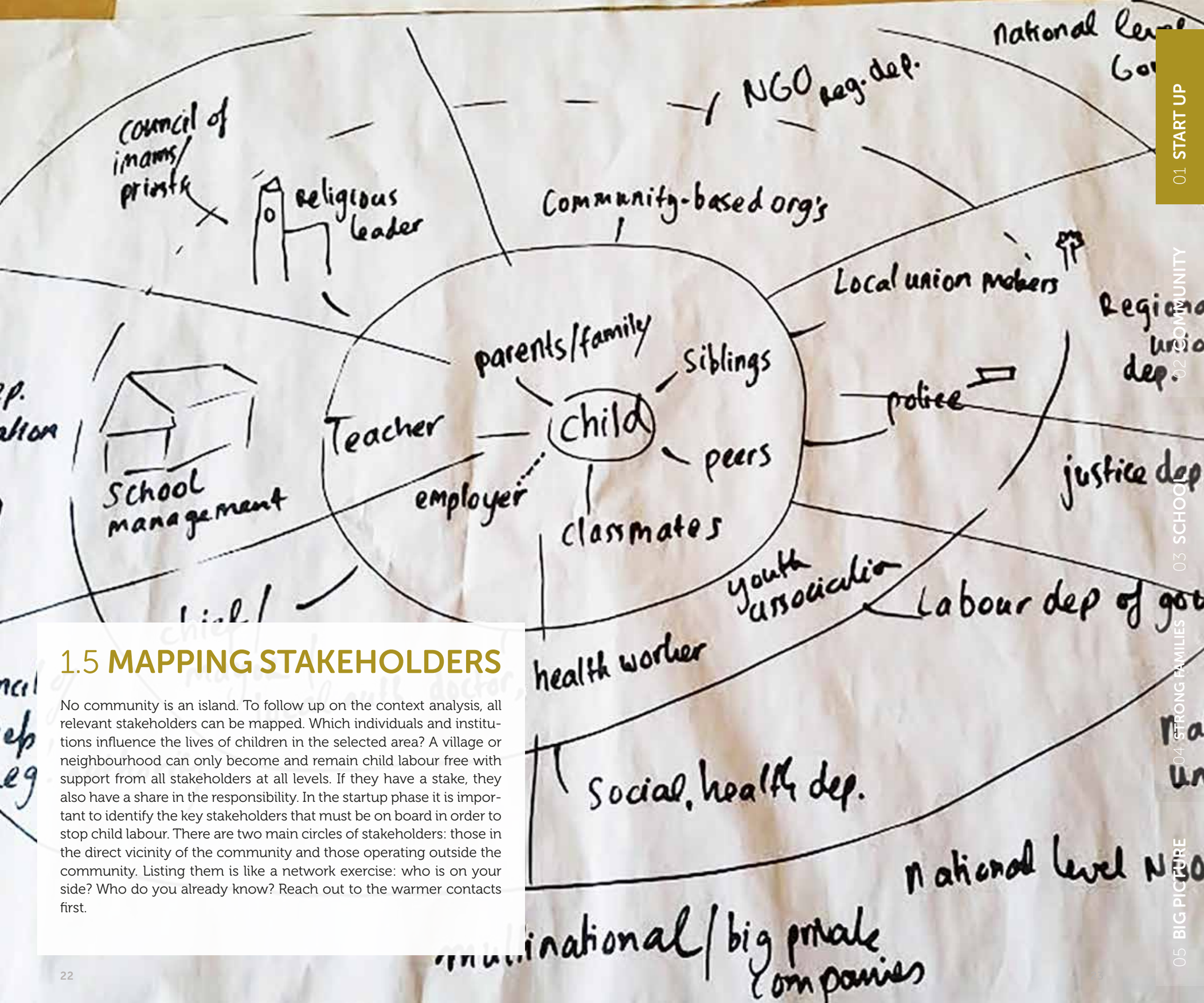
A baseline study can give information about the type of work parents do and the type of work children do. And, it can help to uncover the reasons parents give for not sending their children to school.

Ownership by local authorities

The area you select needs to be an administrative unit recognised by the state. Local authorities supervising these units – whether known as villages, communes, wards or any other name – implement government policies on education and economic development. They have influence and links to their superiors at the regional or national level. Local authorities are crucial partners for creating child labour free zones that remain child labour free. They are also the ones who can turn a concept into government policy.

Community ties

When selecting an area, it is important to have good connections in the community: people who know your organisation and who know their own community well. They may be frontrunners of a community-based organisation or active trade union members who have the drive to change the situation. To build ties you could organise a large public event such as a marathon, bike race or football match in the area. During the organising process, you might find out which village is most open to a new initiative like the child labour free zone.



1.5 MAPPING STAKEHOLDERS

No community is an island. To follow up on the context analysis, all relevant stakeholders can be mapped. Which individuals and institutions influence the lives of children in the selected area? A village or neighbourhood can only become and remain child labour free with support from all stakeholders at all levels. If they have a stake, they also have a share in the responsibility. In the startup phase it is important to identify the key stakeholders that must be on board in order to stop child labour. There are two main circles of stakeholders: those in the direct vicinity of the community and those operating outside the community. Listing them is like a network exercise: who is on your side? Who do you already know? Reach out to the warmer contacts first.


EVONIK
T
SAMSUNG

Inspiration

Berhanu's inspiration

Berhanu Tufa, director of the *African Development Aid Association* (ADAA) in Ethiopia, went to India in 2008 to learn about the child labour free zones. Although he could see the differences between India and Ethiopia – both in the political space and the type of child labour – he thought: 'We can do this too'. Five years later, the child labour free zones in Ethiopia are working so well that Berhanu hosts other child labour free zone pioneers and shows how it works Ethiopian-style.

Eye-opener for Kids in Need

Flavia Bogore, director of *Kids In Need* (KIN) in Uganda, clearly remembers her visit to India. 'It was a complete eye-opener.' Today she is proud to present the shores of Lake Victoria: buzzing with fishermen and -women, and free of working children. They are all in school.

> 'We selected six districts basically on two criteria: the problem had to be big, and the potential had to be big, meaning there had to be strong union leaders and members. In Korçë we selected two schools. One with all Roma children, and one mixed. Both schools had lots of children dropping out, and working. We picked those schools because we believed those schools could set an example for other schools'
>
> **Stavri Liko** – *teachers' union FSASH-SPASH*, Albania.

The entry point of the Agricultural Union in Ghana

Long before working on a child labour free zone, the trade union GAWU worked with people in the 'informal economy' – workers without a contract. In Ghana this is the largest group of employees and includes, for example, small cassava and cocoa farmers.
The union organised these workers so they could get better salaries and social security. While working with the farmers, the union encountered many cases of child labour: it turned out that many farmers were parents of to working children.
When GAWU started a child labour free zone project, it logically focused on what it does best: getting better salaries and working conditions for the parents. This, combined with awareness-raising on the risks of child labour and the importance of education, helped parents to take their children away from work and send them to school.

> 'I was a child labourer myself. When I was nine or ten, I had to quit school to herd the cattle. I remember how sad I felt when I saw my former classmates run to school in the morning, while I had to turn the other way, to the bush, with the older ones and the cows. I was lonely. When my mother, who lived elsewhere, found out I did not go to school, she made me live with her again and she sent me back. I became one of the best students of my class.'
>
> **Pascal Masocha** – *National coordinator Coalition Against Child Labour* (CACLAZ), Zimbabwe

Notes

02 COMMUNITIES IN CHARGE

NGOs, unions and coalitions are facilitators, trainers and connectors. But without the energy and efforts of people in the community, the project will likely come to an early end. It takes a village to raise a child so that he or she can go to school. Everybody in the community must believe that children should be able to enjoy education without having to work. This chapter outlines different components of community mobilisation: how to engage gatekeepers, how to have citizens in control of the project, how to involve them in baseline surveys, and how to make and use media, arts and sport to spread the message.

2.1 GATEKEEPERS FIRST

Who are gatekeepers?

Every community has leadership structures. Gatekeepers are influential men and women who have the respect of community members; traditional leaders, religious leaders, local authorities and civil leaders. Gatekeepers are also citizens who hold a special position in the community, such as local treasurers, shamans or counsellors, midwives and successful entrepreneurs. Their participation and support is a precondition for a successful project. Getting to know community leaders through regular visits to the village requires patience, creativity, time, and an open attitude. The crux is finding common ground. After all, we all want a better future for our children. Once a leader is willing to actively contribute to the process of making the village child labour free, he or she can become an ambassador who is capable of pushing the project forward.

Responsibility of gatekeepers

Governments, not NGOs, are responsible for making education of sufficient quality accessible to every child. The ultimate goal of the child labour free zone initiative is that governments fulfil this responsibility. Engaging local authorities as owners of the project in the first phase means that they are more likely to feel responsible for its success.

A mayor who supervises a successful child labour free zone has a good story to tell his or her superiors at the national level.

Some organisations have signed agreements with local authorities that stipulate the transfer of responsibility from NGOs to government. For example, the agreement may state that the NGO provides education for children, but within five years the government will take over this task.


Let us make sure that all children are protected

2.2 MOBILISING CITIZENS

Child labour free zones are best facilitated by a core group of citizens who organise themselves in a committee, action group or association that actively promotes education and protects the rights of the children who live in the community. These committee members have an important task: they are role models and watchdogs at the same time.

Creating committees

Ideally the committee is a group of enthusiastic individuals who represent the diversity of their community: for example, the mayor, the teacher, the priest or imam, the parent, the student leader, the shopkeeper and the midwife. There are multiple ways to create a committee: the members can be voted in during a public gathering, the mayor can appoint individuals, or villagers can volunteer themselves. Working on a committee does not fit everyone: people need to be motivated and committed. Volunteering takes time and energy.

Training and motivating committee members

Trainings can be set up to help committee members make a start as role models and watchdogs in their community. During these trainings, committee members learn about children's rights and the impact of child labour. They also learn practical skills such as how to sensitise other parents, and how to identify and solve problems.
Committee members' efforts can be rewarded by organising an exchange visit to another village to see how other people create child labour free zones, by holding community gatherings to celebrate successes (for example, more children back in school) and applauding their efforts and commitment, or by organising special dinners or other events to celebrate their good work. Committee members can also be given a prominent role when hosting (foreign) delegations who have been invited to visit a child labour free zone.

Involving existing groups

Existing community groups, for example church-based women's groups or youth sports club, are important collectors and disseminators of information. Acquaintances talk, play, and laugh together. They know, trust and influence each other. Representatives of these groups can be asked to join the committee or to participate in trainings designed especially for them. If those groups do not yet exist in a community, the core committee can ask fellow community members to create new groups, for example a parents' or students' association. Within their own circle of influence, these associations can form a tight web around the children so that each one of them enrols and stays in school.

> 'You need key persons from the community to know who is who and what is what.'
>
> **Flavia Bogore** – *Kids in Need*, Uganda

2.3 EMPLOYERS LEADING BY EXAMPLE

Employers come in many shapes and sizes. The employers of children can be family members, plantation holders, craftsmen, restaurant-keepers and factory owners. A child labour free zone approach needs employers to be part of the solution. They need to be convinced to release the children who currently work for them. Moreover, they need to be convinced not to replace these child workers with new children. This is a long-term awareness-raising operation. By naming and 'faming' them in public, employers who have taken a stand against child labour can be the most powerful role models for employers who still work with children.

Sensitising employers

The best strategy is talking, lots of talking (dialogue, community conversation).

- Individual approach: a community can organise door-to-door visits by volunteers such as members of a youth club, the pupil parents' association, teachers and committee members. There may be visits to the shop, farm or other workplace, ideally accompanied by a respected person such as the chief, the mayor or another employer who has already changed his or her mind. For every (type of) employer a 'sensitisation crew' can be put together. For example, lakeside fishermen deal with the coast guard on a daily basis. Why not ask the coast guard to play the role of watchdogs working to

stop child labour? They know the fishermen personally and know how to approach them effectively. Parents who let their children work in the family business are more likely to be influenced by other parents they know.

- Collective approach: the core committee can organise briefings and dialogues for the general public (see also 2.2) and in this way reach employers without approaching them directly. Billboards, radio messages and public address systems (megaphones) can also change employer attitudes towards child labour.

Employers as role models

An employer who has stopped hiring children is the best advocate to convince others to do the same. An employer who has released children from labour deserves the spotlight. He or she is setting a new norm, and everyone should hear about it. How can employers be presented as role models?

- By surprising the employer who released children with an unexpected ceremony and asking local media to report about it.
- By engaging a group of like-minded employers in one area to sign an agreement against child labour. The one(s) who continue hiring children will eventually feel social and economic pressure to apply the new norm.

2.4 COLLECTING DATA TOGETHER

It is wise to involve community members as data collectors for your baseline study. In doing so, community members become owners not only of the problem but of the solution as well.

Child-friendly research

When the research team wants to interview children in order to collect information, make sure the interview questions and setting are child-friendly. Children may become shy, tired or bored. They do not always understand the formal questions interviewers have prepared. It is easier to talk with children in an informal setting like a playing field, or together with a group of peers, than in an office.

Presentation of findings

When the research team has finished the data collection, it can turn the presentation of its findings into a public event. Everyone is invited. By presenting the findings out in the open, the problem becomes evident and visible. You can also ask a local journalist to attend the presentation and write a story about it (and to come back the next year to see if anything has changed).

2.5 SPREAD THE MESSAGE

As many people as possible need to hear and see it: no child should work and all children must go to school. In one-on-one conversations or in group discussions, on the radio or in newspapers, through public speakers or text messages, by painted slogans on the wall...

Using the radio

Local radio has many listeners. Airtime is expensive but some broadcasters are willing to offer airtime for a good cause. You can host a call-in radio show about the problem of child labour in the area and invite people to ask their questions. A call-in show not only spreads information, but also collects data about people's attitude and knowledge. You can ask a musician or children's choir to sing a 'child-labour-free jingle' for the radio to be played during peak hours.

Film and mobile cinema

Film is a powerful medium: it tells stories in a lively way. And more importantly, it can attract hundreds of people. Film screenings in the community are a great opportunity to get together. Mobile cinema – easy to set up and take down – is used to invite community members to watch a (documentary) film on child labour and talk about the issues raised in the film. The film can be projected on the side of a large boat, or the wall of a church. Good advice for those interested in mobile cinemas: choose a location that is close to everyone, this will make it easier to reach as many people as possible.

Inviting journalists to the child labour free zone

Journalists are always looking for good, interesting stories. A child labour free zone is such a story. Invite journalists from all types of media to visit the village and let community volunteers show them around.

Reach out through sport and arts

Children like to play. Sports and the arts offer unique playgrounds for getting in touch with children and their families.

- Reaching out-of-school children can be difficult. In particular, street children and so-called 'children on the move' easily slip off the radar. Instead of approaching these children with serious messages about child labour and education, build rapport with them by playing football or music together, or chit-chatting.
- A sports event, such as a marathon, is a natural mobiliser that can bring young people together. The event provides an indirect stage for making a statement about child labour in the area, for example through banners, posters, and t-shirts. Popular sportspeople can also play a powerful role as ambassadors.
- Music, theatre and arts are great communication tools. Community theatre is a well-proven method of addressing social injustices present in the community. Children can also be trained to make their own plays or musical performances about a specific theme related to child labour. Of course they need an audience to which they can show their piece of art. Who better to promote their own performance than the children themselves?

Inspiration

A new experience for Indian parents

MV Foundation organises three-day camps for children in Indian villages. Both working and school-going children are welcome. The days are full of joy with activities like dancing, singing and playing sport. Employers and parents are invited too. They see how much fun the children have and what a day free of labour looks like for a child.
After these three days, event organisers visit the families at home, Arvind Kumar of *MV Foundation* explains. 'We ask them, "How did you deal with the fact that your working child was not working?" They answer, for example, that the father or grandfather did the work during the day. Then we say, "So now you can do that all the time when your child goes to school."

Mobile cinema in Uganda

'Mobile cinema has a huge impact', says Flavia Bogore of *Kids in Need. Kids in Need* screens documentaries and regular films about child labour, and talks about the issues raised in the films. In Uganda the local team once screened a film on the side of a large boat in the fishing port. More than a thousand people came to watch. 'Most people never see films, so they are very curious', Flavia says. Moreover, the location in the harbour was great promotion: many pass by the harbour in daytime in the fishing communities at Lake Victoria, so everyone knew about it.

> 'Our message is: education is not only for work and money, it is about being smarter and doing your own things. It is beneficial in daily life: you can read and write; you can understand what is written on a bus. You are able to do better agriculture.'
>
> **Arvind Kumar** – *MV Foundation,* India

Boat builder makes his workshop child labour free

'Lom Nava', literally meaning "if you love me, come to me", is the name of the boat-building shop on Kpando Torkor Beach in the child labour free zone in the Volta Region of Ghana. The carpenter in this boat-building shop once used his own and other children to work for him. The children had to perform services such as carrying wood and were also involved in boat-building activities. The children had no protective gear whatsoever.

After attending the local meetings and listening to all the sensitisation messages, Lom Nava's owner decided to send his child labourers to school and to declare his workplace a child labour free zone. He also erected a sign post in front of his workshop promoting the child labour free zone concept in the community. Behind the workshop is the giant public address system used to broadcast advocacy messages on child labour free zones.

> 'In Ethiopia at the local level we have the network leader, also called the garee. The garee oversees five households, and is appointed by the members of these five households. In the village of Jarti Bakule, there is a boy named Jamal who suddenly did not show up in school. The school management knew they could ask the garee to check with Jamal's parents what was going on. Jamal's father admitted he sent his son to work in a nearby village. The garee went by several times and said all the kids from the neighbourhood were going to school, and Jamal missed out on everything they learnt. Soon they would be able to read. Jamal's father felt that the garee did not approve of his decision. He was sensitive for this pressure, and in the end he called Jamal back home and said he could go back to school.'
>
> **Berhanu Tufa –** *African Development Aid Association* (ADAA), Ethiopia.

Notes

03 TIME FOR SCHOOL

Schools are one of the core components of the child labour free zone. Any child who is not in school is, in fact, a child labourer. Sensitising parents about bringing their children to school is not enough; more needs to be done. How to make schools more accessible and more attractive for children and parents? How to improve the quality of the school? How to enable teachers to become mentors and monitors in the child labour free zone? And what can be done when there is no (good) school available?

Learn

3.1 MAKING SCHOOLS MORE ACCESSIBLE

Few children will be sent to school if the school is too far from their home, overcrowded, or too expensive. Barriers of distance and costs can be addressed by lobbying local authorities to build more village schools, to provide public transport to school, and to remove administrative obstacles for parents enrolling their children in school. While waiting for government action, some villages have decided to start building their own schools and providing their own teachers instead. These are indeed temporary solutions to fill the gap left by a government that is not fulfilling its task. It is therefore wise to sign clear agreements with the local government about when they will perform their duty and honour the children's right to education.

Road to school

A baseline study (see 1.4) can give you information about how far children need to travel to school. This information will strengthen your argument to the authorities. When the school is too far for (the youngest) children or too unsafe (for girls) to walk, and the government fails to take concrete action, communities can try to come up with (temporary) solutions themselves:

- Recruiting volunteer bus or pickup drivers to transfer children along the route.
- Building a passenger bridge over a river to bypass long and unsafe hikes to school.
- Providing bicycles for older pupils or teachers who live far from the school.
- Organising security to enable girls to walk to school together, for example by arranging for them to be accompanied by an older family member.

> ‘I go to the parents, we talk about how they can have a new help in the house when their child goes to school. Or have some extra income. Actually I also educate the parents.’
>
> **Mustafa Khalili** – *teacher at UMEA Primary school*, Uganda

Nearby schools

Groups can start non-formal schooling in the village and employ (volunteer) teachers who live in the same community. A school may start as a small open-air ‘classroom’ for just a handful of children. As more and more children join the group, it will become obvious that the village needs a classroom. Once everyone in the village is convinced that they need and want a proper school for the children, they will have a strong case to convince the relevant authorities in turn.

Making school more affordable

The baseline study (see 1.4) can also tell you the costs of taking a child to school. In addition to school fees for public or private schools, the less obvious expenses required for enrolment – for example schoolbags, pencils, books, uniforms, school lunches – should also be mapped. Ways of lowering the financial burden include:

- Researching financial and non-financial barriers faced by parents that prevent them from sending their children to school.
- Discussing the problem of costly documentation necessary for enrolment (eg, birth certificates) with local authorities and making arrangements to lower the cost.
- When expensive school lunches appear to be a serious barrier and lead to hungry children who cannot concentrate in school, discuss the possibility of providing (temporary) free school lunches, subsidised by the local authorities or the parents’ employers. Feeding their children remains the parents’ responsibility, but free or low cost school food may help to lift some of the burden in the first transfer years.
- Helping community members to increase their income by improving their agricultural or business skills and by saving money in a collective fund (see chapter 4).

3.2 NEED FOR GOOD TEACHERS

Without teachers there is no school. Quality teachers offer quality education. A motivated, well-trained teacher is able to keep his or her pupils' attention. Quality education makes dropping out less likely. Teachers in a child labour free zone don't just teach. They can tell when one of their pupils is not feeling well. They can ask a boy where his friend is if he doesn't show up to class. They know their pupils' parents, and understand what is going on in their homes. Teachers need training, motivation and rewards.

Training for teachers to provide quality education

Teacher education is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education. A lack of trained teachers – which can be common in marginalised areas – undermines the quality of education. NGOs and some teachers' unions have launched temporary solutions by training (volunteer) teachers from the community, while lobbying their governments for structural solutions. They have also provided specialised courses for teachers, to equip them with the skills to become child labour free zone teachers. These trainings have included:

- Child-centred education and communication: talking to children and parents about problems at home and in class.
- Inclusive education: open and positive attitude towards all children, including working and out-of-school children, children from minority groups, migrant children and disabled children.
- Special care for children who are in a vulnerable position and suffer from trauma, such as children in child-headed households.
- Special care for 'late learners' or slow learners who were previously child labourers, as well as first-generation learners whose parents never went to school and are unable to support them with homework or other school-related issues.
- Monitoring skills: keeping track of individual pupils' records.

Motivation for teachers

Teachers need rewards and appreciation. Which strategies have proved successful in improving the image of the teaching profession? When teachers (and teachers' unions) become visible as public campaigners for quality education and against child labour, they acquire a new role. This new role gives them a new image.

- Show teachers respect and appreciation by organising community gatherings where teachers are praised publicly. The negative image of teaching needs to be changed. This can be done by raising awareness of the importance of the teachers in children's lives and, in fact, in society.
- Give individual teachers a name and a face by mentioning them in reports and communications.
- Document and share stories told by teachers about their experiences in their classes and communities.
- Invite teachers to participate in exchange visits to schools in other areas.
- Show the innovative side of teachers' unions in public campaigning: not only as negotiators for working conditions, but also as progressive partners for better education and against child labour.

> 'You cannot expect parents to send their children to a school where they learn nothing. So if you're very busy convincing parents of education, on the other side education needs to improve, as a natural flow.'
>
> **Venkat Reddy –** *MV Foundation*, India

‘You know, only concrete work works. You can organise endless seminars and trainings for teachers, but all those meetings will mean nothing if those teachers do not go and sit with the pupils, talk with the parents, to really get to know them and their situation, and make a plan together to get the kid back to school.’

Stavri Liko – teachers’ union, Albania

3.3 MAKING SCHOOLS A BETTER PLACE

The school needs to be a place where children want to be. Making school more attractive prevents children dropping out, and 'drop-ins' are encouraged. A school becomes more appealing when it is safe and when teachers are understanding and child-centred.

Safer schools

Parents will not send their children to school when the school building is dirty or unsafe, or when teachers are known to use punish their pupils harshly or sexually harass their female pupils. School needs to be the better alternative. Safety in schools can refer to physical safety and hygiene, as well as to safety from violence and gender discrimination and a safe environment for children to raise concerns. During conversations with community members, be sure to discuss parents' concerns. What kind of school do parents want for their children?

Health safety and hygiene can by guaranteed by:

- Building classrooms with concrete walls and concrete floors (instead of mud).
- Installing clean water taps.
- Building hygienic toilets for girls and boys.
- Inviting healthcare teams.

Physical and mental safety can be guaranteed by:

- Having a focal person that children can turn to if they have any problems.
- Teachers and headmasters who are trained to respect children's rights, for example by banning corporal punishment and being alert regarding gender-based violence.
- Pupils who are informed about children's rights themselves and who feel safe talking about violations of these rights whenever they see them happen.

Discussing school feeding programmes

Food is expensive, and many children in poor areas only have one decent meal a day. For some children the certainty of having breakfast or lunch at school can be an important reason to come to class. However, children need to come for the learning and not for the food, so be careful when using this strategy. Parents remain responsible for making sure their children don't go to school with an empty stomach, but in the poorest areas school feeding programmes can be used as a bridging measure.

- School feeding programmes ensure that no child is hungry and that children can concentrate in class.
- School feeding programmes make children healthier and prevent drop-outs due to illness.

Communities have found different ways to make school lunches affordable, for example:

- School management makes some money by selling vegetables from the school garden and invests this money in children's lunches. (This strategy should be well-monitored by the community to ensure that money from the vegetable garden is indeed spent on food and is not used for other purposes.)
- Every day or week, another different pair or group of parents is responsible for making lunch. Cooking in bulk can help to keep costs low.
- Convincing local authorities to pay for the school feeding programmes by explaining their importance and urgency.

Extracurricular activities

A teacher who is able to teach the regular curriculum in an enthusiastic way is very important. However, school is not only a place for learning but also for playing, singing and laughing. Extracurricular activities help turn the school into a place where children want to be. Not all schools have the capacity to initiate extracurricular programmes, but seeking collaborations makes it easier to invite creativity into the school.

- Invite an artist or athlete who comes from or works in the area and ask them to give a workshop to the children.
- Seek collaboration with a community-based organisation or NGO that organises cultural classes such as painting, drawing, theatre, dance, photography, or film.
- Organise a public event such as a football match with children's teams or a musical competition in or near the school.

‘The most important is that you understand what is in the heart of the child. Figure out what the child likes best and what her or his desires are. And use this to help her or him at school.’

Mustafa Khalili – Teacher at *UMEA Primary School,* Uganda

3.4 FACILITATING THE TRANSITION

How to make the change from labour to school less difficult? Creating child labour free zones is all about making it easier (socially, culturally, and financially) for children to leave work and return to or start school. The smaller the gap from labour to school, the more children will cross the bridge. Bridging facilities might include social and mental care for former child labourers, bridge schooling with extra tuition, or accelerated learning as well as psycho-social support.

Arrange bridge schooling

To facilitate the transition from work to school, it is advised to organise bridge courses. These courses teach 'late learners' or 'returnees' the basics of school life: how to behave in class, how to concentrate, how to spell and count. Bridge courses can be very simple or very advanced and may include the following:

- A teacher who spends time with the newcomer(s) after school to make sure these children can catch up with the rest of the class.
- A separate shed or classroom in or near the school, where all late learners of different age groups sit together and are supervised by a teacher who makes individual learning plans.
- Separate classrooms where late learners sit with their own age groups and are supervised by a teacher who has undergone special training in guiding former child labourers.
- Residential bridge camps where children stay for a week or even for months. At these camps, the children realise that they are not alone in their situation and that they have a vast support group. They also learn methods of persuading their parents and peers of the importance of education.

Careful transition from work to school

Depending on the type of work they did and for how long, former child labourers may suffer from psychological or physical trauma. They often experience stigma. Their peers may look down on them, or they may feel ashamed. Children who have just been released from labour need a safety net. What do they need?

- An available health worker, social worker or a trusted teacher to talk to the child and encourage him or her to share problems and concerns.
- The involvement of people close to the child (parents, siblings, new classmates, maybe an older student or a teacher) to support his or her (re)integration into school. The more people promoting the new situation, the more confident the new pupil will feel about being in school.

> 'After having registered all children in a village, children are categorised by age groups for attending schools. For young children who are most frequently affected by domestic child labour, we use pre-school education. Pre-school education is one of the best strategies to keep children out of labour from the very beginning.'
>
> **Alemu Abegaz** – *Wabe Children's Aid & Training (WCAT),* Ethiopia

3.5 KEEPING TRACK OF CHILDREN

One of the strengths of the child labour free zone is that it zooms in on every individual child who lives in that specific zone. Each child has his or her own story and needs an individual approach. Keeping track of all children – those who go to school, those at risk of dropping out of school, and those who do not go to school – is fundamental to making and keeping the zone child labour free. The baseline study (see 1.4) is a start because it makes the children visible and easy to track. The next step is to monitor the baselines. Schools are great places for monitoring.

School-based monitoring teams

One way to monitor pupils is by facilitating the formation of monitoring teams (for example one including a teacher, a student, and a parent) that are responsible for keeping track of a selected number of at-risk pupils. The monitoring teams get together every week or month and discuss 'their' pupils. They make intervention plans for each pupil and divide the tasks: the parent will talk to the parent of another pupil about why the pupil skips so many classes; the student tries to talk to the pupil her/himself, as well as her/his friends. The teacher then takes care of collecting the observations made by the team members and supervises the groups.
The teacher does not need to be the lead monitor. Monitoring initiatives can also be led by the schoolmaster, the students' or parents' association, or a community-based organisation that works with the school.

Children as watchdogs

Children keep an eye on each other. They seek companionship and they want to belong to a group. Youth clubs are important pillars of the child labour free zones: they are places to have fun together, to talk about problems that children have and to go out into the streets to spread the word that all children must go to school. Youth clubs can also function as informal monitors of their peers: their eyes and ears pick up much more than those of teachers or parents.

'Stay focused. Our core is to get children into school and do child tracking, one to one. Don't let any kid slip.'

Venkat Reddy – *MV Foundation,* India

Inspiration

Removing administrative barriers for Malian parents

In Mali, children without a birth certificate need an alternative document, a jugement supplémentaire that costs between 5,000 and 10,000 Francs (€20). The organisation Environnement et Développement d'Afrique (ENDA) was able to convince the local leaders of Markala town that parents could not afford this amount. As a result, the price was reduced to 2,500 francs (€5). A small step for the leaders, a big step for the parents of Markala.

Zimbabwean 'Incubation Centres'

The *Coalition Against Child Labour in Zimbabwe* (CACLAZ) introduced so-called Incubation Centres in Ward 16, where 'returnees' are given an orientation period of six to twelve months. After this period they are placed in the appropriate grade. Incubation Centre Teachers receive specialised training to address the needs of former child labourers, to build their self-esteem and to make them feel at home in school. The Zimbabwean Incubation Centres now receive support from the Ministry of Education and have become an example and inspiration for other schools in the area.

Nicaraguan teachers promote children's rights

Near the town of San Dionisio in a coffee region in Nicaragua, the teachers' union ANDEN organised courses for primary school teachers on school dropouts and child labour. This pilot project aimed to train teachers about child labour and the importance of education, and about communication with parents on these issues. The teachers organised several activities following these courses, including a large gathering for parents about the rights of the child, visits to parents whose children do not attend school, and a big party for children with music, dancing, painting and food. The courses have led to more community involvement in the school, better-trained teachers and better contact with parents. The schools also have strategies now for the implementation of children's rights, laws, values and norms.

> 'I took two awareness trainings, organised by teachers' union SNEC, on the causes and consequences of child labour and ways to fight against it. After the trainings I started to talk about the issue of child labour in my class and other classes. I formed a 'commission' with the pupils who are the most interested in the topic. It's a club that meets once a week to discuss children working and think of solutions. The club is also the starting point for reintegrating school dropouts. The most active pupils in this club identify children they know who are not in school. The pupils come into contact with these children and explain to them that they are always welcome to come back to school. If the child seems interested, I visit his or her parents, I try to identify why he or she is not in school, and together we find a solution.'
>
> **Ms Keita Salimata Témé** – *teacher and focal point, Mamadou Lamine School Bamako, Mali*

Malian mothers take care

The Sibila Mothers' Organisation in Mali is a group of women who convince other mothers to send their children to school. Aichtan Traoré, a member, says she often sees girls doing laundry or cooking during school time. 'Whenever I see this happening, I go and see the mother of that girl. She knows who I am so I know she will listen to me.' Sometimes it takes time and many more visits. 'But when I see that girl walking to school one day, I feel so happy.'

Notes

04 STRONGER FAMILIES STRONGER COMMUNITIES

How to create a child labour free zone where all children stay in school when the external support from the facilitating organisation ends? A child labour free zone is sustainable when the community owns the norm that 'no child should work – every child must be in school' *and* when families are able to support themselves and the education of their children. Some of the initiatives to bring about social and economic change within families are found in this chapter.

4.1 SOCIAL CHANGES IN THE FAMILY

Once parents see the risks of child labour and the value of education, their priorities will shift and a range of positive social changes will take place within families and communities. These verifiable long-term effects make a strong case for the realisation of child labour free zones. Listed below are changes we have been able to identify in child labour free zones. You can use these to convince other people to join your cause.

Shifting patterns and priorities

When parents recognise the importance of education, household members' expenditure patterns change. Less money is spent on alcohol, gambling and irresponsibly large purchases. Alcoholism and gambling often go hand in hand with other problems such as domestic violence and sexual violence. In child labour free zones, where children go to school and where adult men and women are able to earn an income, incidences of domestic and sexual violence decrease.

Gender balance

Collective saving initiatives (see 4.3), such as the Village Saving and Loan Association, lead to a healthier gender balance within the family. Most members of saving associations are women, and these women start earning more respect from their husbands. This newly-acquired balance also contributes to more equal dialogues between couples. It is known that a more equal relationship between men and women results in more well-thought-out joint decisions, for example about family planning.

Increased self-esteem

School-going children not only have an effect on the family's expenditure but also on the self-esteem of all family members. The children feel proud to be in school and their parents feel proud that they themselves made it happen. It is possible. This positive feeling paves the way for seeing children as children, and parents as parents.

4.2 MAKING MONEY

Most initiators of African child labour free zone projects have started savings schemes, marketing opportunities and income-generating activities in the areas where they work. These activities help farmers, small entrepreneurs, and the community as a whole to work more productively and efficiently.

Productive farming and smart marketing

The best farmer is an educated farmer. That is why education for farmers' children is fundamental for the development of society. When working in rural areas, collaboration with organised farmers (eg, agricultural unions, associations and co-operatives) is needed. This collaboration can take many forms, including:

- Training farmers to increase their production (for example with seed modification or irrigation).
- Training farmers to increase their marketing skills so they can earn more from selling agricultural products (for example: negotiation skills; undertaking a market study to discover which products fit people's needs; trying out new products; using the internet to stay informed and communicate with other farmers).
- Training local farmers' unions, associations and co-operatives to increase their organisational skills (such as leadership qualities, taking a collective stand, or using media)

These gatherings for farmers also provide an appropriate entry point to start discussing the role of (working) children in the family.

Starting small businesses

Local and regional governments sometimes make funds available for stimulating entrepreneurship, youth employment or women's economic participation, but citizens have limited access to these funds. The application process is either too complicated, or people are not informed about these opportunities. How to circumvent this?

- Map the available government funds allocated for stimulating local businesses.
- Talk to local government officers about how these funds can be accessed by those who need them most (and inform them of the benefits of the child labour free zone).
- Help beginning entrepreneurs apply for a matching fund.
- Instead of providing seed capital in money, you can support entrepreneurs by providing the first stock of goods (for example twenty pairs of shoes for starting up a shoe shop).

> ‘The best farmer in the world is the educated farmer.’
>
> **Clement Kaba** –
> *General Agricultural Workers Union (GAWU),* Ghana.

4.3 COLLECTIVE SAVING

Various *Stop Child Labour* partner organisations have introduced collective saving initiatives. These are used for different purposes, eg, saving for a sewing machine, a house or water supply. One of the most popular is saving for children's school costs. Collective saving or 'table-banking' is not a new phenomenon: many families still depend on informal insurance systems when they face unexpected costs. Whether the initiative is new or old, it will be most successful when collective saving has a collective purpose, such as providing education for all children.

Reviving existing financial structures

Community members can be involved acting as treasurers or guardians of local insurance associations. Through informal, village-based insurance systems, families protect themselves against emergency costs such as illnesses and funerals. The village treasurers are well-trusted people who have probably enjoyed schooling themselves. They may be the head of a committee or association that makes decisions on local investments and remittances. These insurance associations can be meaningful structures for the child labour free zone:

- The meetings of the informal insurance associations can provide a platform to talk about investing in children.
- Treasurers can act as ambassadors for (investing in) children and education.
- The informal insurance system is able to impose (new) social norms, for example by deciding to help only families whose children are in school.

Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA)

Twenty villagers, mostly women, sit together in a sandy inner courtyard between two houses. Everybody is carrying little books. Wallets and small piles of paper money and coins lie in front of them. A huge box with three locks stands on the table in the middle. Three women – the chair, secretary and treasurer – sit behind it.

"Who wants to add his savings to the box today?" the chair asks. A woman with a baby gives her money to the treasurer, who collects the money in a colander before putting it in the big box. The secretary writes down the amount in a large book.

Welcome to a weekly meeting of a VSLA, a very easy and smart way of saving and getting loans.

How it works

A VSLA is a group of people from the community who save money together. It is a trust-based system run entirely by the members themselves. No outside organisation or bank is involved in the saving or lending. A VSLA group has a maximum of thirty members, so it is easy to handle and everybody knows and trusts each other. The group meets every week, and its members can save money. The amount of money you can save varies from group to group, and is based on its members' earnings.

Each VSLA group decides how much one 'share' is. Members can save anything from one to five shares each week. For example, if a share in a particular group is 1 dollar, the members can save a minimum of one share (1 dollar) and a maximum of five shares (5 dollar) per week.

The money goes into a big box with a number of locks on it. For every lock, there is a key holder. That means that all key holders must be present in order to open the box.

Members of the VSLA group can also apply for a loan from the group's savings. The loan must be agreed upon by majority of the group. Agreement depends on the trustworthiness of the member, the reason for the loan, and of course on the amount that is available in the box.

The loan must be paid back within a certain period of time (this varies from loan to loan) at an interest rate of ten per cent. At the end of the year all the money the group has earned in interest is divided amongst the members according to their savings. In this way members are able to earn a very high interest rate on their own savings.

New members receive training to learn how to run a VSLA. In order to join a VSLA, there is one important rule: your children have to go to school.

Introducing new systems

You can also introduce a saving system amongst community members who have no earlier experience with collective saving. Collective saving associations can increase trust and solidarity among the members of a community. Because it is in everyone's interest that the money is well spent, association members serve as watchdogs of the social norms they themselves set. A few lessons can be learnt from past experience:

- Start with a small group of people who all know each other, or who live near each other.
- Make a plan covering where and how to store and lock the cashbox, and who is responsible for it (this should be taken in turns).
- Make a list of criteria for membership. The most important one: children must be in school.
- Make agreements on how often the association's members meet and can access their savings or loans.

4.4 MORE ADULTS AT WORK

When fewer children work, there is more work to be done by adults. In this way, a child labour free zone creates employment and contributes to the development of entire communities. However, children usually work for much lower wages, so now is the time to demand better wages. Below are two suggested strategies for using the 'adult employment argument' to sustain child labour free zones.

Decent work for adults

When carrying out the context analysis and baseline study, data about employment, unemployment, and underemployment can be collected for both the formal and informal sector. These data can strengthen your arguments in discussions with the Department of Labour and its local representatives. There are more ways to stimulate adult employment:

- Organise a holiday camp for children and let families experience how they cope without children working at home or on the farm.
- Ask an employer who has worked with children before, and now works with adults, to be a role model. Let him or her share the positive experiences of working with adults with other employers, for example in terms of productivity and responsibility.
- Ask employers in the area around the school to offer learning placements or internship positions for local young adults who graduate from elementary or secondary school.

Decent pay for adults

Child labourers are cheap and obedient workers. That is why they are hired. The low wages of children also keep the wages of adults down. When child labour is banned in an area, it creates space for adults to get work and incomes rise.

When adults earn a decent income, it is easier for them to make healthier decisions about their children's futures. That is why child labour – and ending it – is everyone's concern. Lobbying for decent pay and living wages for adults is part of the child labour free zone advocacy package:

- Seek partnership with local trade unions and workers' associations to organise (formal and informal) workers in the selected area to collectively bargain for higher wages and better working conditions.
- Seek collaboration with (international) trade unions and labour rights organisations that can help construct arguments based on international declarations and human rights instruments.

4.5 HARMFUL TRADITIONAL PRACTICES COME INTO SIGHT

Child labour is not an isolated phenomenon. The incidence of child labour can be an indicator that other children's rights violations are taking place. In a child labour free zone all violations of children's rights become more visible and more discussable.

Breaking taboos through community conversations

Dialogues are fundamental for creating child labour free zones. The process of talking about and with children - in people's homes, in schools, under the tree, in the mayor's office or in church - not only reveals the evident, but also the hidden problems that affect children, such as domestic violence (already mentioned in 4.1). A high dropout rate of girls may suggest there are early child marriages or female circumcision in the community. Harmful traditional practices that concern sexuality tend to be surrounded by taboos and mythmaking. How to go about these practices in a child labour free zone?

- Stay focused on education. It is impossible to solve all problems (at once) but it is possible to make all children go to school. Find out what harmful practices directly or indirectly prevent children from going to or staying in school.
- A well-proven method is the 'community conversation' or 'community dialogue' led by appointed facilitators from the community to discuss issues that affect children. Facilitators may need prior training to lead these sessions, as it is no easy task. One of the examples coming from such a community conversation session was that the community agreed on imposing a by-law or social sanctions on community members that do not adhere to the social norms or rules, for example on parents that let their children work instead of sending them to school.
- When these harmful practices are forbidden by law but still practiced by communities (as is often the case with child marriage and female circumcision) law enforcers can come on board. Special training for policemen and policewomen on children's rights helps to open their eyes and ears for violations of these rights.

Inspiration

Talking about female circumcision in Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, the *African Development Aid Association* (ADAA) talks to villagers to hear the problems families face. They learnt that one of the reasons Ethiopian girls are not going to school is circumcision. If a girl gets circumcised, she can be married. And when a girl marries, she stops going to school.

So ADAA invites traditional circumcisers to take part in community trainings. One woman, who was a traditional circumciser before, got so convinced that circumcision is a bad thing that she spends more time spreading that message than she ever spend on her previous job. Because of this, the attitude towards circumcision changes throughout the entire community. Nowadays fewer girls get circumcised, and more girls go to school.

An end to child marriage in Zimbabwe

In Zimbabwe, child marriages are common even though there are laws against it. The *Coalition against Child Labour in Zimbabwe* (CACLAZ) is determined to also make these zones 'child marriage free'. In a child labour free zone, child abuse becomes less and less accepted. It could happen that young girls become targets of unscrupulous adult males, who marry them off to polygamous families to increase the number of women working for them in their large farms.

In Ward 16, CACLAZ works together with the police to trace girls trapped into marriage. More and more young women who were married off as girls are now asking for a divorce. CACLAZ is designing a special programme so they can still enjoy their right to education and go to school.

Women's savings in Kenya

Following a training from *Kenya Alliance of the Advancement of Children* (KAACR) on the importance of saving and local investments, 20 women in Kajulu East village in Kenya decided to form a women's group on table banking. This saving initiative has had a huge impact, and not just on the women's financial situation. The women have gained a lot more confidence and realise that they themselves can contribute to change in their village. Now they can not only make sure that their own children go to school and stay there, but also encourage other parents to educate their children. If parents are absent or cannot pay for the school fees, the children are still able to go to school thanks to support from the women's savings.

Cocoa soap in Ghana

In Ghana, farmers were supported innovative ways to benefit from the by-products of chocolate production. For example, it became clear that producing cocoa soap met a local need. By taking advantage of this, cocoa farmers were able to generate more income.

> 'The best farmer in the world is the educated farmer.'
>
> **Clement Kaba** – *General Agricultural Workers Union (GAWU),* Ghana.

Notes

05 THE BIGGER PICTURE

How do we move from one child labour free zone to a child labour free province, and then to a society that is entirely free of child labour? This chapter presents several strategies that help expand a child labour free zone nationally and internationally.

Free

5.1 TOWARDS CHILD LABOUR FREE ZONE POLICIES

Is a child labour free zone ever finished? The government is the main responsible for making schools available, accessible and affordable for children and their families. As long as the state does not fulfil its responsibility, civil society can do two things: fill the gap left by the state, and push the state to do its work better. The latter requires more time, creativity and persistence. Involving state actors from the local, regional, national and international levels is urgent and necessary in all stages, from the very beginning through to the expansion phase. Below is a summary of the various strategies which have been applied successfully by *Stop Child Labour* partners:

- Taking time to make local authorities familiar with the concept of child labour free zones by paying regular visits.
- Asking local authorities to take a (prominent) seat on the committee that is overseeing the child labour free zone.
- Putting together a child protection team or taskforce at the district or regional level. The team will ideally represent the Departments of Education, Labour, Legal Affairs and Health, as well as NGOs, unions and employers from the area. District and regional level officers have more room to manoeuvre than ministers do, and have more power than their local colleagues. That is why district and regional level officers are strategic lobby targets.
- Inviting government delegations to visit a child labour free zone.
- Presenting the findings of – and updates on – your research and baseline surveys to local, regional and national authorities.
- Presenting yourself as an expert on child labour and the concept of child labour free zones. Pitching your case wherever and whenever you can. Being invited as an expert on advisory boards for law and policy-making on children's development and education.

5.2 INVOLVING MULTINATIONALS

When a large coffee plantation or brick factory is the dominant employer in the area you work, it is clear that lobbying and sensitisation activities need to target the company and possibly its national and international clients. Involving multinationals can be very challenging. It requires joint action from allies (NGOs, government, unions) both inside and outside the country. You can take the dialogue approach of involving the company's managers as partners of the child labour free zone, or choose a more confrontational 'naming and shaming' approach. A combination of both may be most effective.

Know and show

As with everything in the child labour free zone, collecting information is the first step. When the company is poorly managed or even hostile to your actions, it will not be easy to find information about child labour or other abusive working conditions. So how to go about it?

- The baseline study conducted within the community can provide information on how many people work in the company, and how many of them are children.
- Identify the company's national and international suppliers. Is the company on the radar of (international) unions or labour rights organisations?
- Visit the company undercover as 'potential clients' and ask for a guided tour so you can see the working conditions first-hand.
- Once data and stories about what's going on at the company are available, you can organise a public event to allow you discuss the problem together. Invite the local media and the company's managers to take part in the event.

Involve a company as partners

When creating a 'stop child labour taskforce' at the regional or district level, be sure to invite representatives of the company, the local government, the trade union and the community. The taskforce sets itself the goal of banning child labour in the selected area within a certain time span.

An important part of the process is organising the workers in the community to demand a code of conduct that ensures workers' rights. Partnerships with (international) unions and NGOs in countries where the company's products will be sold – and the risk of being named and shamed – may also pressure the company into abiding by the rules.

5.3 JOIN THE MOVEMENT

Stop Child Labour wants to boost the international movement against child labour. The collective expertise and experience of *Stop Child Labour* and its partners is a rich source for everyone who wants to adopt the child labour free zone concept. How can *Stop Child Labour* encourage and strengthen your adoption of the concept? Some ideas:

- Freely use *Stop Child Labour* documentation and position papers for lobby and advocacy purposes.
- Access a wide network of colleagues working on child labour free zones who face similar challenges.
- Take part in exchange visits to colleagues or similar projects in other regions and countries (when resources are available)
- Ask for technical guidance and on-the-job support when starting or working towards a child labour free zone.
- Learn about political lobbying and advocacy skills, and work with companies and social corporate responsibility initiatives.
- Learn about monitoring and evaluation techniques to document the progress of your child labour free zone projects.
- Ask for advice on how to publish your results and communicate them to a wider audience, and share your stories in the *Stop Child Labour* newsletter or on the *Stop Child Labour* website.
- Host visits from (international) delegations on behalf of *Stop Child Labour.*

5.4 THE POWER OF STORIES

To spread the child labour free zone concept, you need powerful stories to demonstrate how child labour free zones work and showcase those who make them work. Good stories travel far. They are strong advocacy tools. This handbook has presented stories from a dozen countries where child labour free zones have been successfully implemented. Now it's up to you.
Several tips and tricks to improve the documentation and visualisation of your results are listed below.

- Ask field staff and community volunteers to document their activities in a simple manner, for example by jotting down or recording an anecdote about a person or an event once a month.
- Ask a journalist or copywriter to portray individual people (for example a child, a teacher, a father, an employer, or a mayor) to give a face and a name to the community members who put so much effort into making the village child labour free. If you want to write stories yourself, make sure you make them personal, tangible, and relatable. You can make a big point with a small story.
- Ask a photographer or filmmaker to join you on a field visit and offer to publish his or her work, or train yourself in audio-visual techniques. You can also consider participatory photography and video-making by community members themselves (see examples at www.photovoice.org and www.insightshare.org).
- Explore digital technologies such as crowdmaps, which allow you to locate where you work, where schools are, how many children attend these schools, and places where children work (only when it is safe to share this information).

‘Take pictures! People want to see what it is all about.’

Flavia Bogore – *Kids in Need*, Uganda

5.5 PASS ON THE SPARK

Stay curious about and open to new ideas. The concept of child labour free zones is not a static one – it is flexible and adjustable to many different contexts. Embrace the concept rather than own it, so others feel encouraged to do the same. Mobility – your own, of your team, and of your ideas – is crucial to the worldwide expansion of child labour free zones.

Share your experiences and questions with others. If you have witnessed an event or activity that went really well – or really wrong – then document what happened so others can learn from the experience. Invite colleagues from other organisations in your country and neighbouring countries to visit child labour free zones. Pass on the spark that once lit the fire in you.

There is no one way to create child labour free zones. This handbook captures the experiences of NGO pioneers and union frontrunners in Ghana, Morocco, Mali, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Zimbabwe, India, Nicaragua and Albania. Together with hundreds of chiefs, mayors, employers, parents, teachers and thousands of children, they are making it happen.

> ‘I realise that our vision is being realised with each dawning day. It is people like you and me who can change the perception around child labour globally. Keep the flame burning’
>
> **T. Nyanhete –**
> *National Council for the Welfare of Children*, Zimbabwe

Inspiration

CLFZ motion passed

In Uganda, the child labour free zone concept has been taken to a whole new level: the Ugandan Parliament was so impressed that it passed a motion urging the Government to create a child labour free Uganda. This is the fruitful outcome of the collaborative work of the Uganda National Teachers' Union (UNATU), Kids In Need (KIN) and ANPPCAN Uganda Chapter. These three organisations worked very hard towards this achievement. They talked to people from the local and national government at every opportunity. They also made sure they had success stories from the child labour free zones for the media in order to get widespread attention. And, to show how it works in real life, they invited Members of Parliament to child labour free zones. There, the MPs could see the change for themselves and talk to the people in the community. The MPs were so enthusiastic that the area-based approach towards creating child labour free zones, which started in a few villages in Uganda, is now on the national agenda.

Legal mandate

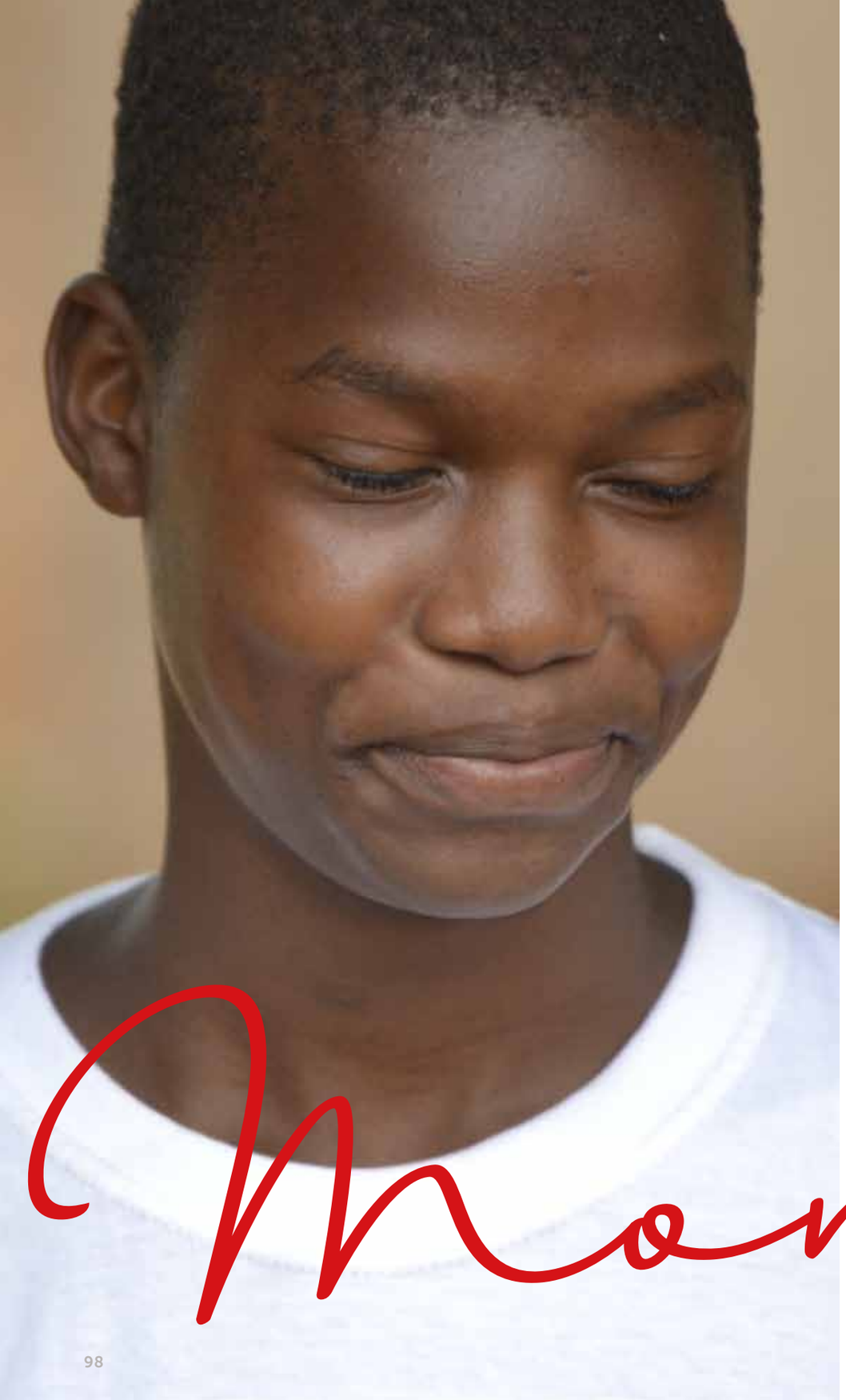
At the national level, KAACR in Kenya has been spear heading advocacy on policy issues. As a result, the Draft Child Labour Policy that for a long time was gathering dust, was approved by Cabinet. Through the lobbying of the network this policy has been presented to the parliament by the Cabinet Secretary awaiting its approval. Once this bill becomes a law, child labour eradication will be planned and funded by the government of Kenya. In that case, the structures built over the last three years to eliminate all forms of child labour will have legal mandate to operate.

Ghanaian Union connects to European Union

The General Agricultural Workers Union GAWU uses its own power and union structures to ensure companies treat their workers well and respect their rights. GAWU has good relations with trade unions in the European market, where most Ghanaian products end up, so big companies do not want to get a bad name. They know that if they hire children to work for their company they risk being named and shamed, which is not good for business at all.

Notes

Stories



Monica

FROM VENDOR **TO DEBATER**

Monica Kengonzi was six years old when a young man was killed by a car in front of her eyes. The man was selling maize at the side of the road, just as Monica had done since she was three years old.

At home Monica cried for days, begging her mother not to send her back to sell maize. But her mother did not know how to manage without the income. She was a single parent; Monica's father had died not long before. So Monica and her younger sister went back to the streets. "The toughest was when it rained," Monica remembers. "My mother covered us in a plastic bag with holes. We were sweating like crazy all day long."

Now, eleven years later, Monica (17) is in senior 3 of the Entebbe Air Force secondary school in Uganda. "I want to be a lawyer," she says resolutely. "I like debating."

She recalls the day David Masele from the local NGO *Kids in Need* (KIN) bought maize from her on the street. "He asked me to take him home to my mother, so he could talk to her." Monica's mother was afraid to send her daughters to school at first, because she thought the family would not be able to survive without her daughters' income. But after a while she was convinced. KIN helped her to start an extra business selling tomatoes, onions, spices and cassava in front of her house, so she could earn some extra money.

Monica remembers the first days at the local school clearly. "It was not so easy; the other children bullied me, asking me where my maize was." But they got used to her as time went on. "It was like a dream coming true. I always envied the children who went to school and now I was one of them. I started to feel better and better."

The thing Monica liked most in primary school was the programme of interaction with other schools. "We held debates with other students. I found out I really enjoy discussions, and from that moment on I knew what profession I wanted to follow."

THE SAVINGS OF HEADMAN MADHENGA

All his life, Village Headman Madhenga had aspired to wealth, but he never managed to escape poverty. He does, however, have six wives and some savings. His position demands this of him. What's more, the chief has ambitious plans for the future. There are new rules in the village.

Madhenga is the chief of one of the 188 villages in 'Ward 16', an area in south-east Zimbabwe. It is almost impossible to escape poverty here. Most people have a small farm or work on plantations, others flock to the gold mines in Gauteng. It has always been like this, and many people think it will always remain so. Most of the children do not go to school but work on the land. They learn everything they need to know from their parents. Zimbabwe, once the breadbasket of Africa and a place where 95 percent of children attended school, is no longer what it used to be.

Mr Madhenga decided to do things slightly differently. Although he and his six wives have produced a respectable number of children, they all go to school. He is convinced that it is the only way to make progress. He says he has always regretted not going to school. His children have better opportunities than he did, although the quality of the education they receive is very poor. It is hard to find good schools in a region where almost all children work. This is one more reason for parents not to send their children to school, and creates a negative spiral.

When the *Coalition Against Child Labour in Zimbabwe* (CACLAZ) first visited Mr Madhenga's village, it brought an idea: Ward 16 should become a 'child labour free zone'; an area where all adults agree with each other that their children will no longer work, but learn.

Headman Madhenga is extremely enthusiastic about the developments. He is known as a 'Stop Child Labour Champion', a frontrunner. Together with village leaders from the surrounding area, Headman Madhenga came up with an idea to quickly improve education in Ward 16. Rules were drawn up for the children and a school was built; the chief used his savings for this. Madhenga has abandoned his dream of becoming rich, but his grandchildren now have a golden opportunity.

Jacinta

MOBILISING CITIZENS

Just a few years ago, Jacinta Namayanja did not know that child labour is a bad thing. Today she is one of the most active committee members in preventing it.

In 2010 Jacinta was selected to join the child labour free zone committee in her hometown in Kitubulu, an area of 8,000 households in Western Uganda. "At first I was a bit scared", she says. "I didn't know anything about child labour. I even had a little girl working as a housemaid myself." She was cheap, and easy to instruct, Jacinta says. "In our community it was understood that children have to contribute. The children were fishing and collecting scrap."

But after months of trainings and workshops, Jacinta understood that child labour is a bad thing. She remembers the moment it really got to her: she was at a workshop on child labour when the news came that two children had drowned while fishing at the lake. Jacinta sighs. "Thirteen and fifteen years old. That really touched me." From that moment on, Jacinta worked tirelessly in the community to spread the message about child labour and get the children into school. In addition to her regular job as a teacher, the committee work takes her about two days a week. It is unpaid volunteer work.

The first step was to identify all the working children, which wasn't difficult: she knew the children of her village well. But then the more complicated work began: convincing the families to send their children to school. "It is very difficult to change an attitude that people have had for so long", she explains. "You have to be persistent, and spend a lot of time talking to the families."

Jacinta clearly remembers her home visits to Siama Bakal, mother of a boy (9) and a girl (13). "The children were selling fish by the side of the road. During school hours as well." Their mother was a bit reluctant to start with. "She didn't like us at first. She saw us as strangers." But Jacinta kept visiting Siama. Week after week, month after month. And as time went by, Siama started to trust Jacinta. →

So she started to listen and understand the consequences of child labour. Together they came up with ways to address the lower income Siama would have when her children would go to school. Siama started a stall in front of her house so she could smoke and sell the fish herself. A year after Jacinta first visited Siama, her children went to school.

The most common reason Jacinta hears during her home visits is that parents do not send their children to school because they are poor. Another one is that girls will end up in the home anyway, so why educate them? "We tell them to think about the future. That they can end the cycle of poverty." Role models – for example a girl who went to school and became a teacher – are very important in these talks. "I am one of them", she says, somewhat shyly.

But the many home visits and hours of talking have paid off. Now almost all children in the region go to school.

And although the work in her own village is never done – it is an ongoing process – Jacinta and the rest of her committee decided to take it to a whole new level. They became an official organisation, a CBO (Community-Based Organisation). With that status they can work in an even bigger region and reach other villages. This will enable them to attract more driven people like Jacinta, spread the word, and get all children into school.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Oggu Anjaiah used to hire children to work on his farm. Releasing them was one of the best things he did for his company. As was the effect on other employers in the area.

Oggu Anjaiah, a rice and cotton farmer in a small village in the south of India, was sure he'd got himself a great deal: he made a loan of 5,000 Rupees (around €60) to Dappu's parents. In return, Dappu – a twelve year-old boy – would work for him for five years. Two years later, Oggu is a famous man.

Oggu, a tall man with a big moustache, saw only benefits: for the sum of 1,000 Rupees (€12) a year he had a boy working for him for as long as he wanted, doing whatever he wanted him to do. Dappu was good value for money: he worked 16 hours a day, taking care of the buffalos and the entire household, weeding the land and cutting grass. But when Oggu attended a meeting of a local youth group, he heard about the effects of child labour and realised that having Dappu was not a good thing at all. He decided, on the spot, to release Dappu.

What he didn't know at that moment was that his decision was actually the most beneficial thing he had done for his business in years. Suddenly he found himself on stage at a feast, crowned with flowers, shaking hands with the president of the village while all the villagers applauded him. The next morning his picture was all over the local newspapers, portraying him as the local hero.

Soon other employers in the area – ashamed of having child labourers and full of envy for Oggu's position in the spotlight – released their child workers too.

And Dappu? He went to school. He now works as a driver for the state road transportation.

In order to spread the message, MV Foundation in India puts employers who release a child labourer in the spotlight. "We make sure he is the hero. We organise a gathering, invite him on stage, clap for him and invite local newspapers. Seeing his photo in the press, other landlords want to be like that. It is a great way to spread the message, everybody talks about it." Arvind Kumar says.

BUILDING A SCHOOL TOGETHER

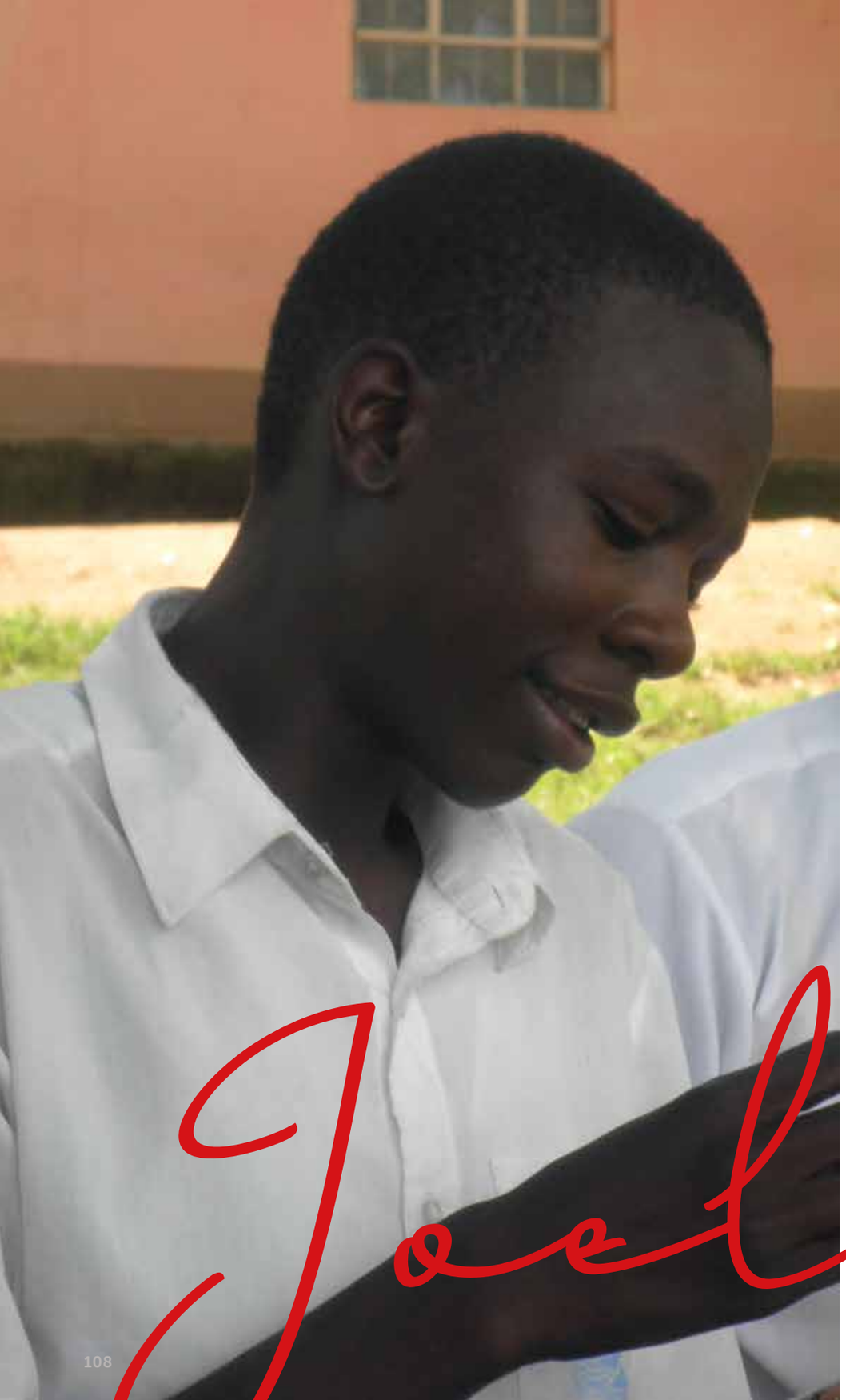
In big cities you usually find good schools; the government pays for them. But outside cities, although they are still the government's responsibility, schools are not in such good shape or are even non-existent. In Ward 16 in Zimbabwe the villagers decided to change this: they started to build the schools themselves.

Pascal Masocha, co-ordinator of CACLAZ, asked the children, parents and Headman of Ward 16 to consider an apparently simple question: what makes a good school? Until that time, the school in Ward 16 had been a broken building no child would attend. They stayed at home or helped their parents on the sugar cane plantations.

The community gathered together to make a list of ideas and the children helped by turning the ideas into cardboard model schools. After a few weeks they were ready to display the results. On the day of the presentation, Masocha and his team prepared a barbecue and music to make everyone feel special and excited. The cardboard models were beautifully designed with toilets, fences, a water tap, a garden, a big meeting hall and of course a playground.

After this, it was time to turn the model into reality. And although the construction was actually the government's responsibility, everyone knew that would not happen in the near future. How about building it themselves? And so they did.

Now in different parts of Ward 16, villagers are actually building schools. Some persons contribute with bricks or cement, others with their muscles. Together they create the school they had in mind, and it makes the people feel proud. So although the lack of help from the government is not a good thing at all, it did create a school that is really part of the community. Everyone made it, so everyone is part of it. And if all goes well, it might encourage the government to take over and build more schools outside the major cities.



LEARNING TO LEARN

As a young boy, Joel Kilwana (16) collected scrap. At the age of ten he enrolled at school, where he met teacher Mustafa Khalili.

In the busy fishing village of Kitubulu, the sandy terrain of the UMEA (*Uganda Muslim Education Association*) primary school is quiet and peaceful. The calmness is a miracle though, when you look inside the classrooms: they are literally filled with children. There are seventy pupils in some of them, says teacher Mustafa Khalili. "But we manage. Sometimes we have three teachers in the classroom."

Mustafa has been teaching at the school for 25 years. "I like working with children. They are open." He smiles. "I like children better than adults." Alongside the regular teaching, Mustafa has another role to play: he helps the children who enrol at school at a later age. He coaches them and gives them extra lessons when needed. Most are former child labourers.

Joel Kiwana was one of these: he had been collecting scrap since he was a young boy. And although he did attend school at the age of six, he dropped out when he was eight years old. Combining work and school was too much for him. Another problem was the school fees: Joel's mother could not afford to pay them. "My mother really wanted me at school, but she did not know how", says Joel.
Luckily, the NGO *Kids in Need* gave her some help to start a new business selling shoes. The extra income meant that Joel could stop working and go back to learning when he was ten.

Mustafa remembers the first day Joel came to school. "He was a shy boy," he explains. Mustafa coached Joel at school every day to make him more at ease. "With new children, we first figure out what their interests are. Joel really liked drawing and drama; this helped him to express himself."
In addition, Mustafa gave Joel lessons to teach him to how speak better as he had some difficulties in this area. Mustafa says, "This is important for children that come to school at a later age, otherwise they get frustrated and insecure".
Joel really liked it at school. "I was finally with my friends." It had been a dream of his. His neighbour was graduating, and all Joel could think was, 'I want to be in school'. And so far he has lived up to his dream. Now – six years later – he is in senior 3 of the Air Force secondary school, studying science. He adds with a proud smile, "I want to be a doctor".

Meryem

BRIDGING THE GAP

'Many Moroccan teachers are rather 'classic''. Meryem Doublal (30), teacher and member of education union SNE, laughs when asked what 'classic' means. 'How shall I say it: conservative, strict? Teachers who yell 'Sit down!'' Sometimes pupils leave school because teachers are too strict, the French and Arabic teacher explains. 'And that is of course not the intention.'

Doublal describes herself as 'modern'. She certainly looks that way in her modern clothes, but her manner of teaching and interacting with children is also modern. 'I ask pupils how they are doing, whether they have any problems and I tell them that they can talk to me if that is the case.'

This makes Doublal a suitable teacher for the 'preparatory class' that started at the Zarktouni school in the Moroccan harbour city of Safi in October. There are 11 pupils in this class who returned to school after an absence ranging from several months to several years. Most of them have worked as maids, sellers of plastic bags, or handymen in one of the many car garages. The preparatory class is designed especially for this target group to make the transition to regular education or further education easier.

Together with the local project leader and four other teachers Doublal 'recruits' the child labourers in the garage district of Safi by talking to them at their places of work. 'I ask whether they want to return to school, which they generally do. They have learned in the meantime that school is better than working and they don't let a second chance slip away.' Doublal explains that because the teachers come across as being 'modern', the child labourers do not feel threatened. 'I also tell them that I am not strict, that I am as they are, from the same area. Do not worry, if you find yourself facing problems at school, I will help you.'

According to Doublal, convincing the parents of the 40 children in the special preparatory classes was relatively easy. 'Parents would generally like to see their child return to school.' Conversely, employers are often difficult. 'Child labour is prohibited in Morocco which is why they say, for example, that the children are adults. We continue to return to them and confront them with the fact that minors are working for them.' The teacher knows that it is a long-term project. 'So many children work in Safi, in the neighbourhood, in the city, everywhere. And they are keen to return to school, are motivated. Being able to do something for them makes me feel useful.'

Zakaria

‘GOING TO SCHOOL IS BETTER’

Dressed in jeans, a Paris Saint-Germain football jacket and flip flops Zakaria Rajati (14) looks like an average Moroccan adolescent. With his hands in his pockets, he shuffles across the unpaved road in Sidi Wassel, a working-class area in Safi. His mother, Zahra Nayti, is right behind him.

Zakaria scowls when he introduces himself with a weak handshake. He quickly sticks his hands back into his pockets and nods at a group of youths a bit further up the road. While walking to the nearby Zarktouni school, Zahra apologises for not being able to receive guests at home. ‘My husband is chronically ill and our house is rather small.’ In an empty classroom mother and son sit down at a cramped school desk. Zakaria, who is becoming more and more at ease, explains that he left school 18 months ago. ‘I had to repeat a class twice and I did not want to be in yet another class with much younger children.’

His illiterate mother, who never went to school herself, thought it was ‘awful’ that Zakaria was no longer getting an education: ‘I was sad and tried to convince him to return to school, but he really did not want to.’ She was worried that her son would hang around on the streets, with all due consequences. But Zakaria looked for and quickly found a job as a helper at a car garage where he earned 50 dirhams (€4.50) per week. Zakaria: ‘I used that money to go to the hammam and the hairdresser’s, I gave my mother the rest, about 20 dirhams.’

After he had worked for over a year, teachers Mohammed Garmim and Meryem Doublal talked to the boy at the garage and asked whether he wanted to return to school. Zakaria explains: ‘Yes, I very much wanted to.’ ‘I had to do unpleasant jobs at the garage, such as wash car tires. That was no fun. I realized that going to school is better.’ His employer also consented and even encouraged the boy to continue his education.

Together with other former child labourers the fourteen-year-old is now in the special ‘preparatory class’ of the Zarktouni school. ‘I can get my certificate within one year and follow vocational education to become an auto mechanic. After that I want to work at Hyundai or Peugeot and save for my own car dealership.’ Mother Zahra smiles: ‘I am happy for Zakaria. He will be able to take care of himself later if he continues to learn now. With God’s help all will be well.’

Text: Bart Speleers

THE DREAM BOX

On a hill overlooking Victoria Lake stands a tiny house. A small cow grazes in the mud out the front; a goat shelters from the pouring rain under a tree.

Under a roof of corrugated iron a woman is doing another woman's hair. The hairdresser is Prosscovia Atuhaire. She lives here with her husband and nine children. The 16m² house has one bed, for the parents, and a mat on the ground for their children. A rope strung from one wall to the other functions as a wardrobe for the clothes of all eleven residents. Houses like this are common in this Ugandan fishing region, Kigungu.

It wasn't always this busy in the small house: three of the children are their neighbour's. When the parents found out they were infected with HIV, they simply left one day while the kids – 3, 8 and 11 years old – were at school. "I found them crying in front of the door and decided to take care of them", Prosscovia says. They have no idea if the parents are still alive. "We never heard from them again."

Three of the nine children are her biological children, the other three are those of relatives. The youngest of the children is five; the oldest eleven.

The family is getting by, Prosscovia says. Because they grow cassava, sweet potatoes and greens around the house, food is never a problem. Paying for school fees is though.

Officially the government schools are free, but there is still a fee that has to be paid for every child, varying from a few Euros to around €15 per child per quarter. The older the child, the higher the fee. Prosscovia also needs to pay for lunches at school, as the school is an hour-long walk away – too far to come home for lunch. Although she makes some money with her mobile hairdressing, cattle and her husband's income, she cannot pay for all nine children's school fees herself.

On the question of how she manages, her eyes start to sparkle. "I am saving money and getting loans with the VSLA." →

Prosscovia

She has always been good at saving, she says, proudly showing a huge box with a lock on it. “I have big dreams, you know”, she says smiling, almost unable to lift the huge box. She would save money so she that she had some whenever a rainy day came along. “But is was never enough.”

She saves money with the VSLA and receives a good interest payout at the end of the year. She also applies for loans, which she uses to pay for the school fees of all nine children and to buy products such as wigs, gel and rollers for her mobile hairdressing job. Last year a loan from the VSLA enabled her to buy a motorcycle, which she rents out to earn some extra money.

Later, in the afternoon, the children come walking home. They play around, chasing each other, laughing out loud; just being kids.
Now her children are in school, Prosscovia can work on her next big dreams. The first of these is a bigger house for the whole family. A bit further down the hill, the walls of the new house are already built. The next savings and loan will be used to construct the roof.
And when the family is all set, it is time for her own personal dream: to have her own hairdressing salon. “With mirrors and dryers and everything,” she adds with a big smile.

Ms Dasash

INCOME GENERATING ACTIVITIES

Ms Dasash Yitayew lives in Amhara National Regional State, at Belta-Amjaye Kebele. She and her husband, Ato Biadgie Abebe, work 7 days a week to meet their basic needs. They have 4 children, who didn’t used to attend school.

Ms Dasash Yitayew is one of the participants in the Estie project’s income-generating activities (IGA). She took part in a business skill training and received startup capital of 1100 birr. Ms Dasash used this to buy two sheep. When the sheep have lambs, she sells these at the market. This generates additional income for her and her family.
Ms Dasash’s daughter, Tsedal (aged 12 years), was once employed in a private house as a domestic worker. Now Tsedal goes to school. She has returned to live with her father and mother and no longer works in the private house. The income-generating activities have enabled Ms Dasash to send all her four children to school on a regular basis.

The children also have school uniforms and educational materials such as pens, exercise books and pencils. Ms Dasash is very proud that she is able to provide for her family and that her children go to school.

ADULTS WORK

Children are cheap labourers. But adults can be a lot more productive, fisherman John Kalunda discovered.

At the end of a muddy path, on the shore of Lake Victoria, is the small landing site Kigungu. It is quiet here; the lake spreads some kind of calmness. Occasionally a tropical red bird can be seen sitting atop of one of the wooden boats, looking for some scraps of fish. A few men are cleaning the boats and preparing the fishing nets.

It has not always been such a peaceful place though. Just a few years ago, children worked here. Doing the fishing, cleaning the boats. It was hard and dangerous work. Sometimes the children became ill or even drowned. Many were using drugs and alcohol.

John Kalunda is one of the employers on the landing site. He owns six boats and has five people working for him. "All adults", he adds proudly. Like all employers there, he too used to employ children. "They were easy to direct, and very cheap. Some would even work for free; I gave them some fish at the end of the day", he explains.

Then one day people from the NGO *Kids in Need* came to educate the fisherman about child labour. "They told us about children's rights, and showed us how dangerous the work is. We learned that these children would become a problem for the community if they didn't go to school", says Kalunda. After attending different trainings and workshops, some of the fishermen volunteered to tell the other fisherman about children's rights. Kalunda says, "It changed our minds, we were ignorant before".

Slowly, the children disappeared from the landing site. More and more adults came in to take over the jobs. And although the adults are more expensive to hire than the children, the amount of fish caught by Kalunda's employees increased a lot too. "Adults know what they are doing. Yes, it's much better this way."

Questions & Answers

1. What is a Child Labour Free Zone?

Child labour free zones are geographical areas – such as villages, plantations or urban neighbourhoods (of five to six thousand people) – where all children are systematically being taken away from labour and (re)integrated into formal, full-time schooling.
Each child labour free zone is different. However, the concept itself is built upon a set of shared beliefs embraced by the Stop Child Labour partners and based on twenty years of experience.

2. Why start with a relatively small area?

The area-based approach towards child labour free zones involves all people who live, work and attend school within a specific area. Everyone in this area should be convinced that no child should work and every child must be in school. Starting small makes it possible to zoom in on every single child. For those children who are not in school, specific plans can be made to take them away from work and prepare them for integration into schools.

See also: 1.2 GUIDING BELIEVES

3. How do you expand a Child Labour Free Zone?

A child labour free zone project may start very small. But it can become an inspiring example which many others will follow. The number of Indian child labour free zones that were facilitated by MV Foundation grew from three to 6,000 in twenty years. For the successful expansion of child labour free zones, mobility of people and ideas is crucial. Talking to people and sharing success stories and best practices is the best way to make the concept travel.

See also: 5. THE BIGGER PICTURE

4. How to deal with low income status of families?

Child labourers are cheap and obedient workers. That is why they are hired. The low wages of children also keep the wages of adults down. Where child labour is no longer accepted and adults are thus no longer competing with cheap child labour, there is space for adults to get work and incomes rise. International research has now confirmed the fact that the majority of families can survive without the income of their working children.

See also: 4. STRONGER FAMILIES, STRONGER COMMUNITIES

5. How to deal with non-availability of schools and teachers / quality education?

Every child has the right to quality education. The existence of a well-functioning educational system is the responsibility of national and local governments – as well as of the community, when they are convinced that children belong at school. National governments need to take responsibility and ensure consistent policies and programmes on the linked issues of child labour and education. When all community members stand up and claim their rights, demand for better education can come from within child labour free zones. Civil society organisations also play an important role when it comes to lobbying and advocacy. They can put pressure on the government and point to child labour free zones as an inspiring example to be followed. Teachers can make the schools more accessible and attractive, and can also organise themselves through teachers' unions. A teachers' union advocates for the interests and rights of its members as well as for the quality of education – these two issues are closely linked.

See also: 3. TIME FOR SCHOOL

6. How to deal with low participation rates from women? (Gender issues)

Child labour free zones are best facilitated by a core group of citizens who organise themselves in a committee, action group or association that actively promotes education and protects the rights of all children – boys and girls alike – who live in the community. Ideally, the committee is a group of enthusiastic individuals who represent the diversity of their community. This group can discuss and promote issues such as the participation of women and joint decision-making.

See also: 2.2 MOBILISING CITIZENS

7. How to deal with different settings and migration?

There is no 'one size fits all' solution to establishing child labour free zones. Rural areas where most people are farmers require a different approach from urban areas where people work in factories or as street vendors. Areas where there are many migrant families require a different strategy from more remote or 'stable' communities. But we know from experience that the area-based approach can be successful in varied and diverse settings. Social mobilisation and consensus-building around the norm that 'no child should work –

every child must be in school' are the most important building blocks for any child labour free zone. We see change happen as soon as all community members are convinced that school is indeed the best place for children to work.

8. How to deal with lack of government buy-in

Governments and other relevant stakeholders do not always provide immediate support. The process of creating child labour free zones starts at the grassroots level with the passion and commitment of all community members. In places where communities gain confidence and feel proud about sending all children to school, we see a growing demand for more quality education. The best source of inspiration for government and other key stakeholders to support the process is to witness the successes in the child labour free zones themselves. These successes show that it is indeed possible to get children out of work and into school and encourage others to become part of the solution.

See also: 5. THE BIGGER PICTURE

9. How to co-operate with other big players (UNICEF, IPEC, Plan, SCF)?

In order to sustain and scale up the successes of child labour free zones we not only seek government support, but also look for opportunities to work together with other key players like ILO, UNICEF and other international organisations. They can make important contributions to the creation of child labour free zones. They are able to bring in activities to strengthen the child labour free zones on the ground and/or mobilise more support at the national level, according to their experience and expertise. It also works the other way around: the child labour free zones can provide an environment that enables these players to implement their own programmes and work together with others towards shared objectives in the fields of children's rights, youth employment, decent work for adults, etc. In any case, the concept of child labour free zones embodies opportunities for creating synergies and increasing impact.

See also: 5. THE BIGGER PICTURE

10. How to deal with conflict communities?

Conflict can be armed, but may also be hidden in the form of social exclusion and discrimination. In all cases the best answer is peace-building and keeping the best interests of the child at the centre of development. This means adopting inclusive strategies to reach the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. For example, teachers can be trained to integrate all children into school and to be more sensitive to the needs of specific groups; child rights clubs in the schools can organise drama or other awareness-raising activities around conflict; child labour free zones committees can use community dialogue to discuss and solve conflict; village elders and religious leaders can be encouraged to promote peace and social inclusion in their communities. Child labour free zones can offer a win-win situation for the whole community, as in the end everyone is better off when children are attending school instead of working.

Notes

Imagine a classroom full of children. In the first row sits Monica from Uganda, 17 years old, who once was a street vendor and now is a great debater in senior 3. Next to her is Anxhela Ibrahimi, a 15-year-old from Albania who dropped out of school but has returned thanks to her teacher's efforts. All the way in the back is a shy boy named Dojojaja, who is now 12 and comes from Mali. He used to pull oxen every day and this is his first year in school. Across the room from him is little Jamal, 14 and from Ethiopia, a former cattle boy who has turned into an active student in the school club. This handbook is written on behalf of all these children whose numbers grow every year and who were able to start a new life in school thanks to the child labour free zones.