

Save the Children's position on
children and work



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The International Save the Children Alliance is the world's leading independent children's rights organisation, with members in 29 countries and operational programmes in more than 100.

This document describes Save the Children's position on children's work and is intended as a framework for Save the Children programmes which address the issue of children and work.

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The adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is fundamental to the recognition and realisation of children's rights, including the right to be free from harmful work. Since then there have been a number of important developments in the field of child work. The most significant of these has been the adoption of International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 182 on the worst forms of child labour. Other developments include consumer concern about children's work, an increased focus on corporate social responsibility, and recognition of the effects of macro-economic policies on children. It is against this background that this position has been developed. It is the result of a year-long consultation with Save the Children staff and working boys and girls.

Our goal

Save the Children fights for children's rights. As part of this goal, Save the Children seeks to:

ensure that girls and boys are protected against harmful work.

Our goal, our understanding of children's work and our beliefs about appropriate responses are shaped by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and a rights-based approach to programming.

Implicit in our goal is a belief that children's work is not a uniform activity and we must recognise that, while some forms of work violate children's rights, other forms of work do not. Most forms of work have both good and bad elements, and for this reason, can be both harmful and beneficial to children's development and well-being. Therefore, we accept neither blanket bans of all child work, nor an approach which unequivocally promotes children's work. We believe that different responses are appropriate for different forms of work and for different working children.

In achieving this goal, we seek to ensure that governments, families and other 'duty-bearers' fulfil their obligations to address children's rights. We also seek to ensure that boys and girls fully and meaningfully participate in decisions which affect them. Children should be enabled to exercise their rights, and the opportunities available to them should be expanded so that work is a choice, not a necessity.

Definitions

Child

A child is a girl or boy under the age of 18. This includes adolescents who are often excluded from conceptualisations of working children. Children are the holders of rights as defined by the UNCRC.¹ We view all children as individuals capable of being actively involved in claiming their legal entitlements.

Work

Save the Children views child work in its broader sense, as activities children undertake to contribute to their own or family economy. This means that we include time spent on home-maintenance chores, as well as on income-generating activities inside or outside the home. Thus, the unpaid agricultural work of many girls and boys on family-run farms, and the domestic tasks done by many children in their own homes, are included in this definition. Work can be full or part-time.

Our definition of work does not exclude criminal or illicit work activities. While some believe that describing activities such as the commercial sexual exploitation of children as work can be seen to legitimise these activities, we believe that including these activities in our definitions of work has two main advantages. Firstly, defining

the work activities of children as ‘crimes’ can lead to the exploited and abused children being treated like criminals, rather than holding the exploiters and abusers of children responsible. Secondly, while we recognise the exploitative nature of these activities, the causes and some of the effects that they have are similar to other forms of work, especially other extremely harmful forms of work. This suggests possibilities for shared learning and an overlap in responses.

How children define work

In attempting to define work, we recognise that there are often no shared beliefs about what work is. For girls and boys work means many things. For some, unpaid activities are not considered work, for others it is important to include these activities to ensure that the housework of girls is recognised. Some working children argue that work is something that is ‘dignified’ and contributes to their own or their family’s survival. Others see work as harmful or exploitative.²

¹ Article 1 of the UNCRC states that: “For the purpose of the present convention, a child means every human being below the age of 18 years, unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.”

² These definitions were gathered from various sources, including our consultations with working children on this position statement.

Harmful work

In defining harmful work, we use Article 32 of the UNCRC:

“States Parties recognise the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child’s education, or to be harmful to the child’s health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.”

Implicit in this article is the belief that boys and girls only need to be protected from harmful work, and that this harmful work has a number of components, including harm to health, development and education. Distinguishing between different forms of work requires the full participation of working girls and boys.

Within the broad category of harmful work, it is also helpful to distinguish between different degrees of harmful work. In some forms of work, harm may be an inevitable part of the work, while in other forms of work it may be possible to prevent harm from taking place. Thus, three categories of work may be distinguished:

³ We do not use the child labour/child work dichotomy for several reasons. There are problems translating the two terms. Constant use of the term child labour, with its negative connotations, implies that all work is harmful and we do not believe this to be

- work where the harm to the child is extreme, and where rights violations are impossible to prevent, requiring urgent removal from work. This corresponds to ILO Convention 182 on the worst forms of child labour and includes, among others, forced labour and prostitution
- work where rights are violated, but where it is possible to prevent violations through improving working conditions or assisting children to find better alternatives to harmful work
- work where rights are not violated and may contribute to the fulfilment of rights. Work which contributes to the fulfilment of rights can be encouraged.

We do not use the terms ‘child labour’ and ‘child work’ to distinguish between harmful and non-harmful forms of work, but instead use the term ‘child work’ to refer to all forms of child work, explicitly identifying different degrees of harm where necessary.³

the case. We have also found that in some cases a more complex categorisation of work is needed than that offered by the simplistic child labour/child work dichotomy.

The key causes and effects of children's work

In this section we provide an exploration of key underlying causes of work, and of the effects of work on the realisation of children's rights, and we consider which duty-bearers are responsible for the factors that push children into work. This analysis is essential to inform our position on child work.

Why do girls and boys work?

Poverty is often given as the key reason for children's work, and there is much evidence to suggest that many children work for their own or their family's survival. However, there is also evidence to show that some poor countries, and indeed some poor households, have been more successful in tackling harmful child work than others with similar resources. This suggests that, in addition to poverty, other key causes must also be explored in order to truly understand why children work.

A lack of access to good quality, relevant education is also regarded as a key reason for children's work. In many instances, boys and girls work because there are no schools for them to go to, or because the education on offer is of poor quality and irrelevant to their survival needs. The fact that education is not a viable alternative to work for many children may be partially linked to the inability of governments, (because of insufficient resources), to ensure that education is genuinely free, or to invest in improvements in the quality of schooling. However, it is often

a lack of *commitment* to education, and the consequent allocation of resources to other sectors, that is responsible for poor educational provision. The negative attitudes and lack of skills among teachers, and the levels of abuse in schools, are also factors that contribute to children and their families regarding work as more relevant than school.

Structural inequalities, based on gender, caste, class, religion and disability, are important determinants of both the types and amounts of work that girls and boys do. For example, children may be discriminated against on the grounds of gender, ethnicity or disability, leading to exclusion from school, limited employment prospects and little choice but to work in harmful forms of work. Gender norms can prevent women from entering paid employment, necessitating children's entry into the workforce.

Beliefs about childhood also determine children's work. While in the West, childhood is seen as a time for play and school, in many other parts of the world, work is seen to be the most appropriate place for learning and development. This can shape parental decisions about children's work, employers' beliefs about the appropriateness of recruiting children, and government legislation on child work. Working children should not always be viewed as passive victims of exploitation. Children themselves may choose to work, feeling that work offers them better opportunities than schooling, to please their parents or simply because they want to earn money.

Children's views on the reasons why they work

During the consultation process for this position statement, working girls and boys from Mongolia identified the following reasons for their work:

- pressure from parents
- own choice
- their friends work
- their parents are unemployed
- the collapse of the Soviet system.

In Nicaragua, boys and girls told us that they wanted to work because:

- they like to study and look nice
- work has positive elements, including making one feel happy
- they need to work for their survival.

Children in India told us that they work as part of a duty to their families, to make their parents happy, get their blessings and provide some comfort to them.

Seemingly unrelated issues like HIV/AIDS, conflict and climate change, can have a major impact on child work. For example, the HIV/AIDS pandemic has reduced the adult workforce and diverted expenditure away from social protection and education, pushing boys and girls into harmful work. Conflict can lead to an increase in child soldiers and to children being separated from their families, becoming vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

Environmental disasters associated with climate change can increase household vulnerability, forcing children to work to enhance the amount or stability of incomes.

When seeking to understand children's work, it is important to remember that, for each individual working child, it is likely that choices about work have been shaped by more than one factor. For example, the primary reason for girls and boys from poor households working may be the need to earn money due to poverty. However, it may also be the case that children from poor households would continue to work even if household income were increased if, for example, there were no schools available to provide them with an alternative to work.

How does work affect the realisation of children's rights?

Work can have both positive and negative effects on the realisation of a range of child rights, and this effect will vary greatly with the type of work and with the maturity, gender and other status of the child. Younger girls and boys, and children with disabilities, may be especially vulnerable to a number of child rights violations as a result of work. Work can have a major impact on children's right to survival and development. In its worst forms, work can kill. The negative effects of work on physical development may include injuries from dangerous equipment, mines and guns, and physical abuse by employers or customers. The negative psycho-social effects of work include the psychological effects of verbal, physical or sexual abuse by employers, and feelings of low

Children's views about the effects of work

During the children's consultations, boys and girls identified several negative and positive effects from work.

Positive effects

- we learn to communicate with other people
- we learn to support our families
- we regularly learn new things
- we can pay school-related expenses
- it helps me to behave with assurance and improve my speech
- we learn how to handle money
- we learn how to take on responsibility faster than other children
- we learn the reality of the street
- we get clothes and food in return for work.

Negative effects

- can harm physical development and lead to injury
- start liking money too much and drop out of school
- may fall under the influence of bad people
- self-esteem can be damaged
- if we are not treated well, we suffer.

Children argue that the effects of work vary. Children from Mongolia told us that girls are more likely to suffer psychological abuse at work, whilst boys are more likely to suffer physical abuse. A child from Central America said:

"I think for a child from three to twelve years, it is not as easy to carry a bucket full of water as for some kid of fifteen or sixteen, so it's different; it's the age that makes the difference."

self-esteem as a result of doing low status work. Although psycho-social impacts often receive little attention, they can be greater than the physical effects. Work can also help girls and boys achieve their rights to survival and development, for example, incomes from work can be used to pay for food and health care. Work can enhance feelings of self-esteem, through the knowledge that children are contributing to household incomes.

Work can help children to realise their right to education by paying for school fees or providing children with skills and capabilities. While some children manage successfully to combine work with education, in many cases work has a negative effect on children's schooling. In some types of work, long working hours or slavery-like conditions can mean that girls and boys are either unable to attend school, or are too exhausted to achieve their full potential.

Work can deny boys and girls their right to protection. In some occupations – such as commercial sexual exploitation, or where children are trafficked for work – girls and boys are treated like criminals because of their work. Children may be arrested but are not always treated as minors within criminal justice systems. When children attempt to return to their communities, they may be ostracised because of the low status or criminalised nature of this work, making a return to a community/family environment difficult. Working children who live away from home while engaged in occupations such as domestic service, may also be denied their right to a family environment, and as a consequence may be deprived of protection against abuse while working.

Discrimination against working children can affect the realisation of their rights. It can, for example, lead to some groups of working children being denied access to health or education services. This may involve the discriminatory attitudes of staff against working children, or be reflected in the way services are delivered – for example, opening hours that do not allow working children to attend clinics or schools, or schools and clinics that are a long way from children's workplaces.

Work often means that children have little time, freedom or opportunity to realise their right to participate in decisions that affect their lives. However, children's roles in the economic survival of the household can also result in them taking a greater role in decision making. In some cases,

children meet other children through working and join forces – through working children's organisations – to improve their rights. Working children's organisations also enable children to fulfil their right to freedom of association.

Children also have a right to leisure, recreation and to participate in cultural activities. Working long hours, or having to combine work and school, may deny children this right.

Who is responsible for harmful child work?

At the international level, key duty-bearers include the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) – such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund – responsible for macro-economic policies which have a major impact on the poverty that pushes many children into harmful work. Evidence shows that the pressure from IFIs to deregulate economies, and privatise and decrease investment in public services, has led to reductions in the quantity and quality of education and social protection measures, leading to greater family vulnerability and a likely increase in harmful child work.

At the national level, government choices over resource allocation in areas such as social protection can have a major impact on household poverty and vulnerability. Governments are responsible for ensuring that schools can provide a viable alternative to harmful work, and that while children continue to work, they are able to combine work with school. Governments are responsible for adopting legislation on child work,

and, importantly, for ensuring that legislation is appropriate and effectively enforced in a way that acts in children's best interests and does not criminalise working children. Governments are also responsible for regulating the private sector on child work issues.

The decision of employers – from divisions of multinational companies to householders seeking child domestic workers – about whether or not to employ boys and girls obviously has a major impact on the number of children who work. Employers are also often responsible for the degree of harm that children face at work. Decisions about working hours, health and safety, and the way that children are treated all affect whether or not work violates children's rights. The way that employers treat adult workers can also have an effect on child work. For example, the continuous search for cheap labour by multinational corporations can lead to low adult wages and the need for families to meet income shortfalls through children's work. While the majority of working children work for small employers outside the export sector, multinational companies have enormous global reach and can potentially impact on large numbers of working children. Multinational companies have a responsibility to monitor and address harmful child work throughout their supply chains.

Consumers, customers and co-workers are also responsible for how children are treated at work, and for putting pressure on employers to behave in a responsible way.

Parents and carers, even those operating with limited resources, have a responsibility to make every effort possible to protect girls and boys from harmful work. If parents and carers have no choice but to send children to work, then they have a responsibility to minimise the negative effects of work on children's rights. Careful choices over the types of work that children do, listening to children's views and concerns, and respecting the contributions that children make can all reduce the harm faced.

Finally, duty-bearers have a responsibility to challenge the power relationships and attitudes that perpetuate harmful child work in our communities. In addition to actions directly related to child work, all duty-bearers have a responsibility to analyse and address the impact of seemingly unrelated issues, such as armed conflict and HIV/AIDS, on children's work.

Save the Children's role and the general principles of appropriate responses to child work

Save the Children's role

In order to fulfil our goal of ensuring that boys and girls are protected against harmful work, Save the Children's role is both to support direct interventions to prevent harmful child work or improve the lives of working children, and to influence other duty-bearers to fulfil their obligations. These two roles are inextricably linked and, while elements of the organisation may choose to focus on one of these two roles, Save the Children as a whole will not be successful if it attempts to do one at the expense of the other.⁴ To support direct interventions, and strengthen the ability to influence others, Save the Children also has a role to play in research, monitoring and evaluation work. To be informed fully, our work should be based on sound research, involving the full participation of children. Monitoring and evaluation is important for determining the success, or otherwise, of interventions in leading to real improvements in children's lives. In all our work, Save the Children works with partners – locally to implement projects or pursue advocacy objectives, as part of a global movement for children, and internationally through networks and coalitions involving non-governmental organisations (NGOs), academics, research institutes, etc.

⁴ Direct interventions can only ever reach a small proportion of working children, larger numbers of children can be reached through influencing others. Advocacy towards duty-bearers needs

General principles of Save the Children's work

All of our work is based on a rights-based approach. Rights are inter-dependent and indivisible. The violation of one right often has an effect on other rights, and no one right is superior to other rights. This holistic nature of child rights means that it is crucial to use a full understanding of the links between children's right to be free from harmful child work and their other rights. This does not mean that all child rights have to be addressed in a single intervention. Instead, applying a rights-based approach means looking at the child's whole situation, finding gaps in interventions or rights abuses requiring urgent attention, and considering how the capabilities and capacities of organisations can be used to achieve maximum impact.

In relation to children's work, it is important to ensure that preconceptions about work do not cloud judgements about where to prioritise intervention. For example, although child work in export production is highly publicised, child work in less visible occupations, such as domestic work, also deserves our attention. A situation analysis is crucial for finding an entry point for action. This should explore key causes and effects of children's work, along with the activities of other duty-bearers in response to children's work.

to be based on a sound understanding of the lives of working children and of the effectiveness of different responses, which can be best gained through direct interventions.

In applying a rights-based approach to programming, it is also important to ensure that four principles of the UNCRC are reflected in all of our work.

The right to survival and development

In all of our work we need to make “the maximum attempts possible” to ensure children’s right to survival and development. We must recognise both positive and negative effects of work on survival and development and that, as children develop, their vulnerability to rights abuses as a result of work changes too. For example, very young children are particularly vulnerable to work hazards and require special protection. Older children who are over the age of compulsory schooling but under 18 may need help gaining access to work as well as protective measures.

The best interests of the child

In all of our work, acting in children’s best interests should be our primary concern. In relation to child work, this means avoiding the preconception that all work is harmful, and recognising that work is sometimes in children’s best interests. For example, we should recognise that while the removal of children from harmful work is sometimes an imperative, the removal of children from work without considering the impact on their survival and development is not in their best interests. The best interests of children can only be determined through consultations with children and their families.

Non-discrimination

All of our work should seek to ensure that children are not discriminated against on the grounds of age, gender, disability, ethnicity, area of origin or any other status. This also means ensuring that working children are not discriminated against because they work.

Participation

In all of our work we need to involve children in decisions that affect them. This means listening to children and taking their observations and suggestions seriously. We need to involve children in the planning, implementation and evaluation of actions, and encourage others to do the same. We should also support children’s own initiatives to participate in decisions which affect them. Adults have an important role to play as advisors and supporters of children fighting for their rights. This includes ensuring that working boys and girls are informed enough to be able to participate in a genuine way. Children’s right to participate does not, however, free adults from their responsibilities to protect children from exploitation or abuse.

Our position on key issues

Through our activities aimed at fulfilling our goal to ensure that children are protected against harmful child work, we have developed understanding and experience of certain key issues. In this section we outline our position on these key issues. These positions form the basis for both direct interventions and advocacy work.

Distinguishing between the positive and negative effects of work

The UNCRC implies that not all work is harmful to children’s rights. A recognition that work can be both harmful and beneficial to the realisation of child rights should form the basis of all responses to child work. Consequently, Save the Children does not promote blanket bans on work. At the same time we do not promote “a right to work” unconditionally. There are no articles in the UNCRC referring to this right. However, girls and boys do have a number of rights, such as a right to survival and a right to an education, which may be benefited by children’s work. We believe that we should be fighting for these rights, and recognising that *some forms* of work can be one way – along with, for example, schooling or social protection – in which such rights can be achieved. This should not prevent us from clearly stating that many other forms of work have a negative effect on children’s rights.

In deciding on responses to forms of work which have a negative effect on children’s rights, it is important to distinguish between work where harm is extreme and the only option is to remove children from work because violations of rights are impossible to prevent (eg, commercial sexual exploitation or work in underground mines), and work where improvements in working conditions can reduce the harm faced. For work where rights violations are extreme and impossible to prevent, duty-bearers should urgently seek to remove children from such work. In this context, implementation of ILO Convention 182 on the worst forms of child labour is an important tool. Often children in the worst forms of work have

been separated from their families, for example in the case of trafficking or recruitment into armed forces. For many of these children, reunification with their families is an important aspect of their rehabilitation process. However, some children involved in extremely harmful forms of work may come from abusive family situations where reunification is not a viable option. Even when the child is to be reunited with his/her family, it might be appropriate for the child to spend a short time in an institution that provides opportunities for the child to rest and receive professional help in recovering from his/her experiences. In all cases it is the best interests of the child which should guide the choice of rehabilitation measure and the children concerned must be fully consulted to determine appropriate responses.

For work where improvements in working conditions can reduce the harm faced, duty-bearers need to consider the wide range of rights violations in the workplace. This may involve, for example, addressing health and safety issues, reducing working hours, ensuring that working boys and girls are not abused and are treated with respect, and enabling working children to combine work with school.

Macro-economic policies and child work

Economic policies at the international and national levels have significant implications for the factors that cause children to work. National governments and IFIs which are responsible for implementing these policies therefore need to fulfil their responsibilities to ensure that policies

do not lead to an increase in the number of girls and boys involved in harmful work, nor increase children's vulnerability to harm within existing jobs. For example, governments should prioritise spending on education and social protection aimed at groups most vulnerable to harmful child work. Child rights and child work concerns should be incorporated into Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) by explicitly stating a reduction in harmful child work as a goal and outlining strategies to achieve this goal.

Education and child work

Governments need to develop strategies to help education become an effective means of preventing harmful child work and to ensure that the rights of working boys and girls to an education are fulfilled. Although governments have primary responsibility for providing education, organisations working outside the state sector also have a role to play. To fulfil their responsibilities, governments need to ensure adequate investments in education, and address discrimination, quality and relevance issues in schools. They have a responsibility to:

- recognise the importance of early childhood education, which can ensure children enter school rather than work
- involve children and communities in decision making about schools – this will, for example, help to make schooling more relevant to their needs
- recognise the particular needs of older children. Older children may not have had schooling and may not want to be in classes with younger children. Special provision

may be needed to enable such children to get an education

- recognise the importance of post-primary education, which can provide children with the skills needed to find an alternative to exploitative child work.

To ensure that girls and boys are able to combine work with education, governments should:

- avoid placing too heavy a burden on children by expecting them to spend long hours at school or doing homework in addition to long hours at work. Children have a right to rest and leisure
- recognise the educational value of children's working lives and aim to validate this learning within the education system. This could include developing curricula to address attitudes and norms which reinforce and legitimise the exploitation of children
- use school as a means of helping children to deal with the problems they face at work. For example, schools can be used to teach children about their rights and about what they can do when they feel these rights are being abused.

Non-formal education (NFE) should also be seen as a means of enabling children who may have been alienated by the formal system to get a high quality education and, eventually, to access the formal system. Although NFE can be used as a model for influencing the formal system, NFE should not be seen as a sustainable alternative to formal education.

Legislation on child work

Governments have the responsibility to adopt and apply appropriate legislation to ensure that boys and girls are protected from harmful child work. Legislation includes national laws and international conventions, such as ILO Conventions on the worst forms of child labour (182) and on minimum ages for employment (138). Any legislation will only benefit working children if it:

- acts in children's best interests – this should be the primary goal of all legislation
- criminalises abusers of child rights, rather than the children whose rights are violated
- avoids blanket bans of work which fail to distinguish between harmful and non-harmful work or to acknowledge benefits gained from work
- ensures that children's other rights, including rights to survival and development, are not harmed, for example by compensating for incomes lost
- involves the full participation of children and families in decisions about its formulation and application.

Regarding minimum age legislation, it is also important to remember that age is only one of the means of determining the level of harm faced. In deciding how to legislate against harmful child work, it is also important to consider other factors, such as how gender, development or disability influence the effects of work. As it is unlikely that legislation will reach all children in the hard-to-reach informal sector, alternative

measures should be adopted to reach these children. Governments should also adopt and apply a system of birth registration. This is an important tool for successful application of much legislation.

Employers' responsibility to address harmful child work

All employers – ranging from divisions of multinational companies, to home-owners employing a single domestic worker – have a responsibility to address harmful child work. All employers must avoid 'quick fix' solutions to children's work, (involving the summary dismissal of children), which are in the best interest of the employers rather than the children. Instead, employers must:

- take immediate measures to remove boys and girls from extremely harmful forms of work and do this in a way which provides viable alternatives and acts in children's best interests
- compensate for incomes lost (eg, redundancy payments) for children who have been removed from work
- improve the lives of children who continue to work, including treating working children with respect and allowing children to combine work with education
- ensure that children who are legally working are not discriminated against in pay and conditions at work. This includes avoiding banning all child work for under-18s, as this can reduce employment opportunities for girls and boys under the age of 18 but over the age of compulsory schooling.

Larger employers should support longer-term programmes to prevent harmful child work. Employers must also ensure that the adults they employ are not exploited – as stated above, this can have a knock-on effect on poverty and children’s work. Thus, for multinational companies to fulfil commitments to address harmful work, they must both address child work in their own supply chains, and ensure that their drive for profits does not reduce household incomes to such an extent that children have to do harmful work.

Other duty-bearers, including governments and consumers, can put pressure on employers to ensure that they are meeting their responsibilities. However, governments and consumers should avoid trade sanctions or boycotts as a means of making the private sector address harmful child work. These measures can mean that boys and girls are pushed out of the relatively well regulated export sector, into the often more harmful informal sector. This is not to say that consumers should do nothing about harmful child work. Consumers can place pressure on companies to take a responsible approach to child work, by, for example, encouraging them to enable working children to attend school or to provide opportunities for vocational training.

Supporting working children’s organisations
Working children’s organisations help to achieve children’s right to participate and associate, and can help children to achieve their right to be free from harmful work. They can serve a variety of functions, including whistle blowing, monitoring

work places, providing mutual support and protection, and advocating for policy change. Girls and boys have the right to participation and association, and such organisations are to be encouraged. Like adult organisations, children’s organisations reflect a wide spectrum of opinions, and while some focus on the benefits of children’s work, others focus on raising awareness about the harm caused by children’s work. As different forms of work require different responses, these two goals are not necessarily contradictory.

NGOs, trade unions and other duty-bearers have a role to play in supporting such organisations, for example, by providing resources and ensuring that children’s participation is informed, ethical and meaningful. Participation should always be in the best interests of the child, and children may need support in case of a backlash from employers or parents. Adults involved in children’s organisations need to guard against the manipulation of children, but at the same time ensure that children are able to make informed choices.

International Save the Children Alliance
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"My work is to select big rocks at the river. I like it because with the payment I help my family. But they don't allow us to rest enough."

Marvin Aráuz, 13 years old, Ocotal, Nicaragua*

"I work as a bricklayer's assistant. I like laying mortar. I don't like mixing the mortar."

Benjamín Calderón, 13 years old, Ocotal, Nicaragua*

*Children's quotes and drawings come from a consultation on this position paper carried out in Central America.