

TOOL



THE ALLIANCE
FOR CHILD PROTECTION
IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION

Disability and Child Labour¹

The linkages between disability and child labour are complex, and clear evidence on their causal relationship is still hard to come by – in particular the question of whether children with disabilities are more vulnerable to entering child labour often remains unanswered. However, analysis of other factors closely linked to disability and child labour, such as poverty and access to education, can help to understand the linkages between disability and vulnerability to child labour.

CHILD LABOUR AS A CAUSE OF DISABILITY

Perhaps the most recognised relationship between disability and child labour is that children who are involved in child labour, particularly those in hazardous work, are at a high risk of acquiring a disability. Hazardous work in dangerous or unhealthy working conditions can result in injuries, ill health and permanent disability.

DISABILITY AS A RISK FACTOR FOR CHILD LABOUR

Researching the question of whether children with disabilities are more vulnerable to child labour can be challenging because often other factors such as poverty and access to education come into play and their inter-relation can be complex to disentangle. For example, children with disabilities often have limited access to inclusive education and consequently have low skills and limited chances to find decent work, making them more vulnerable to child labour. Living with disabilities also implies extra costs, such as healthcare, which can push families into poverty and increase child labour risks. Poverty can also cause disability because it can lead to neglect, malnourishment, denied healthcare, violence against children and child labour. While global evidence seems to confirm that children with disabilities have a higher vulnerability to child labour, this is not always the case. A study in Indonesia² found that children with disabilities who were out of school were not engaged in economic or household activities; rather, they were found to be inactive at home. It is therefore important to always assess correlations in each specific context.

PARENTAL DISABILITY AND CHILD LABOUR

Sometimes overlooked in the literature is the role of parental disability in child labour. The economic and social exclusion of adults with disabilities and limited social protection are strong risk factors for child labour, in particular the WFCL.

KEY ACTIONS TO ADDRESS DISABILITY IN CHILD LABOUR PROGRAMMING:³

Gather disability-disaggregated data

- **Ensure that child labour/WFCL indicators** and data collection efforts can be disaggregated by disability status.⁴
- **Design data collection tools** in a way that is inclusive and non-stigmatising – for instance, adapted tools for people with impairments and training of data collectors on working with people living with disability.
- **Analyse disability-disaggregated data** to examine the linkages between disability and child labour.

Design inclusive child labour strategies and programmes:

- **Include families with children or adults who are living with disabilities** in vulnerability criteria for humanitarian assistance and child labour prevention programmes.
- **Work together with national and international disability organisations** to promote inclusive child labour prevention and response interventions, such as:
 - inclusive education and job training opportunities for children with disabilities;
 - rehabilitation care, including physical therapy and psychological support for children with disabilities who were formerly in child labour;
 - awareness-raising and actions to prevent children with disabilities from entering child labour.
- **Advocate for inclusive livelihoods opportunities for adults with disabilities** as a means of reducing the engagement of their children in child labour activities.
- **In parallel with inclusive livelihood opportunities for adults with disabilities**, advocate for inclusive livelihoods opportunities for adolescents with disabilities who are above the minimum age for work.

1 ILO (2011). "Facts on disability and child labour", https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/---ilo-jakarta/documents/publication/wcms_165280.pdf

2 ILO – EAST Project (2010). "Disability, Access to Education and Child Labour: exploring the links", Jakarta.

3 Guidance developed by Handicap International and the Child Protection Sub-Cluster in South Sudan.

4 Leonard Cheshire and Humanity & Inclusion (2018). "Disability Data Collection: A summary review of the use of the Washington Group Questions by development and humanitarian actors", <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Disability%20Data%20Collection%20DIGI.PDF>