

# TOOL



**THE ALLIANCE**  
FOR CHILD PROTECTION  
IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION

## Child Labour Risk And Protective Factors

This overview presents common risk and protective factors in humanitarian settings. It is important to identify risk and protective factors in the specific context to better understand what factors leads to child labour. For example, being young can be a risk factor in a setting where young children aged five years are frequently seen in agricultural child labour alongside their family); but it can be a protective factor in a setting where typically adolescents start working to provide income for the family. Moreover, it is important to remember that it is typically not one specific risk factor that determines whether children enter child labour – rather it is usually a combination of several risk factors that accumulate at the different levels of the socio-ecological framework, and the lack of protective factors that exist to outweigh or buffer against the existing risk factors. Thus, it is essential to analyse the interplay between both risk and protective factors to determine who is most at risk.

### INDIVIDUAL CHILD

#### RISK FACTORS

- Sex / age (depending on the context)
- Lack of consistent, responsive caregivers
- Disability / impairment, physical or mental ill health
- Lack of access to quality education opportunities
- Combining school with work
- Low self-esteem and limited self-confidence
- Sense of responsibility to take care of family/ contribute to family income
- Engaging in risky behaviour, such as substance use
- Limited access to social and recreational activities
- Limited access to psychosocial support
- Displaced (refugee, asylum seeker, migrant)
- Stateless
- Lack of birth registration and other documentation
- Family separation, child-headed household
- Violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation
- Psychosocial distress
- Association with an armed group or force
- Limited knowledge of occupational hazards and safety
- Limited access to protective equipment, training or supervision
- Having siblings in child labour

#### PROTECTIVE FACTORS

- Sex / age (depending on the context)
- Healthy attachment to caregivers
- Good physical and mental health
- In school (enrolled, attending and/or completing) incl. in ECD, formal/non-formal education, TVET
- Takes part in safe and appropriate social and recreational activities
- Safe and positive family and peer relationships
- Positive self-esteem and self-confidence
- Strong life skills including socio-emotional skills
- Awareness of risks, of child labour, child rights and available services
- Good understanding of safety and protection in workplace
- Participation in appropriate and safe child work
- Legal status and documentation

## FAMILY AND CAREGIVING ENVIRONMENTS

### RISK FACTORS

- Not in a safe family/caregiving environment such as lacking a consistent, responsive caregiver
- Poverty and household income shocks
- Unemployment of caregiver(s)
- Absence, death, ill health or impairment of significant caregiver(s)/breadwinner(s)
- Mental health problems of the primary caregiver(s)
- Neglect and limited parental supervision
- Family members in illicit or exploitative work
- Low support for education from caregivers due to financial, safety, gender norms or other reasons
- Lack of understanding about legal framework, hazards and consequences of child labour
- Social and gender norms that condone or encourage child labour
- Violence or abuse within the family

### PROTECTIVE FACTORS

- In a safe family/caregiving environment
- Adequate and safe employment or income for adults within the household
- Food-secure household
- Access to basic services and information
- Strong social (family) networks
- Positive value placed on education by caregiver(s)
- Social and gender norms that reject child labour and that value education, including girls' education
- Information about the legal framework and access to opportunities for light or decent work for children

## COMMUNITY

### RISK FACTORS

- Community lives in the area affected by the crisis, affected by conflict or insecurity
- Loss of livelihoods or access to land
- Food insecurity or aid dependency
- Violence within the community
- Exacerbated gender inequality and discrimination
- Barriers to safe decent work for older children above the minimum working age but below the age of 18
- Social and gender norms that condone or encourage child labour
- Child labour linked to migration routes or seasonal work
- Loss of education and training opportunities in the community or barriers to accessing available education
- Heightened marginalisation of excluded groups
- Inadequate or inappropriate provision of humanitarian assistance including lack of safeguards in humanitarian assistance to prevent child labour
- Limited social support, child protection and/or social welfare systems in the community

### PROTECTIVE FACTORS

- Strong social support networks within the community, e.g. places of work, services, neighbours, religious places
- Presence of community-level groups and organisations that support and empower working children
- Community-based learning opportunities including formal, non-formal and informal education
- Positive opportunities for children and adolescents to engage in peer groups and other social support activities
- Decent work opportunities for young people and adults, including those with a disability
- Presence of support for at-risk families or individuals

## SOCIETY

### RISK FACTORS

- Insecurity and conflict
- Legislative and policy gaps related to child labour or for specific groups e.g. refugees or migrants
- Lack of recognition by state of specific population groups (e.g. stateless or ethnic minorities) to exercise labour and other human rights
- Social norms that condone child labour
- Patterns of exploitative labour and migration
- Limited education and child labour monitoring systems and law enforcement
- Informal economies and unregulated work
- Limited access to the formal labour market for refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and other excluded groups
- Overstretched services including law enforcement, social workers, justice and other essential services
- Limited political will and/or investment in child labour policy implementation
- Presence of new actors such as armed groups or traffickers

### PROTECTIVE FACTORS

- Strong and inclusive child labour legal framework and policies
- Well-resourced services and policy implementation
- Child-friendly and inclusive services for all children at risk of or in child labour
- Social protection and safety nets
- Functional education and child labour monitoring systems and law enforcement
- Availability of decent work for adults and for young people below the age of 18 years and above the minimum working age
- Presence of new actors and stakeholders such as humanitarian organisations that enhance capacity and services