The COVID-19 consequences on **child labour in agrifood systems**

ANALYTICAL PAPER

The COVID−19 consequences on **child labour in agrifood systems**

Contents

Acknowledgements

Abbreviations and acronyms

CLMRS	Child Labour Monitoring and Remediation Systems
DHRRA	Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas
EPHPM	Yearly Permanent Multiple Purpose Surveys of Households
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FMA	Fishery and Management Area
ICI	International Cocoa Initiative
ILO	International Labour Organization
INE	Honduras National Statistical Institute
NGO	non-governmental organization
PACE	Partnership Against Child Exploitation
UNHS	Uganda National Household Survey
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal

Executive summary

This paper provides insights on how the COVID-19 pandemic and related policy responses to curb its spread increase the risk of child labour through different pathways. It draws on case studies from seven countries covering different production systems: Côte d'Ivoire (cocoa), Ethiopia (cattle keeping and farming), (Lebanon (horticulture and greenhouse farms), the Philippines (municipal fisheries), and Viet Nam (crop farming, livestock, and citrus fruit chains).

Following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, **restrictive measures to limit the spread of the virus were implemented across countries**. These measures included lockdowns, partial or total school closures, curfews, movement restrictions, as well as closures of borders. They had social and economic implications **particularly affecting poor households in rural areas.** In addition, the consequences of the pandemic are compounding pre-existing climate and economic crises (e.g. hurricanes Eta and Iota in 2020 in Honduras, Beirut's port explosion in Lebanon) that exacerbated vulnerabilities and inequalities.

By using the conceptual framework of the **vicious cycle of child labour in agriculture** (FAO, 2020), with a focus on the three interconnected dimensions of poverty, child labour and limited participation in education, the paper explains how the consequences of this crisis exacerbated drivers of child labour, affecting rural livelihoods and households coping strategies.

The increase in child labour is triggered by a combination of factors. With school closures, children are expected to use their free time to help in the house, at the farm or during fishing trips. Across almost all case studies, the data collected show that households have experienced a decrease in their income and purchasing power. This is due to a combination of decreased earnings as a result of job losses, producers not being able to sell their products because of movement restrictions or closure of restaurants and markets, and surges in prices of essential goods. In order to compensate for the decrease in household income, children may have to work and support livelihood efforts. In the same manner, children may engage in casual labour to support their families. In some cases, child labour is triggered by adult labour shortages due to movement restrictions, and to reduce production costs (children used as cheap labour in greenhouses in Lebanon). Overall, the data collected through the case studies indicate that children supporting families and communities was considered as acceptable, in the context of school closures and reduced household income. In some cases, children themselves perceived the need to help their families as important for them (the Philippines, Viet Nam).

Coping strategies reported by households are diverse. In some cases, households reported reducing the frequency and portions of daily meals (Ethiopia, Honduras, Lebanon, Viet Nam), thereby increasing the risk of food insecurity. For example, in Honduras, the number of acutely food-insecure people has doubled in just over a year. Some households reported selling their assets (Honduras) and engaging in backyard gardening and livestock-raising (fishers in the Philippines) to cover their food needs. Another coping strategy, which is the focus of this paper, is to resort to children to help families to secure food and livelihood needs, or as a source of ready and cheap labour (greenhouse farms in Lebanon).

Most case studies suggest an **increase in child labour in targeted communities following the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, which exacerbated existing underlying vulnerabilities.** For example, in selected cocoa-growing communities of the Côte d'Ivoire, the percentage of children identified in hazardous work for children increased from 16 percent to 19.4 percent. In the Philippines, about 34 percent of the children respondents from targeted fishing communities indicated that they helped more on fishing trips, while 19 percent of them supported other livelihood efforts of their households. In Lebanon, findings from a survey on greenhouses farms showed that 24 percent of the respondents in Akkar resorted to child labour (compared to 16 percent in 2017), while the share rose to 74 percent in Mount Lebanon (46 percent in 2017). On the other hand, in Honduras, the prevalence of child labour in agriculture seems to have decreased, potentially due to the contraction of economic activities and related labour demand (see Table 1 in the introduction chapter with key finding from all case studies). However, there is mounting evidence of the negative impact of the crisis on child labour. The recent ILO-UNICEF projection predicted an increase in the global number of children in child labour situations as a net effect of the pandemic: 8.9 additional million children by the end of 2022. The results of the case studies thus suggest that this projected estimate may also apply to the specific context of rural areas and agriculture, where the prevalence of child labour appears to be strongly affected by the pandemic.

The way the COVID-19 crisis is affecting children depends on contexts and children's situation. In some cases, children whose main activity was an unpaid activity for the household worked more, while those working for paid jobs (such as casual labourers) experienced a decrease in work, either working for a reduced number of hours or not working anymore (Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Honduras). The reduction in child labour for those children involved in paid work/casual work may be due to movement restrictions and economic slowdown that may have lowered the demand for labour. In other cases, there is an increase in the number of children engaged in paid jobs (e.g. in greenhouses in Lebanon). Where sex-disaggregated data were available, there are some indications that **rural girls' child labour increased more than for boys** (Honduras, Uganda), which may be due to girls' domestic and caring responsibilities. In some cases, girls face compounded risks, with child labour being associated with an increased likelihood of girls being forced into early marriage (Ethiopia).

Further research is needed to better understand how crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic affect child labour. The nature of the containment measures themselves made it challenging to collect information on the short-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on child labour in rural communities. Despite the preliminary findings and conclusions that can be inferred from the case studies, more research is needed to confirm these elements and assess long-term effects.

The case studies show that the pandemic has had different effects on child labour depending on the socio-economic context of rural livelihoods and the subsectors of agriculture. The most common effects are an increased number of children involved in child labour and hazardous work in agrifood systems and/or a higher number of hours worked for children previously involved in child labour, increased school dropouts, and a willingness of children to help their parents to manage risk through their economic contribution. However, commonalities are difficult to generalize because of the non-harmonized approaches to collecting quantitative and qualitative data on child labour, where such data exist. It is thus critical to collect detailed age- and sex-disaggregated data and information on child labour, taking into account the different subsectors of agriculture (i.e. crop farming, capture fisheries, aquaculture, forestry and livestock) and capturing the type of tasks (and associated hazards) in which different children are engaged. This is a fundamental step to inform and design tailored responses to address child labour in agrifood systems.

Therefore, the paper's findings call for further research to validate and better understand the short and longer term consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on child labour in agrifood systems. The challenge in proposing a conceptual model to guide future research with a set of potential mechanisms to be empirically tested resides in the gaps of pre-COVID-19 child labour in agriculture baseline but also on the possibility to compare child labour data collected before and after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, the inclusion of a child labour module in household's survey programs measuring livelihoods and poverty, targeting rural areas where the majority of rural poor live and depend from agrifood systems for their livelihoods would be certainly helpful. However, since child labour data have been more frequently and regularly collected through national labour or child labour survey, there is an additional difficulty to make sure that the child labour data collected thanks to new statistical means can be compared to the existing baseline and are collected in a way that is adequate. Indeed, national child labour surveys are typically very costly because of the complex statistical definition of child labour and of the sensitivity of the topic which may involve and trigger bias among respondents.

Inclusive and sustainable recovery policies and interventions are urgently needed. As governments, international organizations and agricultural stakeholders can make choices likely to influence the course and consequences of the pandemic, these should include informed and targeted measures to prevent and eliminate child labour in agrifood systems. For instance, dramatic cuts in public spending following the pandemic can aggravate children's vulnerability to harmful and exploitative forms of work. Data and evidence about the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic are critical to inform and guide agrifood system responses and policies in order to mitigate these risks and contribute to sustainably ending child labour in agriculture. This crisis brings the opportunity to break the vicious cycle of child labour in agriculture. Responses to the interconnected dimensions of the poverty, child labour and low participation in education need to be considered in light of local and national contexts and levels of vulnerabilities of different groups. They may include a combination of well-targeted social protection measures combined with investments and support for sustainable livelihoods, and access to free and quality education, vocational training for youth and decent jobs for all.

The paper is structured around three parts:

▶ Part I sets the scene, presents the analytical framework used to explain the linkages between the COVID-19 pandemic and the increased risk of child labour, and describes the methodological approach.

▶ Part II presents the seven case studies highlighting how of the pandemic exacerbated the drivers of child labour

▶ Part III shares concluding reflections and recommendations on the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on child labour in agrifood systems, building on the lessons learned from the case studies and other crisis.

Part I
Introduction

This paper is a contribution to the collective efforts to close a current significant knowledge gap on what child labour in agrifood systems looks like after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. It aims to provide a starting point for larger and more systematic knowledge generation efforts in this area. It is therefore intended for a technical audience working on eliminating child labour and building back better agrifood systems. The paper is also produced in the context of the 5th Global Conference on Child Labour, held in May 2022, that closed with the adoption of the *Durban Call to Action*, ranking *Ending child labour in agriculture* as the second top priority.

The consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on rural households

Measures to contain the spread of COVID-19 pandemic have caused an unprecedented decline in economic activity and jobs all over the world, hitting agrifood systems and rural households particularly hard, including through income and job losses due to reduced production, prices and sales of produce (Bundervoet, Dávalos and Garcia, 2022). The equivalent of about 125 million full-time jobs have been lost as a direct consequence of the pandemic (ILO, 2021). The pandemic, which comes on top of other crises and shocks (i.e. environmental crises, economic crises, conflicts), has increased rural poverty and food insecurity. An estimated 97 million more people have been pushed into poverty, with particularly acute losses of income in emerging and developing countries (Bordi *et al.*, 2021).

Depending on their socio-economic situation, households may adopt different strategies to cope with the pandemic-induced shocks and meet their immediate needs (Ragasa *et al.*, 2021; Wang *et al.,* 2021). Low-income households with limited savings and access to social protection may reduce their food consumption, sell their assets, use emergency savings, take out loans from local moneylenders or resort to child labour (FAO, 2020; ILO *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, the unique combination of global market disruption, income and job losses and complete or partial closure of schools has the potential to increase in an unprecedented manner the risk of child labour through different pathways by exacerbating its drivers (in particular poverty, labour shortages and low access to education). Gender inequality might also be further deepened, with girls expected to perform additional household chores and agricultural labour.

While the last two decades have seen significant progress in the fight against child labour, it is estimated that an additional **8.9 million children could be in child labour by the end of 2022** because of the rising poverty driven by the pandemic (ILO and UNICEF, 2021). These estimations make the situation especially critical for the agriculture sector, which already accounts for 70 percent of children in child labour (ILO and UNICEF, 2021).

Linkages between the pandemic and child labour in agrifood systems–analytical framework

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Box 1 – Definition of agrifood systems

Agrifood systems (or food systems) encompass the entire range of actors and their interlinked value-adding activities involved in the production, aggregation, processing, distribution, consumption and disposal of food products that originate from agriculture, forestry or fisheries, and parts of the broader economic, societal and natural environments in which they are embedded.

Source: FAO. 2018. *Sustainable food systems - Concept and framework.* Rome, FAO.
https://www.fao.org/3/ca2079en/CA2079EN.pdf

Quantitative data to measure the direct consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on child labour in agrifood systems remain particularly scarce. The lack of actual household- and individual-level data that could help generate ex-post evidence on these consequences is largely due to the disruption of data collection during the pandemic and the fact that the pandemic it not yet over.

In the absence of robust population-level data that can be used to monitor changes in child labour after the onset of the pandemic, this paper draws on a series of case studies describing how the COVID-19 exacerbated the drivers of child labour. It applies the framework of the **vicious cycle of child labour in agriculture** (Figure 1) to understand different pathways to increased child labour, with a focus on three interconnected dimensions: poverty, child labour and low participation in education.

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Figure 1. **Vicious cycle of child labour in agriculture**

LOW AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY COMBINED WITH VULNERABILITY

POVERTY

LIMITED CAPACITY TO INNOVATE AND RESPOND TO SHOCKS

CHILD LABOUR

UNSKILLED LABOUR, WEAK BARGAINING POWER AND LOW EARNINGS

LOW PARTICIPATORY IN EDUCATION AND POOR HEALTH

Source: FAO. 2020. *FAO framework on ending child labour in agriculture.* Rome, FAO. https://doi.org/10.4060/ca9502en

Poverty – child labour: As mentioned previously, low-income households in rural areas adopt different coping strategies to meet their immediate basic needs and mitigate the impacts of crises on their livelihoods. The COVID-19 pandemic is different to other crisis, as it led to an unprecedented combination of business and school closures, and restrictions on trade and mobility, with major consequences in terms of income and job losses and food security. In this context, households may have no choice but to resort to child labour to supplement household income losses and or compensate for labour shortages (or lack of liquidity to hire adult labour), with higher risks of exposure to exploitative and hazardous work. In the same manner, those already working might do so for longer hours or under worsening conditions to support their family.

Low participation in education – child labour: Complete or partial school closures as measures to protect from the spread of the COVID-19 virus have increased the risk of child labour, as children are more likely to work when school is not an option. They become a readily available, invisible and free or cheap workforce. Furthermore, when children leave school to support their families, this may not be a temporary situation. The disruption of face-to-face education and uneven access to remote learning solutions is adding to this risk of permanent dropout.

While causal evidence needs further research, this paper intends to offer useful information and insights to inform policies and programmes and accelerate the engagement, especially of actors in agrifood systems, to address the root causes of child labour in the context of inclusive and sustainable recovery interventions.

Box 2: Definition of child labour

The main instruments which inform the legal definition of child labour are: the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), which are only a few countries short of being universally ratified. Additional guidance is provided in the related Minimum Age Recommendation, 1973 (No. 146) and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Recommendation, 1999 (No. 190). Protecting children from economic exploitation is also included in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989, Article 32.

Child labour is commonly defined as work that is inappropriate for a child's age, affects children's education, or is likely to harm their health, safety or morals. It is work that impairs children's well-being or hinders their education, development and future livelihoods.

The difference between "child labour" and "child work" is that child labour refers to work that is harmful to children. Not all work done by children under the age of 18 is child labour. Children between 12 and 14 years old may do some light work as long as it is not dangerous or does not interfere with their education.

Hazardous work is work that is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of a child (Article 3[d] of Convention No. 182). This work is dangerous or occurs under unhealthy conditions that could result in a child being killed, injured or made ill as a consequence of poor health and safety standards and working arrangements. Some injuries or ill health may result in permanent disability. Often health problems caused by working as children in child labour may not develop or appear until the child is an adult. Hazardous work should be identified at the national level.

The worst forms of child labour include, in addition to hazardous work, all forms of slavery (sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom, and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict), and the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution or pornographic materials or performances, as well as for illicit activities. These worst forms jeopardize the physical, mental and/or moral well-being of a child because of their nature and because of the conditions in which they are carried out.

The overlap group (14/15–17 years) belongs to both the child (0–17) and youth (15–24) age groups. The overlap group corresponds to a category where children have reached legal working age (set at 14 years old in some countries, and 15 or 16 years in most countries). They can be either in child labour or in youth employment as younger workers. The determining factor is the danger of the tasks performed by those younger workers. A child of this age group spraying hazardous pesticides is a child in child labour. A child of this age group applying safely biopesticides is a younger worker.

Source: FAO. 2020. *FAO framework on ending child labour in agriculture*. Rome, FAO.
https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca9502en

Approach and limitations

Case studies

The seven short case studies presented in this paper were prepared based on existing and recent research, studies and surveys. The content and additional analysis conducted by FAO have been validated through intensive exchanges with the relevant entities who commissioned, supervised and/or conducted these case studies (e.g. governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), development agencies). The case studies build on existing literature and mounting anecdotal evidence collected to provide some elements of analysis that can inform areas of interventions for governments, international organizations and agricultural stakeholders.

The selection of case studies was guided by:

▶ A concern over a fair geographic representation

▶ A diversity of value chains and subsectors in which children are employed in agrifood systems.

▶ Data availability, since comparable data on child labour before and after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic are relatively scarce.

Some case studies rely on nationally representative data (i.e. Honduras, Uganda, Viet Nam) while others rely on data specific to given value chains and sectors in a given region or country (i.e. Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Lebanon, the Philippines). Table 1 presents selected findings from the case studies. Table 2 provides basic information about the case studies included in this paper and their differences and complementarities in terms of scope and coverage.

Limitations

While temporary lockdowns and fears of contagion presented unique challenges to traditional data collection methods, other types of data gathering, such as telephone and computer-assisted surveys, were used to collect information.[1] However, the datasets used in most of the case studies present some limitations that restrain the scope of the conclusions and a robust impact evaluation. For instance, these data do not include baseline and endline (i.e. before and after the onset of the pandemic) individual data on children's occupation, labour, and time spent on different activities. Furthermore, the data do not always include information on the type of tasks undertaken by children and potential related hazards, which would lead to underestimating the prevalence[2] of child labour in the contexts of the case studies. In certain contexts, these data collection approaches proved less conclusive to capture child labour, which has multiple layers in its statistical definition. In particular in the case of telephone and computer-assisted surveys, controlling bias introduced by the remoteness proved difficult, resulting in uncertain results (personal communication with UNICEF official). Finally, not all of the data are disaggregated by age and sex, thus limiting the scope to look for potential heterogeneous effects depending on children's groups.

Considering these limitations, the data sources of the case studies should not be taken as statistically representative on the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on child labour in agrifood systems. Nevertheless, these case studies provide, through quantitative and qualitative lenses, important insights and snapshots of the situation of child labour following the onset of the pandemic (and where applicable comparing the situation before and after the latter) in a selection of contexts and settings.

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[1] Due to the inherent limitations compared to in-person data collection, phone-based surveys that collected data on child labour might have produced less reliable results, making the data not necessarily comparable with previous data that were collected via other methods and/or relied on non-comparable samples. These datasets should therefore be used carefully and with these limits in mind.

[2] Prevalence is the proportion of a population that has a specific characteristic in a given time period, regardless of when the characteristic was first developed.

Table 1. **Selected findings from the case studies**

Case study	Selected findings
Côte d'Ivoire	In the cocoa-growing communities targeted by the study, the percentage of children identified in hazardous work for children labour increased from 16 percent to 19.4 percent, compared to visits conducted during the same months in previous years in the same communities. This corresponds to a 21.5 percent increase in child labour identification.
Ethiopia	Children in their communities worked longer hours for their families with domestic chores and agriculture-related activities. When asked about changes in time spent in different activities, children whose main activity was an unpaid activity for the household reported working more while those working for paid jobs, such as casual labourers, experienced a decrease in work.
Honduras	There was a decrease in the number of children involved in child labour in agriculture (from 176 181 in 2019 to 124 158 in 2021), while the relative share remained stable (from 48.3 percent in 2019 to 48.4 percent in 2021), which may be due to economic contraction and associated lower labour demand. Out of the children in child labour in rural areas, girls' involvement increased from 19.8 percent in 2019 to 25.2 percent in 2021, while the share of boys decreased from 80.2 percent to 74.8 percent.
Lebanon	Findings showed that 24 percent of the respondents in Akkar resorted to child labour (compared to 16 percent in 2017), while the share rose to 74 percent in Mount Lebanon (46 percent in 2017). An alarming majority of the children involved in child labour in greenhouses were not enrolled in school: 82 percent in Akkar (compared to 21 percent in 2017) and 93 percent in Mount Lebanon (compared to 33 percent in 2017).
Philippines	The number of children who worked on household- and family-related tasks also increased. Prior to COVID-19, only 9 percent of the children declared working on household- and family-related tasks. With COVID-19, however, 29 percent of the children respondents worked on these tasks and only 13 percent spent time studying school modules. About 34 percent of the children respondents indicated that they helped more on fishing trips, while 19 percent of them supported other livelihood efforts of their households.
Uganda	The share of children in child labour (excluding household chores) increased considerably after the onset of the pandemic, from a proportion of 12 percent of children in child labour before the pandemic to 22 percent after the pandemic. The share of children in child labour is greater in rural areas than in urban areas, and among the 5–11 and 12–13 age cohorts (23 and 37.6 percent, respectively, against 9.7 percent for the 14–17 age cohort).
Viet Nam	Only 4 percent of children in the group of working children in the seafood fishery and aquaculture chains and 2 percent of the working children in the citrus chain said that they had to go to work due to the consequences of the COVID-19.

Table 2. **Case studies included in this paper**

Country	Coverage	Value chain/ sector	Data source	Sample	Timeframe
Côte d'Ivoire	Cocoa-growing regions	Cocoa value chain	Child Labour Monitoring and Remediation Systems (CLMRS), International Cocoa Initiative	5 081 children (2 171 before the pandemic, 2 910 after the outbreak of the pandemic) from 263 cocoa-growing communities	Data collected first between 17 March and 15 May 2020, followed by a telephone survey in July 2020
Ethiopia	Amhara region	Cattle keeping and farming	Baseline survey conducted by the Care and Protection of Children learning network	3 230 households	Data collected between 3 March 2020 and 20 May 2020
Honduras	National	Not applicable	Yearly Permanent Multiple Purpose Surveys of Households (EPHPM), Honduras National Statistical Institute (INE)	National estimates	EPHPM for 2019 and 2020
Lebanon	Akkar and Mount Lebanon regions	Horticulture	In-depth assessment of child labour in greenhouses in the Akkar and Mount Lebanon regions, FAO and the Consultation and Research Institute	152 greenhouse farms	Assessment conducted in 2021

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Country	Coverage	Value chain/ sector	Data source	Sample	Timeframe
Philippines	Three municipalities, two major fishing grounds, Lamon and San Miguel Bays	Fisheries	Child Work in the Municipal Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector, Philippines Country Study by Liza L. Lim as part of a regional study entitled *Regional Study on Child Labour in Fishery and Aquaculture Value Chains in Asia and its Inter-Linkages with Migration* (FAO – AsiaDHRRA, FAO PhilDHRRA)	Total households: 85 Total number of adult respondents: 85 Total number of child respondents: 85 Total respondents (adults and children): 170	Study conducted in 2021
Uganda	National	Not applicable	Uganda National Household Survey 2019/2020, Uganda Bureau of Statistics	10 818 children (4 147 before the pandemic, 6 671 after the outbreak of the pandemic)	National Household Survey conducted in September 2019–March 2020 and in July–November 2020
Viet Nam	Mekong River Delta, North and Central regions	Fisheries, crop farming, livestock, and citrus	Studies on child labour in family-based agriculture, Institute of Policy and Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development	357 children, 228 parents and 146 local experts/ authorities	The studies entailed two surveys: one in February-March 2020 and another in September–October 2021

Part II
Case studies

Côte d'Ivoire:
Hazardous child labour in cocoa-farming communities following the onset of the pandemic

The information presented below has been provided by the International Cocoa Initiative (ICI) based on the data insights generated by its Child Labour Monitoring and Remediation System implemented in Côte d'Ivoire (ICI, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c).

In Côte d'Ivoire, measures to contain the spread of the COVID-19 included closure of schools (from 16 March to 18 May 2020), partial closure of international borders (from 22 May to 30 June 2020), and curfews and restrictions on movement within the country (from 23 March to 15 May 2020).

These measures made it challenging to collect information on the short-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on child labour in rural communities. However, data collection through the International Cocoa Initiative's (ICI) CLMRS continued, helping to fill this gap. The system relies on monitors living in cocoa-growing communities who work throughout the year to raise awareness about child labour, identify those in child labour, and provide assistance where it is needed. Monitors visit households to interview children. They collect data on mobile phones, which are synchronized with a central database. Even with travel restrictions in place, monitors continued to collect data in their own communities, while respecting precautionary guidelines.

This meant that data are available to assess the evolution of child labour during and after the period of partial lockdown in 263 cocoa-growing communities in Côte d'Ivoire.[3] In these communities, 1 443 cocoa-growing households were visited under ICI's CLMRS between 17 March and 15 May 2020 to identify cases of child labour.[4] **The percentage of children identified in hazardous work for children increased from 16 percent to 19.4 percent, compared to visits conducted during the same months in previous years in the same communities (Table 3). This corresponds to a 21.5 percent increase in child labour identification.**

Table 3. **Means comparison (t-test) of child labour identification rates among children visited prior to vs. during partial lockdown**

	Observations (# of children)	Mean child labour identification rate	Standard error
Prior to partial lockdown: (Mar–Apr–May in years 2015–2019)	2 171	16.0%	0.0079
During partial lockdown: (17 Mar – 15 May 2020)	2 910	19.4%	0.0073
Difference:		3.4%	0.0109

t = -3.1334; Degrees of freedom = 5080; H0: difference>0; (Pr(T > t) = 0.9991

Source: ICI (International Cocoa initiative). 2020. *Hazardous child labour in Côte d'Ivoire's cocoa communities during COVID-19.* Geneva, ICI. https://www.cocoainitiative.org/sites/default/files/resources/ICI_rapid-analysis-covid-impact-child-labour-identifiation_1July2020-2_0.pdf

The study suggests possible drivers for this increase in child labour, based on evidence on the root causes of child labour and from past pandemics and the data collected. As schools were closed, parents might have taken their children with them to the farm to help with the work. Previous analysis has shown that child labour prevalence is higher in communities where schools are not present. In addition, restrictions on movement may have limited the availability of adult labour, increasing pressure on families to call on their children to make up the shortfall. ICI also conducted a telephone survey among 515 cocoa farmers covered by the CLMRS in July 2020, in which households were asked to share their assessment of the evolution of their income since the introduction of measures to contain the pandemic. Over half of the respondents reported a drop in household income, due to a combination of decreased earnings and surges in prices for essential consumption goods. Finally, some programmes run by the government, civil society and industry to support

[3] Namely in the regions of: Agnéby-Tiassa, Bélier, Gboklé, Goh, Guémon, Haut Sassandra, Indenié-Djuablin, La Mé, Loh-Djiboua, Marahoué, Nawa, San Pédro, Sud-Comoé and Tonpki

[4] More recent data were collected but not yet processed, analysed and released.

vulnerable cocoa-growing households and promote child protection were necessarily disrupted during the partial lockdown, thus reducing access to these services.

To assess how the situation evolved, ICI continued to analyse cases of hazardous work for children identified by the CLMRS after the lifting of measures. Since child labour rates fluctuate throughout the year, in line with the changing need for labour, cases identified during a given period were compared to longer-term averages for the same period in years preceding the pandemic. The data suggest that child labour rates progressively returned to expected levels during the months following the easing of measures.

More in-depth analysis of the time-series CLMRS data is underway to better understand the mechanisms behind the observed rise in child labour identification.

Selected recommendations targeting cocoa-growing communities:

▸ Ensure a living income for cocoa farmers (e.g. companies paying farmers a fair price for crops) and workers.

▸ Promote livelihoods diversification and access to social protection to strengthen their resilience to future crisis.

▸ Accelerate the elimination of highly hazardous pesticides by promoting alternatives such as integrated pest management and agroforestry systems and by raising awareness of communities on hazards of pesticide exposure.

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Ethiopia:
The consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on child labour in family-based agriculture in Amhara region

This case study was prepared with inputs from World Vision and the Partnership Against Child Exploitation (PACE) consortium,[5] based on the 2020 PACE baseline report – Ethiopia: a situational analysis of child labour in the Amhara Region (PACE, 2020) – Led by the Care and Protection of Children (CPC) Learning Network of Columbia University.

The PACE consortium supported World Vision in identifying 3 230 households with children engaged in or at risk of being engaged in child labour in the Amhara region of Ethiopia, which has among the highest prevalence of child labour in the country. The Care and Protection of Children conducted a baseline[6] involving the households in the programme's targeted area. Data collected with the child questionnaire contained information about child work and working conditions from children and their caregivers.

The results of the survey (Table 4) indicate that children undertake multiple activities. In terms of agricultural work, children are mainly involved in cattle-keeping or farming and to a lesser extent khat farming (most common among boys) – initially working for their family and then with employers once they have enough experience. Children – mainly girls – also engage in fetching water (43.7 percent) and domestic work (35 percent).

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5   *https://www.pace-consortium.org/about*
6   Timeframe of the baseline survey was 3 March to 20 May 2020.

Table 4. **Share of children engaged in different types of activities**

Activity	Boys	Girls	All
Cattle keeping*	51.6%	19.7%	36.2%
Farming	21.1%	7.9%	14.7%
Khat collection	10.5%	8.1%	9.4%
Sand mining and loading	2.2%	2.1%	1.2%
Casual labour (construction sector)	14.3%	5.2%	9.9%
Firewood and dung collection	29.9%	25.5%	27.7%
Fetching water	36.5%	51.1%	43.7%
Domestic work	12.4%	59.3%	35%

*Reading: 19.7% of all girls in the sample are involved in cattle keeping, 51.6% of all boys are involved in cattle keeping, on average 36.2% of all children are involved in cattle keeping.

Source: PACE (Partnership Against Child Exploitation). 2020. *Ethiopia: a situational analysis of child labour in the Amhara Region.* London, PACE. https://news.trust.org/contentAsset/raw-data/0c8273ca-dcdd-4324-aee9-1a3242f1f6a7/document1?byInode=true

The study indicates that children are often expected to work beyond their physical abilities, out of their parents' sight, and exposed to violence (mostly outside of the households) and hazardous conditions (whether working within the household or for an employer). The study also provides additional information on the type of work undertaken by children based on in-depth interviews undertaken with household heads and individual children, and on focus groups with children in child labour.

As the survey took place as COVID-19 was reaching Ethiopia (March–May 2020), the scope of data collection was expanded to include the consequences of related lockdowns, school closures and movement restrictions. Some of the consequences reported by households included: increased cost of goods (gas, cooking oil, sugar); shortage of agricultural inputs; and decrease in the average household income. This combination of higher family consumption costs and lower income exacerbated situations of economic fragility in the area. Families experiencing poverty were disproportionately affected, with several reports of reduced daily food consumption within households.

Two *kebele*[7] managers reported that children in their communities worked longer hours for their families as a result of the restrictions related to COVID-19, either at home doing household work, or outside collecting firewood or cow dung (as a source of fuel for cooking fires), fetching water and herding cattle. This increased involvement of children in supporting families and communities was perceived as

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[7]   A *kebele* is part of a *woreda*, a subdivision within a region.

acceptable, in the context of school closures and the reduced household income: for instance, some of the respondents/*kebele* managers mentioned that in the context of school closures and the reduced household income, children had "no activity except playing and *supporting their parents*". However, it was also observed that while some children spent more hours engaging in labour during lockdown, others had more free time. When asked about changes in time spent in different activities, children whose main activity was an unpaid activity for the household reported working more while those working for paid jobs, such as casual labourers, experienced a decrease in work (Table 5). One *kebele* manager reported noticeable changes in child protection concerns in their community, including girls being forced into early marriage.

Table 5. **Self-reported changes in time spent in activities**

Activity	More time	Same time	Less time	Sample size
Cattle keeping	51.30%	36.80%	11.80%	76
Domestic work	50.80%	46.20%	3.10%	65
Fetching water	44.40%	37%	18.50%	27
Alcohol production and selling	43.50%	26.10%	30.40%	23
Farming	35.70%	58.90%	5.40%	56
Firewood collection	34.80%	47.80%	17.40%	23
Sand mining and loading	32.10%	17.90%	50%	28
Casual labour (construction)	30%	22.50%	47.50%	80
Khat collection	26.60%	12.50%	60.90%	64
Street sales (incl. shoe shining)	18.50%	29.60%	51.90%	54
Loading and unloading	0%	20%	80%	5
Stone mining	0%	50%	50%	2

Source: PACE. 2020. *Ethiopia: a situational analysis of child labour in the Amhara Region.* London, PACE.
https://news.trust.org/contentAsset/raw-data/0c8273ca-dcdd-4324-aee9-1a3242f1f6a7/document1?byInode=true

The baseline report notes that this analysis only captures the initial consequences of COVID-19 on the programme's target population, as data collection was completed by the end of May 2020, and that additional research is required about the long-term effect of the crisis.

Selected recommendations targeting family farming in areas with high levels of poverty:

▶ With a crisis that enhanced situations of economic fragility, it is crucial to provide humanitarian aid where needed to ensure households' food security. This aid needs to be coupled with support to livelihoods (e.g. provision of quality inputs, training, access to finance and markets) to build resilience to future crises.

▶ Extend social protection to farmers (e.g. through farmers' registries and producer organizations) and agricultural workers.

▶ Raise awareness on hazardous work for children to avoid exposing children to harm or exacerbating potentially harmful situations.

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Honduras:
The consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on all sectors in the country: insights on the effects on child labour in agriculture

In Honduras, the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and related measures to curb its spread are not only related to health but have also affected food systems, leading to households' reduced purchasing power and inability to cover basic needs. The number of acutely food-insecure people in Honduras has doubled in just over a year, due to the combined consequences of COVID-19, poverty and climate-related disasters such as Hurricanes Eta and Iota in 2020 (FAO, 2022a). These compounded crises have disrupted and eroded rural communities' agricultural livelihoods, forcing most vulnerable families to choose between selling their assets to cover their food needs and reducing the number of daily meals (FAO, 2022a).

Data from the Yearly Permanent Multiple Purpose Household Surveys (EPHPM) developed by Honduras' National Statistical Institute (INE) (INE, 2022) allow us to compare the prevalence of child labour before and after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic's consequences show a decrease in both the absolute numbers and prevalence of child labour in Honduras. As shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2, the share of children in child labour in all sectors decreased from 14.8 percent (364 765 children) in 2019 to 11.2 percent (256 526 children) in 2021, while the share of children in child labour in agriculture remained stable, from 48.3 percent to 48.4 percent. The EPHPM also presents insights on child labour in rural areas, hence going beyond agriculture: in rural areas, girls' involvement in child labour increased from 19.8 percent in 2019 to 25.2 percent in 2021, while the share of boys decreased from 80.2 percent to 74.8 percent during the same period.

In the case of Honduras, COVID-19 pandemic seems to have upended local labour markets and suppressed the availability of wage employment. In this case, the opportunity cost of child labour was low and therefore there was no increase. The reason behind the decreasing trend in child labour in all sectors may lie in the economic contraction experienced by Honduras over the past two years. The deteriorating economic activity and the resulting job losses in both the formal and informal sectors may have lowered the demand for labour force, including

Figure 2. **Children in child labour in all sectors and in agriculture**
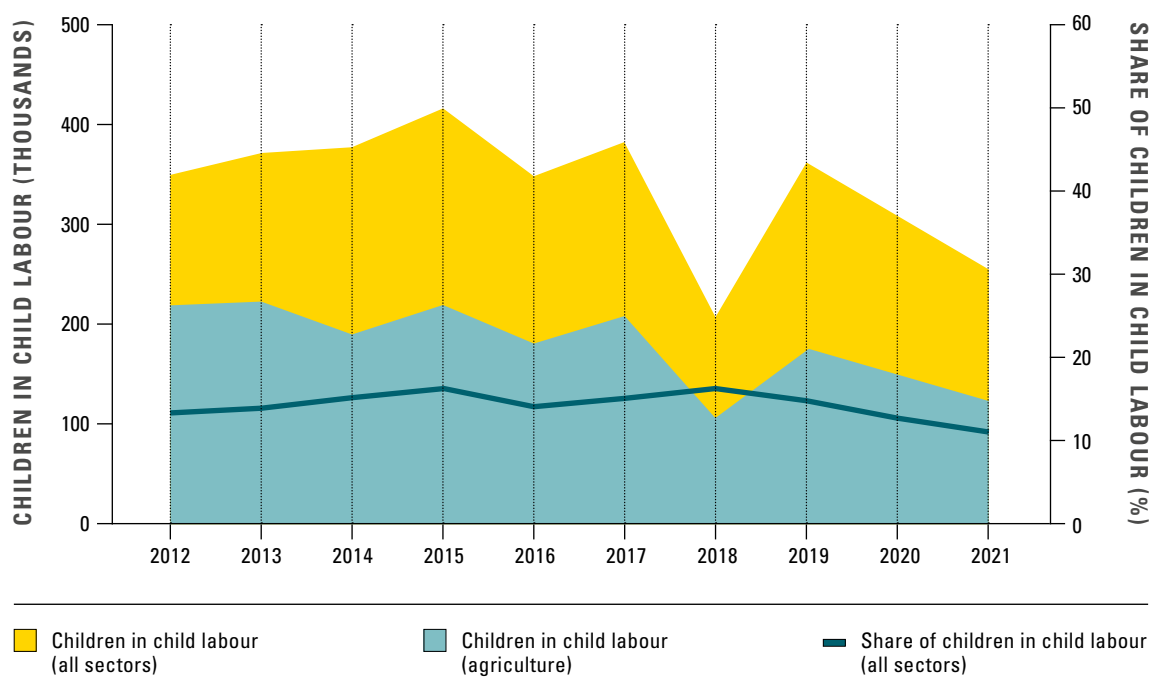
Note: 2020 survey conducted by phone, with possible impact on the data and quality of results.

Source: INE (Instituto Nacional de Estadística). 2022. Encuesta Permanente de Hogares de Propósitos Múltiples (EPHPM). In: *Estadisticas INE.* 2022. Cited 12 May 2022. https://www.ine.gob.hn/V3/ephpm

children as the cheapest and lowest-skilled labourers. This, in addition to lockdown measures, may have increasingly engaged girls in domestic and caring chores, providing a possible explanation to the gendered prevalence of child labour in rural areas. Similar trends and interpretations emerged for Ecuador and Colombia (Global March Against Child Labour, 2021).

The EPHPM surveys also offer a comparative picture of the consequences of COVID-19 on education (Table 6). While school attendance levels for children in child labour in rural areas remained limited to about 35 percent in both 2019 and 2021, girls experienced a decrease from 43.4 percent to 39.4 percent, against a mild increase for boys from 33.1 percent to 34.2 percent. Once again, this might be explained by the lockdown-driven increase in the chore and caring burdens, mostly assigned to girls. Finally, a downturn trend in school attendance emerged as well among children involved in child labour in rural areas aged 5–9 (87.6 percent to 85.2 percent) and 15–17 (22.3 percent to 18.9 percent), while the 10–14 age cohort saw an upward trend, from 42.7 percent to 46.8 percent.

Figure 3. **Distribution of children in child labour by sector**
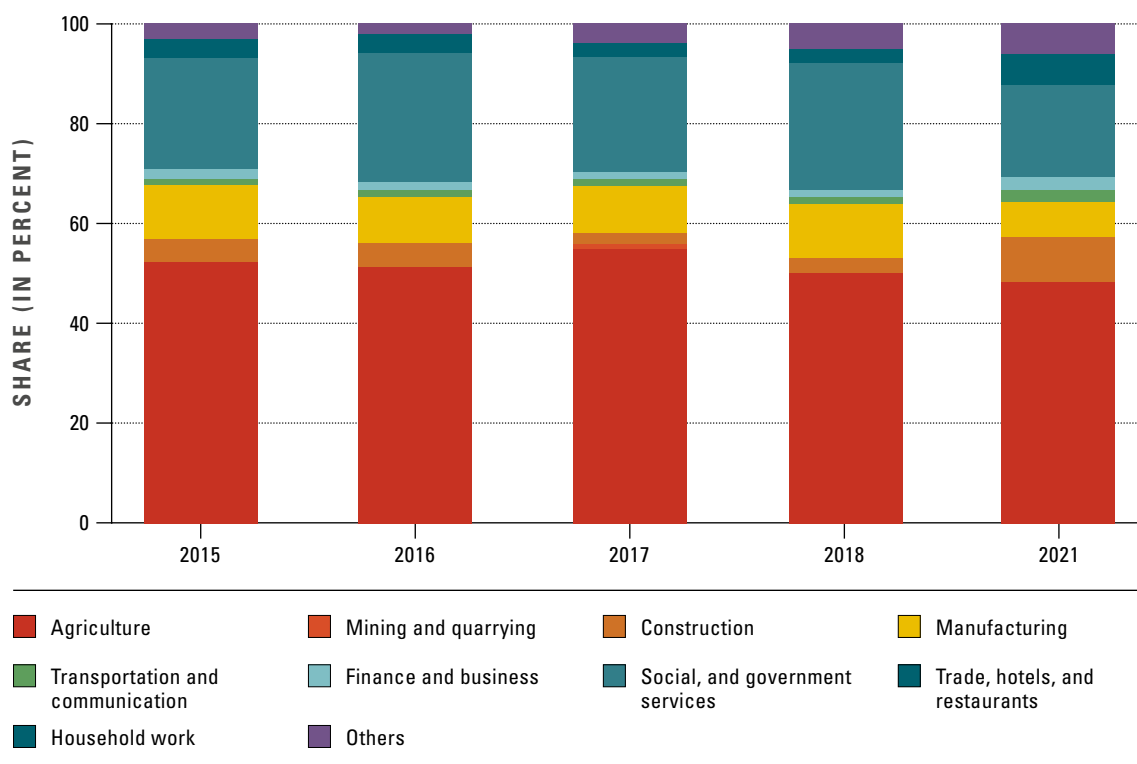
Note: Distribution of children in child labour by sector could not be generated for 2019 due to data unavailability for this specific year. No data were available for the year 2020.

Source: INE. 2022. Encuesta Permanente de Hogares de Propósitos Múltiples (EPHPM). In: *Estadisticas INE*. 2022. Cited 12 May 2022. https://www.ine.gob.hn/V3/ephpm

Table 6. **Share of children in child labour in rural areas attending school (in percent)**

	2019	2021	Evolution
By gender			
Boys	33.1	34.2	+ 1.2
Girls	43.4	39.4	- 4.0
By age			
Aged 5–9	87.6	85.2	- 2.4
Aged 10–14	42.7	46.8	+ 4.1
Aged 15–17	22.3	18.9	- 3.4

Source: INE. 2022. Encuesta Permanente de Hogares de Propósitos Múltiples (EPHPM). In: *Estadisticas INE*. 2022. Cited 12 May 2022. https://www.ine.gob.hn/V3/ephpm

More evidence and data are needed to confirm or refute the age- and sex-disaggregated nexus between COVID-19, child labour and school attendance. Honduras' first National Child Labour Survey, foreseen for 2022, will provide an opportunity to shed more light on these aspects.

Selected recommendations to inform forthcoming National Child Labour surveys and to connect child labour and COVID-19 with climate change and food insecurity dimensions:

▶ Collect more evidence and data to help understand why COVID-19 caused an overall decrease in child labour prevalence in all sectors, an increase of girls in child labour in rural areas; and a decrease in school attendance for girls in child labour in rural areas and for children aged 5−9 and 15−17 in rural areas.

▶ Urgently implement policies and programmes to address the increasing food and income insecurity of smallholder farmers, which contribute to their economic and functional dependency on child labour.

▶ Collect more evidence and data on the consequence of schools reopening on children's dropout rates and return to school, particularly for girls; ensure a safe and inclusive return to school for all children, irrespective of sex and ethnic origin.

▶ Improve farmers' resilience to climate change-related events, such as hurricanes, by expanding social protection and insurance schemes and promoting climate-smart agricultural practices.

▶ Provide children and young people with knowledge about the impacts of climate change, environmental degradation, and possible solutions.

▶ Engage in green economy and climate change platforms.

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Lebanon:

Consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on child labour in the horticulture sector: child labour in agriculture in greenhouse farms in Akkar and Mount Lebanon

The COVID-19 outbreak in Lebanon started in February 2020 with a limited number of cases and reached its peak in January 2021. As a response, a series of measures to curb the spread of the pandemic, including the partial closures of schools, universities and businesses and total countrywide lockdowns, were implemented intermittently. The pandemic, together with the foregoing economic crisis and Beirut's port outburst in August 2020, exacerbated the socio-economic hardship and food insecurity, exhausted the healthcare system and resulted in intensified levels of poverty. The multidimensional poverty rate in Lebanon nearly doubled, from 42 percent in 2019 to 82 percent in 2021, and "extreme multidimensional poverty" affects 34 percent of the population today, exceeding half of the population in some areas of the country (ESCWA, 2021).

Food imports, which account for up to 85 percent of the country's food needs, saw a sharp decrease since the onset of the pandemic and after Beirut's port outburst, where 70 percent of food imports arrived. This caused the cost of nationally produced staple foods to skyrocket (WFP, 2020). These compounded pressures added to the foregoing underperformance (slow growth and weak investments) of the national economy, directly hitting the horticulture sector, which is also essential to ensure food security in Lebanon. In particular, greenhouse farms have been forced to adopt a variety of coping mechanisms such as resorting to children as a source of ready and cheap labour (FAO, 2022b).

Against this backdrop, FAO, in collaboration with the Consultation and Research Institute, undertook an in-depth assessment of child labour in greenhouses in the Akkar and Mount Lebanon regions in Lebanon (FAO, 2022b). This assessment built on a baseline of prevalence of child labour in greenhouses before COVID-19, established in a previous FAO-UNICEF study on child labour in Lebanon published in 2019 (FAO and UNICEF, 2019). The 2021 assessment surveyed the same greenhouse farms interviewed for the 2019 study, providing comparative insights on the prevalence of child labour before and after the COVID-19 outbreak (Table 7). Findings showed that 24 percent of the respondents in Akkar had resorted to child labour (compared to 16 percent in 2017), while the share rose to 74 percent in Mount Lebanon (46 percent in 2017). Moreover, the study found that an alarming

majority of the children involved in child labour in greenhouses were not enrolled in school: 82 percent in Akkar (compared to 21 percent in 2017) and 93 percent in Mount Lebanon (compared to 33 percent in 2017).

Table 7. **Child labour and school enrollment in greenhouse farms in Akkar and Mount Lebanon (percent)**

	2017	2021	Evolution
Share of greenhouse farms resorting to child labour			
Akkar	16	24	+ 8
Mount Lebanon	46	74	+ 18
Share of children in child labour not enrolled in school			
Akkar	21	82	+ 61
Mount Lebanon	33	93	+ 60

Source: FAO. 2022b. *In-depth assessment of child labour in greenhouses in the Akkar and Mount Lebanon Regions in Lebanon – Case study.* Beirut, Lebanon, FAO. https://doi.org/10.4060/cb8075en

Most of the respondents in Akkar (68 percent) and in Mount Lebanon (53 percent) agreed or strongly agreed with the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent school closure had caused an increase in child labour. The qualitative findings confirmed as well that the number of children hired had risen due to school closures following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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The direct reasons for relying on child labour in greenhouses in both Akkar and Mount Lebanon were found to be essentially economic (reduce labour cost for greenhouses and secure decent income for households). Hence, mitigating the COVID-19 consequences on farmers' economic vulnerability will be key. The study's findings will support FAO in the design and implementation of tailored programmes and projects aimed at promoting greenhouses as sustainable and viable businesses that are free from child labour and that contribute to food security in Lebanon.

Selected recommendations targeting horticulture and greenhouse farming:

▸ Urgently implement adequate income security measures to address the increasing multidimensional poverty rate among the most vulnerable farmers.

▸ Urgently implement adequate food security measures to address the impact of the compounded crises on food imports and food prices.

▸ Collect more evidence and data on the impact of schools reopening on children's dropout rates and return to school, particularly for girls. Ensure a safe and inclusive return to school for all children, irrespective of sex and ethnic origin.

▸ Provide horticulture and greenhouse farmers with adequate financial support to reduce labour costs and provide income support, and implement measures addressing the lack of farmers' access to liquidity, thus reducing economic dependency on child labour as a coping strategy.

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The Philippines:
The consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on child labour in municipal fisheries

This case study has been produced based on the content of the forthcoming FAO publication FAO, Fishing for a Better Future: challenges and opportunities for addressing child labour in small-scale fisheries and aquaculture value chains (FAO, forthcoming).

According to the Philippines Labour Force Survey undertaken by the Philippines Statistic Authority, in 2020 about 63.6 percent of child labour was in the agriculture sector. Sector-disaggregated data exist but do not provide insights on subsectors.

The forthcoming regional study, "Fishing for a Better Future: challenges and opportunities for addressing child labour in small-scale fisheries and aquaculture value chains", reports on research on child labour in selected fisheries and aquaculture communities in the Philippines. The study was conducted by the Asian Partnership for the Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas (AsiaDHRRA), in partnership with FAO. This research investigated the prevalence, causes and consequences of child labour in the context of the municipal fisheries.[8] It also examined how child labour is linked to fisheries resource status, livelihood and economic feasibility, studied the inter-relations between unequal distribution of the value along identified value chains; assessed the role and influence of certification schemes and responsible business framework and other voluntary guidelines on child labour in the targeted value chain; looked into migration dynamics and drivers in the fisheries and aquaculture sector; and, finally, provided agriculture/fisheries stakeholders (government, fisheries and aquaculture producer organizations) and other relevant ministries (education, social development, labour) with concrete recommendations on how to mitigate and eliminate child labour in fisheries and aquaculture.

The case study reported that in municipal fisheries in the Philippines, fishing operations are considered a family undertaking in which all members of the household participate. Because everyone contributes their share in sustaining the family and in pursuing the household's livelihood, children are also expected to take part in

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[8]   As defined under Republic Act 8550, otherwise known as the Philippine Fisheries Code of 1998, and as amended by Republic Act 10654, municipal fisheries are traditional, artisanal, subsistence or small-scale fisheries that involve the use of vessels of 3 gross tons or less as well as fishing operations that do not use fishing boats.

the operations. The study was conducted in three municipal study sites located in Fishery Management Area 1 (FMA 1). These municipalities are in two major fishing grounds in FMA 1: Lamon and San Miguel Bays. The research examined the socio-economic conditions of selected small-scale fisheries and aquaculture households and the participation of 5- to 17-year-old children from these households in small-scale fisheries and aquaculture value chain operations. The research used a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods adapted to the context in the research sites. As the study took place from January to October 2021 as COVID-19 was reaching the Philippines, the scope of data collection was expanded to include the consequences of related lockdowns, school closures and movement restrictions. For this study, 85 municipal fishing households from three municipalities were surveyed. From these, 85 household heads (or representatives) and 85 children with ages ranging from 5 to 17 were identified for survey interviews. Of the 85 children surveyed, 77 were engaged in child work (encompassing child labour and acceptable tasks)[9] in the fisheries and aquaculture sector. The other eight were engaged in other types of work such as laundry, cooking, housekeeping, construction and sales.

Table 8. **Number of respondents (adults and children) by municipality**

Municipality	Types of Respondents	
	Adult Head/ Representative Adult Member of the Household	Children Aged 5-17
Province of Quezon		
Panukulan	25	25
Infanta	31	31
Sub-Total (Quezon)	**56**	**56**
Province of Camarines Sur		
Siruma	29	29
Total Number of Respondents	**85**	**85**
Total Number of Children Engaged in Child Work (Fisheries and Aquaculture)	--	**77**
Total Number of Children Engaged in Child Work (Others)	--	**8***
Total Respondents (Adults and Children)	**170**	

*Eight of the child workers in the survey are not involved in fisheries and aquaculture operations. They engage in house chores, sales, laundry, cooking and fetching water and firewood.

Source: FAO (forthcoming). *Fishing for a Better Future: challenges and opportunities for addressing child labour in small-scale fisheries and aquaculture value chains.* Rome, FAO.

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9   See Table 1 for the distinction between *child work* and *child labour*.

Of the 85 municipal fishing households identified as respondents, 66 are represented by adult male household heads, while only 19 households are represented by adult female household heads. In the municipalities identified as study areas, municipal fishing households are predominantly represented by male adults. This is because municipal fishing in the Philippines is still considered a male-dominated occupation.

Table 9. **Representation of municipal fishing households, by gender**

Gender	Municipality			Total
	Panukulan	Infanta	Siruma	
Male	20 (80%)	30 (97%)	16 (55%)	66 (78%)
Female	5 (20%)	1(3%)	13 (45%)	19 (22%)
Total	25	31	29	85 (100%)

Source: FAO (forthcoming). *Fishing for a Better Future: challenges and opportunities for addressing child labour in small-scale fisheries and aquaculture value chains.* Rome, FAO.

In terms of age, most of the household heads belong to the middle age group, as is the general case among the municipal fishers. However, while a typical municipal fisher is around 50–60 years of age, 60 percent of the adult household respondents, particularly in the municipalities of Panukulan and Infanta, Quezon are in the age range of 31–45 years old; this indicates that the household respondents chosen are in the relatively younger cohort of municipal fishers.

Table 10. **Distribution of age ranges of the adult household respondents, by municipality**

Age Range of Household Respondents	Municipality			Total
	Panukulan	Infanta	Siruma	
18–30 years old	0	4 (12%)	0	4 (5%)
31–45 years old	22 (88%)	16 (52%)	13 (45%)	51 (60%)
46–59 years old	3 (12%)	7 (23%)	14(48%)	24 (28%)
60 years old and above	0	4 (13%)	2((7%)	6 (7%))
Total	25	31	29	85 (100%)

Source: FAO (forthcoming). *Fishing for a Better Future: challenges and opportunities for addressing child labour in small-scale fisheries and aquaculture value chains.* Rome, FAO.

As for the child workers interviewed, 53 (62 percent) of those identified as respondents are male, while 32 (38 percent) are female. There are more male child workers identified as respondents in Siruma compared to the two municipalities in Quezon.

Table 11. **Distribution of child respondents, by gender**

Gender	Municipality			Total
	Panukulan	**Infanta**	**Siruma**	
Male	11 (44%)	15 (48%)	27 (93%)	53 (62%)
Female	14 (56%)	16 (52%)	2 (7%)	32 (38%)
Total	25	31	29	85 (100%)

Source: FAO (forthcoming). *Fishing for a Better Future: challenges and opportunities for addressing child labour in small-scale fisheries and aquaculture value chains.* Rome, FAO.

In terms of age, 64 (75 percent) of those referred by the adult respondents were children aged 5–14 years of age. Only 21 (25 percent) were 15–17 years of age. The choice of child respondents was probably influenced by the notion that the allowable age for children to work is 15; hence, children below 15 are deemed by the household heads to meet the criteria for selection of respondents by the study. This could also be because children aged 5–14 are usually the ones tapped for assistance and support by the adults in their fishing activities because the older children are busy at school and/or work outside the household.

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From the research, it was noted that 93 percent of the surveyed municipal fishers rely on fishing as a primary source of income. Of these, 56 percent work as hired fishers and/or as coconut farmer to augment their household income. It was observed that there are also limited options in farming activities because transport of farm products to the mainland during this period is also limited. As such, municipal fishers in the surveyed localities need to look for other sources of livelihood to sustain the needs of their families. According to the research results, municipal fishers have relatively insecure economic tenure, compared to the fish workers from aquaculture and commercial fisheries. This is because most of them are engaged only in subsistence fishing with limited access to both capital and technology. This, in turn, translates to widespread poverty among them. In fact, in 2018, the municipal fisheries were identified as the second poorest sector in the country (Philippine Statistic Authority, 2020). Poverty among the surveyed municipal fishers was already pervasive before the COVID-19 pandemic, which compelled the national and local governments to adopt containment measures that limited the economic activities and mobility of the municipal fishers.

Among the surveyed municipal fishers, 95 percent indicated that their households were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite being able to go out on the water and fish, fishers faced market pressures as restaurants and seafood markets closed, and restrictions on the movement of goods and people led to a drop in seafood prices in the Philippines. In fact, most of the adverse effects of the pandemic mentioned are related to their livelihoods: 87 percent of the adult respondents identified reduced income as a major consequence of the pandemic. This was followed by constraints in mobility, which was identified by 68 percent of the adult respondents. The constraints in mobility, especially in selling products, was a factor for reduced income. In addition, many municipal fishers reported that the COVID-19 pandemic threat has reduced the number of buyers of their seafood products. In general, the indicated that they had to sell their fish products at a lower price and pursue alternative livelihood activities to meet their income needs. Some households also engage in backyard gardening and livestock-raising as sources of food and income for their households.

The children perceived the need to help their families to meet their household needs as an important responsibility. Fishing is considered among these communities as a family enterprise where family members do not receive compensation for their individual contribution. The number of children who worked on household- and family-related tasks also increased. Prior to COVID-19, only 6.8 percent of the children said they worked on household- and family-related tasks. After COVID-19, however, 21.25 percent of the children respondents worked on household- and family-related tasks and only 9.35 percent spent time studying school modules; the

data reported that before COVID-19 the majority of children were working around their school schedule. Asked how the COVID-19 pandemic had consequences for them, particularly when physical school was closed, 24.65 percent of the children respondents indicated that they helped more on fishing trips, while 13.6 percent of them supported other livelihood efforts of their households.

Children are prohibited from working by virtue of existing laws and policies, and mechanisms are firmly in place in the Philippines to enforce them. Putting the spotlight on fishing, however, makes the enforcement of child labour laws difficult if it is undertaken without addressing the underlying issues of poverty, depletion of fisheries resources for fishing households, and access to quality education, among others. This emphasis on fishing alone also renders the economic activities undertaken by children throughout the other facets of the fisheries value chain "invisible". The invisibility of the work that children undertake in the fisheries value chain, without which the overall outcome of development cannot be achieved, needs to be overcome. Recognizing this "invisible work" and its contribution to the household and local economies is vital in the efforts to have children included in policy discussions and development processes so that they are not merely regarded as recipients of social assistance and categorized as beneficiaries, as is often the case, but as vital components of the local economy that needs support and protection. Documenting children's participation in fisheries value chains – and at which stages and performing which tasks – is key to designing effective policies and programmes that address the drivers of using children's labour in the sector.

It must be noted that the surveyed small-scale fisheries households have not received any training or been given any opportunity to upgrade and access the requisite knowledge and skills to explore and realize value creation or value addition opportunities for their fish products. There are, of course, several other important preconditions for the effectiveness of value chain development in the context of small-scale fisheries aside from training. The lack of awareness on child labour and the very limited understanding of its risks are some of the reasons why child labour persists. An awareness-raising campaign and the institution of a child labour risk assessment system across the small-scale fisheries value chains are critical components of an effective value chain development initiative. Enabling the transition to decent work for small-scale fishers requires understanding the risks and hazards that fishers, especially child fishers, face in performing their tasks. Risk assessments to identify potential hazards could result in mitigation and control measures. In addition, the provision of technical and soft-skills training, education on occupational safety and health, entrepreneurship awareness, and information on how to access technology and financing are critical for improving the working and living conditions of fishers and moving them out of poverty.

Selected recommendations targeting small-scale fisheries:

▶ Recognize the "invisible work" of children and its contribution to the household and local economies in order to have children included in policy discussions and development processes.

▶ Document children's participation in fisheries value chains in order to design effective policies and programmes that address the drivers of using children's labour in the sector.

▶ Conduct an awareness-raising campaign and institute a child labour risk assessment system as part of an effective value chain development initiative.

▶ Provide technical and soft-skills training, education on occupational safety and health, entrepreneurship awareness, and information on how to access technology and financing, in order to improve the working and living conditions of fishers and move them out of poverty.

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Uganda:
The evolution of child labour in Uganda following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic

This case study has been produced based on the data insights from the Uganda National Household Survey (2019/2020) (UBOS, 2021).

Following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, restrictions and measures to limit the spread of the virus were implemented in Uganda, including lockdowns, curfews, movement restrictions, as well as closures of borders (Republic of Uganda, 2022). The pandemic-induced shocks and losses have often affected the more vulnerable households. With household poverty and economic vulnerability being major drivers of child labour (FAO, 2020), the pandemic can potentially affect children in the most vulnerable households and increase their likelihood of being in child labour.

While more data and evidence have been generated since the beginning of the pandemic, reliable data to assess the implications of the pandemic on child labour remain sparse. Recent data from the Uganda National Household Survey (2019/2020) (UNHS) can help fill this gap.[10] These nationally representative data include detailed information on household and individual characteristics, including labour force participation for household members aged five years and over. The labour force module includes, among other information, details about the main sector and industry of occupation as well as working conditions for children (i.e. working hours, health and safety issues). The survey was also implemented before (September 2019 – March 2020) and after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic (July–November 2020), thus providing information on these indicators for both periods (UBOS, 2021).

Using the data from the UNHS, this case study provides a short assessment of the situation of child labour in Uganda before and after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, looking specifically at child labour in rural areas and in the agriculture sector. For this assessment, we limit our sample to children aged 5 to 17 years old at the time of the survey. Since some child labour may be seasonal and vary throughout the year, especially in agriculture (FAO, 2020), we also limit our analysis to the children interviewed in the same months of the year before and after the onset of

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[10] We warmly thank the Uganda Bureau of Statistics for sharing the datasets and questionnaires with us.

the pandemic (i.e. September to November 2019 and 2020, respectively). Accounting for missing data, we use for this analysis a final sample of 10 818 children aged 5–17 years old, of whom 4 147 were interviewed before the pandemic and 6 671 after the onset of the pandemic. This analysis relies mostly on descriptive statistics and comparisons of child labour rates before and after the pandemic.

Table 12 compares the share of children in child labour[11] in Uganda for different age cohorts, before and after the onset of the pandemic. The results are disaggregated by various socio-economic characteristics (e.g. gender, location, sector of occupation). Table 12 shows that the share of children in child labour (excluding household chores) increased considerably after the onset of pandemic, from 12 to 22 percent of children in child labour. The share of both male and female children increased after the onset of the pandemic (from 15 and 8.9 percent to 24.4 and 19.4 percent, respectively). The share of children in child labour is greater in rural areas than in urban areas and also increased following the onset of the pandemic (from 13 to 25.8 percent). The share[12] of children in child labour among children working in agriculture also slightly increased after the onset of the pandemic.

Looking specifically at differences across age cohorts, the share of children in child labour is greater after the onset of the pandemic among the 5–11 and 12–13 age cohorts (23 and 37.6 percent, respectively, against 9.7 percent for the 14–17 age cohort). The increase is particularly substantial among these two cohorts, indicating that a larger share of children from these cohorts – in comparison to older children – were in child labour after the onset of the pandemic, stressing their greater vulnerability. The share of children aged 12–13 and working in agriculture in child labour also increased significantly after the onset of the pandemic, while the share of children aged 14–17 decreased. A similar trend towards increases in the share of children in child labour is observable when accounting for household chores (lower part of the table). Following the onset of the pandemic, the share of female children in child labour became greater than the share of male children, reflecting the fact that female children may have been tasked with more household chores after the onset of the pandemic.

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[11] For this assessment, we follow the definition of Uganda's national child labour legislation, as elicited by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (2021), namely children are considered children in child labour if they are aged: (1) 5–11 years and they are at work in economic activity; (2) 12–13 years doing work in economic activity other than "light work" or do work beyond 14 hours a week; or (3) 14–17 years involved in hazardous forms of work or working for an equivalent of 43 hours in a week or beyond.

[12] A share is a part or portion of a larger amount which is divided among a number of people, or to which a number of people contribute.

Figure 4. **Share of children in child labour (excluding household chores) in urban and rural areas, before and after the onset of the pandemic**

RURAL AREAS

URBAN AREAS

Before COVID-19 After COVID-19
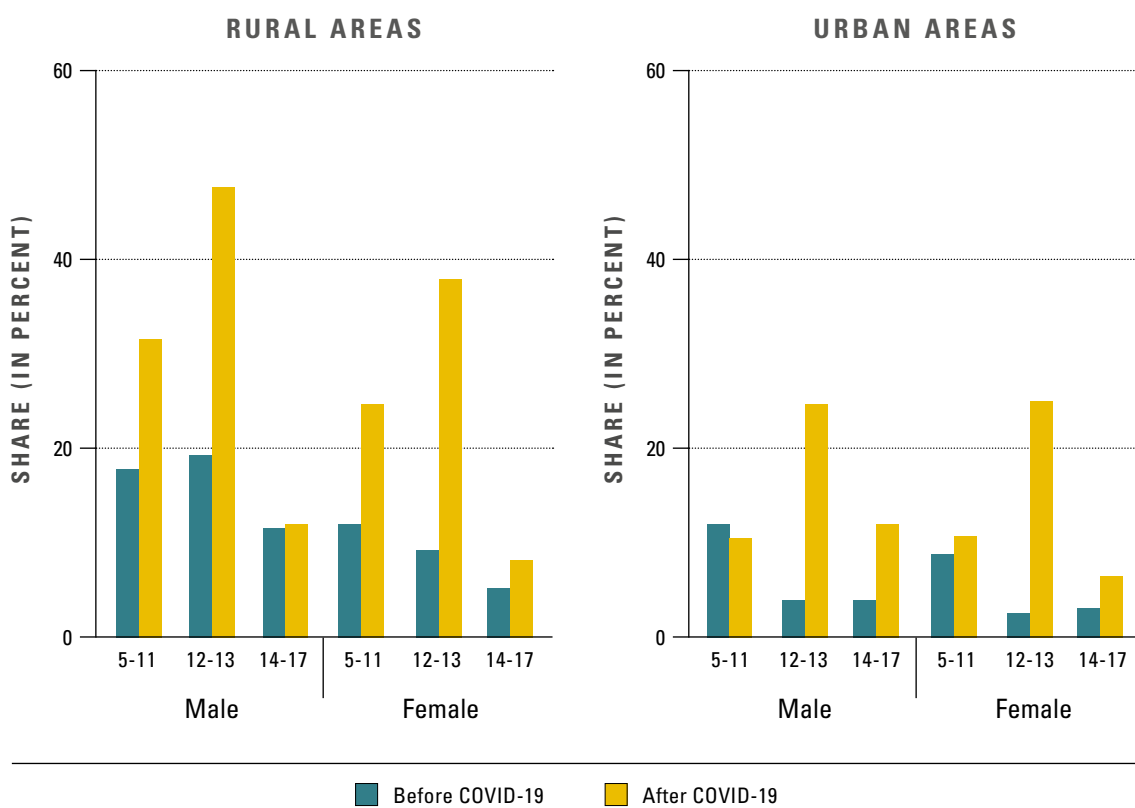
Note: Distributions generated from weighted population.

Source: UBOS (Uganda Bureau of Statistics). 2021. *2019/2020 Uganda National Household Survey*. Uganda Bureau of Statistics. https://www.ubos.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/09_2021Uganda-National-Survey-Report-2019-2020.pdf

Before the pandemic, the share of children in child labour (excluding household chores) was greater in rural areas than in urban areas (Figure 4). The share of children in child labour after the onset of the pandemic is significantly greater, for both genders as well as all age cohorts. A similar pattern can be observed when accounting for household chores (Figure 5).

Figure 5. **Share of children in child labour (including household chores) in urban and rural areas, before and after the onset of the pandemic**

Note: Distributions generated from weighted population.

Source: UBOS. 2021. *2019/2020 Uganda National Household Survey*. Uganda Bureau of Statistics. https://www.ubos.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/09_2021Uganda-National-Survey-Report-2019-2020.pdf

In the same vein, most children in child labour are found in rural areas, both before and after COVID-19 (Figure 6). The share of both boys and girls aged 12–13 and 14–17 located in urban areas increased after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. In line with the prevalence of residency in rural areas among children in child labour, most children in child labour, for both genders and all age cohorts, work in agriculture, both before and after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (Figure 7). It is also noteworthy that a larger share of female children aged 12–13 in child labour were working in agriculture, while a larger share of female children aged 14–17 in child labour were working in the production and services sector after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 6. **Location of children in child labour, before and after the onset of the pandemic**
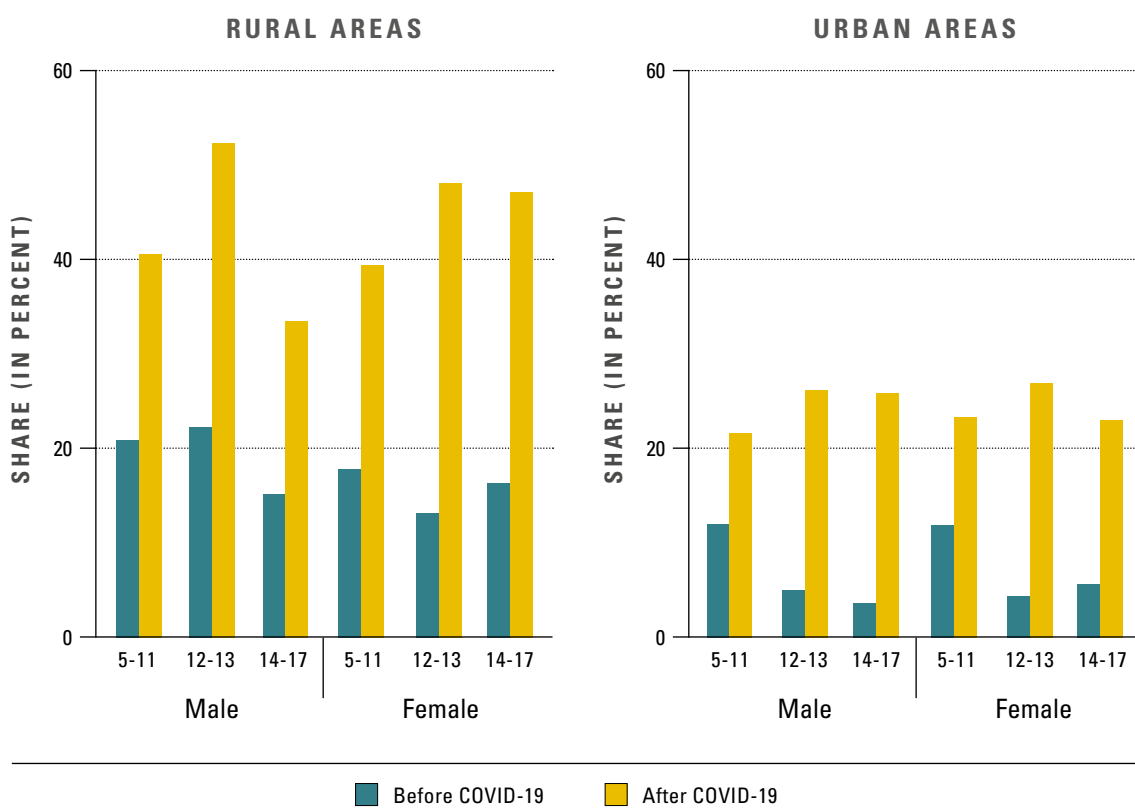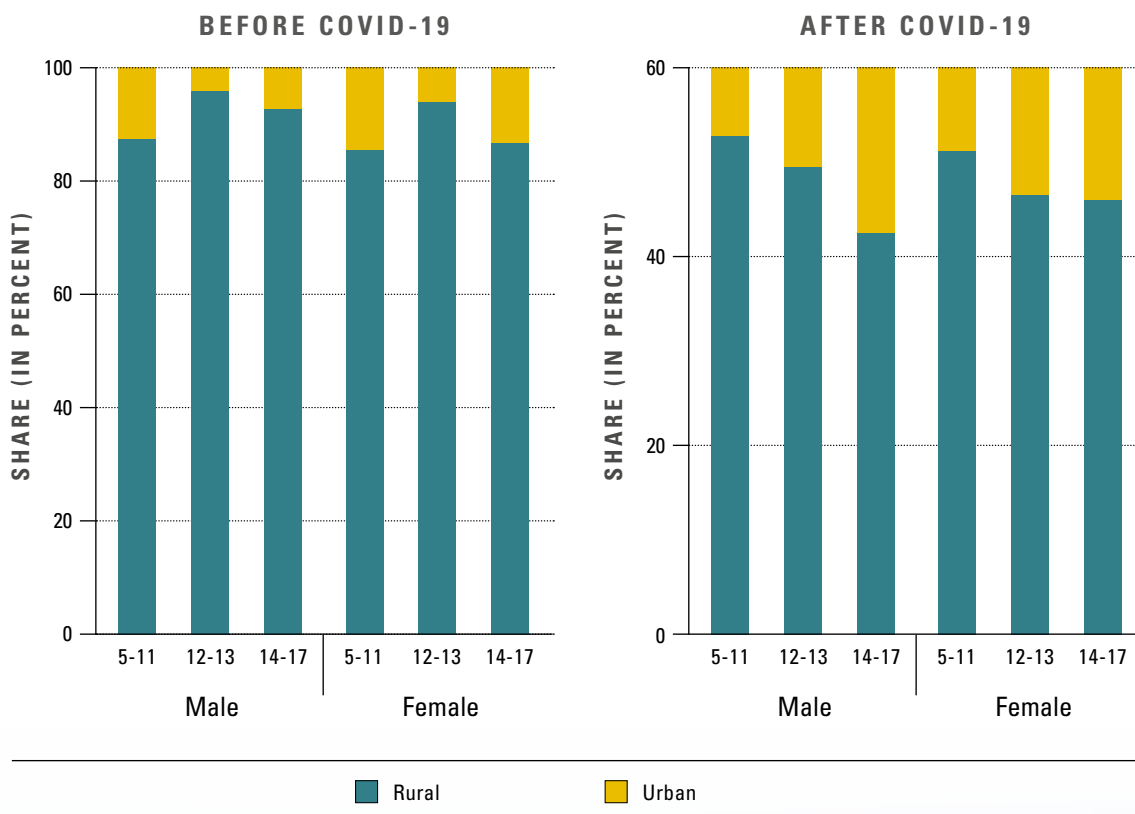
BEFORE COVID-19

AFTER COVID-19

Note: Distributions generated from weighted population.

Source: UBOS. 2021. *2019/2020 Uganda National Household Survey*. Uganda Bureau of Statistics. https://www.ubos.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/09_2021Uganda-National-Survey-Report-2019-2020.pdf

Figure 7. **Economic sector distribution among children in child labour (excluding household chores), before and after the onset of the pandemic**
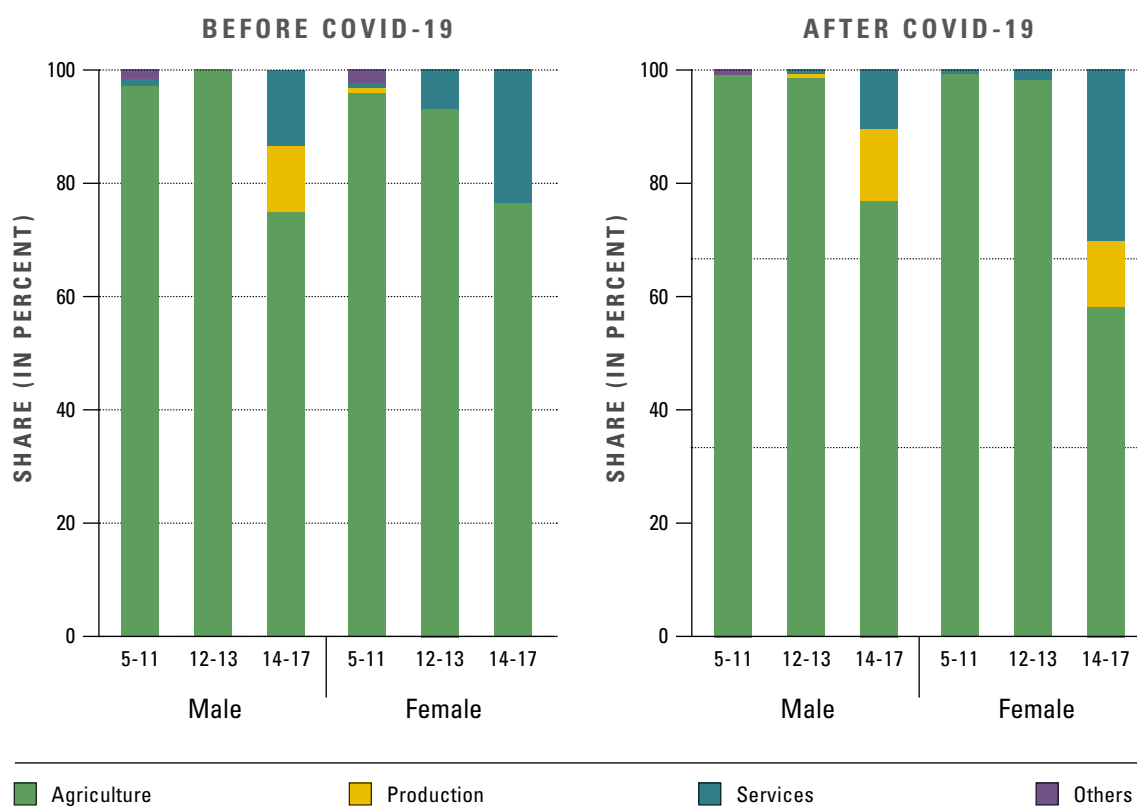
Note: Distributions generated from weighted population. Category *Others* also includes children with a missing sector.

Source: UBOS. 2021. *2019/2020 Uganda National Household Survey*. Uganda Bureau of Statistics. https://www.ubos.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/09_2021Uganda-National-Survey-Report-2019-2020.pdf

Table 13 displays the main components of child labour, before and after the onset of the pandemic, using the same disaggregation patterns. Before the onset of the pandemic, about half of the children in child labour were working children aged 5–11 (49.3 percent), followed by long hours on household chores for all children (27.3 percent). After the onset of the pandemic, most of the children in child labour were working long hours on household chores (39.7 percent), followed by working children aged 5–11 (36.2 percent). This may indicate that following the onset of the pandemic, more children started working excessive hours on household chores, possibly as the result of school closures. Looking at sex-disaggregated data, long hours on household chores affect a larger share of female children in child labour, both before and after the onset of the pandemic (41.4 and 48.3 percent, respectively). However, it is noteworthy that the share of male children in child labour affected by long hours of household chores increased after the onset of the pandemic (from 15.5 to 31.4 percent).

About 16.9 percent of children in child labour were in hazardous work (either through hazardous industries/occupations or working conditions) before the pandemic. This share declined after the onset of the pandemic, which may be the result of pandemic-induced job losses. The share of children in child labour suffering from long hours of work increased after the onset of the pandemic, including for those working in rural areas and agriculture (from 6.8 to 15.3 percent and 6.8 to 18.9 percent, respectively). This may be a sign that children had to work more after the onset of the pandemic as a response to income shocks caused by the pandemic.

While this assessment compares the situation of child labour before and after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the increase in child labour cannot be directly attributed to COVID-19 due to multiple limitations of this analysis. First, the sets of children and households interviewed before and after COVID-19 are different. As child rates probably initially vary across these households and their communities, the differences in child labour rates may be (partly) attributed to these initial differences and other factors that are not accounted for in this analysis. To control for some of these factors, we ran a logit regression accounting for some of these factors[13] (Figure 8). This regression seems to confirm that the probability of being in child labour increases after COVID-19. Nevertheless, this regression does not account for a multitude of unobserved factors and its results should be interpreted with much caution. Second, part of this increase may also be driven by a longer-term trend. As indicated in the Uganda National Survey Report 2019/2020 (UBOS, 2021), the share of children in child labour for the 12–13 and 14–17 age cohorts had already increased between 2016/2017 and March 2020 (by 4.5 and 2.9 percentage points, respectively). Part of the differences found between the pre- and post-COVID-19 samples may also be driven by this trend. Finally, the timing (i.e. the month of data collection) between the two survey waves (i.e. before and after COVID-19) presents significant differences. The distribution of households across months for each group differs significantly between the two waves. Some of the seasonal differences (from one month to another) between the two periods may also drive some of the results. Considering all these limitations, the results should be interpreted with caution and not as causal effects.

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[13] In this regression, we control for whether the household was interviewed before or after COVID-19, children and household head's age and gender, household size, as well as fixed effects for the months of interview, the location (urban or rural) and the subregion of residence.

Figure 8. **Odds ratio of the logit model on the probability of being in child labour**

Sub-region and month of interview controls included. *p<.10, **p<.05, ***p<.01

Source: UBOS. 2021. *2019/2020 Uganda National Household Survey*. Uganda Bureau of Statistics. https://www.ubos.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/09_2021Uganda-National-Survey-Report-2019-2020.pdf
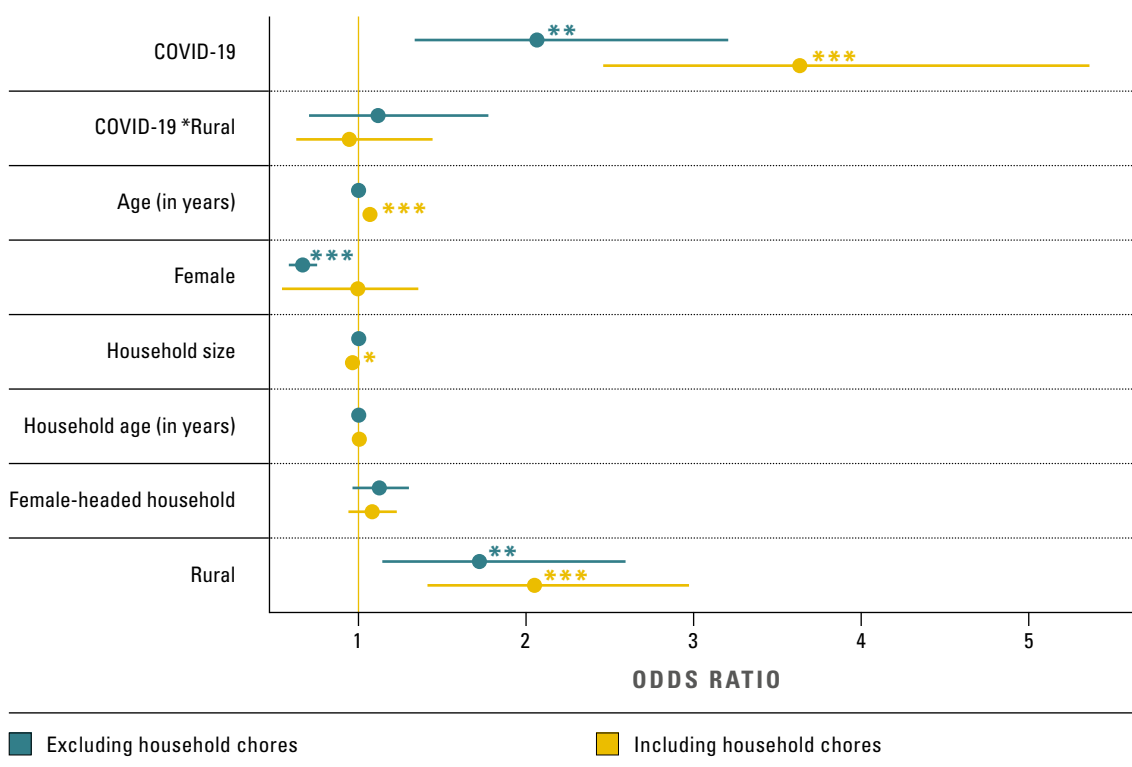
This assessment shows a significant increase in child labour in Uganda after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, although this analysis does not allow for lessons to be derived regarding the role played by COVID-19 in these increases. The share of children in child labour is high in rural areas and greatly affects both female and male children. Longer hours on household chores were also a more important component of child labour after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, with specific risks for children's education and longer-term development. Agriculture also remains the largest economic sector where children in child labour are working. As the pandemic and its consequences and implications for rural households' resilience are expected to last in the long term, the risks related to child labour (and for children's long-term development) are also equally expected to last and should thus be addressed. A better understanding of the dynamics and implications of COVID-19 on child labour and using more robust methods to address the aforementioned limitations would also be needed to generate insights and evidence that could inform policies aiming at targeting and supporting the most vulnerable children who are likely to be, and continue to be, affected by the pandemic and its long-lasting consequences.

Table 12. **Share of children in child labour (percent), before and after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.**

| | Before COVID-19 | | | | | | |
	All	Male	Female	Rural	Urban	Agri.[1]	Not Agri.[2]
Excl. household chores							
Child labour 5–17 years[3]	12.0	15.0	8.9	13.0	7.3	52.1	74.0
	(32.5)	(35.7)	(28.5)	(33.7)	(26.0)	(50.0)	(44.3)
	[4 147]	[2 051]	[2 096]	[3 510]	[637]	[990]	[47]
Child labour 5–11 years[4]	14.1	16.7	11.2	14.9	10.3	100.0	100.0
	(34.8)	(37.3)	(31.6)	(35.6)	(30.4)	(0.0)	(0.0)
	[2 389]	[1 200]	[1 189]	[2 028]	[361]	[363]	[11]
Child labour 12–13 years[5]	12.1	16.6	7.9	13.9	3.1	40.9	51.2
	(32.6)	(37.3)	(27.0)	(34.7)	(17.5)	(49.3)	(55.9)
	[655]	[305]	[350]	[557]	[98]	[213]	[5]
Child labour 14–17 years[6]	7.4	10.1	4.8	8.4	3.5	16.3	68.4
	(26.2)	(30.2)	(21.3)	(27.7)	(18.4)	(37.0)	(47.3)
	[1 103]	[546]	[557]	[925]	[178]	[414]	[31]
Incl. household chores							
Child labour 5–17 years[3]	16.5	17.7	15.3	18.2	8.9	62.0	78.2
	(37.1)	(38.2)	(36.0)	(38.6)	(28.5)	(48.6)	(41.8)
	[4 147]	[2 051]	[2 096]	[3 510]	[637]	[990]	[47]
Child labour 5–11 years[4]	18.1	19.3	16.8	19.4	12.0	100.0	100.0
	(38.5)	(39.5)	(37.4)	(39.6)	(32.6)	(0.0)	(0.0)
	[2 389]	[1 200]	[1 189]	[2 028]	[361]	[363]	[11]
Child labour 12–13 years[5]	15.4	19.5	11.7	17.6	4.8	52.0	68.8
	(36.1)	(39.6)	(32.1)	(38.1)	(21.5)	(50.1)	(51.8)
	[655]	[305]	[350]	[557]	[98]	[213]	[5]
Child labour 14–17 years[6]	13.7	13.1	14.3	15.8	4.8	34.2	72.2
	(34.4)	(33.8)	(35.0)	(36.5)	(21.4)	(47.5)	(45.5)
	[1 103]	[546]	[557]	[925]	[178]	[414]	[31]

	After COVID-19						
	All	**Male**	**Female**	**Rural**	**Urban**	**Agri.[1]**	**Not Agri.[2]**
Excl. household chores							
Child labour 5–17 years[3]	22.0***	24.4***	19.4***	25.8***	12.6***	56.4**	82.5
	(41.4)	(43.0)	(39.5)	(43.8)	(33.2)	(49.6)	(38.3)
	[6 671]	[3 383]	[3 288]	[4 995]	[1 676]	[2 529]	[79]
Child labour 5–11 years[4]	23.1***	25.3***	20.7***	28.1***	10.5	100.0	100.0
	(42.2)	(43.5)	(40.5)	(45.0)	(30.7)	(0.0)	(0.0)
	[3 759]	[1 927]	[1 832]	[2 824]	[935]	[868]	[9]
Child labour 12–13 years[5]	37.6***	41.0***	33.9***	42.9***	24.8***	71.9***	67.3
	(48.5)	(49.2)	(47.4)	(49.5)	(43.3)	(45.0)	(48.8)
	[1 124]	[563]	[561]	[840]	[284]	[586]	[13]
Child labour 14–17 years[6]	9.7**	11.8	7.5**	9.9	9.1**	11.3***	82.4
	(29.6)	(32.2)	(26.4)	(29.9)	(28.8)	(31.7)	(38.4)
	[1 788]	[893]	[895]	[1 331]	[457]	[1,075]	[57]
Incl. household chores							
Child labour 5–17 years[3]	36.5***	35.6***	37.5***	41.7***	23.6***	77.2***	85.5
	(48.1)	(47.9)	(48.4)	(49.3)	(42.5)	(42.0)	(35.5)
	[6 671]	[3 383]	[3 288]	[4 995]	[1,676]	[2 529]	[79]
Child labour 5–11 years[4]	34.9***	34.9***	34.9***	39.9***	22.3***	100.0	100.0
	(47.7)	(47.7)	(47.7)	(49.0)	(41.7)	(0.0)	(0.0)
	[3 759]	[1 927]	[1 832]	[2 824]	[935]	[868]	[9]
Child labour 12–13 years[5]	43.3***	44.8***	41.7***	50.3***	26.5***	82.9***	67.3
	(49.6)	(49.8)	(49.3)	(50.0)	(44.2)	(37.7)	(48.8)
	[1 124]	[563]	[561]	[840]	[284]	[586]	[13]
Child labour 14–17 years[6]	35.7***	31.2***	40.3***	40.1***	24.5***	54.8	86.3
	(47.9)	(46.4)	(49.1)	(49.0)	(43.0)	(49.8)	(34.7)
	[1 788]	[893]	[895]	[1 331]	[457]	[1 075]	[57]

Notes: Comparison of weighted means. [1] Working in agriculture; [2] Not working in agriculture; [3] Total child labour;
[4] Children aged 5–11 in an economic activity; [5] Children aged 12–13 years in economic activity, excluding those in light economic activity;
[6] Children aged 14–17 in hazardous work or working excessive hours.

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.10$.

Standard deviations in parenthesis and number of observations in squared brackets.

Source: UBOS (Uganda Bureau of Statistics). 2021. 2019/2020 Uganda National Household Survey (2019/20 UNHS). Kampala, Uganda Bureau of Statistics. www.ubos.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/09_2021Uganda-National-Survey-Report-2019-2020.pdf

Table 13. **Components of child labour, including household chores (in percent), before and after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.**

| | Before COVID-19 | | | | | | |
	All	Male	Female	Rural	Urban	Agri.[1]	Not Agri.[2]
Working children[3]	49.3	55.8	41.6	47.5	65.9	59.1	28.6
	(50.0)	(49.7)	(49.4)	(50.0)	(47.7)	(49.2)	(45.9)
	[757]	[388]	[369]	[681]	[76]	[617]	[35]
Hazardous industries or occupations[4]	12.0	17.8	5.0	12.3	9.6	12.9	31.8
	(32.5)	(38.3)	(21.9)	(32.8)	(29.7)	(33.5)	(47.2)
	[757]	[388]	[369]	[681]	[76]	[617]	[35]
Long hours of work[4]	6.5	4.9	8.3	6.8	3.3	6.8	18.7
	(24.6)	(21.6)	(27.7)	(25.2)	(18.0)	(25.3)	(39.5)
	[757]	[388]	[369]	[681]	[76]	[617]	[35]
Hazardous working conditions[4]	4.9	6.0	3.6	5.1	3.3	5.1	15.6
	(21.6)	(23.9)	(18.6)	(22.0)	(17.9)	(22.1)	(36.8)
	[757]	[388]	[369]	[681]	[76]	[617]	[35]
Long hours on household chores[5]	27.3	15.5	41.4	28.3	17.9	16.0	5.3
	(44.6)	(36.2)	(49.3)	(45.1)	(38.6)	(36.7)	(22.7)
	[757]	[388]	[369]	[681]	[76]	[617]	[35]

	After COVID-19						
	All	**Male**	**Female**	**Rural**	**Urban**	**Agri.[1]**	**Not Agri.[2]**
Working children[3]	36.2***	41.3***	31.0***	38.7***	25.4***	45.6***	12.6**
	(48.1)	(49.3)	(46.3)	(48.7)	(43.6)	(49.8)	(33.4)
	[2 460]	[1 207]	[1 253]	[2 037]	[423]	[1 938]	[70]
Hazardous industries or occupations[4]	4.9***	7.3***	2.4***	4.1***	8.7	5.2***	30.2
	(21.7)	(26.1)	(15.4)	(19.8)	(28.2)	(22.2)	(46.2)
	[2 460]	[1 207]	[1 253]	[2 037]	[423]	[1 938]	[70]
Long hours of work[4]	15.8***	16.9***	14.6***	15.3***	17.8***	18.9***	31.3
	(36.5)	(37.5)	(35.3)	(36.0)	(38.3)	(39.2)	(46.7)
	[2 460]	[1 207]	[1 253]	[2 037]	[423]	[1 938]	[70]
Hazardous working conditions[4]	3.4**	3.1***	3.7	3.8	1.5	3.5*	22.4
	(18.0)	(17.3)	(18.8)	(19.1)	(12.2)	(18.3)	(42.0)
	[2 460]	[1 207]	[1 253]	[2 037]	[423]	[1 938]	[70]
Long hours on household chores[5]	39.7***	31.4***	48.3**	38.1***	46.6***	26.9***	3.5
	(48.9)	(46.4)	(50.0)	(48.6)	(49.9)	(44.3)	(18.6)
	[2 460]	[1 207]	[1 253]	[2 037]	[423]	[1 938]	[70]

Notes: Comparison of weighted means. Sample limited to children in child labour. [1] Working in agriculture; [2] Not working in agriculture; [3] Children aged 5–11; [4] Children aged 12–17; [5] Children aged 5–17.

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.10$.

Standard deviations in parenthesis and number of observations in squared brackets.

Source: UBOS (Uganda Bureau of Statistics). 2021. 2019/2020 Uganda National Household Survey (2019/20 UNHS). Kampala, Uganda Bureau of Statistics. www.ubos.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/09_2021Uganda-National-Survey-Report-2019-2020.pdf

Viet Nam:
The consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on child labour in family-based agriculture

Before the onset of COVID-19, the Second National Child Labour Household Survey, conducted in 2018, (ILO and Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs of Viet Nam, 2020) indicated that around 1.75 million children (9.1 percent of Viet Nam's children) aged 5–17 years old were engaged in economic activities. Nearly 60 percent of all working children were in child labour, with 53.6 percent employed in agriculture, fisheries and forestry; almost half of the children in child labour performed hazardous work.

Among the most performed types of classified work/tasks, the following were featured highly: animal raising; growing of annual crops; growing of fruit trees; fishing; and aquaculture and processing of seafood products. Around 84 percent of children in child labour lived in rural areas (ILO and Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs of Viet Nam, 2020).

After the first international cases were detected in late January 2020, Viet Nam began instituting border closures, travel suspensions and localized lockdowns. On 1 April 2020, Viet Nam initiated a nationwide lockdown to suppress the spread of COVID-19. However, these restrictive measures had economic and social consequences. By 2021, a high percentage of households lost their jobs or experienced reduced income as a consequence of the containment measures adopted to halt the spread of the virus (Ministry of Planning and Investment, General Statistics Office, 2021). A study presenting and analysing the first consequences of COVID-19 on livelihoods and food security in Viet Nam indicated that, among the surveyed households, coping strategies included reducing the quality and quantity of meals, sending children to work, and borrowing from relatives and friends (Aaron *et al.*, 2021).

This case study illustrates the data collected from two studies on child labour in family-based agriculture with a focus on fisheries, crop farming, livestock, and citrus fruit chains in Viet Nam – Mekong River Delta region (2020) and North and Central region (2021). The studies were conducted by the Institute of Policy and Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development, with technical assistance provided by FAO. A total of 357 children, 228 parents and 146 local experts/authorities' representatives were surveyed, and data were validated in national validation workshops in 2020 and 2021. These studies took place as the first and second waves of COVID-19 were affecting Viet Nam; the scope of data collection was enlarged to take into account

the consequences of related lockdowns, school closures and movement restrictions. The children respondents participating in these two studies were asked about the reasons for working/engaging in economic activities. A small number of children perceived and consequently reported COVID-19 as a direct reason, while the majority reported wanting to contribute to supplement household income.

Such findings resonate with the data at the national level, which indicate that the average monthly income of workers decreased for the first time in five years. Gross domestic product in the third quarter of 2021 was estimated to have decreased by 6.17 percent over the same period in 2020 (ILO and Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs of Viet Nam, 2020). Furthermore, the data demonstrated that the labour market has faced a serious crisis, with millions of workers suffering job losses and income reductions. The Labour Force Survey data from 2020 and 2021 show that employment opportunities for workers have become more difficult than ever. Employed workers in agriculture, forestry and fisheries were highly affected, with more than a quarter (26.4 percent) of workers negatively affected by the pandemic, a nearly three-fold increase relative to the previous quarter in 2021. In all the agrifood system, the consequences of COVID-19 have led to disruption of operations in agriculture, including aquaculture, fishing, and processing, as well as fruit/citrus production and processing, especially during the peak periods of social distancing.

However, the epidemic does not seem to have had significant consequences on early child labour in the households participating in these studies. Nevertheless, findings of these two studies confirmed that children in families with small aquaculture farms started to work earlier than children in families with large-scale aquaculture production because of the different economic conditions of their households. In addition, the qualitative part of the questionnaire revealed reported cases of children involved in shrimp- peeling activities in informal local facilities (often in the house of the employer). Shrimp-peeling is mainly performed through piecemeal arrangements without contracts or personal protective equipment.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, in small-scale family farms producing rice and other crops, children have participated in some tasks in rice production, such as weeding, while boys engage in spraying pesticides. During harvesting, boys are involved in transporting heavy rice bags (60 kg). Working children are involved in harvesting several crops such as chili, corn, beans and mushrooms. Some children take part in other activities such as growing vegetables and weeding. These children often participate in the family agricultural work with their parents or relatives at the age of 13 but also participate as a regular labourer and work as hired labour to help their parents outside their farms.

Related to farming and animal husbandry, children in rural areas, especially in poor households and ethnic minority households, ten-year-old children were working to help their parents. In citrus fruit farms, 55.9 percent of the children respondents were engaged in economic activities. The average age for starting work was 11.2 years. Household income support was the main reason given (83.6 percent of respondents) for many working children (83.6 percent).

Based on the 2021 study, only 4 percent of children in the group of working children in the seafood fishery and aquaculture chains and 2 percent of the working children in the citrus chain said that they had to go to work due to the consequences of COVID-19. However, the pandemic means that poverty will be on the rise, and a rise in child labour is one of the directly related expected negative consequences. In addition, due to containment measures to curb the spread of the pandemic, children were learning online for a long time.

Findings from this case study on child labour in the Mekong Delta and in the North and Centre regions of Viet Nam show that the main reason for children participating in agricultural production activities is that they want to share the financial and work burden with their parents and contribute to the family's income. Poor economic conditions is a key factor leading to children dropping out of school.

Selected recommendations targeting family-based agriculture:

▶ Improve the income and livelihood of agriculture-based households as a means to reduce child labour in agriculture. Agricultural livelihood intervention models should be implemented to enhance the incomes of families with children at risk of engaging or engaged in child labour. The successful models should be supported to scale up.

▶ Support rural communities with solutions such as infrastructure development, processing and increasing added value to the agricultural sector. If the agriculture sector is to attract sufficient, well-qualified workers to be able to keep up with future demands for sustainable agricultural products, the narrative must change from food production as hard work to food production as a desirable occupation.

Part III
Concluding reflections and recommendations

The data available in the case studies presented in this paper indicate that the combination of lower participation in school (Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Lebanon and the Philippines), increased poverty (Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Viet Nam and the Philippines) and pre-existing situations of economic fragility (notably in the case of farmers in Lebanon) led to an increase in child labour in agriculture. This is in line with the inferences that can be made for cases where only quantitative data is available such as Uganda. On the other hand, more information is needed where this increase was not observed, such as the case study for Honduras.

This increase in the prevalence of child labour after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic is in line with the observed effects of previous pandemics and shocks on child labour. A recent review by Kechagia and Metaxas (Kechagia and Metaxas, 2021) shows that pandemics are usually associated with an increased demand for child labour, as well as absenteeism and higher dropout rates in school. For instance, the school closures resulting from the Ebola crisis also affected children in child labour in Sierra Leone, with many children reporting taking new roles and responsibilities to support their household. Many children also reported not being able to return to school, unable to pay for the school fees as a result of the economic impacts of the Ebola crisis (Save the Children *et al.*, 2015). This could eventually have long-term impacts on these children, who could be more vulnerable to child labour and trapped in poverty over time. In addition, income and non-income shocks can lead children to work more or longer hours as a response to these shocks, resulting in increased child labour in agriculture or rural areas – especially in the most vulnerable households (Beegle, Dehejia and Gatti, 2006; Bandara, Dehejia and Lavie-Rouse, 2015). Evidence gathered through the case studies above confirms that

the COVID-19 pandemic seems to affect child labour through similar mechanisms than previous health crises, through school closures or income and non-income shocks affecting rural households, especially the most vulnerable.

The distinctive aspect of the COVID-19 pandemic is that school closure denied to a certain extent the possibility for households to choose between work and education for their children.

It is still too early to know the long-term impact of the pandemic on child labour in agriculture, as the socio-economic effects, especially for low-income households are still being felt, and in many cases are worsening. Thus, in addition to the short-term impacts observed through the case studies included in this paper, it is crucial to consider potential longer-term impacts. The framework of the vicious cycle of child labour can be a useful tool to assess the different pathways that lead to, increase or perpetuate child labour in agriculture. Notably, special attention will need to be given to assess whether or not children (and which children) went back to school following the reopening of schools.

The crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic shows how rapidly progress in addressing child labour can be reversed; it also calls for urgent action. This section shares areas of interventions that could be explored to address child labour in agrifood systems in the context, and in the aftermath, of such a crisis. It draws on existing knowledge about approaches that can contribute to set in motion a virtuous cycle for children, rural communities and agrifood systems.

In the context of recovery plans, the paradigm of building back better should encompass child labour and its elimination in agrifood systems.

The following recommendations about areas of interventions are also in line with the different related points of the Durban Call to Action.

The Durban Call to Action indeed ranks *Ending Child Labour in Agriculture* as the second top priority to accelerate progress towards Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 8.7 and the elimination of child labour in all its forms. By placing the elimination of child labour in agriculture so high within the priorities of the Durban Call to Action, the 5th Global Conference has called on all agricultural actors to urgently do more on all the below areas.

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Knowledge generation and data collection

The preparation of this paper revealed the gap in knowledge and data collected on the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on child labour in agrifood systems. The full consequences of the pandemic, and how different people have coped with it remain undetermined, but the preliminary findings from case studies collected clearly indicate that increased poverty and vulnerability of households, in particular small-scale producers and fishers in rural areas, combined with school closures led to – or increased the risk of – child labour as a coping strategy.

Selected priority areas of intervention[14] to explore for this (*as well as the implications of different stakeholders)* include:

▶ **Expanding efforts to compare pre- and post-pandemic data on child labour** to detect new and emerging patterns of child labour and help manage actions accordingly through updated national child labour surveys, including a COVID-19 module, targeted rapid assessments focusing on child labour included in vulnerability assessments and broader livelihoods measurements, and socio-economic analysis efforts as part of the international community's efforts to build-back better *(governments through national agricultural research institutions, international agricultural research institutions, international financial institutions, international organizations and international NGOs)*.

▶ **Systematically disaggregating data by subsectors in agriculture and segments of agrifood value chains, age, gender, and tasks undertaken by children** *(governments through national agricultural research institutions and extension agents, NGOs, international agricultural research institutions)*.

▶ **Collecting more information and data on the situation of children in the aftermath of schools reopening**, especially in rural areas, and school re-enrollment/dropout rates, disaggregated by gender and school level (primary, lower and upper secondary education).[15] This could be done through existing child labour monitoring systems, surveys or assessments undertaken in areas or value chains that have been particularly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, by integrating child labour modules/questions *(governments through national agricultural research institutions and extension agents, NGOs, international agricultural research institutions)*.

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14 In line with point 18 and point 23 of the Durban Call to Action.

15 Other data collection tools for identifying the needs of affected populations are also being developed and should incorporate questions or modules on child labour.

▶ **Consulting women, men, boys and girls, including child protection groups** when collecting data to understand the changing situation in a specific community, identify risks and mitigation measures, and design tailored interventions *(governments through national agricultural research institutions and extension agents, NGOs, international agricultural research institutions)*.

▶ **Supporting information- and data-sharing** through existing online platforms on food security, protection, education and rural development donors' groups, and across countries, research institutes and development partners, to monitor the consequences of the pandemic on agriculture, food security, incomes and child labour *(governments, NGOs, international agricultural research institutions, international development organizations)*.

▶ **Evaluating the consequences of recovery plans and investments with a child-labour lens**, by integrating specific indicators, to understand their effectiveness in building rural households' resilience and contributing to eliminate child labour, and to build evidence on what works (and what does not work) *(governments through national agricultural research institutions and extension agents, resource partners, international development organisations, including international financial institutions)*.

▶ **Designing and implementing rapid data collection response systems** to assess the consequences of possible future crisis situations on children's involvement in child labour *(governments through national agricultural research institutions, international agricultural research institutions)*.

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Policy responses

It is undeniable that the COVID-19 pandemic has increased poverty and food insecurity, which are root causes of child labour. Coordinated and comprehensive responses to the consequences of the pandemic targeting vulnerable rural households are essential. How economic recovery plans and investments target and support those households and their livelihoods will be key.

Social Protection[16]

Contribute to poverty elimination by:

▶ **Scaling up local shock-responsive social protection measures and interventions,** including social assistance, targeting shock-affected rural households that generally depend on farming, livestock, forestry, fishing or aquaculture for their livelihoods to enable them to meet their basic needs; and considering child labour at every step in the design, implementation and evaluation of these measures and interventions *(governments through inter-ministerial collaboration, international development organizations)*.

▶ **Tailoring social protection interventions to respond to the needs and characteristics of different communities and subsectors**, inclusive of small-scale producers, workers, migrants and other vulnerable groups, and following a gender- and nutrition-sensitive approach *(governments through extension agents, NGOs, producer organizations)*.

▶ **Combining social protection with agricultural policies and programmes adapted to subsectors and value chains**, which prevents lack of liquidity and increases capacity to manage risk (e.g. agricultural insurance and microcredit, natural resources management) *(governments through inter-ministerial collaboration)*.

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[16] In line with area of priority V of the Durban Call to Action.

Education[17]

Increase school participation, better skills, employability and decent work by:

▶ **Ensuring access to formal quality education for children living in under-serviced rural areas** and whose families depend on agriculture for their livelihoods, by organizing transportation and/or offering mobile school services (e.g. vans serving as mobile schools) *(governments, international donors' community).*

▶ **Creating opportunities to ensure rural children's access to informal education**, such as junior farmer field and life skills, children's ecological clubs, and other educational opportunities to complement or temporarily replace formal education in case of school closures, to ensure a "bridging" function from informal to formal education *(governments, NGOs, international organizations);*

▶ **Prioritizing the integration of agricultural (and other vocational and life) skills and knowledge into primary and lower secondary education** – for example, through school farming and home-grown school gardens projects – to promote an interest in agriculture and increase education's relevance for children's guardians *(governments, NGOs, international organizations).*

▶ **Increase school participation by encouraging and providing support and incentives to families and out-of-school children to restart schooling** and avoid permanent dropouts among both girls and boys – for example, through greater public and private investments in rural areas to ensure all children have access to quality and free education (schools, materials and teachers), and by exploring alternative pathways to deliver remote learning (including digital learning solutions (UNICEF and AUC, 2021)) in cases of future disruptions *(governments through extension agents, NGOs, producer organizations, resource partners).*

▶ **Promoting skills training opportunities and vocational education in agrifood systems and business** to ensure a smooth school-to-work transition for older children *(enterprise-based solutions and models, governments, public–private partnerships).*

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[17] In line with point 29 and point 32 of the Durban Call to Action.

Household- and community-level responses

The case studies show the diversity of situations and call for interventions that are tailored to the challenges and characteristics of targeted communities and that consider the specificities of the child labour phenomenon in each region and community. Interventions should be gender-transformative: in crises, girls' early marriage might become more prevalent and the burden of combined agricultural work and domestic chores can increase; for boys, greater responsibility as a way of compensating for the loss of income due to a crisis, can lead to an increase in hazardous work and migration in search of work, putting children at increased risk of exploitation.

▶ **Improve resilience and food and nutrition security by combining humanitarian assistance with livelihood support for the most vulnerable households**[18] – for example, continuing and scaling up (as needed) distributions of agricultural inputs (e.g. seeds, tools, livestock feed) based on households' needs, and supporting livelihood diversification, home-based food production (e.g. backyard gardens and poultry) and income-generating activities based on market needs *(governments through extension agents, NGOs, producer organizations, international development organizations)*.

▶ **Increase the capacity to innovate and foster better livelihoods in rural areas by facilitating and supporting local value chains**[19] – and local value addition – to meet communities' food needs and provide income-generating activities for rural households, including youth, based on market opportunities *(governments through extension agents, NGOs, producer organizations, private sector)*.

▶ **Provide decent work, better skills and employability by facilitating access to vocational training**[20] for adolescents and to decent work opportunities for those of legal working age *(governments through extension agents, NGOs, producer organizations, private sector)*.

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[18] In line with point 13 of the Durban Call to Action.

[19] In line with point 17 of the Durban Call to Action.

[20] In line with point 17 of the Durban Call to Action.

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