

PRACTICAL GUIDE

# AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVES and decent work in Latin America

actions and measures for the eradication of child labor





## Practical guide

# Agricultural cooperatives and decent work in Latin America:

actions and measures for the eradication  
of child labor



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# 1

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What is decent work?



The concept of decent work refers to the possibility of accessing decent employment, which corresponds to the aspirations of people, which generates a fair income, with safe conditions in the workplace and social security for those who work and their families.

It also provides for the guarantee of freedom of expression of opinions, the right to organize and gather and equal treatment and opportunities for women and men. The concept of decent work, originally promoted by the ILO, has been integrated into the most important human rights declarations, resolutions and outcome documents of major UN conferences. The four pillars of the Decent Work Agenda – job creation, social protection, rights at work and social dialogue – have become central elements of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Cooperatives have a remarkable potential relative to the implementation of decent work measures and the Sustainable Deve-

lopment Goals (SDGs) and can contribute significantly to the achievement of goal 8 (decent work and economic growth) and goal 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) of the 2030 Agenda, especially media. to promote, boost and implement international labor standards” (ILO, 2022).

Goal 8, among its specific targets, includes:

“8.7 Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labor, end contemporary forms of slavery and trafficking in persons and ensure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labor, including the recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labor in all its forms”.

# 2

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## Child labor



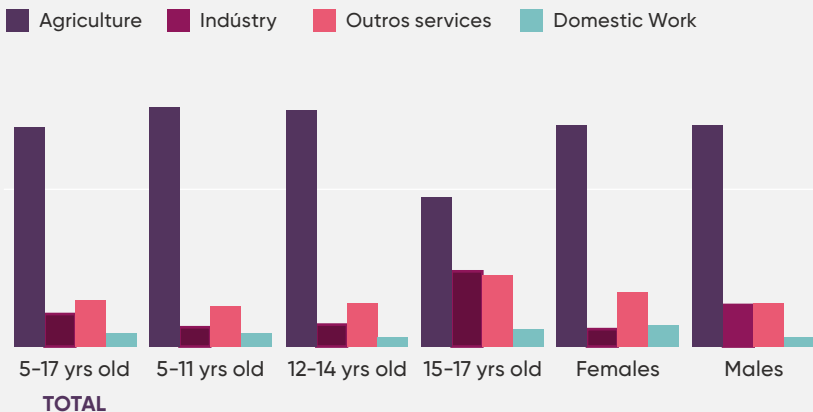


Child labour has significant socio-economic consequences in the short, medium and long term, affecting children, parents, communities, businesses and countries. It involves health risks and risks for the lives of minors that extend into adulthood, including school desertion, poverty that increases the gap between rich people and people with fewer resources, low productivity and social risks (drug addiction, prostitu-

tion, delinquency), among others. The agricultural sector involves most of the child labor in the world, therefore the role of agricultural cooperatives for its eradication can be fundamental. It's important to keep in mind that each country has legislation dedicated to child labor, so norms may vary depending on the country.

### The agricultural sector has the greatest amount of child labor in the world

Percentage of children between 5 and 17 years of age in child labor per economic sector and gender



Source: ILO and UNICEF: Child labor: Global estimates 2020, trends and the road forward (New York, 2021).

While the eradication of child labor should be the target to obtain, current labor market conditions in many rural areas in Latin America mean that the contribution of child labor remains fundamental to the livelihood of family agriculture.

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*In this sense, coordinated efforts between civil society actors (NGOs), cooperatives and States is essential through the implementation of national plans and projects, the proposal of clear goals and the evaluation of results.*

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However, actions can be implemented to eradicate hazardous forms of child labor and to reduce child labor of children under 14 years of age as much as possible. It is essential to raise awareness and provide an adaptation to the needs of communities. In this sense, coordinated efforts be-

tween civil society actors (NGOs), cooperatives and States is essential through the implementation of national plans and projects, the proposal of clear goals and the evaluation of results. Thus, coordinated efforts are needed for assistance in the guidance and supervision of member families of the cooperative in those activities that represent risks to the health of children and that affect the hours that should be invested in learning at school and play time. Impact objectives must also be considered when formulating public policies for the reduction and eradication of child labor.

# 3

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Measures and actions that  
cooperatives can use to  
eradicate child labor

According to the ILO, there are several actions that cooperatives can take towards the eradication of child labor. Some of the prevention measures that can be put in place are:

- Include a clause in statutes prohibiting child labor
- Develop specific policies and/or action plans to eliminate child labor within cooperatives
- Include child labor issues in the agenda of the General Assembly and the Board of Directors.
- Raise awareness of child labor and the importance of children's education among members and the community.
- Establish savings and credit schemes.
- Support members in sending their children to school (to at least complete mandatory education).
- Make agreements with the schools so that the cooperative acts as guarantor until the member can pay for school fees.
- Promote school feeding programs for children (cooperatives could provide some products free of charge or at reduced prices).
- Advocate with local authorities for the implementation of measures to eliminate child labor, including, for example, access to education and sponsorship of school feeding programs.

### Removal measures:

- Partner with other actors in the supply chain.
- Refer children to other organizations that could care for them (including schools and public service providers).

- Protect children who have reached the minimum working age by improving occupational safety and health, working conditions and workplace arrangements.
- Be part of a special work force in collaboration with law enforcement agencies.
- Assess child labor within the cooperative and within members' operations.
- Monitor law/policy implementation.
- Establish reporting systems as part of the child labor clause of the cooperative's statutes or child labor policy/action plan.

## Monitoring Measures:

- Create a committee to monitor child labor or a child labor focal point in the cooperative.
- Identify indicators for child labor monitoring.
- Ensure that children who were removed do not return to work or move to another community to work.
- Be part of the child labor committees formed at community level.
- Link members and their families to state services such as health/hospitals, insurance and cash transfers. Cooperatives could also establish an insurance plan for its members.

*Source: "El rol de las cooperativas en la prevención y eliminación del trabajo infantil. Guía del facilitador para capacitar a la gerencia, el personal y los miembros de las cooperativas agrícolas",*

# 4

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## Good practices



An example of State-NGO and cooperative joint action for the eradication of child labor can be found in the Proyecto Semilla (Seed Project), developed in Peru by three NGOs: Fundación Desarrollo y Autogestión (Development and Self-Management Foundation) (active in Ecuador, Peru, Argentina and Bolivia), Desco (Centro de Estudios y Promoción del Desarrollo, Perú) (Studies Center and Development Promotion, Peru) and World Learning (United States). This is a pilot project that emerged within the National Strategy for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor (ENPETI, for its acronym in Spanish) 2012-2021, whose objective is to maintain joint effort between the State and civil society in an intersectoral and interdisciplinary manner. The challenge of ENPETI is to eliminate hazardous child labor and minimize work in children under 14 years of age, through the implementation of national plans and projects, the proposal of clear goals and results evaluations.

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*The challenge of ENPETI is to eliminate hazardous child labor and minimize work in children under 14 years of age.*

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The work team of the Semilla project, together with the technicians of the Villa Rica Golden Coffee cooperative, was working in coordination for assistance in the guidance and supervision of the member families of the Cooperative in those activities that represent risks for the health of children and affecting the hours that should be devoted to learning in school and play time, as well as the use of chemical, toxic or contaminant substances. ►



Work with families has been a process which has included accompaniment, education and discussion, which has been producing radical changes within the cooperative in this regard.

The Semilla project gave rise in 2019 to the SELTI certification—Sello Libre de Trabajo Infantil (Seal Free of Child Labor), granted by an international certifier, which has a two-year renewable duration and implies having a social responsibility action within the cooperatives, although the seal can also be granted to traditional companies.



# 5

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Useful tools

BORDA, Aníbal y RUIZ, Willy. “Producción rural libre de trabajo infantil. Manual” Lima: desco / DyA, 2016.

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