

ADDRESSING CHILD LABOUR IN SUPPLY CHAINS

INTRODUCTION

Global March Against Child Labour (GMACL) has identified addressing child labour in agriculture in particular, and in domestic and global supply chains in general, as the key priorities that need attention, intervention and resources if the world is to make significant progress towards zero child labour by 2025. With a holistic approach that combines the 'whole of supply chain' action with community participation using best practices and advocacy at all levels, GMACL aims to target the issue of child labour in supply chains and simultaneously strengthen leadership of global south based organisations and stakeholders to also ensure child labour free supply chains.

BEST PRACTICES

▶ Child Friendly Village Model (CFV)

A CFV creates a community where no child is in exploitative labour, all children are in schools and children and adults participate in the decision making processes of the village with respect to their rights.

GMACL believes that systemic change can only be achieved when the affected - children and community become change agents. Thus, in a CFV, focus is on community participation and decentralised governance through forming community groups (Children's Parliament, Youth Groups and Women's Groups) that are educated and empowered to know their fundamental rights and advocate for them with the local governments to realise the same. This process of community engagement, in combination with an inclusive gender approach, enables an environment to combat structural inequalities to change attitudes towards harmful norms and traditions that cause violations of children's rights and hinder community development.

Through sensitisation on rights of all community members (women, men, girls, boys), and democratic participation opportunities for all, community ownership and collective problem solving attitude is built. The model also fosters cross-linkages with different government departments like education, labour, health, social welfare, etc., and their participation for overall delivery of services and access to rights.



Further, the rights-based approach makes the model sustainable as upon exit from the intervention area, the communities can continue to advocate and realise their rights through enhanced knowledge and capacity gained during the process. A key element of CFV in GMACL's implementation design is a school feeding programme to encourage school enrolment and retention. of body text

Outcome and Impact of CFV

- Re-enrolment of out of school children
- Tackling of teacher absenteeism
- Provision of separate toilets for girls in school avoiding their drop-out
- Advocating for quality mid-day meals in schools
- Stopping child marriages by Children's Parliament members
- Gaining access to different social welfare schemes
- Addressing child labour in supply chains such as mica mining

This model has also been used for advocacy at regional, national and international levels with governments as well as with private sector to address child labour.

▶ Child Labour Monitoring System (CLMS)

The CLMS is an active and coordinated process used to regularly monitor and address children in child labour or at risk of it, in a particular defined area (community/district, etc). Its objective is as a result of monitoring, ensure that children are protected from exploitative and hazardous work.

Key activities include:

- Regularly repeated direct observations to identify child labourers and determining risks to which they are exposed
- Referral of these children to services (education, health, vocational training, etc.)
- Verification that they have been removed and tracking them afterwards to ensure that their situation has improved

Outcome and Impact of CLMS

The model has been used in Ghana to address child labour in cocoa sector, in Indonesia and Philippines in the fishing sector, and in many other countries. We propose using a combination approach which has community participation in it as a key feature.

CLMS helps to mainstream child labour in government work by not only enhancing the government's accountability but also supporting its work through participation of other stakeholders. In this way, it also facilitates coordination and cooperation with different stakeholders including local industries and employers not only to share information, but also implement joint solutions.

▶ Child Labour Free Seal (CLFS)



Illustrative picture

The CLFS model allows companies, associations and informal producing units such as communities and farmers to enter socially responsible markets and promote their products free of child labour.

The seal is the first step for an informal production unit to be able to comply with international standards and maintain more transparency as they are directly linked with the government without middlemen or suppliers. The producer community or informal unit has to agree to follow certain standards to apply for the seal issued by the government. Such a model makes it possible for the communities to also access the bigger market to increase livelihood and generate a living income. Being part of the seal increases their visibility making them less vulnerable to being exploited as the seal is directly issued by the government.

Outcome and Impact of CLFS

This model has been used in Peru and Mexico to address child labour in global and domestic supply chains. When communities apply for a seal to the government they will also fall under a monitoring system of the government for better transparency. The community will then also be directly linked to global supply chains and therefore have better market access and can ask for higher prices. As this is done on a community level, farmers can collectively engage and increase their bargaining power for better prices for their products and also promote their work to attract foreign buyers.



OUR APPROACH

GMACL's approach is centered upon addressing the issue of child labour holistically through community participation, ownership and strengthening of civil society leadership at all levels using these and other best practices. This is further combined with 'whole-of-supply chain' action with gender as a cross-cutting issue that also allows understanding of the (gender) inequalities perpetuating child labour and more sustainable ways to address those accordingly.

Such an approach not only enables prevention of child labour and detecting of weak systems responsible for and perpetuating it, but also keeps communities at the center, using area based good practices which in turn creates an ecosystem for sustainable and child labour free supply chains.

In the case of CLMS, the community itself is sensitised and empowered via CFV activities and keeps a track of the out of school children making them equal partners in monitoring progress to ensure there is no child labour which further makes them more accessible and more qualified to apply for the CLFS. This also enables overcoming certain weak points of other interventions such as certification schemes, as they often lack the monitoring aspect.

As a community keeps track of the out-of-school children, the records only need to be checked by government officials in order to continue the seal. However, the companies can also have access to such records for monitoring and full transparency of their supply chain so that they are able to pay a fair price to the actual farmer/producer. Further, a company can also use blockchain technology to make sure no foreign products are entering their supply chain.

In a nutshell, the rights awareness and sensitisation process through which GMACL engages with the community in a CFV serves as a stepping stone for their collective participation and action, enabling them as vigilantes of protection of children. A CLMS group formation gives the community in a CFV, the autonomy to monitor and report the progress indicators of children's school attendance and withdrawal of children from work, with the incentive of getting a CLFS by the support of government and local NGOs. Eventually, such a community in a CFV can successfully sell their products to foreign buyers with increased bargaining power as their community is child labour free, making their product supply chain transparent and traceable.

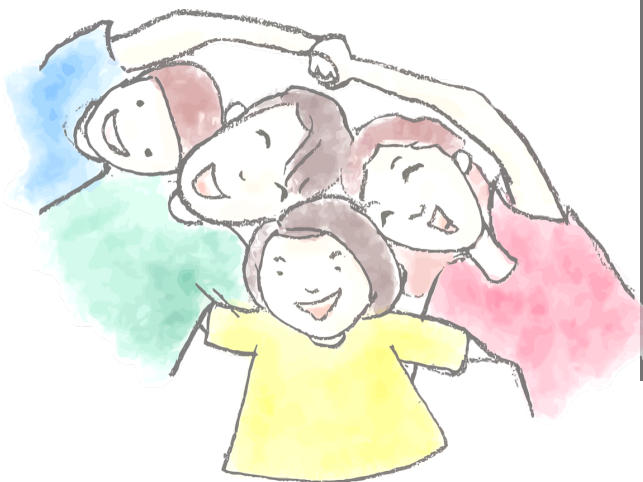
The interconnectedness of three key components of the approach, i.e. CFV; CLMS and CLFS with a gender responsive lens addresses child labour in supply chains, enhances the income of farmers and communities at a grassroots level with the help of the local government and other key stakeholders. This integrated approach is based on years of experience with the constituent elements of CFV, CLMS, and CLFS and is a proven means for reducing child labour and removing children from dangerous working situations.



GENDER

Including an analytical framework, that situates gender as a cross-cutting issue while addressing child labour has increasingly become a priority for GMACL. In recent years, the correlation of child labour dynamics and gendered norms, systems of oppression such as patriarchy, social structures of hierarchy such as caste and class and rural poverty, have become more explicit in the organisation's approach towards child labour. This can be seen in recent GMACL research on child labour in agricultural crops such as sugarcane in India and Uganda and the development of an advocacy tool on gender-responsive due diligence.

This intersectional aspect is akin to GMACL's holistic approach to address child labour as it will help in addressing the issue by also taking into consideration how gender inequalities embedded in the community and social environment limit opportunities and determine pull and push factors for child labour to exist, affecting differently girls from boys. Understanding child labour and its root causes using such a nuanced gender lens approach allows for creating a more intersectional picture of child labour and building gender transformative interventions for its sustained eradication.



OUR EXPERIENCE - SOME EXAMPLES OF OUR CURRENT AND PAST WORK IN SUPPLY CHAINS

GMACL has continued to be a Southern-led NGO, exclusively working to address child labour and challenges related to access to quality education for all for more than 20 years. Due to its global network of civil society, expertise and knowledge, GMACL participates in different platforms, groups, networks, events, etc. - all of strategic importance to its mission of ending child labour. Some of these include:

- Key player and contributor in the four Global Conferences on Child Labour, last one held in Argentina in 2017
- Under the Dutch International Responsible Business Conduct (IRBC) agreements, GMACL is a part of the sectoral dialogues in food and metal sector
- Representing civil society voice on child labour in the Global Coordinating Group of Alliance 8.7
- Organised the first global conference on child labour in agriculture in 2012
- Implemented a 3 year project to address child labour in ready made garments in India GMACL in collaboration with the Centre for Responsible Business drafted practical framework document for two sectors, i.e. garments and fisheries for child friendly supply chains
- Research on child labour in different products - cotton, garments, spices, shrimp and sugarcane
- Currently, GMACL is working on addressing child labour in shrimp and coffee supply chains in Bangladesh and Uganda respectively using an area based approach and a CLMS
- Initiator and co-organiser of the 1st ever global event on child labour in global supply chains in the Netherlands in January 2020
- Over 73,000 children have been protected through the CFVs. Further, CFV has been replicated in Uganda enrolling 1,200 children, in child labour or at risk of child labour, in schools. It is currently being implemented as per local context in Nepal.

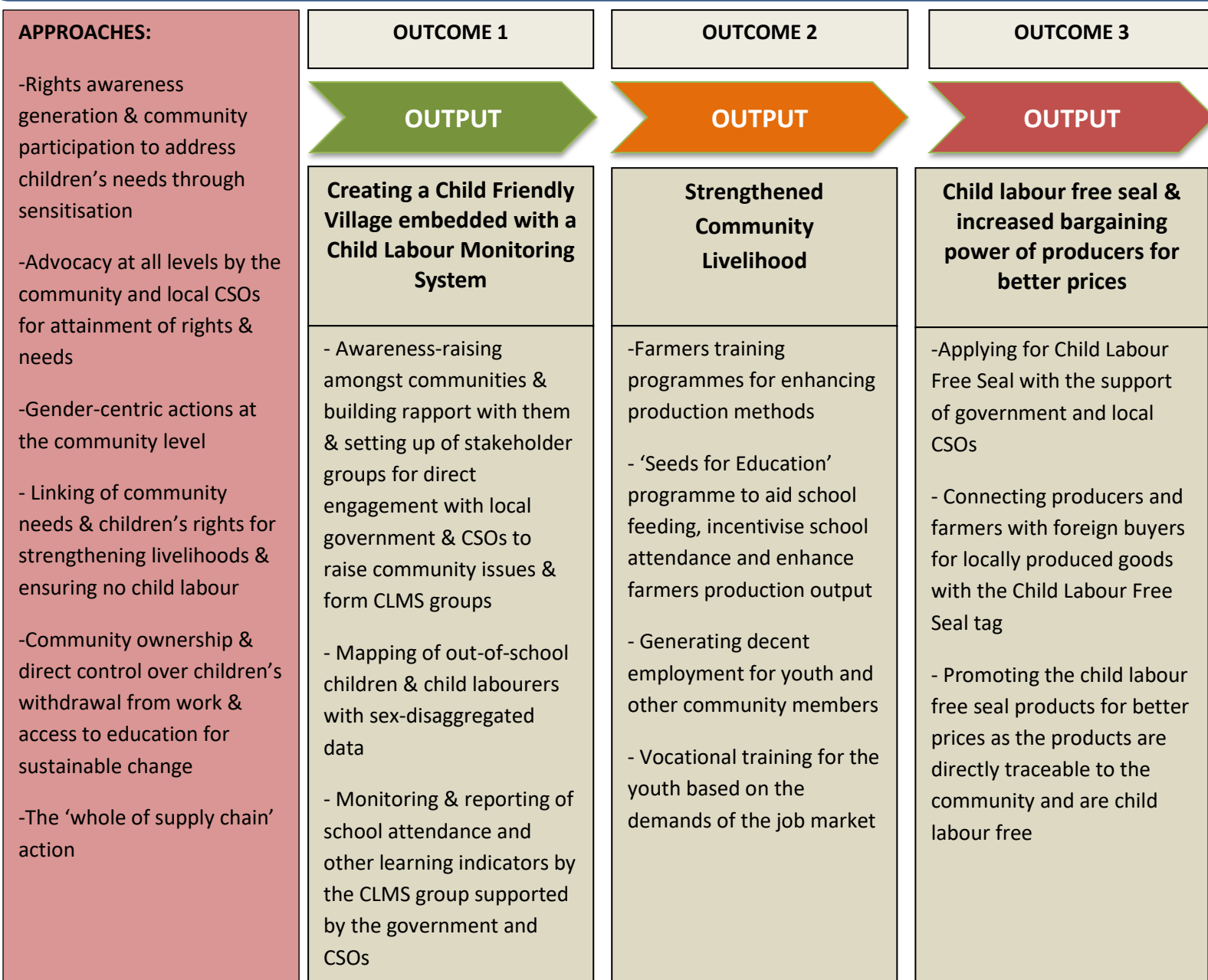
10 top things this approach ensures

1. No child labour
2. School enrolment and retention - better education outcomes
3. Increased community participation and community-led development with a focus on children, women and youth
4. Changed community attitudes and practices towards respecting human rights of children
5. Addressing gender inequality
6. Direct relationship between the government and the communities and relationship of trust between communities, businesses and governments
7. Community monitoring of child labour which in turn also ensures transparent supply chains for businesses
8. A child labour free product that is verifiable and traceable back to the producers
9. Strengthened bargaining power amongst producers
10. Capacity building of actors and stakeholders in Global South



Theory of Change – Addressing Child Labour in Supply Chains

Creating Child Labour Free Supply Chains through Child Labour Free Communities



LONG TERM IMPACTS

1. **Strengthening collective action through rights-awareness amongst communities for establishing direct community & social control over the withdrawal of children from work and improved access to education**
2. **Introducing changes at the level of knowledge, attitudes and practices amongst community members and stakeholders towards eradication of child labour**
3. **Addressing the needs of the community, especially decent livelihood in a sustainable manner to keep children out of child labour and build back better**