Strengthening Area Based Approach To Address Child Labour

TECHNICAL PAPER

About Us

The Global March Against Child Labour (Global March) is a worldwide network of trade unions, teachers' associations, and civil society organisations (CSOs) that work together towards the shared development goals of eliminating and preventing all forms of child labour, slavery, and trafficking and ensuring access by all children to free meaningful and good quality public education.

Our mission is to harness the collective strength of our network to tackle systemic inequalities, reduce socio-economic barriers and diminish vulnerabilities that create the ecosystem for child labour to thrive.

What we do

- ➤ Developing and collating knowledge-based evidence

- ➤ Building and strengthening a worldwide movement of stakeholders

- ➤ Spearheading advocacy activities in partnerships on policies and programmes

- ➤ Fostering meaningful and positive social change through awareness-raising

Abstract

This technical paper provides a conceptual and analytical overview of key models and tools derived from the Area-Based Approach (ABA). Using contemporary examples, including Global March Against Child Labour (Global March) interventions and projects, the paper highlights key characteristics, thematic priorities, impacts and challenges pertaining to the efficacy of the approach with regard to evolving root causes of child labour, in particular the challenges related to economic root causes of child labour. Additionally, it provides examples of good practices and integrates innovative solutions within ABA models to address the emerging root causes of child labour such as negative impacts of climate change, declining agricultural income and food insecurity among others and it presents ways on how ABA can complement pre-existing government led interventions to have more impactful results, where CSOs are key allies. It is intended that this document can play a role in building technical understanding and awareness on ABA and its contemporary models and lay the foundation to realign the designing of ABA interventions to be able to address child labour by building resilient livelihoods, communities and ecosystems by integrating innovative solutions.

Introduction

Child labour is a pressing humanitarian issue and practices to prevent and eliminate child labour have long focused on specific sectors and commodities, relying mainly on immediate withdrawal and short-term rehabilitation measures. It demands a comprehensive solution that is multi-sectoral, yet also sensitive to local contexts and region-specific factors that perpetuate child labour. Inclusive interventions that shift the focus from a sector-based approach to an area-based approach aiming to eradicate child labour across the whole area rather than focusing on one specific sector are urgently needed. Area-based Approach (ABA), also known as Integrated Area Based Approach (IABA), introduced by the International Labour Organization (ILO), aims to eliminate child labour from the grassroots level by tailoring the interventions to specific geographical areas or communities where it is prevalent. It adopts a focused strategy by concentrating its efforts on a specific geographical area and combating all forms of child labour in the designated region. The ABA model to tackle child labour is a rights-based approach as it recognizes the inherent rights of the children and aims to create environments where these rights can be fully realised. It prioritises the protection and promotion of children's fundamental rights - where every risk, vulnerability, and threat of violation of a child's rights are considered on an equal level. The ABA also integrates supply chain and rights based approaches and works with governments, social partners, local farmers and communities, local and international buyers working from bottom to top to remove key barriers to the elimination of child labour and bring children back to school.

The supply chain approach is closely connected to the ABA as companies alone cannot eliminate child labour in the lower tiers of their supply chains as long as there is no concerted action at the community level. While working with a supply chain approach, the focus is on geography and commodities with high incidents of child labour such as in cocoa, coffee, tea or textiles. The ABA also addresses child labour issues emerging from other informal sectors such as domestic work. At the same time, a rights-based approach is central to ABA. It focuses on improving national legislation, policies and programmes to address the rights and root causes of child labour and supports local governments, public services providers, and other relevant stakeholders to take effective action to stop child labour and forced labour in these sectors.

In putting the best interest of the child at the forefront means that the environment and the actors around the child need to be mobilised and articulated for that same goal. Therefore, individuals and institutions in the selected areas play a key role in the success of an ABA intervention. A village or neighbourhood can only become and remain child labour-free with support from all stakeholders at all levels. If they have a stake, they also have a share of the responsibility. There are two main circles of stakeholders: those in the direct vicinity of the community (parents, teachers, elders, community leaders, local authorities, children/youth/women's groups, etc.) and those operating outside the community (state actors, private sector, among others).


Photo Courtesy: Stop Child Labour

Key Characteristics of Area-based Approach

1) Focuses on the rights of all children in a specific geographical area to work towards reducing, and eventually eliminating, child labour.

2) It is a rights-based approach in which every child and every risk of violation of child rights is taken into consideration.

3)Targets stakeholder consulting, strengthening and accountability.

4)Targets creating child labour free and child-friendly spaces.

5) Recognises that there is a common set of root causes of child labour and addresses factors driving all types of child labour in the given geographic area.

6) Helps prevent children simply moving from one supply chain to another, or into a more hidden form of child labour.

7) Consistent with government policies and commitments under ILO child labour Conventions, which are not limited to child labour within a specific sector.

Different Models and Monitoring Systems of Child Labour

Key programmatic models, mainly the Child Friendly Villages (CFVs) and the Child Labour Free Zones (CLFZs) are rooted in the ABA. Both CFVs and CLFZs have origins in the Global South, include child labour monitoring, withdrawal and remediation, integrate community, child and stakeholder participation as well as aim to address systemic issues responsible for child labour. Originating in India, both CFVs and CLFZs are prominent models of addressing child labour in communities. Both are developed on an ABA, working towards creating child labour-free spaces which started in a few villages and are now well-known globally. Additionally, ABA-led interventions, such as the CFV and CLFZ have strengthened the Child Labour Monitoring (CLM) to Child Labour Monitoring and Remediation System (CLMRS) over recent years, shifting the focus from monitoring the industry to monitoring the child as s/he is removed from work and provided with social protection services. The attention has also moved from the "withdrawal" of children from work to a coordinated child protection effort involving the identification, referral, verification and tracking that targeted children are provided with satisfactory alternatives. Lastly, a change has occurred from monitoring specific target sectors to an area-based approach to monitoring all types of child labour in larger geographical areas. The focus therefore is not only on children who work in a specific sector or on the worst forms of child labour, but on all children within that area who don't attend school.
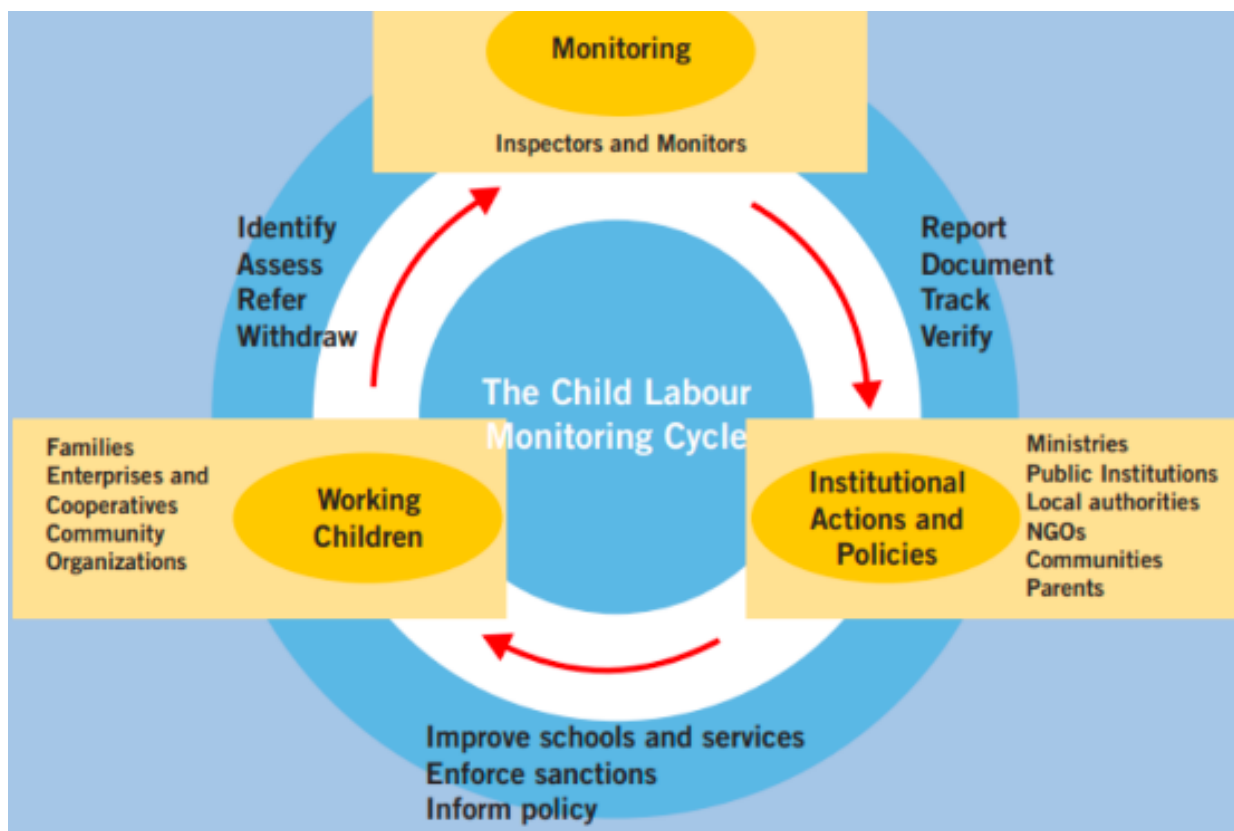
Source: ILO, 2005

These include 'invisible' forms of child labour where children work on their family's land or as domestic workers in the household. The prevailing belief is that poverty, while a contributing factor, is not the sole root cause of child labour. Rather, the underlying cross-cutting issues, child-unfriendly traditions, and norms, the violation of worker's rights and poor education systems collectively contribute to it and explain why the alarming number of children do not attend school. implementing ABA, and creating CLFZs enhance the favorable circumstances to combat child labour. It requires the involvement of all stakeholders, mobilising them to take proactive steps towards it.

Key Thematic Areas

The contemporary models of ABA have focused on addressing the root causes of child labour. Based on the analysis of key ABA led models, mainly CLFZs and CFVs, some thematic areas are highlighted due to their influence, impact as well as key role in providing solutions for a sustained eradication of child labour.

Lobby and Advocacy

ABA interventions seek a systemic change from the bottom up, in doing so, they have included essential aspects of lobby and advocacy where communities are key agents of change. For instance, focusing on community democratic participation and decentralised governance, the CFVs have created spaces for community groups (Children's Parliament, Youth Groups and Women's Groups, among others), first to be sensitised on their rights to later interact with local authorities, enabling community advocacy for the realisation of their fundamental rights, keeping rights of the child at the forefront. This locally driven advocacy provides community ownership and a collective problem-solving attitude that is key in the sustainability of the approach.

The model also fosters cross-linkages with different government departments like education, labour, health, social welfare, etc., and their participation for the overall delivery of services and access to rights. Some of the outcomes and impact of the local advocacy within the CFV model have included: re-enrolment of out of school children; tackling of teacher absenteeism; provision of separate toilets for girls in school avoiding their drop-out; achieving quality mid-day meals in schools; stopping child marriages; and gaining access to different social welfare schemes. The [model](#) keeps around 75,000 children away from child labour every day. Other models such as the CLMS contribute 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 and Youth Participation

Highlighting the rights of all children is a key element in ABA. By putting children at the forefront of interventions, participation of children and youth is included in different processes such as identification of right violations, mainly child labour, monitoring of the identified cases, and in some specific models, democratic practices. In the case of CFVs, child participation has been the essence of the model for a sustainable approach for prevention and elimination of child labour by involving children and youth in decision making processes at the community level, thereby translating their right to participation through institutional structures such as Children's Council and youth groups. In aiming to achieve child participation, the following principles are considered:

- No child labour in the community
- Children's Council is elected to represent voices of children
- All children are enrolled in school and retained
- The Children's Council is recognised by the elected village council

CFV has been instrumental in achieving full child participation in villages. Some of the key examples of Child participation and its impact on child and village development have been documented below:

- Children (6-14 years) in the villages are free from violence, keeping good health and receiving regular education
- Children (6-14 years) in the villages are aware of their rights
- Enhanced accountability of Government institutions/bodies and Development Agencies towards communities by leading advocacy of the Children's Council
- Improved child protection mechanisms in the villages

Youth are key stakeholders in the fight against child labour. This includes engagement with child labour survivors, becoming advocates/activists on child labour elimination, and communicating their or the survivors' "lived experiences" and "testimonies" to the broader public and specific stakeholders such as policymakers. Youth's crucial role in programmatic interventions can be seen in the CFVs where youth groups have supported bringing children's issues and decent youth employment to members of parliament and local government, supporting youth-MP partnerships and mobilising the "better-off" cohort of young people, including student bodies.

Photo Courtesy: Food And Agriculture Organization (FAO)

Education

It is well known that one of the most effective ways to prevent child labour is to improve access to and quality of schooling. Yet, simply ensuring withdrawal of child labourers and their enrolment in schools is not enough to address the problem. Attention to the various contextual challenges around this relation (education and child labour), such as missed years of education, logistic and infrastructure, and gender-based inequalities among others, is key while designing and implementing programmes and policies that could guarantee a more suitable and lasting transitioning from child labour to education to youth employment in decent work. ABA models have always highlighted the key role of education, as one main goal being that all children must be in school, among others. For the last two decades, Global March's member Education International and its affiliates, Algemene Onderwij sbond (the Netherlands) and Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft (Germany), through the Fair Childhood Foundation,ave supported projects to reduce school dropout rates and child labour and to contribute to the development of child labour-free zones in over 13 countries.

It is important to highlight some essential aspects to consider in ABA to make more effective interventions in relation to education.

- the focus is not only on children who work in a specific sector or on the worst forms of child labour, but on all children within the area of intervention who don't attend school
- the need for child-youth transition from child labour to education to decent work, especially in agriculture, using skill-based training
- the linkages of education and other emerging and crucial topics such as environment, food security, migration, among others. (school feeding and other good practices)

Gender and Other Key Intersections

There is a strong correlation between child labour and gender dynamics of inequality (gender-based violence, pay gap, triple burden for girls/women, discriminatory gender norms and stereotypes, etc) that at the individual level, dramatically shape the differentiated labour experiences of girls and boys in child labour, and, at the community and society level, limit opportunities and determine pull and push factors for child labour to exist. Therefore, gender is a crucial factor to consider in ABA interventions as a cross-cutting aspect rather than a thematic focus. Including this in ABA means going beyond the much-needed sex-disaggregated, age and sub-sector data on child labour in a specific geographical area, to a more interconnected approach that reflects how gender inequality, in combination to other discriminations based on race, caste, class, nationality, disability, etc, contributes to child labour with differential impacts on children. In consequence, interventions on child labour that contribute to gender equality and social inclusion are more effective and sustainable. Gender has been included in ABA interventions by working on issues such as education of girl child, prevention of child marriage and any form of gender-based violence through, sensitisation, mobilisation and engagement with relevant stakeholders such as women's groups, youth groups, girl child committees and others. The CFVs have ensured that 25,000 girls are kept away from child marriage. Attention to gender gaps in equal wages and decent employment conditions have also been part of child labour programmes, in the form of promotion of economic activities, cash transfer or micro credit initiatives and skills-based training for women. However, area-based practices could delve deeper in the gender and child labour connection, with more transformative interventions aiming for gender equality.

Agriculture

The largest proportion of children continues to be found working in one of the most hazardous and difficult sectors, i.e., agriculture (comprising farming, fisheries and aquaculture, forestry and livestock production), in which most of the child labour takes place in family owned smallholder farm units. Further, as children on family farms work in an informal economy set up, there is a lack of reporting, making family child labour in agriculture invisible, hidden, unacknowledged and even more difficult to tackle. Therefore, attention to agri-rural areas with high informality, family farming practices and risky commodities with an integrated and highly participatory approach is a priority. Companies like Nestle, the International Cocoa Initiative (ICI) and Tony's Chocolonely have been implementing the CLM(R)S in their cocoa sourcing areas to prevent and address the issue of child labour. This system helps to identify instances of illegal child labour, find alternative solutions, and prevent the use of illegal child labour by raising awareness around the topic, with significant results.

Other model pioneered in Peru and extended to Mexico that addresses child labour in global and domestic supply chains of agriculture is the Child Labour Free Seal which have integrated agro-technical support with Human Rights standards, including prevention of child labour.

When obtaining the Seal, awarded by the government, companies, associations and informal producing units such as communities and farmers increase opportunities to enter socially responsible markets and promote their products free of child labour. This contributes to stepping away from informality, increasing livelihood and generating a living income that in turn results in reduction and elimination of child labour in their area of production. While ABA has been widely and effectively utilised for addressing child labour in agro-supply chains and sectors, their own challenges remain. Implementation of some current models based on ABA are limited to popular commodities and more focused on the visible supply chains instead of paying special attention to areas with risk commodities, targeting workers at the bottom. There is also hesitation from the global donor community to fund such interventions for longer periods of time which is crucial for creating sustainable models in informal economies such as agriculture, especially for generating decent work and livelihood opportunities to prevent child labour holistically. Further, resources and attention since recent years has focused mostly on global supply chains, whereas the majority of child labour takes place for domestic consumption. Moreover, area-based good practices also need stronger interventions for strengthening social and economic empowerment of women farmers and farm workers who contribute to the informal agricultural sector significantly and yet remain invisible.

Improving community income

Addressing the increasing income inequality is essential to addressing child labour. The last few years have witnessed an enlarged focus on addressing the economic root causes of child labour by stakeholders, ranging from the private sector in the cocoa supply chain exploring cash transfers for farmers to implementing income-generating programmes for women. However, the collective impact of ABA-led interventions on income enhancement, especially in the agriculture sector has been limited. In this case, the cocoa sector serves as a good example. Despite two decades of discussions on sustainability and interventions to address child labour in the cocoa sector, child labour continues to be a challenge in West African cocoa production, where children are involved in age-inappropriate and hazardous labour. Emerging environmental challenges, gender inequality and cost of living crisis is only making the issue of child labour more daunting to address due to lack of appropriate focus on improving smallholder farmers' economic conditions.

While solutions such as living income and ensuring farmgate prices are often debated as the silver bullet for addressing agricultural poverty, living income is very much a bare minimum, a basic human rights and farmgate prices alone do not ensure a sustainable increase in income as long unless the interventions keep the interests of the community at the forefront instead of the companies and other stakeholders. This presents an opportunity to build further on ABA models that by default are community centric and therefore have a lot more potential to integrate innovative solutions that benefit the farmers and the communities even in the most fragile situations as we would see in the upcoming sections of this document. The cocoa sector is symbolic of the larger issue of child labour in agriculture and the need to look beyond just withdrawal and re-enrolment of children. The COVID-19 crisis has worsened the decline in economic activity all over the world, hitting particularly hard agriculture and food systems leading to a surge in food insecurity and poverty backfiring on child labour. Thus, ABA interventions need to focus on the emerging multi-dimensional economic root causes of child labour by promoting innovative solutions that address food insecurity along with household income in informal sectors such as agriculture.

The way forward with the Area based approach

As described above, the different ABA models and tools, especially CLFZs, CFVs and CLM(R)S have contributed significantly to the prevention of child labour, improving access to education, strengthening the participation of women, children and youth along with mobilising the local stakeholders and duty-bearers. However, as the issue of child labour is becoming increasingly impacted due to evolving root causes such as inequality and food insecurity, decreasing agriculture income and negative impacts of climate change, it is crucial that ABA interventions further explore the nuances of its thematic focus and include new approaches that are responsive to the emerging root causes and risks that have a negative bearing on child labour. For this reason, the coming two sub-sections will explore how implementation of an ABA can be strengthened by integrating innovative solutions on food security, livelihoods and climate change, as well as existing structures developed by the governments and other key stakeholders, adapting to the context of intervention and tapping into intrinsic aspects of the communities to work with, where CSOs play a key role.

Strengthening ABA by integrating innovative solutions

Global March and its partners have been working on integrating such new approaches within its ABA interventions with an emphasis to address economic root causes of child labour in different local contexts. They are briefly explained below:

Addressing food insecurity through seeds for education

Safeguarding the food security of vulnerable communities is of utmost importance to prevent child labour. Household poverty and food insecurity are the main drivers pushing children too early into the workforce. In fact, the ILO estimates that for every 1 per cent rise in poverty, there is a likely 0.7 per cent rise in child labour. Hence, efforts directed to ensure the survival of vulnerable communities along with school-based feeding programmes to boost food security not only have the potential of pulling children out of hazardous work but also enable complete education and overall well-being of the most vulnerable child. Implementing school feeding programmes and empowering communities with tools and skills as well as benefits of social protection can play an influential role in preventing child labour, encouraging school enrolment and providing a healthy and nutritious diet for the most vulnerable children. School feeding programmes are implemented in 130 countries, benefitting 368 million children worldwide.*

Source: FAO, 2021

As an example, Africa, home to the largest number of child labourers with 87 million child labourers wherein 31.5 million are in hazardous work (UNICEF-ILO), has attracted school feeding programmes through foreign collaborations and UN support. However, they are yet to be mainstreamed which requires a more robust system, a planned outlay and a dedicated budget

Photo Courtesy: World Food Programme

In this case, the ABA can act as a catalyst to strengthen efforts at the community level by incorporating measures to improve access to meals and tools and resources to grow food which can go a long way in addressing the root causes of child labour. Global March, along with its regional member organisations National Organisation of Trade Unions (NOTU) and The African Network for Prevention Against Child Abuse and Neglect Uganda (ANPPCAN) in Uganda came on board as civil society mobilisers with a primary goal of reducing child labour by providing food security with the initiative [Seeds For Education.](#) Sufficient food grown on surplus school land or at a farmer's land has proven to reduce dependence on child's income and increase the chances of bringing them back to school. In the last 3 years, "seeds for education" has impacted more than 800 children in over 19 schools in Mt. Elgon's coffee-growing region which is a hotspot for child labour. Below are the key characteristics of its implementation:

- The selected government schools receive seeds to grow beans and maize. The schools are selected based on the availability of unused land, without compromising on the land for children to play
- School teachers, headmasters and some children are oriented to sow the seeds and grow food throughout the season
- Agronomic support is provided by local farmers to the schools for efficient gardening practices
- Schools with no kitchen are supported to build a kitchen with the help of communities so the meals grown on the school land can be cooked and distributed amongst the children
- Assessment of the impact of school-based meals is done to understand its impact on attendance and enrolment of children in school

Simultaneously, advocacy efforts are carried out with various stakeholders, be it children, their families, parliamentarians or business groups to create awareness regarding individual efforts and advocating for a child's fundamental right to education. Additionally, with the help of CLMS in the Mt. Elgon region, Global March is targeting areas in the coffee plantation process in Uganda which is highly labour intensive and thus engages huge numbers of child labourers.

Addressing livelihood challenges in fragile communities through saline farming

Child labour increases during man-made conflicts and natural disasters resulting in displacement and forced migration of children. Increasing impacts of climate change have led to destruction of homes, agricultural livelihoods and assets and the access to education is often interrupted. Rural and agricultural communities as well as climate vulnerable communities such as coastal communities of Bangladesh are bearing a heavy burden of these crises, with children pushed into labour for survival. According to UNICEF Bangladesh Child Protection Specialist Kristina Wesslund, climate change is one reason why an estimated 3.45 million Bangladeshi children are involved in child labour. More than 19 million children in Bangladesh, from 20 of the country's 64 districts, are most vulnerable to the disastrous consequences of climate change, warned the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in a 2019 report.

Photo Courtesy: Global March Implementation site in Bangladesh. Partner Organization: Cordaid

The starting point for successful strategies to combat child labour in such fragile contexts is increasing household income and agricultural productivity to reduce the burden on children. Supporting livelihood interventions for decent rural work, including community projects to restore livelihoods, boosting food production and coping with future shocks can bring about a revolutionary change to the ecosystem responsible for child labour. For addressing child labour where livelihood and decent work challenges continue to push more and more children and households into poverty, a uni-dimensional approach will not prove to be sustainable. Global March along with Cordaid Bangladesh, initiated a pilot project on saline farming in Khulna, a climate-vulnerable coastal region of Bangladesh where child labour in the shrimp sector is prevalent. In this pilot project, Global March and Cordaid combined livelihood solution and child labour awareness and advocacy to be able to provide a more long-lasting solution to the complex challenge of child labour. From 2021 to 2022, Global March and Cordaid worked on a pilot basis with 40 households, who were trained to convert their unused salt affected land for growing salt tolerant crops. This solution has proven to help vulnerable families to earn an extra income and improve food security, resulting in the withdrawal of children from child labour and enabling their transition to formal education. Instead of fighting the salt in the soil, the salt-affected soil is used for agriculture again, by introducing varieties of well-known crops such as snake gourd, bitter gourd, and other green leafy vegetables that grow well on salt affected land.

This way, degraded soil becomes productive once again and that offers new opportunities for the vulnerable households and their children. After 6 months of intervention, the targeted households were able to produce vegetables worth 6,570 BDT (Approx 70 Euros), from the first 3 months of production (from winter vegetables). In total, 57 children within the targeted households were out of school (12 dropped out, and 45 attending schools irregularly). 42 children started attending schools on a regular basis. The additional income supported the families to purchase the necessary educational materials. Additionally, each farmer harvested, on an average, 219 kilograms of vegetables (3-5 varieties) of which about 95 kilograms were consumed per family and/or gifted to relatives by each farmer, and around 124 kilograms were sold by each farmer (only in winter season alone). With the help of saline farming, training of smallholder and marginalised farmers on collective saltwater farming ensures increased food supply in otherwise uncultivable land which is done with the help of experts. Additionally, advocacy on child labour and education in target communities with the families as well as duty-bearers makes the practice participatory and sustainable, contributing to an evolving ABA.

Moving towards a multi-dimensional CLMS

Establishing a robust CLMS that is specific to areas with high-risk indicators of child labour has a better tendency to furnish desired results and can be further turned into a pan country movement to be able to address child labour by targeting its root causes at the local level. However, the issue of child labour is not an isolated one and therefore different parties contributing directly and indirectly to child labour must integrate a more nuanced, multi-dimensional CLMS to assess different indicators of child labour and explore collective solutions. The private sector can immensely benefit from a multi-dimensional CLMS wherein the data generated on child labour with assessment of its root causes, particularly in sector or commodity-based interventions can provide in-depth information to the company and play a key role in improving its human rights due diligence and remediation processes. A multi-dimensional CLMS follows a risk-based due diligence approach in line with guidance from the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) guidelines for enterprises.

These systems enable actual or potential cases of child labour to be identified, remediated, and monitored on an ongoing basis but also an insight into root causes of child labour, hazardous work, decent work deficits and farmers' capacity needs. However, it is important that the resulting tool is made in consultation with key stakeholders, is simple, gender-sensitive and cost effective to drive uptake in the sectors. Most importantly, a multi-dimensional CLMS can build clarity and consensus on what constitutes child labour and what doesn't. Since the CLMS tool includes questions pertaining to the nature, time and circumstances of work for children, it helps in distinguishing between different types of child labour especially in agriculture wherein child labour definitions remain differently understood by different stakeholders including the communities and that has a direct bearing on how children are monitored, withdrawn and remediated. For instance, not every child helping their parents on a coconut plantation is immediately involved in child labour, and not every task on a coconut farm is immediately a cause for concern. Using the CLMS to understand the nuances and conditions of child labour, their work can be categorised into child/light work, child labour, worst forms of child labour and hazardous child labour. It is also encouraged to build on pre-existing tools as a more cost-effective way to build a CLMS. As a part of its project, "Protecting the rights of children in the coconut oil supply chain - Philippines," Global March is leading a consortium of CSOs, agricultural experts, private sector and local child protection duty-bearers in implementing a multi-dimensional CLMS based on ILO's pre-existing child labour profiling tool which has also shaped the Philippine government'.

The aim of using a multi-dimensional CLMS is to strengthen the monitoring and remediation of child labour in coconut oil-producing communities largely dominated by farmers. At the same time, the tool is designed to include supplier monitoring and risk information on child labour for the company Human Rights Due Diligence (HRDD) and use the generated information for addressing root causes of poor income among smallholder coconut farmers. Overall, the multi-dimensional CLMS has been designed for:

• Building capacity of smallholder coconut farmers and workers - facilitating trainings, consultations and dialogue on improving product quality and enhancing knowledge on other forms of livelihood for farmers
• Strengthening company HRDD – with the help of CLMS, using data generated on risks and root causes of child labour, improving company HRDD process for addressing the risks of child labour
• Strengthening advocacy with downstream stakeholders and other downstream supply chain actors to create awareness on the area-based approach and advocate for its adoption in lower supply chain tiers and other commodities to address child labour
• Using effectiveness of CLMS as a good practice for advocacy towards improvement of systemic root causes of child labour

Photo Courtesy: Global March Against Child Labour

Potential of ABA to strengthen existing structures

Building up from the origin of the ABA as an intervention determined by a specific geographical area, to the inclusion of innovative solutions to address evolving root causes of child labour such as inequality and food insecurity, decreasing agriculture income and negative impacts of climate change; it can be said that ABA as an approach is adaptable. It must also be noted that there already exist several structures like ABA led models, but they may or may not be identified technically as ABA. However, ABA guidelines and experiences can play a crucial role in complementing the pre-existing structures developed by the governments and other key stakeholders, adapting to the context of intervention and tapping into intrinsic aspects of the communities to work with. Additionally, it can help merge and mobilise resources in situations where funds may not be readily available to build a CLFZ or CFV from scratch. Therefore, ABA can be seen as a catalyst to strengthen existing structures, such as child friendly or child labour free (local) government driven models /seals/initiatives and CSOs can be considered catalysers in this process. A case drawn from different Global March's project engagements and interventions is presented below to exemplify this potential of ABA.

Municipal Models for detection and eradication of child labour

In the three countries where Global March is implementing projects (Peru and Nepal – Catalyst project and The Philippines - Protecting the rights of children in the coconut oil supply chain), the ABA component is seen at the local level by promoting and supporting the adoption of existing child-friendly/child labour free local government models. In Peru, it is called the Municipal Model for Detection and Eradication of Child Labor; in Nepal it is called the Child Labor Free Municipalities, and, in the Philippines, it is called the DOLE (Department for Labour and Employment) Seal for Child Labour Free Establishments. Despite some differences among the examples, in all cases the main goal is for the Local Government Units (LGU, being municipalities, wards, districts, among others) to give priority to children in their planning, budgeting legislation and delivery of service to enable assure that all children enjoy their rights to development, survival, protection and participation.

The models instruct local government to include criteria or indicators for the identification, attention and referral of child labour cases, which, when put in place, will grant the status / seal for recognising the LGU to be child labour–free. Particularly for the case in the Philippines, the Department of Interior and Local Government mobilises and audits teams to check LGU's performance based on 12 indicators and one of those indicators is absence of child labour or evidence of percentage of reduction in child labour cases. All models are led by local governments, but a high level of coordination with relevant stakeholders (local authorities, police, local Ombudsman, development partners, community-based organisations, NGOs, business associations, trade unions, among others) is required. It can be observed that these models provide a great platform for the integration of ABA characteristics, resulting in stronger child protection and other such pre-existing structures. For instance, a multi-dimensional CLMS can support the CSOs, governments, companies and communities to understand the cases of child labour better resulting in:

- Improved monitoring, withdrawal and remediation of child labour
- Improved data gathering and evidence of reduction or absence of child labour in a specific area, e.g Barangays in the Philippines (a small territorial and administrative district forming the most local level of government) so they can apply for the seal of child friendly local governance, thereby strengthening a pre-existing structure using aspects of ABA
- Provide information to the companies, governments and other stakeholders on the root causes of child labour, working conditions and possible remedy opportunities thereby strengthening the HRDD process of the companies

Role of CSOs as catalysers of ABA intervention and sustainability

CSOs are catalysers as they can critically apply learnings and key aspects of ABA led models to build up on existing social, political and economic systems, complementing aspects of different intervention models aiming for resilient livelihoods, communities and ecosystems. It is through the support of CSOs that existing structures such as the municipal models described above are strengthened, (re)activated and/or expanded. The role of CSOs revolves around:

1) **Capacity building** (through sensitization, awareness-raising campaigns, trainings) to local actors (municipal personnel, community members, children, and others) for sharing conceptual knowledge on ABA, to arrive at common understandings on the models' procedures and requirements, and to identify and set the needed steps and resources in implementing the models.

This is important due to gaps in the knowledge and information that different stakeholders have around definitions of child labour and ABA. CSOs expertise on the topic, as well as their knowledge of the cultural and social dynamics of the specific areas of intervention and actors, is key in this process;

2) **Implementation** of the models through coordination, working groups, technical assistance, planning design, implementation and monitoring, together with the local government and the models' related stakeholders. This is important as establishing such models is a complex and costly process. Many times, challenges such as lack of resources, political instability and change in priorities (e.g., public health due to natural/human disasters or pandemics) threaten the continuity of the models' implementation. The local presence and relevance of CSOs together with their technical capacity on the topic and skill to convene local actors is key in this process, to the point that their work can also serve as the base for establishing or complementing the models;

3) **Advocacy** for recognition, adoption and inclusion of the models as key interventions / good practices to address child labour in the countries, for example, to be included in national/local policies and budgets, as well as to promote the models for wider use or replication in other areas, sectors or municipalities. This is important as efforts to prevent and eradicate child labour sometimes work in silos with fragmented and limited impact. CSOs as connectors play a key role in bringing actors together to strengthen public policies with evidence-based advocacy and to enhance synergy between the public and private sectors.

Photo Courtesy: Stop Child Labour

While CSOs are key to strengthen and advocate for ABA to accelerate progress towards eradicating child labour, the political will and governmental articulation among national, provincial and local levels is essential for the implementation of ABA and possibilities for its replication, as well as resource allocation (from national to local budgets) to design, monitor and evaluate ABA interventions. It is important to count on national guidelines, but it is essential to tailor the same to the provincial and local realities and needs of the areas of intervention regarding child labour. There already exists a collective global validation and commitment from key stakeholders, including the governments on promoting ABA. The most recent example is the 5th Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labour 2022, where the Durban Call to Action on the Elimination of Child Labour recommends ABA as an effective programmatic response to prevent and eliminate child labour in supply chains. Additionally, at the regional level, the 2013 Kampala Declaration in Uganda presented a collective endorsement of ABA from 25* countries long-term impact. The governments and CSOs need to collectively work in order to fulfil these commitments.

*Zimbabwe, Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, Ghana, Morocco, Mali, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo, Sudan, South Sudan, Tanzania, Zambia, Malawi, Rwanda, South Africa, India, Nicaragua, Albania, Czech Republic and the Netherlands

Conclusion

In conclusion, ABA:

- Focuses on the rights of all children in specific geographic locations or communities where child labour is prevalent and implements community-centric sustainable solutions
- Recognises that child labour is often deeply rooted in the social and economic context of communities and that effective solutions require a context-specific approach addressing concerns to eliminate it
- Includes a CLMS
- Is a lens used to set up or guide the development of models such as Child Friendly Villages (CFV), Child Labour Free Zones (CLFZ), and CLMS
- Focuses on key thematic areas such as community income, lobby and advocacy, child and youth participation, education, agriculture and gender
- Can be strengthened by integrating innovative solutions on food security, livelihoods and climate change
- Serves as a catalyst to: Mobilise other stakeholders that initially do not adhere to the existing structures, enabling stronger and more effective partnerships. E.g., Business, TU and Municipalities
- Expand opportunities to mobilise resources towards more sustainable interventions.

Photo Courtesy: Global March Against Child Labour

In this process of revaluation, Global March, based on its experiences on working with the ABA, positions the ABA in today's time as:

"*A dynamic, multi-dimensional approach that considers the economic root causes of child labour at it's heart. It tries to intervene with sustainable solutions for improving indicators of child labour such as poor household or sectoral income and is structured to include other good practices to improve and empower communities and their systemic socio-economic challenges. Additionally, it makes use of the information generated from the CLMS to engage and inform companies, their upstream and downstream actors, governments and other key stakeholders, on the risks, root causes and remedies for child labour as well as decent work deficits. Such an ABA engages multiple stakeholders, duty-bearers and community representatives for a more holistic, systemic and sustainable change at the local level to create an impact at the global level for more responsible business practices, child friendly and economically empowered communities.*"

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