



# Promoting Children’s Rights and Strengthening Child Protection in the Private Sector



## Vision

Children’s fundamental rights are respected and promoted throughout the business and global supply chains of private sector multinationals

## Action

Working with companies to uphold the rights of children while supporting supply chain transparency and improving business practices

## Approach

A holistic, multi-sectoral, innovative and sustainable approach which strengthens local child protection systems and is embedded in communities



## Key facts

- 1) Over 1 billion children are touched by global business supply chains directly or indirectly through their impact on families.
- 2) Around 138 million children, or one in ten worldwide, are in child labour, with 54 million children in hazardous work and almost half of them between 5 and 14 years-old.
- 3) Over 800 million mothers worldwide are not adequately protected with leave and cash benefits in case of maternity.
- 4) Approximately 2 billion children live in areas where air pollution levels exceed World Health Organization (WHO) standards.

Source: <https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-business>

## Terre des hommes wants to make the protection of children everyone’s business

Global supply chains have the potential to generate economic growth, employment and skill development. Nevertheless, human rights abuses, including **child rights violations like child labour, violence, abuse and harassment in the workplace are widespread in the production and global supply chains of many of the world’s most commonly traded goods** – from coffee, cocoa, and gold to sugar and palm oil. When we look at the issue of child labour alone, we see the magnitude of the problem. As part of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), world leaders committed to take immediate measures to end child labour in all its forms by 2025. The latest global estimates however indicate that globally 138 million children are still in child labour, accounting for almost one in ten of all children worldwide, with nine out of ten jobs provided by the private sector in developing countries.

The existence of child rights violations in a company’s supply chain is against the principles companies wish to adhere to, but specific expertise is required to achieve this in reality. **Terre des hommes engages with the private sector to improve the lives of children, families and communities by working across the public and private sector divide to strengthen child protection and promote**

**children’s rights in supply chains.** This includes working with companies to respect (i.e. to not cause harm as a minimum) and support (i.e. to make a positive contribution to) the rights of children while supporting business practices. We understand the challenges and the opportunities that come with addressing child rights issues in developing countries - where most of these supply chains start. We also have the expertise to develop holistic, outcome-oriented and sustainable approaches that work for everyone. With companies being an essential part of the ecosystem in those countries, **we believe businesses have the potential to be a driver for good and we are committed to supporting them in that process.** By integrating child rights into existing business models, we can achieve scale and sustainability while doing what we do best – putting children first.

## An Introduction to Tdh

As the **leading Swiss organisation for children's rights**, created in 1960, the Terre des hommes foundation is committed to protecting children's lives and their rights, and improving their well-being. We aim to do so through innovative programmes, specially designed to have both short- and long-term impacts.

For more than 60 years, we have been working in difficult situations, in countries at war, regions devastated by natural disasters, and places where poverty and malnutrition force millions of children and their families to migrate elsewhere. We provide direct and indirect support to millions of children, their families and communities in around thirty countries every year.

### Our Vision

We aspire to a world where the rights of children, as defined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, are always respected. Because we live in a world where children and young people cannot always grow up safe from harm, we support them, hand in hand, in building their resilience, so that they can become actors of positive change in their lives.

### Our Mission

In order to protect children and their future, we are committed to fostering sustainable change to protect their rights and well-being. To make a difference, we support children in expressing their needs and interests and encourage them to participate actively in their communities to promote their empowerment, we advocate for the rights of children worldwide and ensure their well-being and the effective implementation of their rights as defined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and other human rights instruments, and we focus our efforts on protecting the lives of children in fragile contexts as well as in more stable environments.

### Our Values

- Participation and Empowerment
- Partnership and Collaboration
- Innovation and Learning
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Leadership and Excellence

### Our Distinctive Approaches

When working with the private sector, Tdh adopts a community and systems strengthening approach. Research supports area-based approaches over strict supply chain approaches for reducing child rights violations. Therefore, Tdh opts for a broader area-based focus, collaborating with companies, civil society, communities, governments and families and children themselves to strengthen child protection and promote children's rights in global supply chains. Two key approach pillars are mainstreamed throughout all activities:



- **A community-based approach** – instead of a 'supply chain-based approach', Terre des hommes adopts a 'community-based approach'. Leveraging on, engaging with and supporting the agency of children, families and communities to identify and address child rights violations within their own community.
- **Strengthening the existing formal child protection system** – Terre des hommes ensures that supply chain efforts are linking up to, aligned with and strengthen the existing government child protection system. Terre des hommes thereby invests in the overall system and the connection between supply chain and government efforts, preventing the risk of potentially building duplicate and inefficient systems that run in silos.

## Child labour



Terre des hommes makes a distinction between child work and child labour.

**Child work** refers to the participation of children in any paid or unpaid economic activity, or activities to support families and family caregivers, which is not detrimental to their health and mental and physical development. This type of work can even be seen as beneficial for the child's development.

On the contrary, **child labour** refers to work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to their physical or mental development – including by interfering with their education. It includes work done by children *under the minimum legal age* for that type of work and *the worst forms of child labour* (like slavery, forced labor, prostitution, illicit activities and *hazardous work*). These types of work should be eliminated as a matter of priority.

Child labour can result in extreme bodily and mental harm, and even death. It can lead to slavery and sexual exploitation. In nearly every case, it cuts children off from schooling and health care, restricting their fundamental rights. Children who miss out on education struggle to access decent work, earn an adequate living and are likely to have to send their children into child labour when they become a parent one day.

## Backed by experience

Terre des hommes has been involved with private sector companies and in the fight against child rights violations through child protection systems strengthening and community-based approaches for decades in several countries around the world.

- Through **global partnerships with most of the leading coffee companies in the world**, we have supported these companies in developing their child labour and child protection strategies and policies, developed their KPIs, training materials for their staff across the globe, and implemented an innovative new community-based Child Rights Monitoring and Remediation System for the sites from where the coffee is sourced.
- In Burkina Faso, we have been working since 2009 **in gold mining areas**. We have worked closely with minors and the local authorities to develop a community-based early warning and protection system: a continuous information gathering system via an Android phone application recording any arrival/departure of children on the extraction sites. In the event of an incident, SMS messages are automatically sent to the relevant key actors for in-depth assessment of the child's situation and supporting access to support services.
- Since 2019, we have been working in the **leather industry and the adult entertainment industry** in Bangladesh and Nepal resp. Through a large-scale [multi-stakeholder initiative](#), we have facilitated children in or at risk of the worst forms of child labour and small business owners to act as agents of change. By surfacing the drivers behind the worst forms of child labour and planning, programming, testing and evaluating innovative solutions to address these, the children and business owners themselves have generated innovation and context-appropriate solutions from the ground, which has proven to sustainably improve the lives of children and their families.
- In the **digital sector** and in partnership with [Salus](#), Tdh has tailored [the global standard protection case management digital tool](#) to be used for child rights monitoring and remediation in private sector supply chains. This tailored tool now guides frontline workers through the monitoring and remediation process, ensures timely responses and accountability, and provides access to real-time data for companies while maintaining strict confidentiality standards.

## Tdh and Child Rights and Business

**Tdh is committed to empowering businesses to be positive drivers for societal well-being in the countries and communities in which their supply chains start.** We are dedicated to ensuring that companies not only avoid harming children in their supply chain but actively contribute to their rights and welfare.

**Tdh is uniquely positioned for this initiative, drawing on its established reputation in Switzerland and global work in Child Rights and Business.** Leading a global inter-agency Community of Practice on Child Rights and Business, Tdh excels in supporting Swiss multinationals in sustainability in general, human rights due diligence and child rights specifically. Tdh partners with businesses to align their operations with child rights principles. These partnerships aim to ensure that companies' pursuit of business goals does not come at the expense of child welfare but instead supports it. Tdh also technically supports companies to monitor for, identify, mitigate risks and remediate instances of child rights violations, including child labor. It thereby encourages practices that support families, leverage on existing community structures and strengthen public state systems, contributing to sustainable development goals.

***"Tdh supports companies do due diligence and develop management systems for not just their own operations, but to cascade it and make it work for the communities and countries where they operate as well".***

How to do this in contexts of remote and disadvantaged areas of the world with widespread informality, insufficient law enforcement, limited access to services and persistent poverty, however, is far from simple. Tdh has an in-depth understanding of the needs and challenges of children, families, communities and governments in 'source/origin' countries where most global supply chains start. We know child rights violations thrive where families are poor and excluded. It thrives where women and girls are discriminated against. Where institutions are weak or undermined by crises. It thrives when children lack access to fundamental services, such as education, health, justice, child protection and social protection.

While there are no easy fixes, we have the tools and knowledge to address child rights violations by working together with communities, civil society and governments to provide tailored, holistic and sustainable solutions. **Tdh's added value thereby lies in its capacity to link community development and child protection systems strengthening work with a company's supply chain.** Combining the growing demand within the private sector with our experience and knowledge of working in 'source/developing' countries, give Terre des hommes an added value and comparative advantage to position itself vis-à-vis the private sector as an expert in this field and a potential strategic partner of choice for private sector multinationals concerned with upholding the rights of children within their global supply chain.



## Case study: A community-based Child Rights Monitoring and Remediation System (CRMRS) on coffee farms

As part of a global partnership with Nestlé Coffee, holding some of the leading coffee companies in the world, Terre des hommes has supported the company in developing and implementing a community-based Child Rights Monitoring and Remediation System (CRMRS). The CRMRS focuses on prevention, continuous monitoring, identification and remediation of child rights violations on the coffee farms and in the communities from where coffee is sourced. It ensures that children who are at risk of/or exposed to child labour, violence, neglect, abuse and harassment are identified and receive an effective, timely, multi-sectoral and child-friendly response from relevant service providers under the local child protection system in a coordinated and accountable manner. The CRMRS adopts a holistic, innovative and sustainable approach by capitalizing on and strengthening local and national child protection systems. It does this by **supporting and working closely with both national child protection authorities and community-based structures around the farms.**



### COMMUNITY-BASED PREVENTION, MONITORING AND IDENTIFICATION

- 1) Communities play an important role in preventing, monitoring and identifying child rights violations. The CRMRS supports them to form a **Community-Based Child Rights Committee (CBCRC)** which acts as a lookout, support structure and change agent for child protection at the community level.
- 2) CBCRCs are supported to: A) develop their own constitution, manage their own membership, and set their regular meetings, B) **lead on addressing and tackling the root causes to the main child protection issues in their own communities** using a [proven methodology](#), 3) conduct individual household/coffee farm visits to monitor for and identify potential child protection issues through an observation-based system both on the coffee farms and in the wider community, 4) **safely refer identified child protection issues** to social workers, and 5) **support individual child protection cases through community-based remediation.**



### REMEDATION SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN

- 3 Each CBCRC will be connected to a **professional social worker who assesses and addresses the needs of each child protection case.** They provide direct support and involve relevant community-based service providers. Farms not meeting social sustainability standards (i.e. processes and practices) to prevent child labour and other child protection incidents from occurring on farms, will be referred to coffee company agronomists who will support the farms to mitigate child protection risks at the farm.
- 4 **Children in child labour will be supported to access education, livelihoods/income support and other basic services.** For this, local referral pathways will also be strengthened/established.
- 5 **Existing local financing schemes contribute to a community child protection fund,** which is managed by the CBCRC. The fund is available to the community and functions as an emergency fund for urgent child protection cases.

### INTEGRATION OF SUPPLY CHAIN AND GOVERNMENT EFFORTS

- 6) In contexts where social workers do not exist or do not have the capacity to respond to identified child protection cases, **social workers are put in place as part of the national child protection system.** They are hosted and supervised by the child protection authorities.
- 7) An [innovative technology application](#) guides social workers and agronomists through the monitoring and remediation process, ensures timely responses and accountability, and provides **access to real-time data for companies** while maintaining strict confidentiality standards.

## Our services

Based on shared value-based partnerships, our goal is **to support and deliver sustainable solutions to businesses and authorities that create positive changes for children, young workers, parent workers, communities and businesses themselves.** We strive to help companies understand where change is needed, and leverage our expertise as well as the companies' reach to eradicate risks and create positive impact. By providing global expertise, advisory, services and support covering a broad range of child rights and business issues across multiple sectors and countries, **our work positively impacts the lives of children across global supply chains.**

Terre des hommes thereby focuses on:

- **Assessing and understanding child rights risks linked to a company's business, operations and supply chains and how to mitigate and prevent them.** We can support businesses understand how and where they adversely impact children, and present practical solutions for mitigating risks and creating positive change. This includes conducting child rights risk assessments as well as providing tools and guidance development on this. We have also developed a new Human Rights Index for one of the leading food companies in the world to better ascertain where to prioritize its investments and track the impact of such investments over time.
- **Establishing community-based Child Rights Monitoring and Remediation Systems.** We provide direct support to companies and have developed practical tools and guidance for businesses on how to implement the Child Rights Monitoring and Remediation System, grievance mechanisms and how to remediate any adverse impacts found in a way that fully integrates with existing systems in a country – both community-based and public state – thereby ensuring sustainability and cost-effectiveness over time and at scale.
- **Accessing and utilising a digital tool for the monitoring and remediation of child rights issues in line supply chains.** Tdh can facilitate the tailoring, deployment and utilisation of a [globally recognized and international child protection community supported digital solution](#) to be used for child rights monitoring and remediation in global supply chains – this innovative technology application both guides field workers through the child rights monitoring and remediation process while also providing real-time data and evidence supporting annual reporting based on the data provided by existing systems on the ground.
- **Working with companies on human rights due diligence, child protection and child labour strategies and policies and building staff capacity on these.** Ensuring the commitment to respecting and supporting children's rights in corporate strategies, policies, and building the capacity of staff on these. We have worked on global child rights and business policies such as the establishment of norms and standards in the Better Cotton Initiative. We have also supported numerous individual companies in the review of their HRDD approach and the development of their child protection strategies and KPI frameworks.
- **Technically overseeing and supporting local implementing partners of companies.** For multiple companies, we oversee and technically support their local implementing partners ensuring adherence to global standards and practices, while technically reviewing proposals, budgets, designing approaches, developing SOPs and tools, and overseeing technical implementation.
- **Creating family-friendly workplaces and safe workplaces for young workers.** We can support business to offer parent and caregiving workers the resources and services they need to balance work and family life. This includes the establishment of child friendly spaces, positive parenting trainings, safe drinking water and sanitation at work, migrant parent support, and supporting access to childcare, health, legal support and other essential services. We can also offer support packages for young workers on e.g. industry-specific occupational health and safety measures and youth skill development programs.
- **Advocacy and research.** Terre des hommes influences the development of key international legislations, policies and practices on child rights and business and conducts research within this space.

### Positive outcomes for the private sector

At the same time, businesses that work with us benefit from a multitude of positive outcomes:

- ✓ Better risk management
- ✓ Compliance in supply chains
- ✓ Reduced risk of child labour and child rights violations
- ✓ Increased workforce stability and satisfaction
- ✓ Improved recruitment and retention
- ✓ Reduced exposure to regulatory or other liabilities
- ✓ Strengthened corporate reputation among customers

### Your Strategic Child Protection Partner

In partnership, we can combine the demands and needs within the private sector with our experience and knowledge of child protection and working in 'source/developing' countries. **Through a shared-value and joined-journey approach, we can offer our expertise, co-create, and co-communicate for impact.** By integrating child rights into existing business models, Tdh improves the lives of children, families and communities by working across the public and private sector divide and can achieve scale and sustainability while doing what we do best – putting children first.