This reference handout is based on a live webinar given by Inge Verburg, Customer Marketing Manager and Siriki Diakité, Regional Representative for West Africa.

It includes slides from the webinar, along with notes of the spoken text shared during the event.

The recording of the webinar can be downloaded here.
Every child has the right to a good education, the right to play and the right to enjoy his or her childhood. Nobody wants to imagine that a child might have suffered to make the products they enjoy, but unfortunately child labor is still far too common.

Child labor denies boys and girl their rights – to be safe from harm, to quality education and vocational training, and to play and rest. The fundamental human right to be a child.

UTZ wants to make sustainable farming the norm. Child labor free farming practices are key to that mission. Therefore we need to work on tackling child labor, through certification and beyond certification, in joint efforts with others.
And that is not an easy job.

Today we’ll talk about why child labor is an extremely complex issue that can’t be solved by simply banning children from a farm. We will see that it requires an collaborative approach that also looks into the root causes of the problem.

I'll explain how UTZ works on eradicating child labor by implementing a new approach and how your company contributes to this by sourcing UTZ products.

We will look at a few research figures and quotes from UTZ certified farmers showing how certification has positively impacted their lives in this context and has led to better opportunities for their children.

As always, we’ll end by sharing some ideas on how to communicate on the topic to your consumers and other stakeholders.

I’ll start with shaping the context of child labor for you, by giving some facts and figures.
First some numbers.

According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), over 168 million children worldwide are engaged in child labor. More than half of them, 85 million, are doing hazardous, dangerous work. Although the global number has declined by one third since 2000, the absolute numbers are still horrendous.

When we zoom in, we see that agriculture remains by far the most affected sector where child laborers can be found: 98 million, or 59%.

And where on the globe do we find child labor? The World Bank has made this interesting graph with the red dots indicating where child labor occurs. So what I have done is that I have laid the cocoa production belt over the graph in orange – and what we see very clearly is that in many of the regions in which cocoa is produced, there is a lot of child labor.


*Children in employment: total (% of children ages 7 – 14)*
The child labor issue is huge in the West African cocoa sector. A 2015 study* by Tulane University in the US estimated that there are 2 million child laborers on cocoa farms in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana alone, the two largest cocoa producing countries in the world.

In addition to the physical effects of child labor, cocoa farming often interferes with children’s education. The International Labor Rights Forum (ILRF) found that in Ghana, only around 75% of children attend school.** In Côte d'Ivoire, the problem is even more severe: only 59% of young boys and 51% of the girls attend school. As children are unable to attend school, you can imagine that the consequences follow them throughout their life. Illiteracy (29% in Ghana and 43% in Côte d'Ivoire) and innumeracy place heavy burdens on the ability of farmers to do their work, especially when it comes to negotiating contracts and prices for their crops.

Of course it’s not only cocoa. Child labor also occurs in the other sectors UTZ works on: coffee, tea and hazelnuts. All come with their specific root causes and requirements to tackle the problem. In this webinar we focus on cocoa and Côte d'Ivoire specifically where we know the problems are severe and where we are the furthest in implementing our new approach. We will talk more about that a bit later.

Now that we know a bit more about the extent of child labor - worldwide, in the agricultural sector and in cocoa farming specifically - let's dive deeper into the issue itself to get a better understanding why eradicating child labor needs an intense, collaborative approach.

1. Child labor is a complex issue that needs an intense, collaborative approach.
It's good to realize that child labor is an extremely complex issue. There are multiple reasons for that.

First of all, it's about the definition. What is child labor and what is it not? That's not as straightforward as you would think. Most of us will probably have had Saturday jobs when we were young and I expect that wasn't considered as child labor. When is it crossing the line though and not OK anymore?

Then, what causes child labor? Why do children work and not go to school? We'll see that the root causes of child labor are a mix of different factors.

And very importantly, although you would think that taking a child off a certified farm is solving the problem of child labor, this is not the case.

Finally there is the simple fact that we cannot be at all farms at all times to check whether children are at work or not.
Let’s start with the definition.

The International Labor Organization officially defines child labor as:

“Work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity and that is harmful to their physical and mental development.”

Or in other words:
Child labor is work that harms children because it is performed at too early an age or under dangerous conditions, or stops them going to school.

This sounds easy, but what is considered ‘too early an age’? What are dangerous conditions? And who sets the guidelines?
13 and 14 year olds are allowed to do light work, such as small tasks around the house or helping out their parents on a small scale or family run farm. Under the condition that the work:
- is not harmful to their health and development,
- does not interfere with their schooling or training,
- is supervised by an adult, and
- does not exceed 14 hours a week.

Children below the age of 15 cannot be employed as permanent, seasonal or casual workers.

Children from 15 to 18 cannot carry out work that is dangerous or that could harm their wellbeing, physically, mentally, or morally. So they shouldn’t carry heavy loads for instance, or work in dangerous locations, in unhealthy situations, at night, or with dangerous substances or equipment. They should not be exposed to any form of abuse and of course in all cases, there must be no trafficked, bonded or forced labor.

So, what are these dangerous conditions we talked about? These are types of work (activities) that may cause health hazards, such as:

- Inhalation of smoke or chemicals, for example by spraying pesticides on a farm
- Carrying heavy loads. Physical labor like this can have an impact on the long term health and growth of children
- Use of dangerous tools. Chemicals are a clear example, but when we talk about younger children these can also be machetes for example.

The UTZ Code of Conduct, that farmers need to comply with, defines child labor based on ILO conventions. These conventions identify three age categories: 0-12 year olds, 13 to 14 and 15-18 year olds.

For the first category it’s very clear: children below 12 should not work at all. Full stop.
So recapping: child labor is **not**:
Children helping out around the house, or doing light work that is appropriate to their age and their level of development, supervised by an adult, and that doesn’t interfere with schooling.

In fact, this kind of work is even supported by the ILO as it allows children to learn to take responsibility, they gain practical skills, they add to their families’ and their own wellbeing and income, and they contribute to their countries’ economies.
You see the definition is extensive but quite clear. But even then...even when the rules are clear it is complex. Sometimes it's just hard to tell from pictures like these – and thus it is hard to tell in the field - whether a child is a child laborer.

When we see hazardous work: yes then it’s clear.

But these boys (if these weren't pictures from a child labor report), could also be helping out their father and mother after school hours.
Or… the other way around: even if this girl goes to school, she might have to spray agrochemicals at other times.

I hope these examples help you understand that detecting child labor is not as easy as you would think, even when the rules are clear.
1.2. Causes are a mix of socio-economic factors

- Poverty drives the need for extra labor on the farm
- Lack of schools prevent children going to school
- Lack of awareness of social-cultural norms

What else makes child labor a complex issue? It’s the root causes.

Poverty is the biggest driving force of child labor. Families simply feel they need the extra income or labor on their farms. It is estimated that most cocoa farmers in Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana live below the international poverty line, and for many families, schooling is simply unaffordable.

In addition, in some communities schools are not available locally, preventing children from having the opportunity to attend. Or if they can go to school, the quality may be very poor. So it’s not always that children don’t go to school because they work, sometimes it’s the other way around: they work because they can’t go to school.

It happens that children are expected to follow in their parents' footsteps, and to learn and practice the work at a very early age. And sometimes child labor may be so deeply integrated in local culture and habits that neither the parents nor the children themselves realize that it is against the interests of children and illegal.
Another factor that adds to the complexity of child labor is that banning child labor on farms does not solve the entire problem. Stop a child working on one farm and he will go to the farm next door or to a factory in the nearest city.

Suspending the certificate of a certified farm when child labor is found is a way to go. But it’s not just about sanctions, it’s not solving the root cause of the problem. In fact, we have learned that too much focus on sanctions is counter-effective as child labor may go underground and then can’t be addressed anymore. Kicking a farm out of the UTZ program leads to even less opportunity to monitor this farm and support farmers to get rid of child labor.

And as I just mentioned by showing you the pictures, child labor is not easy to detect or witness during current UTZ audits.
Finally a very simple fact that also makes child labor a complex issue is that we are not present at all farms 24/7, 365 days a year. As you know UTZ certified farms are regularly audited by independent certification bodies that check the compliance of farmers against the UTZ Code of Conduct. As child labor is prohibited on UTZ farms, there are clear rules about child labor in the Code of Conduct. However these audits are snapshots. So even when no child is seen on the farm during the audit, it’s not a guarantee that a child has never worked or will never work there. And that has nothing to do with the UTZ auditing system; no system can monitor every farm at every moment.

We sometimes get the question from companies: does the UTZ label guarantee a child labor free product? A valid question of course. Knowing all this, you will now probably understand that guarantees are impossible to give.

But eliminating child labor is essential to achieving a world where sustainable farming is the norm, so UTZ is leading efforts to tackle the issue. Which takes us to the next section.
As we have seen in the first part, child labor is such a complex issue that putting a stop to it requires an intense, collaborative approach. Meaning we have to combine efforts with other stakeholders, such as farmer communities, NGOs, governments and companies.

What can you as a company do? Well, sourcing UTZ certified products is a great start as it helps us directly in our work to eradicate child labor.

Our strategy is two-fold:

In our Code of Conduct for farmers we follow the conventions of the International Labor Organization on child labor to ensure children’s rights are respected. More importantly, we work on empowering local communities to protect children’s rights themselves.

But certification alone is not enough. We need to tackle the causes of child labor in a strong coalition with you, the industry, with governments, NGOs and farmer groups to make a difference on sector level. Because eliminating child labor is everyone’s business.

Let’s take a closer look at our approach.
UTZ has always worked to eliminate child labor from certified farms. During the first 5 years of our program we learned that audits and inspections cannot fully prevent and eradicate child labor. We realized that child labor was not often found in audits, while media and research suggested that there was still a problem, even on certified farms. And if child labor was found, we mainly focused on sanctions.

That’s why we are now implementing a new approach that goes further, tackling the problem through prevention, monitoring and remediation. The solution starts with knowing where and what the problem is. This is most effective when it is done by people close to the farmers and children involved – the community. Therefore in our Code of Conduct we now focus on empowering these communities to protect children’s rights.

Our new prevention-monitoring-remediation approach is based on a model of the International Cocoa Initiative (ICI) and it was developed with extensive input from ICI.

Let’s take a look at the three pillars to see what they mean in practice.
In addition to the audits, UTZ is building on a large network of partners, including organizations specialized in child labor issues, to provide training on the correct implementation of the UTZ requirements and awareness raising to farmers and their communities.

Through training in good agricultural practices farmers increase their productivity and decrease their costs which leads to a better income.

Awareness raising activities could include providing materials about child labor in general and specifically on hazards and the most extreme forms of child labor. But also as simple as raising awareness that the place for children is in school.

Preventive training should be done by well-trained people and with clear materials, to avoid misunderstanding of the concept of child labor. We have also learned that it’s important to take a positive approach, to start these trainings by explaining what a child can do to support its family and that children being part of family farming is not the issue.

The first pillar is about prevention that child labor occurs.

The UTZ Code of Conduct includes explicit requirements - or control points as we call them - based on ILO conventions that prohibit child labor. The two main ILO conventions on child labor are convention 138 on Minimum Age and convention 182 on Worst Forms of Child Labor. We have discussed these topics earlier when we talked about the definition of child labor. All UTZ certified farmer groups are regularly audited against the Code of Conduct to check if they comply with these requirements.
Then, there is the identification phase.

Farmer groups need to use risk assessment checklists to identify whether there is a likelihood of child labor in the community. This includes considering issues such as:

- Are there schools available in the community.
- What are the income levels of families.
- What is the availability of adult labor in the community.
- Are there any reports of trafficking.

The next step is something we are now implementing in Cote d’Ivoire: if the risk assessment shows that child labor could be likely, the farmer group must appoint a so-called community liaison officer. Their role is to identify the risks of children actually ending up in labor, both directly in the cocoa fields but also at home.

By being based in the community these child liaison officers are able to be present all year round and to work with the farmers and communities to take steps to prevent, identify and remediate child labor in the community. This is more than an audit alone could ever achieve.

If children are identified by the liaison officer as involved in labor or at risk of child labor, it is the farmer group’s responsibility to act. The child should be taken out of the situation and a remediation action plan should be designed and implemented with the liaison officer in collaboration with child protection experts.
Remediation takes place when a case of child labor is found.

As we mentioned it’s not only about taking the child off the farm, but also about looking at the reasons and responding to those in the best possible way.

Sometimes these include practical and fairly simple solutions, like providing the child with a copy of their birth certificate, school uniforms or books so they can go to school.

Remediation can also mean community wide interventions. Think of supporting the community to request improvements in the availability or quality of local schools. But it may also be organization of training of youths between 15 and 18 to perform activities that are dangerous for children, such as spraying.

And in the case of trafficking or slavery, local authorities must be notified immediately.

All these steps towards eradicating child labor should be owned by the community in order to be sustainable for the future.

The prevention, identification and remediation approach is now included in the Code of Conduct for cocoa, coffee and tea farmers. We still need to work on further implementation and scaling of the approach, especially in coffee and tea. So far our focus has been on cocoa in Cote d’Ivoire.
Child labor is one of the most critical issues for farmers, whether they are certified or not. Since it’s a global issue, we need a global solution as well, which goes beyond certification. Tackling the problem therefore requires a change on sector level.

That’s is why UTZ is building strong partnerships with industry partners, governments, civil society and farmer groups through our new Sector Partnerships Program, funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Together we will focus on six issues, child labor being one of them. Only in a powerful coalition we can take greater action to influence the sector agenda towards sustainability and a child labor free world.

This means we will focus on building the capacity of civil society – NGOs - in producing countries to raise awareness and lobby governments & companies and work within farmer communities.

These governments need to provide infrastructure, such as schools and a strong legal framework that protects children’s rights, making sure laws are enforced.

And we already discussed our focus on strengthening the capacity of farmer groups and local communities to be empowered to prevent, monitor and remediate, child labor and raise their voice towards policy makers.
As I mentioned we are now implementing the new community approach to tackle child labor. The first audits on UTZ cocoa farms in Cote d'Ivoire will take place around September. And we need to work further on implementation and upscaling of the approach, also in coffee and tea farming.

Therefore I can’t show you results or impact data yet on this specific approach.

What we do know from research is that UTZ certification leads to a better income for farmers, reducing the need for children to support their parents in the fields. Therefore more children are being sent to school.

Let’s have a quick look at a study we did in Côte d'Ivoire in 2014 with more than 750 cocoa farmers.
This slide compares the yields, productions costs and income of UTZ certified farmers with non-UTZ farmers.

You can see that the study found that UTZ certified cocoa farmers had higher yields per hectare and lower production costs per kilogram of cocoa beans than non-UTZ farmers which helped them increase their income.
The same study showed that farmers use their higher incomes to pay for everyday needs of the family, children's schooling and clothes.

As you can see in the red part of the pie, 49% of UTZ farmers said they used increased cocoa revenues to send their children to school, the main investment among the study participants.
And that’s also what we hear from farmers. The cocoa farmer in this picture is part of one of the first UTZ certified cocoa cooperatives. He never went to school but thanks to certification his children can. Making sure more children attend school definitely helps to put a stop to child labor.

I think we have seen clearly that eliminating child labor is really everyone’s business as the challenge is that child labor is not a stand-alone issue.

We strongly believe that if we can make a powerful coalition with other stakeholders and take on the challenge together, even if it is huge, we can eradicate child labor and achieve our mission of making sustainable farming the norm.

I hope this webinar has helped you understand why child labor is such a complex issue and hopefully it has given you more insight in the way we are working against it. And I hope in due time I can show you that our new approach pays off and does contribute to a better future for the children of farmers.
As you know we are happy to support you in strengthening your sustainability communication. Show consumers what you’re doing to help tackle child labor by sourcing UTZ certified raw materials and consequently how they contribute to this by simply enjoying your products.

We have our marketing toolkit available for you which has been updated with information about our work against child labor, infographics and social media visuals, farmer testimonials like the one we’ve just seen, and short clips like this one interviewing a child labor liaison officer.

And don’t forget we have plenty of other materials in our toolkit that are there for you to use in your sustainability communication whenever it suits you.

[Click here](#) to go to the child labor communication toolkit
[Click here](#) for the interview with child labor liaison officer (video 1”08)
Finally, don’t forget to tune into our webinars... hope to see you at the next one!

These are the links to get in touch with us:

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