

REVIEW PROTOCOL FOR CHILD LABOR TOPIC AREA

Highlights

- The objective of the Child Labor Evidence Review is to determine the quality of existing causal evidence on the effectiveness of interventions intended to reduce or prevent child labor.
- The review also considers studies in which school participation and child health and safety are secondary outcomes, which can further contribute to the reduction or prevention of child labor.
- Only research with causal designs is reviewed for this topic area.

Introduction

The term **child labor** refers to the engagement of children in prohibited work and, more generally, in types of work deemed socially and morally undesirable as guided by individual nation's legislation, the International Labour Organization (ILO) Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), their respective supplementing Recommendations (Nos 146 and 190), and reports and resolutions from the International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS).¹ It is important to note that there is no single legal definition of child labor that applies universally across nations, and the terminology and concepts used to categorize child labor and working children (and to distinguish between the two) may change over time and may be inconsistent across published studies and research reports. Working children is a broader concept that comprises children engaged in any activity to produce goods or to provide services for their own use or for use by others, thus including all activities within the general production boundary, as defined in the 2008 System of National Accounts (SNA).²

This CLEAR Evidence Review includes the existing causal evidence on child labor and child work targeted for elimination from a set of eligible studies (see eligibility criteria on page 3). Again, depending on the study and the specific country where the intervention or research occurred, working children, child labor, and related terms are not always defined similarly across studies. In general, in the studies included in this Evidence Review, child labor includes child work below the minimum age as established by national legislation and the worst forms of child labor, including hazardous work, and hazardous unpaid household services. These studies typically follow the below considerations as detailed in the aforementioned ILO documents when considering whether work is considered child labor, yet the specifics of these categories often vary by country:

- **Minimum Working Age.** Individual countries set a general minimum age for admission to work not lower than the end of compulsory education and generally at least 15 years of age. The minimum age varies by country.
- **Worst Forms of Child Labor (WFCL).** This category of work applies to all children under 18 years of age and includes (1) all forms of slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom, as well as forced labor, including that in armed conflict; (2) child prostitution and child pornography; (3) the use, procurement, or offering of a child for illicit activities, including illegal drug production and trafficking; and (4) work which is likely to harm

¹ Please see reference documents, including these conventions and conference resolutions, at www.ilo.org and ilostat.ilo.org for more information on child labor definitions, guidance, measurement, considerations, and variations by country.

²Report III, Report of the Conference, 20th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (Geneva, 10-19 October 2018).

the health, safety, or morals of children, also known as “hazardous child labor” or “hazardous work”. Hazardous work includes activities of a hazardous nature (designated hazardous industries and occupations), or work under hazardous conditions whether paid or unpaid. The list of hazardous occupations, industries and conditions for children varies by country.

- **Hazardous unpaid household services.** Unpaid activities performed by children in their households, such as household chores, may be considered child labor (hazardous work) when done for long hours, in an unhealthy environment, involving dangerous equipment, and/or in a dangerous location. Individual countries may consider the effects on a child’s education when determining what constitutes long hours.
- **Light Work.** Countries may permit light work among children in certain age groups, including household chores, if it is not harmful to their health or development and does not adversely affect their participation in school or vocational training. The lower age limit for light work varies by country. Permissible light work excludes hazardous child work.

Scope of this review

This systematic review assesses the quality of existing causal evidence on the effectiveness of program interventions on child labor outcomes. However, the Evidence Review includes a broad scope of causal evidence related to children’s work since, as described earlier, the concepts of working children and child labor are not always well-defined and may overlap. Studies of interventions designed to affect attitudes towards child labor in addition to their impact on child labor outcomes are eligible for review. Studies of poverty reduction programs, such as conditional cash transfers and school enrollment/attendance interventions, that address child labor as a primary outcome, are eligible for review. Studies focused on child labor with secondary outcomes of child health and safety are eligible for review, but studies of programs designed primarily to impact academic or health outcomes that do include child labor outcomes are not. The review addresses the following research questions:

- What is the quality of existing causal evidence on the effectiveness of interventions intended to reduce or prevent child labor?
- What is the quality of existing causal evidence on the effectiveness of interventions intended to increase school attendance or participation among children at risk of or involved in child labor?
- What is the quality of existing causal evidence on the effectiveness of interventions intended to reduce or prevent work-related injuries or illnesses in working children under 18?

Domains of Interest:

The primary domain of interest in this independent, systematic evidence review is Child Labor, as defined by the study author. CLEAR acknowledges the variance in definitions of child labor by country, and transparently identifies authors’ definitions in study summaries. CLEAR does not validate the definition of child labor or assess the validity or completeness of authors’ constructs within individual studies for the country in which the program or intervention being examined occurs, as that is outside the scope of CLEAR’s evidence reviews. Each study profile contained in CLEAR includes a summary of the intervention and the outcomes assessed by the study for consideration by readers.

- **Child Labor**, including but not limited to paid or unpaid child work below the minimum age as established by national legislation and the worst forms of child labor for all children under 18, including hazardous work, and hazardous unpaid household services. (CLEAR does not validate an author’s definition of child labor for each individual country and study.)

For studies addressing the primary domain of interest, secondary domains of interest may also include:

- **Education and Skills Gain**, including school participation, enrollment, attendance or dropout rates. Educational achievement (e.g., test scores) is excluded from this topic area.
- **Health and Safety**, including work-related injuries, illnesses, and death related to occupational risk (e.g., broken bones, respiratory illnesses), where authors report these outcomes separately from child labor outcomes.

Eligibility Criteria

CLEAR conducts a broad literature search to identify the research papers and reports that examine at least one of the research questions of interest. (See Appendix A.) This systematic review only includes causal studies.³ The identified research is then examined against the eligibility criteria described below, and studies meeting these criteria receive a second-level review, including an assessment of the quality of the causal evidence presented in the study.

1. **Does the study examine the population of interest?** The research eligible for review under this protocol must include working children, children who are involved in child labor, or children who have been identified as at risk for being involved in child labor. This may include having limited ties to the educational system or not being enrolled in school. The age definition for individuals under 18 varies by type of work and by country.
2. **Does it examine an intervention designed to reduce or prevent child labor?** To be eligible for review, the research must examine a program or intervention designed to reduce or prevent child work targeted for elimination or involvement in child labor. Studies of interventions designed to strengthen ties to the educational system (for example, through education subsidies and poverty alleviation programs such as conditional cash transfers) that include the reduction of child labor among their primary goals are eligible. Studies that include enrollment and participation in school and/or health and injury outcomes as secondary outcomes may be included. Studies of interventions designed to move children from prohibited work into permissible work that does not adversely affect their health, safety or schooling may be included.
3. **Was the study conducted in a relevant time and place?** To be the most relevant to practitioners, policymakers, and other stakeholders, the review is limited to studies published from January 2006 through May 2018. The review includes research within and outside of the United States and its territories.
4. **Was the study published in English?** All research studies must be published in English to be considered for inclusion in CLEAR.

³ Causal studies in this topic area were reviewed according to CLEAR Causal Evidence Guidelines. The full set of guidelines may be found at <https://clear.dol.gov/>.

Causal Evidence Guidelines Specific to the Topic Area

CLEAR employs a standardized, systematic review process as documented in its CLEAR Policies and Procedures document.⁴ The child labor topic area includes both experimental and nonexperimental causal research which is reviewed and rated based on the eligibility criteria previously described and the CLEAR Causal Evidence Guidelines.⁵ In assessing the quality of the evidence, CLEAR uses ratings of high, moderate and low. Only two types of studies may receive a high rating: well-conducted randomized controlled trials (RCTs) with low attrition and no obvious confounds to the RCT design and interrupted time series (ITS) designs with sufficient replication. The CLEAR Causal Evidence Guidelines describe the criteria for rating the quality of evidence. In addition, Table 1 provides the additional guidance on attrition standards for RCTs, control variables for nonexperimental regression analysis, group composition standards, and the time period for ITS designs for pre-intervention data that are specific to this review. Please review the CLEAR Causal Evidence Guidelines for additional detail regarding this guidance.

Table 1: Child labor topic area review specific guidance

	CLEAR Causal Evidence Guidelines	Topic Area Specific Guidance
Attrition Standard	Study must have low attrition at the cluster or subcluster level to meet Criterion RCT.2.	Conservative attrition standard.
Control Variables	To meet Criterion Regression.1 and receive a moderate rating, nonexperimental causal research must include specific control variables in its regression analysis (other than those using fixed effects). Regression methods that incorporate a matching design must match on these control variables; if not, they must include them as controls in the regression.	The control variables for the child labor review are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age • Gender • At least one measure of household socioeconomic status, such as household income, poverty, asset ownership, parental education, or social class/caste/ethnicity • Outcomes at baseline (for example, if the outcome of interest is schooling, the study should control for schooling status at baseline).
Changes in Group Composition	Studies with nonexperimental designs and analysis at the group level must meet Criterion Regression.4 to receive a moderate causal evidence rating.	Conservative migration standard.
Pre-intervention Data	An ITS design must use data drawn from a sufficiently long period of time before an intervention’s implementation to meet Criterion ITS.2.	Data must cover at least one year before the implementation of the intervention.

⁴ The CLEAR Policies and Procedures may be found at <https://clear.dol.gov/>.

⁵ These guidelines may be accessed at <https://clear.dol.gov/>. Studies using a regression discontinuity design are reviewed using the CLEAR Descriptive Study Guidelines also available at <https://clear.dol.gov/>.

Appendix A: Literature Search

CLEAR conducted a comprehensive literature search to identify research meeting the eligibility criteria described in the review protocol. The literature review process includes (1) a database search, (2) a search of selected internet sites for grey literature, (3) a snowball search, and (4) a Google Scholar search for specific intervention names.

1. Database Search

All CLEAR searches use the following databases to identify causal literature: Scopus, Academic Search Premier, Business Source Corporate Plus, E-Journals, EconLit, Education Research Complete, SocINDEX with full text, ERIC, PsycINFO, and ProQuest Dissertations and Theses. In conducting the search, CLEAR uses “and” to connect terms from each category (design, outcome, impact and keyword terms) and “or” among terms within a category for example “Causal AND employ* AND impact AND child labo*” An asterisk indicates a truncation. When a truncated term is used in a search, all words with the root are returned (for example “employ*” returns works such as “employment” and “employer”. Similarly, a search including the term “work” returns citations containing “work” such as “working children,” and “child work”.

Table A-1 Keywords used in database searches for child labor topic

Design terms	Causal, evaluation*, experiment*, cross-sectional, random*, randomized controlled trial, RCT, regression, quantitative, quasi experiment*, quasi-experiment*, QED, statistical, difference in differences, double differences, propensity score matching, interrupted time series
Outcome terms	Work, job, employ*, occupation*, hours, income, pay, wage, school participat*, school attendance, safety, health, illness, disabilit*, injur*, hazard, accident, child labo*
Impact terms	Effect*, efficac*, impact, improv*, progress, gain, growth, increase, benefit, reduc*, decrease, prevent, diminish
Keyword terms	Child labo*, trafficked child*, child trafficking, child sexual exploit*, forced child work*, forced child labo*, compulsory labo*, child slav*, child employ*, sexual exploit*, forced labo*, debt bondage, bonded labo*

2. Internet Sites Literature Search

CLEAR also searched other research databases to include The Campbell Collaboration, NBER Working Papers, RePEc, Self-Sufficiency Research Clearinghouse, and Social Science Research Network using a limited set of key words.

The CLEAR team also searched the following list of organizational internet websites conducting or publishing research in this area based on a limited set of keywords and using a Custom Google Search strategy.

- International Labour Organization
 - NORMLEX (formerly ILOLEX)
 - NORMLEX Ratification Status
 - NATLEX
 - Labor Administration and Inspection Program (LABADMIN)

- International Labour Organization International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor (ILO-IPEC)
- Child Soldiers International
- United Nations Development Action Framework (UNDAF)
- Save the Children
- Global March Against Child Labour
- Child Labor Coalition
- International Initiative to End Child Labor
- Child Rights Information Network
- Free the Slaves
- Walk Free
- Office of the Special Representative for the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict
- United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Sale and Sexual Exploitation of Children
- Understanding Children's Work (UCW) Country Reports and Publication Library
- International Organization for Migration (IOM) Publication Library
- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) State of the World's Children Reports
 - UNICEF State of the World's Individual Country Reports
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
- International Monetary Fund (IMF) Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
- Education for All (EFA)
 - EFA 2016 Global Monitoring Report
- World Bank
- United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (projects)
- United States Department of State (USDOS) Human Rights Report
 - USDOS Trafficking in Persons Report
- United States Department of Labor
- Human Rights Watch
 - World Reports
- Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) News
- All Africa
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and Optional Protocols' State Party Reports, Summary Records, and Concluding Observations

In searching these websites, CLEAR used a search string of "child labor" AND (causal OR evaluation OR experiment OR "randomized controlled trial" OR regression OR "quasi-experiment" OR employment OR "school attendance" OR effect OR impact OR prevent OR trafficking OR "sexual exploitation" OR compulsory OR "forced work" OR slave OR "forced labor" OR "bonded labor") with a set date range of January 1, 2006 through May 31, 2018 (when the search was completed). The search was limited to studies published in English.

3. Snowball Search

The study team conducted a snowball search to identify relevant literature using the reference list of a study or studies to identify other studies to include in the review. The following sources were used:

Baird, S., Ferreira, F. H. G., Özler, B., Woolcock, M. Relative Effectiveness of Conditional and Unconditional Cash Transfers for Schooling Outcomes in Developing Countries: A Systematic Review. *Campbell Systematic Reviews* 2013:8. DOI: 10.4073/csr.2013.8.

Dammert, Ana C., de Hood, Jacobus, Mvukiyehe, Eric and Furio C. Rosati. 2017. Effects of public policy on child labor: Current knowledge, gaps and implications for program design. *Policy Research Working Paper 7999*. The World Bank Group.

de Hoop, Jacobus & Rosati, Furio C. 2014). Cash transfers and child labor, Understanding Children's Work Working Paper Series March 2014.

Fiszbein, Ariel; Schady, Norbert; Ferreira, Francisco H.G.; Grosh, Margaret; Keleher, Niall; Olinto, Pedro; Skoufias, Emmanuel. 2009. *Conditional cash transfers : Reducing present and future poverty*. World Bank Policy Research Report. Washington, DC: World Bank. © World Bank.

<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/2597> License: CC BY 3.0 IGO.

Kabeer, Naila and Hugh Waddington. 2015. Economic impacts of conditional cash transfer programmes: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Development Effectiveness*, 7 (3). pp 290-303. DOI 10.1080/19439342.2015.1068833.

Lee, Kye Woo and Miae Hwang. 2016 June. Conditional cash transfer against child labor: Indonesia Program Keluarga Harapan. *Asia Pacific Education Review* 17(3). DOI: 10.1007/s12564-016-9436-7.

Sherr, Lorraine; Rodgers, Anna; Varrall, Rebecca; Mueller, Joanne and Michelle Adato (2009) Examining ways in which contact opportunities associated with transfers might help identify vulnerable households and link them with social welfare services: A systematic review of the literature, *Vulnerable Children and Youth Studies*, 4:sup1, 10-40, DOI: 10.1080/17450120903012982.

4. Google Scholar Search

CLEAR conducted a Google Scholar search using a specific list of intervention/program names. The search combined each of the intervention names listed below with "child labor" and "impact" using "and" to connect the terms. The search was limited to publications since January 2006; to children under the age of 18; and to studies written in English.

- Argentina AND Programa Familias
- Argentina AND Programa Nacional de Becas Estudiantiles
- Bangladesh AND Female Secondary School Assistance Program
- Bangladesh AND Reaching Out-of-School Children
- Bolivia AND Juancito Pinto
- Brazil AND Bolsa Alimentacao
- Brazil AND Bolsa Familia
- Brazil AND Bolsa Escola
- Brazil AND Programa de Eradicacao do Trabalho Infantil

- Burkina Faso AND Orphans and Vulnerable Children
- Burkina Faso AND BRIGHT
- Cambodia AND Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction
- Cambodia Education Sector Support Project
- Chile Solidario
- Chile AND Subsidio Unitario Familiar
- Colombia AND Familias en Accion
- Costa Rica AND Supermonos
- Dominican Republic AND Solidaridad
- Dominican Republic AND Tarjeta de Asistencia Escolar
- Ecuador AND Bono de Desarrollo Humano
- El Salvador AND Red Solidaria
- Ethiopia AND Productive Safety Net Program
- Guatemala AND Mi Familia Progressa
- Honduras AND Programa de Asignacion Familiar
- India AND Apni Beti Apna Dhan
- Indonesia AND Jaring Pengamanan Sosial
- Indonesia AND Program Keluarga Harapan
- Jamaica AND Program of Advancement through Health and Education
- Kenya AND Cash Transfer for Orphans and Vulnerable Children
- Malawi AND Zomba Cash Transfer Program
- Malawi AND Social Cash Transfer Scheme
- Mexico AND Oportunidades
- Mexico AND PROGRESA
- Nicaragua AND Atencion a Crisis
- Nicaragua AND Red de Proteccion Social
- Nigeria AND Care of the Poor
- Punjab Education Sector Reform Program
- Pakistan AND Child Support Program
- Pakistan AND Participation in Education through Innovative Scheme for the Excluded Vulnerable
- Punjab Female School Stipend Program
- Panama and Red de Oportunidades
- Paraguay AND Tekopora/PROPAIS II
- Philippines AND Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program
- Peru AND Juntos
- Social Risk Mitigation Project AND Turkey
- Uruguay AND Ingreso Ciudadano
- Uruguay AND PANES
- Yemen AND Basic Education Development Project