International Labour Organization

IOM UN MIGRATION

Research to Action

Global Research Agenda

Building the evidence base for informed policy action against child labour, forced labour and human trafficking

Why do we need a Global Research Agenda?

The latest ILO 2020 Global Estimates of Child Labour indicate that, despite important progress, there are still 160 million children in child labour worldwide. The latest 2022 Global Estimates of Modern Slavery show that there are a total of 27.6 million persons in situation of forced labour between 2017 and 2021. Given the hidden nature of human trafficking, there are no estimates on the prevalence of human trafficking to capture the full scope and scale of the issue.

The headline figures emerging from the global estimates make clear that a substantial acceleration of progress will be needed to meet commitments to achieve SDG Target 8.7. Moreover, the economic impacts of COVID-19 are placing unprecedented strain on Governments, families and societies, the results of which may stall country efforts to address child labour and forced labour.

Policy choices will be critical to achieve SDG Target 8.7, and ready access to reliable evidence will be essential to informing these choices. A growing body of evidence, research and impact evaluation has generated a better understanding of the policy mix that should be implemented to achieve real progress in tackling child labour and its root causes. However, significant gaps still exist and hamper policy development.

Resources are limited, and knowledge gaps are wide: the identification of priority areas of research will be essential to support policy efforts to eliminate child labour and forced labour. It was in this light that in 2020 the ILO's project "From Research to Action" (RTA) launched a process towards the development of global and national research agenda. Through this participatory process, involving the academic community and experts from international organizations, policy actors, INGOs, country representatives and donors, the Global Research Agenda was established.

Process

Mapping of existing research

An extensive mapping of child labour, forced labour and human trafficking research was conducted: key research papers, studies and reports, including impact evaluations in the child labour and forced labour field since 2010 were listed and categorized.

Convening of an International Advisory Board (IAB)

This group, composed of the academic community and experts from international organizations, policy actors, NGOs, country representatives and donors, met to discuss and build the structure of Evidence Gap Maps (EGM) on child labour and on forced labour.

Identification of knowledge gaps

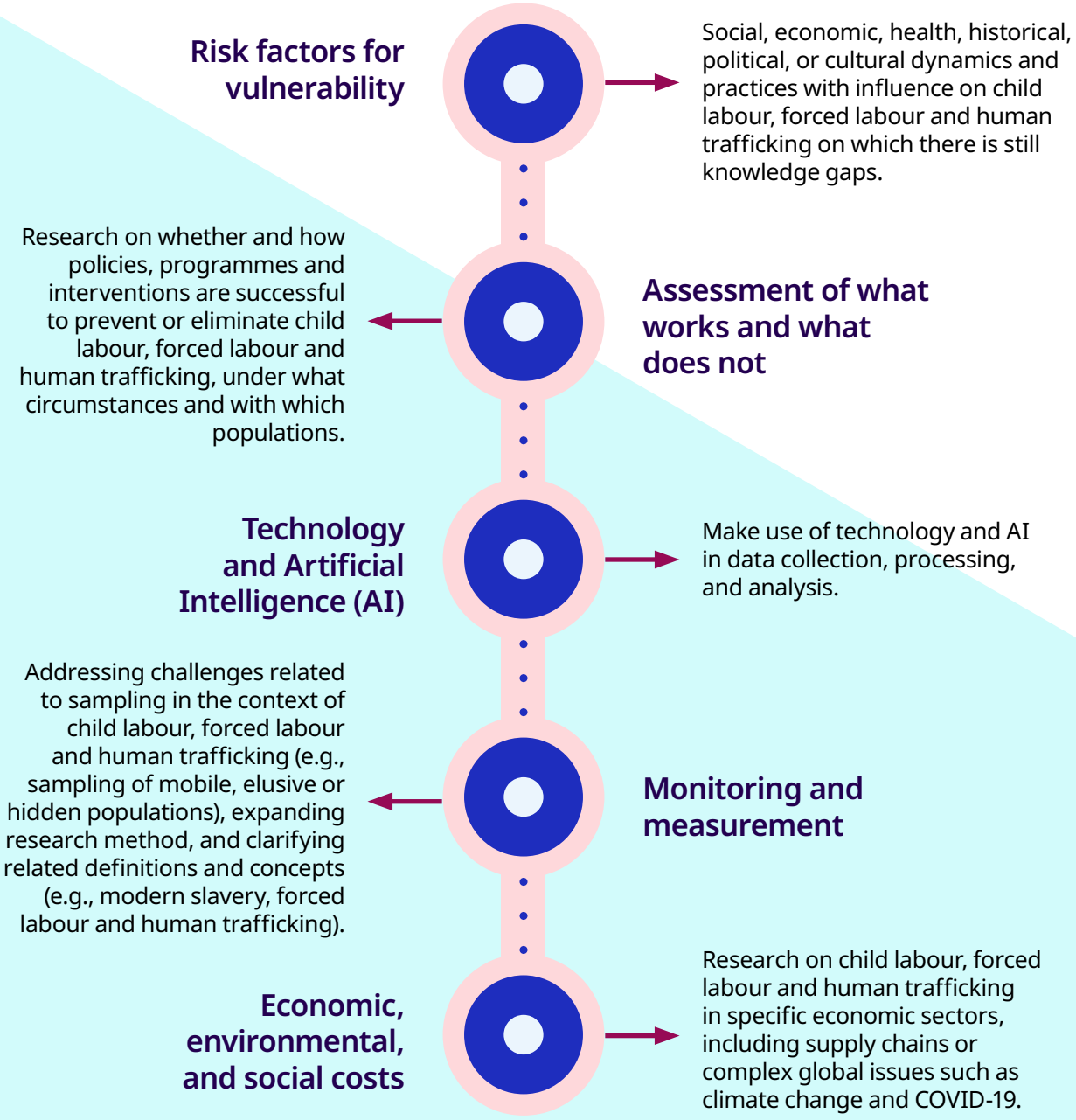
The available child labour and forced labour studies were mapped into an Evidence Gap Map (EGM) based on categories agreed in the IAB consultations. The EGM presents available research and therefore identifies knowledge gaps.

Developing research priorities

The IAB identified an initial set of research priorities. In parallel, a stakeholder mapping was conducted to identify policy actors, funding partners and researchers for consultation. Dialogue was then extended through key informant interviews to identify their needs and priorities.

Establishing a Global Research Agenda

Five Broad Thematic Areas



Main Agenda

Theme	Key topics/ dimensions	Related research questions	Related policy/ programme response
Risk factors for vulnerability	Migration	What are the vulnerability factors for child labour and forced labour migrants?	• Decent work conditions / related programmes (including targeting of specific services) • Social protection policies
	Informality	How does informality act as a driver for forced labour?	
	Demographics	How to improve prevalence studies on forced labour?	
	Child marriage	What is the relationship between child marriage and child labour?	
	Ethnicity	What role does race, ethnicity or other minority status play in vulnerability to child labour/forced labour?	
	Gender-focused policies	How can child labour policies better address the gender-related vulnerabilities to child labour and forced labour?	
	Physical and Mental Health	What are the long term impacts of children working in (specific) potentially hazardous types of work?	
Assessment of what works and what not	Skill development (early childhood)	What is the effect of early childhood development programmes on child labour and schooling?	• Legal commitment • Labour recruitment practices • Education policies • Social protection and livelihood programmes
	Awareness raising and information campaigns	What is the effect of awareness raising campaigns on policy action?	
	Vocational training	What is the role of technical and vocational education and training in small and medium enterprises in reducing child labour?	
	Monitoring and law enforcement	How effective are labour inspectorate and other law enforcement services in reducing child labour/forced labour?	
	Survivors of forced labour and TIP	What strategies are effective at mitigating trauma from these experiences?	
	Social protection and livelihood programmes	What kind of programmes are (the most) sustainable and effective at preventing child and families from child labour and forced labour? What aspects of social protection and livelihood programmes (e.g., cash transfers, credit, parental work) affect child labour/forced labour and how?	
Technology and Artificial Intelligence (AI)	Ethical data collection	What is the impact of technology and AI in data collection in a given context?	• Identification and referral mechanisms • Community monitoring systems
Monitoring and Measurement	Sampling	How can be the range of sampling methods be improved in forced labour research?	
	Methods	How can different research methods address the interlinkages between child labour and forced labour? How can research better involve and benefit local communities?	
	Definitions and concepts (e.g., modern slavery, forced labour, human trafficking)	How to compare findings and data collection procedures given different definitions and concepts?	
Economic, environmental, and social costs	Climate change	How does climate change influence the risk of child labour and forced labour? How does climate change modify the vulnerability factors of child labour and forced labour?	• Labour recruitment • Due diligence • Freedom of association and collective bargaining
	Supply chains	What is the role of global supply chains on child labour and/or forced labour (taking into account broader economic structures and especially third party goods/suppliers)?	
	Specific economic sectors	What is the influence of governance mechanisms on specific sectors?	
	COVID-19	How has COVID 19 impacted the determinants of child labour and forced labour? How has COVID 19 impacted the push/pull factors leading to child labour and forced labour?	

National Research Agendas

Countries with strong interest in building the evidence base needed to set and fulfil policy action priorities may request support from the RTA project to establish a national research agenda. The process is modeled after the qualitative and quantitative research curation and multistakeholder inputs that were conducted for the Global Research Agenda.

Countries that have established or are in the process of developing a national research agenda include:

- Chile
- Malawi
- Nepal
- Paraguay
- Uganda

Do you want a National Research Agenda in your country?

Contact us at rtaproject@ilo.org

Global Call to Action

Collaborate

Innovate

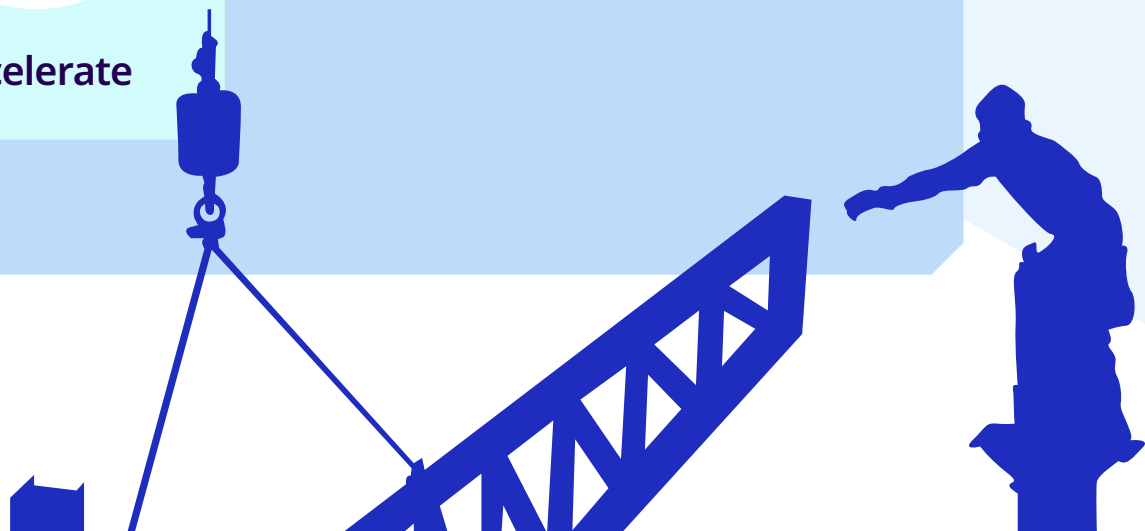
Accelerate

The Global Research Agenda offers opportunities to all stakeholders to initiate and support research addressing the identified priority areas.

To this end, all stakeholders will contribute to deepening the understanding of the root causes of child labour, forced labour, and human trafficking and inform the policies needed to get back on the path toward achieving SDG target 8.7.

Within each thematic area, there are only a few core research questions with the objective of encouraging researchers, including junior researchers, to build on to address evidence gaps. The openness also allows flexibility for practitioners and researchers to fine tune research questions to meet specific priorities and needs in their fields of specialization.

We invite and encourage new collaborations and innovative approaches to implement the Global Research Agenda. We also count on further financial and technical commitments to translating research into policy action and solutions to sustainable development.



The Research to Action (RTA) project

Using Knowledge to Accelerate Progress in the Elimination of Child Labour and Forced Labour

The RTA project centers on bridging the divide between policy research and policy action to tackle issues of forced labour, child labour and human trafficking. The primary objectives of the project are to increase access to evidence, facilitate understanding of available research and gaps, enhance capacity to provide evidence and fill gaps and promote new interest and engagement in the subject area.

Acknowledgements

The RTA project thanks the International Advisory Board (IAB) for their valuable guidance through multiple consultation workshops. The IAB consists of technical experts from the ILO, international organizations, workers' and employers' organizations, United States Department of Labor (USDOL), Alliance 8.7 Pathfinder countries, national statistical offices, INGOs and the research community.

www.rtaproject.org

© International Labour Organization - 2022
Published in November 2022

Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License

This brochure was produced under the framework of the ILO's project "From Research to Action" (RTA) (GLO/18/20/USA). Funding is provided by the United States Department of Labor under cooperative agreement number IL-32462-18-75-K. One hundred per cent of the total costs of the project is financed with Federal funds, for a total of USD 3,360,000. This material does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the United States Department of Labor, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the United States Government.