



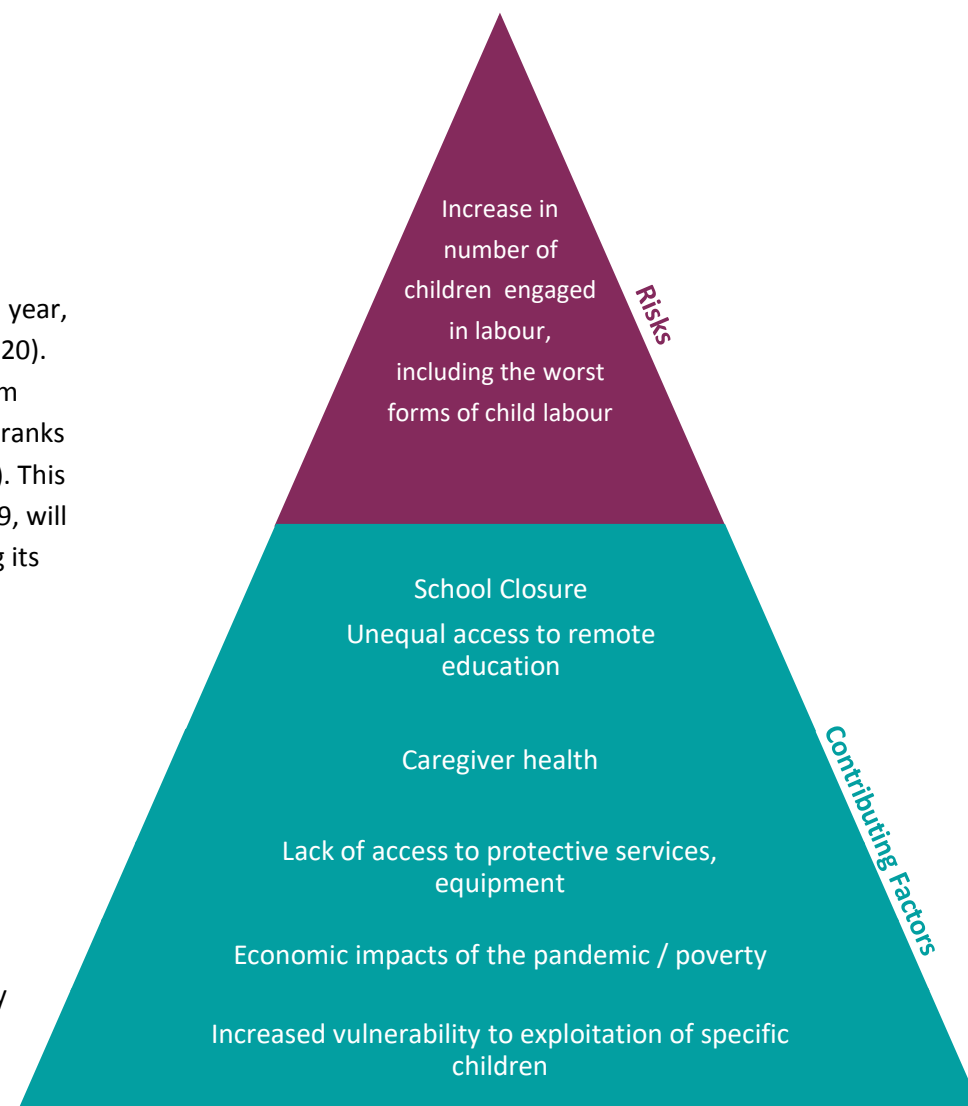
COVID-19 SYNTHESIS #2

JUNE 1-12, 2020

Topic: Child Labour: CPMS Standard 12¹

Child labour is an issue that affects an estimated 152 million children each year, including 72 million who are involved in hazardous forms of work (ILO, 2020). The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that the fallout from COVID-19 will mean that as many as 66 million more children will join the ranks of the 386 million other children who live in extreme poverty (ILO, 2020a). This level of vulnerability and economic desperation, stemming from COVID-19, will likely mean that many of these children will fall into child labour, including its worst forms such as debt bondage and trafficking (website blog: UNICEF evidence for action).

The purpose of this evidence synthesis is to examine what is known about child labour in light of COVID-19. It was carried out by identifying 2 webinars and 20 news articles published between April 22 and June 12, 2020, in either English or French, as well as 24 reports and guidance notes that provided evidence of emerging COVID-19 related child protection risks, or anticipated risks, on different aspects of child labour. The rest of this synthesis is organized in the following way: child labour risks are illustrated by using examples from select articles and research studies; key gaps in the data are gathered, discussed and summarized; and protective factors and reported practices are identified.



¹ **CPMS 12. Child Labour, Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (CPMS):** "Child labour is any work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity. Child labour is work that interferes with children's education and negatively affects their emotional, developmental and physical well-being. Many child labourers are engaged in the worst forms of child labour (WFCL), including forced labour, recruitment into armed groups, trafficking for exploitation, sexual exploitation, illicit work or hazardous work. Humanitarian crises may increase the prevalence and severity of existing forms of child labour or trigger new forms." (The Alliance for child protection in humanitarian action, 2019, p.147)

PROTECTIVE FACTORS

- Social Services: continuous delivery
- Schools: reopened, affordable

SUMMARY OF GAPS

A number of child protection gaps in knowledge related to child labour (CL) were identified including:

- Lack of primary data on CL including its worst forms;
- Lack of information on existing protective factors for children and their caregivers;
- Limited information incorporating children's voices and perspectives;
- No information on stigma and prejudice against children engaged in CL or whether they are seen as potential COVID-19 carriers;
- Lack of information about the public's understanding of CL (compared with child work), particularly given that there are clear international frameworks that define this issue.

CASE STUDIES*

Location: Democratic Republic of Congo
Topic: Increased child labour and sexual exploitation and mitigation strategies

Location: Central African Republic
Topic: Children engaged in household work / family business activities while out of school

Location: Ethiopia
Topic: School closures and access to education

**Click on the 'Case Studies' heading above to read through full write-ups on each of these issues, including first-hand accounts of children and caregivers impacted by COVID-19, as well as observations from child protection practitioners in the field.*

CHILD PROTECTION RISKS

TOPIC	DETAILS	EVIDENCE
<p>Increase in the number of children involved in child labour including the worst forms of child labour</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The conditions for children working in the informal sector of child labour will likely worsen. • Children may engage in work that has lower pay rates, longer working hours and an increased exposure to COVID-19. • Increased use of contract credit can lead to a greater risk that children and families end up in debt bondage. • When debt bondage increases, the restriction of children’s freedom of movement increases. • Lack of data collection and coverage of children engaged in child labour and those who are trafficked during COVID-19 means it is easier for traffickers to hide their operations and more difficult for protective services to screen and assess in order to identify children; tracking children is a significant challenge. 	<p>“A leading charity in Hà Nội says there has been a threefold increase in the number of children living on the streets, forced from their homes in search of work during the COVID-19 pandemic.” (Vietnam News, 2020)</p> <p>“Greater informal employment coupled with economic hardship could push many children out of school and into the labour market.” (UNICEF, ILO, 2020)</p> <p>“Crisis situations often exacerbate violence and harassment at home and at work, including gender-based violence, and may lead more children and adults into child labour, forced labour and debt bondage.” (Alliance 8.7, 2020)</p> <p>“Vulnerable workers are more likely to get tricked and trapped in forced labour. With more workers likely to contract debts to survive, the risk of increasing debt bondage is particularly important. Criminal networks may actively use this global crisis to exploit vulnerabilities to further restrict the freedom of victims and increase the financial profit that forced labour and human trafficking generates.”(ILO, 2020b)</p> <p>“Childline received as many as 92,000 SOS calls (a 50% surge) during the first 11 days of the first lockdown, with callers requesting protection from abuse and violence. Many child labourers, allowed out briefly to go to a toilet, rang up on this help... [...] Child activists are terrified at the post-COVID 19 situation which has rendered millions of workers jobless.” (in India, Sehgal, 2020)</p>

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TO CHILD PROTECTION RISKS

<p>School closures and/or unequal access to remote education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The closure of schools leave children more vulnerable to engagement in child labour or an increased amount of work. • A reduction of school attendance may lead to an increase in child labour in order for families to cope with economic shocks. • Remote education excludes those without access to computers, internet or finances to purchase internet data and may increase the economic burden on households and the likelihood that children engage in child labour. 	<p>“Ivory Coast and Ghana should be on alert for a spike in child labour due to the coronavirus,” experts said, with schools closed and monitors unable to access villages in cocoa harvest season.</p> <p>The two West African countries together produce about 65 per cent of the world’s cocoa and child labour has been a longstanding problem in the sector, despite pledges from chocolate companies including Nestle and Hershey to reduce it.</p> <p>Fairtrade Africa said it had received reports of possible cases in Ivory Coast’s eastern and western regions in recent weeks and flagged them to the government. Government spokesmen for Ivory Coast and Ghana could not immediately be reached for comment.</p> <p>“In normal circumstances children are already vulnerable, and now they are not going to school,” said Anne-Marie Yao, regional cocoa manager for Fairtrade Africa. “We don’t have access to those villages, we don’t know exactly what is happening, and we know that this is the mid-season harvesting period,” she said.</p> <p>They do not have staff on the ground because of the pandemic, and the shelters, where rescued children are normally taken, have closed, she added.</p> <p>“If the current situation continues an increase in child labour is very likely,” she added. [...] “Teachers are often the first to spot child abuse,” said Yao, who suggested the state could instruct them to somehow keep in touch with their students and not all leave the communities. (Nam News Network (7 May 2020))</p>
<p>Economic impacts of COVID-19 on poor families, exacerbating existing vulnerabilities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An increase of poverty worldwide may push children into child labour and lower school enrolment rate, especially for girls. • A reduced income impacts the ability of households to provide food; lack of access to schools’ feeding programs impacts negatively children’s nutrition. • Children with underlying vulnerabilities, especially those exacerbated by conditions brought about by COVID-19 (such as children living without parental support), are at higher risk of exploitation. 	<p>“Given that they have no savings or other financial cushion, most owners of informal enterprises may have no choice but to use their negligible business capital for consumption. As a result, they may be forced to close their informal business temporarily or permanently, leading to job losses and a surge in poverty. Loss of income and deepening poverty, in turn, could trigger a sharp rise in child labour and lower school enrolment rates, especially for young girls.” (ILO, 2020a)</p> <p>“Children who are from marginalized minority groups, disabled, street-connected and homeless, or from single or child-headed households, migrants, refugees, internally displaced persons, or from conflict or disaster affected areas are more vulnerable to child labour and at particular risk in the current crisis.”(ILO, 2020b)</p>

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TO CHILD PROTECTION RISKS, CONT.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the poorest households, if a caregiver or parent falls sick or dies, children may be obliged to engage in child labour to provide additional support for their families. 	<p>“... as parents and caregivers in poor countries fall sick or die, children will take over part of their roles, including domestic work and earning responsibilities, as seen previously in Mali, Mexico, and Tanzania.” (website blog: UNICEF evidence for action)</p>
<p>Lack of access to protective services or equipment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child victims of exploitation are further isolated due to lockdown and confinement; their access to informal support networks is disrupted. • There is a lack of opportunity to identify and protect victims of exploitation and trafficking. • There is a lack of availability and access to services due to public health measures (e.g. NGOs, government offices, shelters, justice). • Suspension of on-site police and labour inspections may lead to increased impunity of traffickers. • A lack of personal protective equipment adds to children’s vulnerability. • When social protection systems such as schools, unemployment benefits, school feeding services and worker insurance schemes are no longer accessible, children engaged in child labour are further harmed. 	<p>“Services considered non-essential, including on-site police and labour inspections, may also be affected. Governments are diverting resources to address the pandemic and the police have new tasks for the enforcement of lockdowns and social distancing, affecting their normal operational capacity. Under these conditions, there is a looming danger that investigating trafficking in persons will become a lower priority and that proactive inspections of suspect sites and cases are reduced. This may in turn have an impact on arrests, investigations, prosecutions and convictions, leading to a climate of practical impunity where traffickers can operate with even lower risk of detection and conviction.” (UNODC, 2020, p.3)</p> <p>“Victims who have had their personal documentation removed by the exploiters may experience additional barriers in accessing COVID-19 related healthcare and other services.”(ILO, 2020b)</p> <p>“Here in the northern region of Ghana children are denied the basic information about the virus and are going through emotional stress and physical stress because they are not in schools and are doing all manner of dirty work. Some children are found using used nose masks or throw away ones to cover which is more dangerous. Most children are roaming around picking scraps of old metals in the name of making money to do what - only God knows. These actions are putting the vulnerable children at risk.” (Case Study: Ghana, Centre for Communities Education and Youth Development, 2020)</p>

PROTECTIVE FACTORS

<p>Continuity of protection services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuity of protection services for high-risk children, such as those living on the streets, is critical. • Keeping shelters open for victims of trafficking during the pandemic is a promising practice. • Identification and prevention activities, for children living on the street and subjected to exploitation, promote protection. 	<p>“Civil society organizations have already issued alerts about access to shelters being denied to trafficking victims because of COVID-19. Some shelters have had to close because of reported infections and others have partially suspended services. Lack of housing, healthcare, legal and other services can increase vulnerabilities both to re-trafficking and to COVID-19 infection. Promising practices have been developed by some countries that allow victims of trafficking to remain in government-funded safe accommodation while the crisis lasts.” (UNODC, 2020, p.2)</p> <p>“In Senegal UNODC is supporting the Government in a large-scale operation that aims to identify thousands of street children that studied in religious boarding schools. These children were often subjected to exploitation and are now at heightened risk.”(UNODC, 2020, p.2)</p>
<p>Encouraging schools reopening and affordability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rewarding and supporting school attendance needs to be encouraged, including school feeding programmes, social protection systems tied to children going to school, and/or reduction of school fees. • School reopening needs to happen as soon as possible; the longer children are out of school, the more likely those engaged in child labour will not return and will drop out. 	<p>“It may be possible to curb the consequences of school closure. [...] Moreover, the re-opening of schools can cause excitement for both students and their parents. Such excitement was widely reported in the aftermath of school closures due to the Ebola epidemic in West Africa.” A World Vision report from 2015 quoted an 11 year-old in Sierra Leone: “When school finally reopened on April 14, it was the best day of my life.” Indeed, in Sierra Leone children had largely returned to class by the end of the Ebola epidemic. (website blog: UNICEF evidence for action)</p> <p>“If school fees increase or school quality deteriorates post-COVID-19, a further increase in child labour seems likely.” (website blog: UNICEF evidence for action)</p>

Find out more about the **main resources and guidance** published related to the topics covered above in the section: [Main Child Labour-COVID-19 guidance, academic research and innovative responses \(not exhaustive\)](#) and about the **news coverage** of those issues in the table below labeled: [Mapped News Articles](#)

Conclusion

As of mid-June 2020, the focus of most media accounts on child labour, related to COVID-19, was on the virus's anticipated effects, rather than actual evidence of its impact on children. Indeed, some early research carried out during the pandemic suggested that the number of children engaged in child labour may have actually *decreased* while the risks of exploitation *increased* (Sehgal, 2020). There remains a pressing need for additional knowledge of the dynamics of child labour across different contexts.

Key Points:

- This evidence brief makes clear that more information is urgently needed to protect children from entering into the worst forms of child labour where they experience serious harm and exploitation.
- There is also a need for reflection on how the drivers of child labour may be gendered.
- Several protective practices could be encouraged and are already emerging such as the continuity of service provision to vulnerable families – inclusive of those engaged in or at risk of child labour – with food, non-food items, or virtual legal advice and assistance.
- Strengthening the social protection response, including cash transfer, also seems to be a key response measure to minimize the anticipated impacts of the pandemic on child labour.
- Finally, it is crucial that there is adherence to national and international laws and that guidelines and advocacy documents are produced to encourage protective governmental policies to prevent and curb child labour and trafficking in relation to specific threats that have been exacerbated by COVID-19.

Case studies/ Observations from the Field

Below are accounts submitted directly to The Alliance from practitioners and researchers in the field that illustrate emerging child protection issues, best practices, and ongoing challenges during COVID-19.

Democratic Republic of Congo

Observations in Kibabi (North Kivu) suggest more children are present at mining sites, either as miners or to sell merchandise. Reports from the field also indicate that the bars, that have not complied with the government order to close, have become a venue for commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking of young girls. “Girls from secondary schools are entering prostitution,” disclosed one source, adding: “it is a serious problem.” Although children in South Kivu are also reportedly working in the fields with their parents, restrictions on mining, increased police presence and enforcement of social distancing regulations have reduced children’s engagement in mining and street activities (e.g. petty trade, washing vehicles). Respondents all agreed that more children, especially girls, have taken on more household chores since the school closures, with one of our sources suggesting that the reason for children’s increased engagement in work is that children are bored and more willing to help.” (Cécile Fanton d’Andon, Christina Reinke for PACE, CPC, June 2020)

Central African Republic

One of our 17-year-old respondents says “In these periods when the school is not working, I work twice as much, as I have nothing to do at home.” (Batangafo). In Bossangoa, children might accompany their parents and stay several days in the bush. This is reportedly common in the sowing season but is accentuated by the COVID-19 crisis. One respondent says, “For sure children work more, especially as they sleep in the field or on the site with their parents, there is nothing else to do than work.” Children also are going to the market to sell mangos they pick in trees or replace their parents to either buy or sell. In mines, our observations revealed an increase in the presence of children due to COVID-19. This is reinforced in Bocaranga where the price of gold decreased drastically. Both boys and girls carry rocks and clean them. Girls on the mining sites also reportedly take care of babies and sell small merchandise. “Our partners around Bossangoa reported that more girls were entering into prostitution around the mining sites. Our local partner also noticed an increase in armed groups’ recruitment. Preliminary findings indicate that there has been a surge in enrollment, but exact figures aren’t known yet.” (Cecile Fanton d’Andon, Marius Mougua for PACE, CPC, June 2020))

Ethiopia

“Several kebele managers reported that children in their communities now work longer hours for their families, either at home doing household work, or outside collecting firewood, fuel or dung, fetching water, herding cattle or agricultural activities. Our initial observations suggested activities such as stone crushing or sand mining have slowed in the absence of truck circulation due to enforcement of movement restrictions, but this might have evolved now that movement regulations are lifted. Some sources also reported decreased engagement in petty trade in the cities. Several kebele managers noticed more children collecting khat (a shrub native to East Africa whose leaves act as a stimulant drug) and working longer hours. One respondent explained, “In khat harvesting more children are working than the previous time because it is a means of income for the household.” One kebele manager reported noticeable changes in child protection concerns in their community, noting, ‘We have observed that girls are forced to engage in early marriage as there is no schooling, but we have never observed any violence of child labor.’ In general, however, the majority of kebele managers interviewed, reported no knowledge of increased incidence of the worst forms of child labor or other forms of violence against children. “

Note: Case studies are important to understanding what is happening in communities and with children. Please send any case studies that are related to child protection risks and mitigation measures during COVID-19 to The Alliance using the [online form found here](#).

Main Child Labour-COVID-19 databases, guidance, academic research & innovative responses *(not exhaustive)*

THEMES	RESOURCES
Main databases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ILO Conventions on child labour, https://www.ilo.org/ipec/facts/ILOconventionsonchildlabour/lang--en/index.htm • United Nations (1989) Convention on the right of the child • The Alliance for child protection in humanitarian action (2019) Standard 12 Child Labour, https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/cpms-video-series-standard-12-child-labour • The Alliance for child protection in humanitarian action (2016) Inter-agency Toolkit : Supporting the Protection Needs of Child Labour in Emergencies • The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (06 May 2020) Technical note: covid-19 and child labour • ILO Child Labour https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/child-labour/lang--en/index.htm • Understanding children’s work an interagency cooperation project: http://www.ucw-project.org/ • Clarissa (12 June 2020) The Child Labour: Action-Research-Innovation in South and South-Eastern Asia (CLARISSA) https://clarissa.global/ • Mouvement Africain des enfants et jeunes travailleurs https://www.maejt.org/ • Partnership against child exploitation https://www.pace-consortium.org/project • Alliance 8.7 https://www.alliance87.org/ • Regional initiative latin american and the caribbean free of child labour https://www.iniciativa2025alc.org/en • 20 global march against child labour updates from partners worldwide: https://globalmarch.org/supporting-families-and-children-in-need-global-march-networks-response-to-covid-19/ • ILAB responses: https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/about-us/response-to-covid-19
References	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alliance 8.7 (29 may 2020) The human rights and labour rights of the most vulnerable must be at the heart of the COVID-19 response • ILO, 2020a. COVID-19 crisis and the informal economy Immediate responses and policy challenges. • ILO, 2020b. COVID-19 impact on child labour and forced labour: The response of the IPEC+ Flagship Programme. • International Labour Organization, ‘ILO Standards and COVID-19’, FAQ – key provisions of international labour standards relevant to the evolving COVID-19 outbreak, ILO, Geneva, May 2020. • International Labour Organization (29 April 2020.), ‘ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the World of Work’, third edition, ILO, Geneva. • International Labour Organization (2020), ‘A Policy Framework for Responding to the COVID-19 Crisis’, ILO Policy Brief on COVID-19, ILO, Geneva. • International Labour Organization (May 2020), ‘COVID-19 Crisis and the Informal Economy: Immediate responses’, ILO brief, ILO, Geneva. • Cécile Fanton d’Andon, Christina Reinke. for PACE, CPC.(June 2020) Preliminary findings on the impact of COVID-19.for DRC.

THEMES	RESOURCES
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cecile Fanton d'Andon, Marius Mougua for PACE, CPC.(June 2020) Preliminary findings on the impact of COVID-19. For CAR • Christina Reinke for PACE, CPC.(June 2020) Preliminary findings on the impact of COVID-19. For Ethiopia • Sehgal Rashme (26 May 2020) In COVID-19 lockdown, 'reverse trafficking' of child labour • UNICEF, ILO (12 June 2020) COVID-19 and Child Labour: A time of crisis, a time to act • UNICEF evidence for action (14 May 2020) Why child labour cannot be forgotten during covid-19 • UNODC (2020) , Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on trafficking in persons

Mapped News Articles

THEMES	SOURCES
<p>Child Labour</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Middle East Monitor (21 April 2020) UNICEF: 4m more children will live in extreme poverty in MENA after COVID-19 • Voice of America (29 April 2020) Orphaned, Abused, Exploited — Children Could be Hardest Hit by Pandemic, https://www.voanews.com/covid-19-pandemic/orphaned-abused-exploited-children-could-be-hardest-hit-pandemic • Chopra, N., 'The Cost of COVID-19 Lockdown: Rise in bonded labour and human trafficking in India', <i>Outlook India</i>, 13 April 2020. • World Vision New Zealand (18 May 2020) Millions More Face Child Labour, Early Marriage Because Of COVID-1, https://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/WO2005/S00098/millions-more-face-child-labour-early-marriage-because-of-covid-19.htm • Nam News Network (7 May 2020) COVID-19: West African countries on alert for child labour spike due to coronavirus, http://www.namnewsnetwork.org/?p=73395 • Human Rights Watch (9 april 2020) COVID-19's devastating impact on children https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/09/covid-19s-devastating-impact-children • The Wire (21 April 2020) COVID-19 Crisis will push millions of vulnerable children into child labour https://thewire.in/rights/covid-19-crisis-will-push-millions-of-vulnerable-children-into-child-labour • The Global March against child labour, Facing child labor from a Covid-19 standpoint https://globalmarch.org/facing-child-labor-from-a-covid-19-standpoint/ • Deccan Herald (26 May 2020) In COVID-19 lockdown, 'reverse trafficking' of child labour In COVID-19 lockdown, 'reverse trafficking' of child labour https://www.deccanherald.com/opinion/in-perspective/in-covid-19-lockdown-reverse-trafficking-of-child-labour-842145.html • ECLT Foundation (2020) The Impact of COVID-19 on Child Labour in Agriculture https://www.eclt.org/en/news/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-child-labour-in-agriculture • TRT World (27 May 2020) UNHCR: child labour, marriages on rise in Yemen as Covid-19 spreads https://www.trtworld.com/middle-east/unhcr-child-labour-marriages-on-rise-in-yemen-as-covid-19-spreads-36663 • Vérité Fair Labor, Worldwide (21 April 2020) COVID-19 and Child Labor https://www.verite.org/covid-19-and-child-labor/ • World Bank Blogs (29 May 2020) An inclusive response to COVID-19 for Africa's informal workers • Viet Nam News (30 April 2020) COVID-19 forces more children onto the streets` • VOA (01 June 2020) 16 millions d'enfants pauvres en plus fin 2020 en Amérique latine • The tribune (8 April 2020) Brick-kiln workers in Jammu defy lockdown to feed family. • MilleniumPost (19 May 2020) To curb child labour: DCPCR comes out with new guidelines • World Economic Forum (12 May 2020) COVID-19 heightens the risk of child labour. This is how we can tackle it