

# The Cost and Effectiveness of Three Approaches to Eliminating Child Labor in the Ugandan Coffee Sector

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The Rainforest Alliance is creating a more sustainable world by using social and market forces to protect nature and improve the lives of farmers and forest communities.



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## BACKGROUND

Child labor is often described as “work that robs children of their childhoods, their potential, and their dignity.” It limits a child’s access to school, is harmful for their physical and mental development, and – in its worst forms – can lead to trauma, injury or even death. Whether work performed by a child qualifies as “child labor” depends on many factors, such as the child’s age, the hours worked, the type of activities carried out, and whether the work interferes with school attendance. Some child work is not harmful and can, in fact, be beneficial: a child doing safe and age-appropriate work on their parents or a neighbor’s farm outside of school hours can earn pocket money and gain important skills and experience. Often a child’s work status changes throughout the year, with regular school attendance except during the peak crop harvest period. Children of school going age should not miss lessons in order to work, and the work should never harm them.

While Uganda has adopted child labor legislation and policies that are in line with the International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions on child labor<sup>1</sup>, in reality, child labor remains rampant in the country. It is estimated that 22 percent of children in Uganda aged 5 to 14 are involved in child labor and do not attend school, while an additional 26 percent combine work and school. The vast majority of child workers (95 percent) work in the agriculture sector (cocoa, coffee, corn, tea, tobacco, rice, sugarcane and vanilla). Roughly half of children in Uganda do not complete primary school.<sup>2</sup>

As an organization that works with more than two million farmers in 70 countries around the world – including many of the countries with the highest rates of child labor – the Rainforest Alliance is acutely aware of the challenges involved with eradicating child labor. The Rainforest Alliance believes that child labor-free agricultural supply chains can be realized through a number of complementary pathways.

Certification is an important tool in the fight against child labor. Experience has shown that merely prohibiting and penalizing child labor violations is insufficient to prevent and eliminate this complex problem. In fact, a punitive approach invariably drives abuses underground, making them harder to detect, mitigate, and remediate. That is why the Rainforest Alliance’s new and enhanced [2020 Certification Program](#) introduces a risk-based “assess-and-address” approach to better prevent, monitor, and respond to child labor.

To ensure greatest impact, the Rainforest Alliance combines certification with other complementary pathways to prevent and remediate child labor, at a government, landscape, community, and company level. These pathways include partnerships between business, civil society, government, and communities, to create environments that enable children to go to school and provide families with the awareness and financial means to support their children’s education and not resort to child labor.

With this in mind, in 2017 staff at the Rainforest Alliance<sup>3</sup>, created a unique opportunity in Uganda; they wanted to assess the costs and effectiveness of the standards-based

1 <https://www.ilo.org/ipec/facts/ILOconventionsonchildlabour/lang--en/index.htm>

2 US Department of Labor, Bureau of International Labor Affairs, Child Labor and Forced Labor Reports, Uganda, 2019

3 These staff worked on the Sector Partnerships Program (which was started by UTZ with funding from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and continued at Rainforest Alliance when the two organizations merged in 2018)

approach to child labor that it was using at the time, and compare that to the high-intensity Child Labor Free Zone Approach and a third approach of moderate intensity. This briefing paper describes the project and the resulting assessment of effectiveness and cost. It concludes with a set of recommendations for donors, companies and Rainforest Alliance Certified farmers who are seeking effective and innovative solutions for eradicating child labor from agricultural supply chains. The full research report can be found [here](#).

## THE “CHILD LABOR FREE ZONE” APPROACH

The Child Labor Free Zone (CLFZ) approach was developed in India in the early 1990s by the [MV Foundation](#). This approach was different from others at the time because it challenged the conventional wisdom that poverty alone was the cause of child labor. Rather, the pioneers of the CLFZ approach argued that deep-rooted societal norms, poorly-functioning schools, and ineffective government policies were the main reasons that children were not attending school. Instead of focusing on children who were working in a specific supply chain, such as clothing factories, CLFZ proponents decided to focus their efforts on a discrete geographical area and work to ensure that *all* children in this area attend school. Their method included all stakeholders — teachers, parents, children, community

leaders, businesses and local authorities — in an intense collaboration to change community norms and policies on child labor. Central to the approach was the creation of a diverse citizen’s committee that acts as both a role model and a watchdog, and communicates one simple, unwavering message: *all children should be in school*.

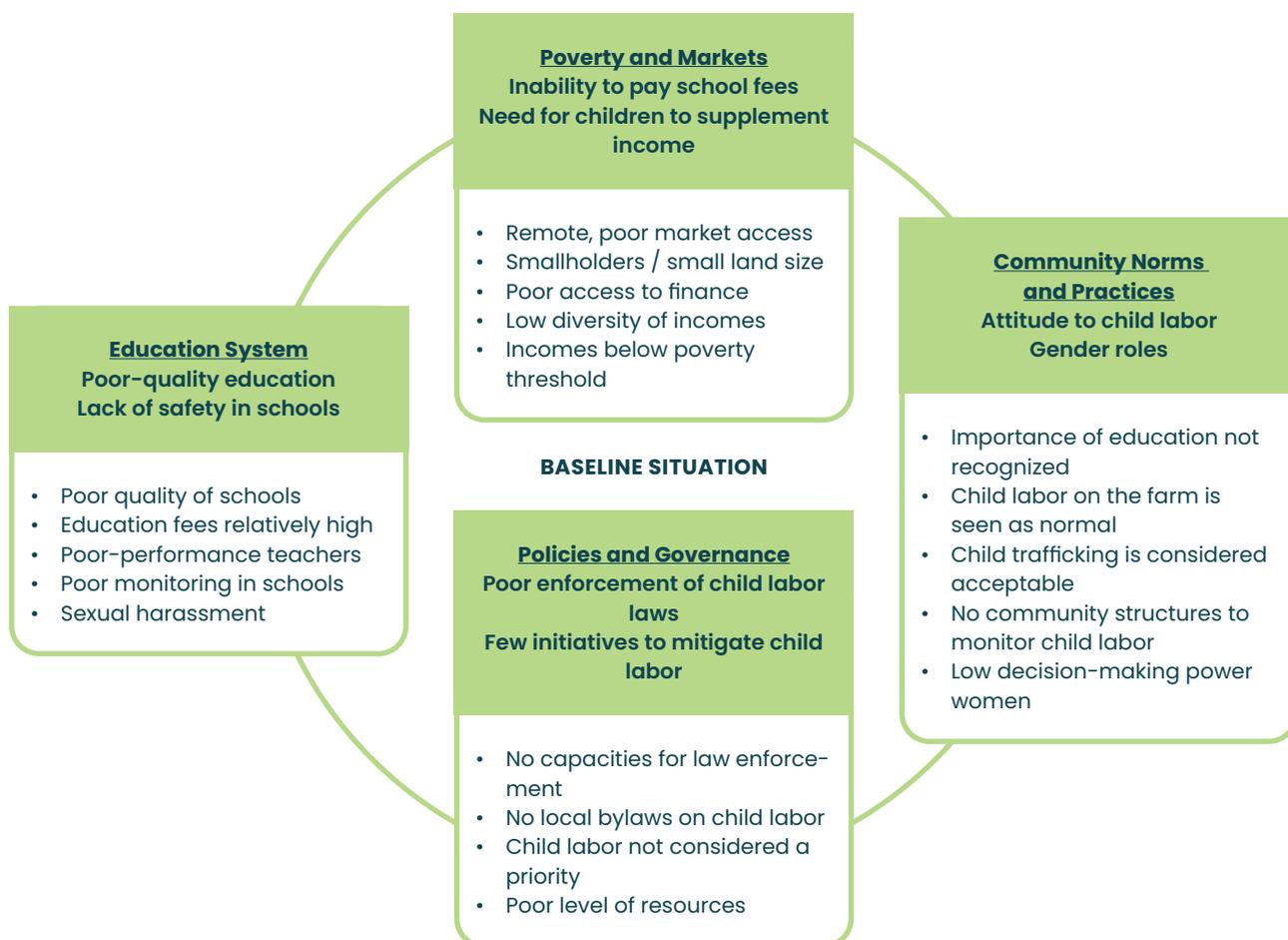
The CLFZ approach was first introduced in Erussi Sub County in the Nebbi District of the West Nile region of Uganda in 2014. That was when Kyagalanyi Coffee Limited (KCL), a Rainforest Alliance Certified coffee trader that was new to the region, realized that 50–60 percent of its coffee supplier households had children who were not in school full time. Kyagalanyi and the Rainforest Alliance approached the Stop Child Labour Coalition and Hivos for assistance, who soon joined forces with local NGO Community Empowerment for Rural Development (CEFORD) and the Uganda National Teachers’ Union (UNATU).

Together, these project partners developed a strategy to implement the CLFZ approach in the Nebbi district. This meant that they would tackle the root causes of child labor in the region, and that they would focus activities not just on coffee farming households that were Kyagalanyi members, but rather on the whole community (*all* households), as well as local government and the education system.

Below is a summary of the CLFZ project activities in the

**FIGURE 1**

Four root causes of child labor in the West Nile region of Uganda. *Source: Aidenvironment.*



West Nile region, grouped by the root cause of child labor that they intended to address:

**Poverty:**

- provide training to help farmers increase their coffee yields and generate more income
- train farmers on alternative sources of income and support this through Village Savings and Loans Associations
- help farmers access funds to pay school fees through Village Savings and Loans Associations
- enhance the role of women in household financial decision-making, as women are more likely than men to prioritize children and education<sup>4</sup>

**Community attitudes and practices:**

- establish Child Labor Committees (CLCs), which are comprised of diverse and respected community members who are committed to raising awareness of the perils of child labor and the value of education
- conduct house-to-house visits to identify households with child labor and develop child labor remediation plans when cases are identified
- visit regularly to monitor the progress of families toward implementing remediation plans
- encourage local chiefs to speak out against child labor, and encourage spiritual leaders to include anti-child labor messages in their church and mosque sermons

Poor quality education (the listed activities were conducted under the leadership of the teachers' union, UNATU):

- select and train "focal point teachers," child la-

bor committees and child monitoring programs at schools

- provide school materials to families that are vulnerable to child labor
- sensitize parents to the need for children to attend school
- train senior women teachers to make reusable menstrual pads for female pupils
- host pro-education radio programs on three local stations
- develop a "children's parliament" in which groups of children identify missing children to teachers, who support re-integration

**Inadequate child labor policies and enforcement:**

- work with governments at the "sub-county" level (a Ugandan administrative unit that is larger than a "parish" but smaller than a "district") to establish a "child labor steering committee" which includes sub-county political leaders, police and the social services secretary, among others
- work with government representatives to lobby for more funding for schools to enhance infrastructure and increase the number of (female) teachers

In 2017, after the above actions had been implemented for three years, an evaluation of the West Nile CLFZ program was conducted by the independent consultancy Aidenvironment. [This evaluation](#) found the CLFZ approach to be effective in reducing child labor, but also raised concerns about its high costs.

## COMPARING DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO CHILD LABOR

In response to the 2017 evaluation of the West Nile CLFZ project and as part of the Rainforest Alliance Sector Partnership Program, a collaboration was started with local partners to build upon the work conducted between 2014 and 2017, but with an additional aim: compare the costs and effectiveness of the original, intensive CLFZ approach with three slightly lower-intensity (and potentially lower-cost) approaches.

This second phase of the project, which began in 2017 and ended in 2020, was conceptualized as follows: the original CLFZ project would continue as before (in "Zone A1"), and its costs and effectiveness would be compared to three alternative approaches. The first alternative approach (in "Zone A2") contained all of the elements of the original CLFZ project, but for a shorter duration (three years instead of six) and with a slightly lower density of Child Labor Committees; the second alternative approach (in "Zone B"), involved a moderate-intensity set of activities that included some – but not all – CLFZ elements and was primarily aimed at Kyagalanyi members; the third alternative approach (in "Zone C") was considered to be "low intensity" and included only the child labor related activities that were required under the UTZ certification program at the time, which included: 1) basic awareness-raising on child labor among member farmers, 2) inspection of farms for child labor during the annual certification audit, and 3) in areas with a high risk of child labor, appointing a child labor liaison officer to monitor child labor and remediate any identified cases.

<sup>4</sup> Observed by local NGO staff, and reported in: Children's Schooling in sub-Saharan Africa: The Role of Fathers, Mothers, and Others, by C.B. Lloyd and A.K. Blanc (1996)



**TABLE 1**

The characteristics and activities of the four project zones.

Main parameters / activities per zone	Child Labor Free Zone approach		Moderate intensity approach	Low intensity approach
	Zone A1	Zone A2	Zone B	Zone C
Year intervention started	2014	2017	2017	2017
Staffing	3 community change agents and 1 child labor liaison officer per sub-county			no staff dedicated to child labor
Household surveys to identify child labor?	Yes, conducted in all village households		Yes, but only in Kyagalanyi member households	
Household-level child labor remediation plans and monitoring?	Yes	Yes	Only in Kyagalanyi member households	No remediation plans; monitoring occurs during annual certification audits only
Child Labor Committees and Village Savings and Loans Associations created?	13 (one per village)	10 (two or three per parish)	9 (one per parish)	No
Women's empowerment program using GALS* approach?	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Support and awareness-raising for teachers and schools?	All 15 primary schools		All 12 primary schools	No
Coalition-building and development of sub-county steering committees?	Yes, started in 2014, steering committee established		Yes, started in 2017, no steering committee established	No
Training on practices to improve coffee productivity (e.g. fertilizing and pruning)?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

\* Gender Action and Learning System

The specific activities conducted in each zone are summarized in Table 1.

### ASSESSING THE COSTS AND EFFECTIVENESS OF EACH APPROACH METHOD

In each of the four study zones, the percentage of households with child labor or at risk of child labor was assessed in 2018 (at the start of the project) and again in 2020 (at the end of the project) by Aidenvironment in partnership with local NGO CEFORD and Kyagalanyi staff. Researchers used a mixed-methods approach that involved quantitative surveys of households, teachers, children, and the staff of Child Labor Committees and Village Savings and Loan Associations, as well as qualitative focus group discus-

sions. In addition, a senior local expert conducted a qualitative assessment based on interviews and focus group discussions. Table 2 shows the number of individuals (or sometimes organizations) interviewed in 2018 and in 2020. As noted in the table, the 2020 numbers were reduced for some groups due to COVID-19 travel restrictions.

There are four issues that limit the validity of some of the data collected in this study. The first is that the percentage of households with child labor or at risk of child labor that were calculated in 2018 do not reflect the true baseline rates for Zones A1 and A2. This is because CLFZ activities in Zones A1, which began in 2014 and showed spill over to zone A2, had already substantially reduced rates of child labor by 2018. Therefore, when assessing the effects of the interventions on rates of child labor, a more accurate

**TABLE 2**

Survey sample sizes in 2018 and 2020. Figures include all study zones combined.

Survey type	Sample size 2018	Sample size 2020
Households visited to assess school attendance and the presence of child labor	4,231	2,827
Households surveyed about perceptions on child labor	2,544	2,440
Child Labor Committees and VSLAs	28	31 (plus an additional 10 qualitative surveys)
Sub-county governments (and Child Labor Steering Committees if present)	3	6 (plus an additional six qualitative surveys)
Children included in focus group discussions	0	22
Teachers surveyed about perceptions on child labor	31	0 (reduced due to COVID-19)
Teachers surveyed about child enrollment	42	4 (reduced due to COVID-19)
Data on school enrollment, attendance and drop out rates	27 (zones A1, A2 and B)	12 (zone B only)

baseline rate of child labor for Zones A1 and A2 is estimated by local experts to be roughly 50 percent.

The second limitation is that the definition of “child labor” used in this study is broader than many conventional definitions. In this study, household heads were asked whether any children in their home were: a) conducting dangerous work; b) working outside the family farm; c) attending school part-time; or d) not attending school at all. In the original study, a household with a child in any of these categories was designated as a household with child labor. This is consistent with the approach used by the Stop Child Labour Coalition, which essentially classifies any child who does not attend school full time as “participating in child labor<sup>5</sup>.”

However, this definition is not consistent with that of the Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Agriculture Standard and the previous UTZ standard, which both use the ILO Conventions and ILO definition of child labor. The ILO considers a child to be participating in child labor if he or she is conducting dangerous work, is below certain age thresholds, or is working excessive hours. Thus, a child who is not in school full time — but for whom there is no evidence of dangerous, age-inappropriate or excessive work — is considered “at risk of child labor” but not “in child labor” using

5 See Stop Child Labour Coalition, 5X5 stepping stones for creating child labour free zones, available at: [https://www.stopchildlabour.org/assets/SCL\\_CLFZ\\_handbook\\_FINAL\\_LR\\_complete.pdf](https://www.stopchildlabour.org/assets/SCL_CLFZ_handbook_FINAL_LR_complete.pdf)

this definition. When reporting on the results of the household surveys conducted for this study, we use the terminology “in child labor” when referring to children that are conducting dangerous work or are working outside the family farm, and “at risk of child labor” when referring to children who are attending school part time or not at all.<sup>6</sup>

The third limitation to the data — specifically, the data collected in 2020 — is the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic prevented researchers from conducting focus group discussions with teachers at the end of the project, since schools were closed and many teachers had left. Instead, one-on-one interviews were held with the remaining teachers.

Finally, calculating the costs of implementing each of the four approaches to eliminating child labor also proved to be quite difficult. Cost was estimated based on the activities carried out in each zone and the related expenditures of these activities. Because cost-accounting was not done per activity and per zone, the cost figures should be considered rough estimates.

6 Relying solely on observations of ‘dangerous work’ and ‘working outside the family farm’ will likely underestimate child labor, since children may do such work in seasons other than when the survey was done. The evidence on the causal relationship between child labor and education is mixed; causality can be difficult to establish (ILO, 2003, Child Labour, School Attendance and Academic Performance: A Review)

### Children in Child Labor or at Risk of Child Labor in Each Study Zone

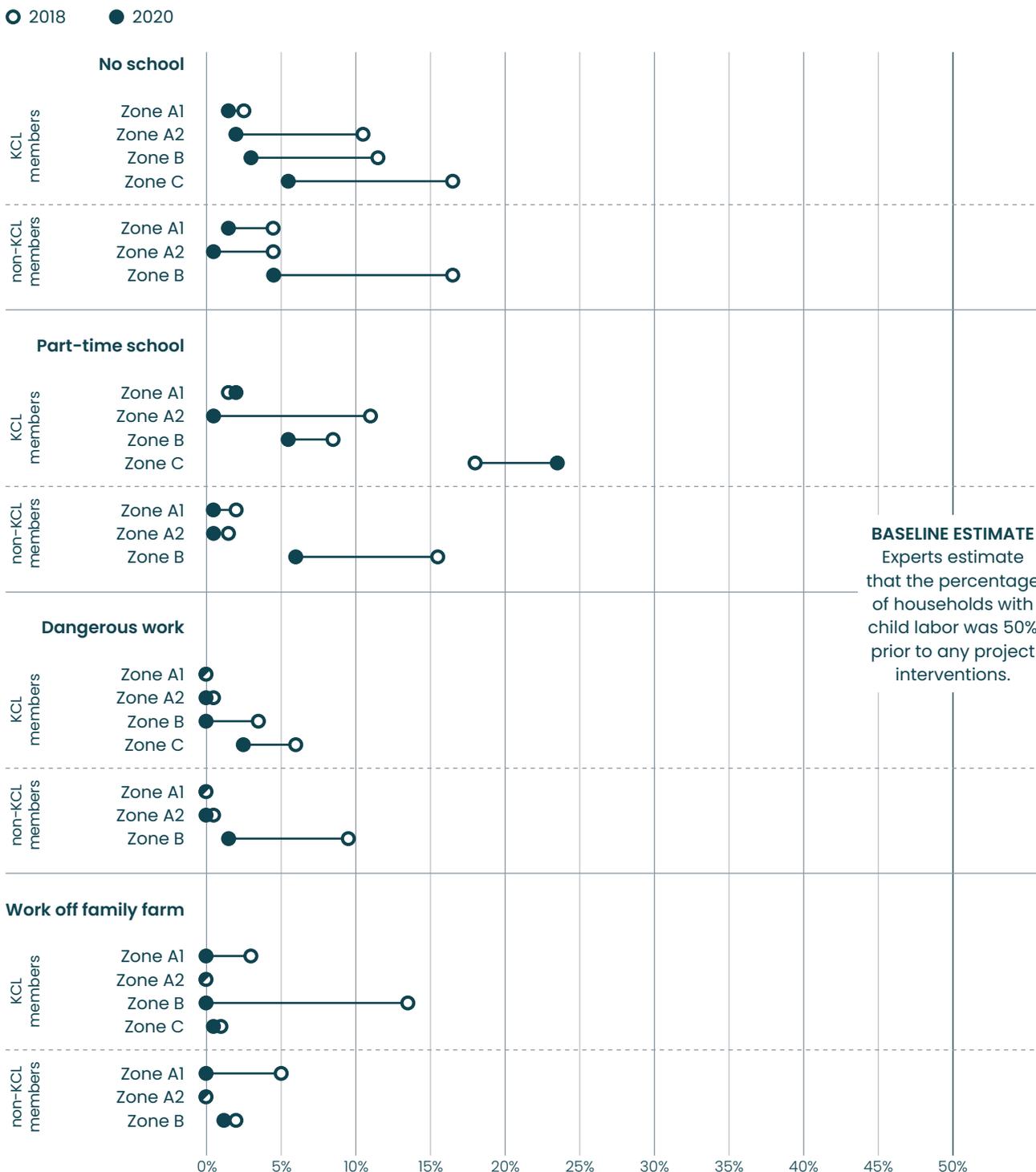
The rate of children in child labor or at risk of child labor in each zone is an important variable for assessing the effectiveness of each of the tested approaches. Figure 2 shows the percentage of children in Zones A1, A2, B and C that are doing dangerous work or working outside family farm (i.e.

are in child labor) or are attending school part-time or not at all (i.e. are at risk of child labor) in 2018 and in 2020. The data for girls and boys have been averaged, because we did not find any significant differences between boys and girls, except in one case (being dangerous work in Zone C, which is double as high for boys as compared to girls).

The data in Figure 2 show that the percentage of children

**FIGURE 2**

Percentage of children attending school part-time or not at all (i.e. at risk of child labor) or doing dangerous work or working off the family farm (i.e. in child labor) among Kyagalanyi Coffee Limited (KCL) members and non-members in each study zone, in 2018 and 2020. A child that falls into multiple categories will be included in multiple bars in the graphic.



in child labor was zero in 2020 in Zones A1, A2 and Zone B for Kyagalanyi members, although a low percentage of children remains at risk of child labor in those zones. In Zones B and C, the rate of children in child labor on farms that are not Kyagalanyi suppliers has declined strongly between 2018 and 2020. The rates of children in different at-risk categories in Zone C has shifted considerably from 2018 to 2020, with the percentage of children fully out of school dropping over ten percent, and the percentage of children in school part-time increasing six percent. This shift can be considered a net reduction in the level of risk.

Shifting from individual children to households, Figure 3 shows the percentage of households with child labor or at risk of child labor in each of the study zones. Note that the rates among households are higher than the rates among individual children because households are classified as having child labor if at least one child is in or at risk of child labor, regardless of the number of other children in the household (e.g. a household with one child in or at risk of child labor, and four children that are not, would be counted as in or at risk of child labor in Figure 3).

In every zone, rates are seen to decrease over time, though as noted above, a rate of approximately 50 percent is likely a more accurate “baseline” figure for Zones A1 and A2 in 2014 than the 2018 data in Figure 3. The rates of households with child labor or at risk of child labor observed in 2020 were lowest in Zones A1 and A2 (2–6%), higher in Zone B (9–18%), and highest in Zone C (44%). These rates suggest that the higher-intensity interventions are indeed more effective at reducing child labor than the lower-intensity ones.

The graphics also reveal the effectiveness of the core CLFZ principle of including the entire community, including schools, local governments and households, in project activities regardless of their participation in a single supply chain (in this case coffee). In Zones A1 and A2, where this principle was followed, the rates of child labor among Kyagalanyi members and non-members were essentially the same. In contrast, in Zone B, where interventions had a reduced community element and targeted Kyagalanyi members only, the rates of households with child labor or at risk of child labor among non-member households were considerably higher: 18 percent for non-Kyagalanyi members versus 9 percent for members.

In Zone C, the percentage of households with child labor or at risk of child labor appear to have dropped between 2018 and 2020, but remain stubbornly high, at 44 percent. This underscores the difficulty in addressing access to education and child labor exclusively through the model of certification that was used at the time, which identified children in or at risk of child labor but tackled only one root cause – poverty – through efforts to improve agricultural practices and thus farm productivity and farmer income. The approach in Zone C did not systematically address poor access to education, community norms that favor child labor, or gender inequality. Nonetheless, as shown in Figure 2, the risk of child labor has declined, with the percentage of children fully out of school declining, and the percentage of children in school part-time increasing.

### Costs of Implementation in Each Study Zone

To the best of their ability, the researchers estimated the costs of implementing each of the different interventions. Note that the costs presented in this section are related to the implementation of the child labor programme only, and includes activities such as conducting house-to-house visits, providing financial support for schools, setting up and training Child Labor Committees (CLCs), hiring child labor liaison officers, and conducting project monitoring and evaluation. The cost figures presented here do not include general overhead or management costs for the Stop Child Labour Coalition/Hivos, Ceford, or Kyagalanyi, nor does it include their programmes on gender or good agricultural practices.

The project costs per zone are shown in Table 3, which indicates that, as expected, costs increase substantially as the intensity of the approach increases.

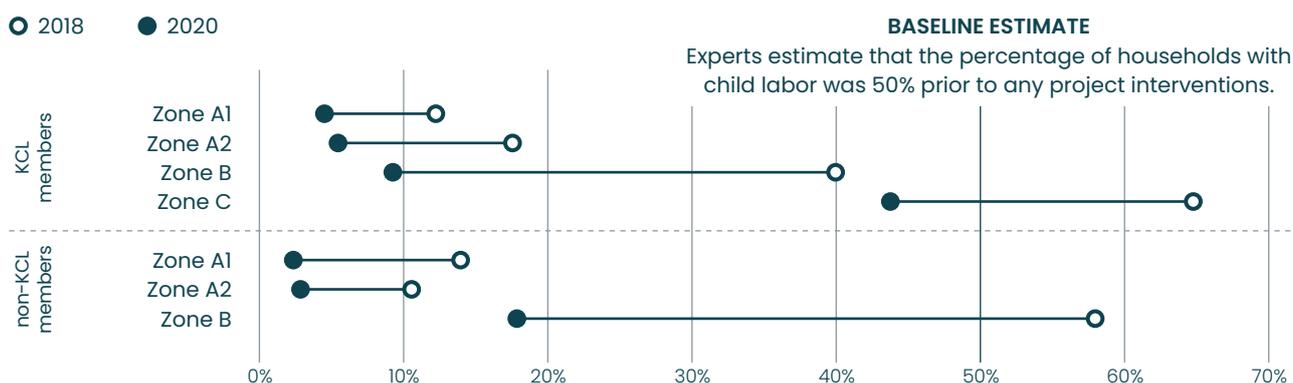
The total costs between 2017 and 2020 for activities specifically related to schools, CLCs and VSLAs are as follows:

- School-based activities: EUR 700/school
- Establishing and supporting Child Labor Committees: EUR 1,200/CLC
- Establishing and supporting Village Savings and Loan Associations: EUR 600/VSLA

The total cost paid by Kyagalanyi for the activities that they

**FIGURE 3**

Percentage of households with at least one child in child labor or at risk of child labor, among Kyagalanyi Coffee Limited (KCL) members and non-members in each study zone, in 2018 and 2020.



**TABLE 3**

Costs of activities per zone, during the 2017–2020 project period (in Euros). These values represent only the costs of activities related to child labor and education, not costs related to certification or training on good agricultural practices.

	Child Labor Free Zone approach		Moderate intensity approach	Low intensity approach
	Zone A1	Zone A2	Zone B	Zone C
<b>Total intervention cost*</b>	EUR 34,460	EUR 32,840	EUR 28,620	EUR 700
<b>Cost per household</b>	EUR 19	EUR 8	EUR 6	EUR 2

\* Excluding the activities noted earlier in this section.

supported – which were primarily aimed at their members – was EUR 13,320.

Researchers made some important observations related to costs:

**Costs are relatively high for establishment of the Child Labor Committees (CLCs), and decline strongly once CLCs have been well established.** The costs for the establishment of one CLC are about EUR 220, while support, training and exchange visits have a cost of about EUR 880 per CLC, within the 3–4 year program period. However, once CLCs are established, refresher training is considerably less expensive, at around EUR 100 per CLC annually.

**Costs will be higher if communities are located further apart from one another, due to travel costs and time.** This is one reason why fewer CLCs were established in Zone A2 than in Zone A1. Remoteness and scattered communities also influence the distance that children must travel to attend school. Generally, the CLFZ approach will be more costly to apply if communities or households are widely scattered.

**Having a project coordinator on staff who links the various project partners and monitors progress is an essential financial investment.** This is because the ability of the diverse project partners to commit to a single, consistent message – that all children must be in school – is a fundamental element of changing community norms about child labor.

### LESSONS ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CHILD LABOR INTERVENTIONS

The above findings on the effectiveness and cost of the different child labor interventions paint a fairly straightforward picture, but the reality is more complex, with many interactions between the individual elements of each intervention, the specific drivers of child labor in a region, and external enabling factors. In this section, we summarize some of the more nuanced lessons that the research team drew from the qualitative and quantitative data. A fuller discussion of the findings can be found in the full report [insert link]. The lessons are grouped by the root causes

of child labor: poverty, community attitudes and practices, poor quality education, and inadequate child labor policies and enforcement.

#### Root Cause 1: Poverty

**Training coffee farmers on productivity-boosting practices increases yields and revenues.** Households in all zones received training on practices that have been shown to increase coffee yields, such as optimal pruning and fertilization. Between 2017 and 2020, yields increased by 46 percent in zones A1 and A2, and by 15 percent in Zones B and C (the lower yield improvements in these zones are likely due to new, untrained coffee producers becoming Kyagalanyi members during the project). Combined with the 20 percent premium awarded for quality and the Rainforest Alliance certification, these changes lead to substantial increases in household income, which were confirmed through farmer interviews.

**Village Savings and Loan Associations enable investments in income-generating activities and fill an important gap for parents who can't afford school fees.** Developed in tandem with Child Labor Committees, Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) are organizations that promote income generating activities among their members; manage an education fund that can be used by members to pay school fees; and sensitize community members about child labor. In this project, 13 VSLAs were established in Zone A1, 10 in Zone A2, 9 in Zone B, and none in Zone C. Over the course of the project the number of students supported by the education fund has increased from 82 to 684 per quarter. In Zone A1, the VSLAs had a direct collaboration with schools, whereby children with delinquent school dues were supported by the VSLAs rather than being expelled by school administrators.

**Empowering women's voices in decisions about household finances benefits children.** Focus group discussions showed that women had a more positive attitude than men toward making funds available for school fees. The CLFZ approach does not specifically include activities on women's empowerment, but in Zones A1, A2 and B a Kyagalanyi-sponsored project began in 2017, which used a range of gender tools to help households develop joint vi-

sions and plans for their family and farm development. Researchers concluded that these efforts contributed to the decreases in child labor or risk of child labor in these zones due to the improved financial decision-making power of women.

### **Root Cause 2: Community Attitudes and Practices**

**Child Labor Committees (CLCs) are one of the most potent, highly effective tools for shifting community attitudes and practices, and form an overarching structure that is necessary for coordinating and linking activities.**

According to the focus group discussions with CLC members, the following activities are most important in this regard: identifying households with child labor or at risk of child labor; sensitizing parents on the negative impacts of child labor; counseling parents and children at risk of child labor; following-up with former school dropouts; and visiting schools to provide school materials to vulnerable children and check whether they are attending school. The researchers noted that the most effective Child Labor Committees do the following: select members that have some level of authority; create internal bylaws; cultivate support from the community and local council; provide modest financial compensation for committee members; provide t-shirts with the “no child labor” message; and ensure that their geographic scope can be reasonably covered on foot.

**It takes many years to shift community norms about child labor.** In Zones A1 and A2, where the full CLFZ approach was implemented, focus group discussions with community members and children suggest that child labor is being avoided due to a belief that it is wrong, rather than a fear of punishment or fines. This is an extremely positive outcome and a prerequisite for durable, long-term change. In Zones B and C, rates of households with child labor or at risk of child labor have decreased to varying degrees, but a shift in underlying norms was not observed.

**Households that have received training on child labor prevention practices appear to “transfer” these practices and norms to neighboring households and communities that have not received training.** In Zone A, where project activities focused both on households that are Kyagalanyi members and those that are not, rates of households with child labor or at risk of child labor fell consistently to relatively low rates for all households (see Figure 1). In Zone B, where project activities were less intense and focused only on Kyagalanyi members, rates also dropped moderately among non-member households. Project partners attribute this drop in rates among non-member households to a spillover effect whereby norms and practices transfer through formal and informal exchanges of information. There is also indication that exchange visits of teachers from Zone B to Zones A1 and A2 contributed to a change of attitude.

### **Root Cause 3: Poor-Quality Education**

**Training teachers on child labor increases their awareness of the problem and their motivation to address cases in their classrooms.** The collaboration between teachers and CLCs/VSLAs to identify children not going to school and to facilitate financial support for families who could not pay school fees has been important for improving the rates of school attendance. While cultural practices such as corporal punishment in the classroom are slow to change, providing teachers with more resources and smaller class sizes improves their ability to monitor student attendance and take action when students are missing lessons.

**Increases in school attendance put pressure on the limited school infrastructure; in zones where project proponents had developed good relationships with sub-county government and advocated for children, additional support for schools was provided.** In Zones A1 and A2, where good relations between project staff and sub-county gov-



ernment had been established, the sub-county organized funding for additional classrooms, desks and latrines to accommodate the higher number of children. Such support was lacking in other zones, where advocacy efforts at the sub-county level were less developed.

**Children have ideas for improving their school attendance and experience.** When asked which issues need improvement, children in the study area cited the following three issues most frequently:

1. Nearly two-thirds of children cited caning (a type of corporal punishment) as an issue. Children reported getting caned for arriving late, not bringing school supplies, not bringing cleaning supplies requested by teachers, and poor performance.
2. Many children cited the lack of parental support for buying books and uniforms or paying school fees. Most children associated higher dropout rates with a lack of parental support.
3. Many children reported that parents requested help on market days, such as carrying items to market or babysitting younger siblings.

**COVID-19 has increased the risk of child labor by closing schools.** Schools in the West Nile region closed due to COVID-19 in March 2020; as of April 2021, they had reopened only for the grade levels that will soon sit for a national exam (primary grades 4-7 and secondary grades 3-4). In focus group discussions, parents reported that school closings had driven up rates of child labor, especially among children who had participated in child labor in the past. Teenaged pregnancies were reportedly on the rise too.

#### **Root Cause 4: Inadequate Child Labor Policies and Enforcement**

**A government-led child labor steering committee consisting of prominent government and community representatives – such as the local council chairman, sub-county chief, police and army representatives, and social services secretary, among others – is an effective tool for accessing government budgets and creating pro-child policies.** In Zones A1 and A2 a steering committee was created that meets quarterly and receives reports from the Child Labor Committees. The steering committee not only works with the community and schools, but supports the police in their efforts to address cases of child labor. The commitment of the steering committee has led to the development of a bylaw on education and child labor in Zones A1 and A2 which, if passed, would recognize the right of children to access education; delineate the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders, in particular parents and teachers; ban or regulate some traditional practices such as child marriage; and articulate the fines and punishments for not adhering to child labor regulations. The process for approving the bylaw is currently held up due to a lack of funds for the required council sittings.

**Buy-in from local government (sub-county level) can lead to the acquisition of more resources from higher levels of government (district level).** This occurred in



Zones A1 and A2, where the child labor steering committee partnered with the district level education office to host an annual Stop Child Labor Week. During this week, there is a parade of school children, discussions of topics related to child labor, and, on the last day, a workshop and action planning session. This has allowed the sub-county to build a stronger relationship with district leaders, making lobbying for materials and teachers more successful.

#### **LOOKING FORWARD**

The research conducted on three approaches to eradicating child labor in Uganda found that, combined with certification and quality premiums, basic farmer training on child labor awareness and yield-enhancing agronomy practices can improve farmer income and solve some cases of children in child labor or at risk of child labor. In the West Nile low intensity zone (Zone C), the percentage of Kyagalanyi member households with child labor or at risk of child labor was reduced by twenty percentage points over the course of the three-year project, but a high percentage remained: 44 percent of households had a child in child labor or at risk of child labor (i.e. were doing one or more of the following: hazardous work, working beyond the family farm, or not attending school full time). With little change in underlying root causes of child labor, such as socio-cultural norms and poor quality schools, the incidence of child labor and risk of child labor will likely remain high.

The research also found that working together with local partners to identify child labor and develop remediation plans with Kyagalanyi member households, in tandem with community-based structures supporting local schools, has a significant positive impact. In the West Nile medium-intensity zone (Zone B), this approach resulted in a decrease in child labor or risk of child labor from 31 to 9 percent of Kyagalanyi member households, and from



50 to 18 percent in non-member households. Researchers suggest that further declines are likely possible if the approach is pursued for a longer timeframe.

Setting up a full Child Labor Free Zone (CLFZ), in which a Rainforest Alliance certificate holder intensively collaborates with local partners, community members, schools and local governments to address all four root causes of child labor and communicate a consistent, straightforward message – all children must be in school – created the strongest and most expansive reduction in child labor or risk of child labor, with rates in Zones A1 and A2 as low as 2 percent. This approach led to the strongest community and government buy-in and, critically, created the shift in norms that is required for long-term change.

These findings have implications for the certified producers, donors, companies and governments who are committed to eradicating child labor from agricultural supply chains.

**Rainforest Alliance certificate holders** should know that the approach to child labor used in Zone C, which is based on the requirements of the former UTZ certification standard, appears to decrease rates of households with child labor or at risk of child labor, but does not go far enough on its own. The recognition that certification should be enhanced to address the root causes of child labor – such as poor quality education – is one of the strongest drivers of the recent changes made to the 2020 Rainforest Alliance Sustainable Agriculture Standard. These changes include the assess-and-address system, which equips certificate holders with the knowledge and practical tools to better prevent child labor, tackle root causes, and remediate actual cases, where possible, through collaboration with local government and others. In addition, the new standard includes a sustainability investment requirement, whereby supply chain partners such as coffee roasters, traders and retailers invest in their producers' sustainability plans – such as the assess-and-address system or specific remediation projects.

**Rainforest Alliance partners** who would like to further bolster their activities to eliminate child labor are advised that

the most cost-effective approach is to implement the full CLFZ in one core zone, with a lighter touch in surrounding regions. Evidence shows that exchange visits between the core zone and surrounding regions greatly enhance the transfer of norms and practices from the core zone to neighboring regions.

To implement the CLFZ approach, the report authors have the following staffing recommendations:

- Recruit field staff from the intervention area, to enhance acceptance and facilitate long-term relationships;
- Appoint one person who is responsible for overall coordination of activities at the various program levels (household, community, sub-county);
- Appoint one person who is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of program activities.

**Donors** who would like to support efforts to eradicate child labor should plan to implement the CLFZ approach in its full capacity for three years, with lighter support in subsequent years to maintain the results. In addition, all projects located in areas with child labor – even those without an explicit child labor focus – should include a component to strengthen women's decision-making at the household level, as this is shown to reduce child labor.

**Companies** that trade in or sell coffee, cocoa, or other agricultural products should know that, while costly for the first three years, the CLFZ approach to addressing child labor has been shown to drastically reduce rates of child labor or risk of child labor. The results of this research suggest that companies can maximize their efforts to reduce child labor by doing the following: 1) not limiting interventions to their own value chain; 2) collaborating with local NGOs, especially those that work with communities and schools; and 3) dedicating resources to a core Child Labor Free Zone that can be used as an example and a source of learning, rather than using a less-intensive approach over a broader area.

As is clear from the research presented in this summary, no single organization can tackle child labor alone; collaboration is the key to successful efforts to eliminate the root causes of child labor. The Child Labor Free Zone approach – with its consistent message that all children must be in school – provided an important framework for that collaboration in the West Nile region of Uganda. Yet even without resources to put the full CLFZ framework in place, the research shows that there are many actions that farmers, supply chain partners, government agencies and teachers can take to facilitate children's access to free and quality education alongside age-appropriate work. 🌱

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