



# ELIMINATING CHILD LABOR

## Effective Standard Setting



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### BEST PRACTICE IN STANDARD SETTING

- Set rigorous standards
- Ensure comprehensive coverage of the supply chain
- Include prescriptive and preventative requirements
- Require actionable remediation
- Encourage improvement over time

Standards can be an important tool for eliminating child labor when designed for real impact, but they need to be applicable to the worksites where children typically toil. The majority of documented child labor is found in informal production sites obscured deep in supply chains.

An effective standard helps every producer in a supply chain understand their obligations and enlists them in the fight against child labor. This brief shares the critical elements common to meaningful standards based on GoodWeave's extensive experience and holistic approach to eliminating child labor. The GoodWeave Standard includes certification requirements that address child labor, forced and bonded labor, and transparent business practices, which are all interrelated.

### **GoodWeave stops child labor in global supply chains. Permanently.**

This brief is one of a five-part series that explores best practice for companies and nongovernmental organizations combating child labor in supply chains and sectors where they work. The information is based on GoodWeave's extensive on-the-ground experience in tackling child labor.

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## SET RIGOROUS STANDARDS

There are hundreds of standards and certification schemes; some are more impactful than others when it comes to addressing child labor. Credible standards follow a rigorous development process that considers input from all stakeholders, and relies on a thorough understanding of intended outcomes and what is possible.

Key factors include:

- Transparent process
- Multi-stakeholder involvement
- Verifiable requirements
- A cycle to refine and improve

### Best Practice Applied

GoodWeave is ISEAL Code Compliant. This means the GoodWeave system has been independently evaluated against ISEAL's Codes of Good Practice. The ISEAL Codes are a globally recognized framework for effective, credible sustainability systems.

GoodWeave's standard setting follows clear and transparent processes that involve all stakeholders, align with existing codes and standards, and account for rigorous field-testing to ensure feasibility in the communities served. GoodWeave makes all relevant information publicly available regarding the development and content of the standard, how the system is governed, who is evaluated and under what process, and the ways stakeholders can engage.

The original GoodWeave Standard was developed through a multi-stakeholder process based on four years of research in producer communities across India, Nepal and Afghanistan. Several rounds of consultation were conducted with over 600 beneficiaries and

stakeholders, including workers, industry members, unions and trade associations, NGOs in the environmental, labor and child's rights sectors, government ministries, and multilateral organizations.

At the outset of the process, GoodWeave employed an in-depth needs assessment with community-based partners to understand local working conditions, and whether challenges could be addressed effectively through inspection and monitoring of requirements. The development process also identified areas where technical assistance was needed to enable producers to achieve compliance, particularly small producers who are unaware or unprepared.

Since establishing the Standard, GoodWeave regularly re-assesses it to identify gaps and needs, and encourage continuous improvement. GoodWeave maintains an evaluation schedule that gathers public input at all levels with representatives from relevant countries and other stakeholders to inform updates and changes.

## ENSURE COMPREHENSIVE COVERAGE OF THE SUPPLY CHAIN

Supply chains can be complex and opaque, which means that any standard should apply to every type of production site at all levels, whether factory or home-based, and every type of worker. Many of the most vulnerable workers in supply chains, including children, are often unlisted or unregistered and hidden from view.

A comprehensive standard will:

- Include every production process, workplace and type of worker
- Evaluate all production units whether producing a certified product or not
- Maintain a clear chain of responsibility to verify compliance
- Acknowledge and allow for subcontracting

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## Best Practice Applied

Any standard developed to address child labor must account for every process in the supply chain to reach the most vulnerable workers, who are often unregistered, including children. Much of this unregulated workforce is found in home-based units and urban slum workshops.

The GoodWeave Standard applies to all work premises that are covered in a licensed supply chain. It covers all workers whether they are manufacturing certifiable products or not. This means that any factory producing GoodWeave certified products is required to comply with the requirements across all production in that factory or worksite. GoodWeave does this to ensure that any claims associated with GoodWeave certification are credible.

An effective standard is explicit about which actors are responsible for compliance in each stage of the supply chain. GoodWeave clearly states that the exporter and all subcontractors are responsible for ensuring compliance with the Standard in all production units, be they factories, small production centers or home-based production units.

The GoodWeave Standard also requires that companies acknowledge and allow for subcontracting, a common and accepted practice that can be used to obscure prohibited practices. This requirement formalizes the practice and allows for verification of the entire supply chain, which is especially important in industries where there is systemic outsourcing and use of informal labor.

## INCLUDE PRESCRIPTIVE AND PREVENTIVE REQUIREMENTS

Beyond the prescriptive rules for enforcing a standard, requirements can also be used in the prevention of child labor.

- Utilize a mix of prescriptive and preventive requirements
- Address forced labor
- Embed identification and verification processes
- Adapt requirements to different supply chain actors

## Best Practice Applied

Prescriptive requirements in a standard lay out the exact rules and what a producer must do to be compliant. The GoodWeave Standard is centered around three key



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Certification Principles: no child labor, no forced or bonded labor, and documented and verifiable work conditions. For each of these Principles, the prescriptive requirements define expectations, for example producers must have policies stating that child labor is not allowed in the workplace and it must be prominently displayed, in view of all workers.

The GoodWeave Standard also includes proactive preventive measures with specific requirements for supply chain producers. For example, they must maintain a register of young workers, their ages, and the work they do. In addition, producers must identify and prevent young workers from engaging in potentially hazardous work. In home-based production units, the employer is also required to ensure young workers understand what constitutes hazardous work and do not engage in it.

While child labor is not allowed, the GoodWeave Standard recognizes and explains the difference between child labor and work that children are allowed to do in the home. By including identification and verification processes in the Standard, producers are able to understand their obligations and how they contribute to verifiable work conditions in both factories and in home-based work sites.

***Transparency is integral to verification and detecting unacceptable practices. This requires disclosure of the full supply chain.***

Transparency is integral to verification and detecting unacceptable practices. This requires disclosure of the full supply chain. All production sites must be registered. The sites must also provide unfettered access to the work place, employment documents, and to the workers themselves for confidential interviews. This process is described in more detail in the brief on Deep Supply Chain Mapping.

## REQUIRE ACTIONABLE REMEDIATION

Child labor is a reality in many supply chains and simple prohibition without remediation can drive the practice out of sight and cause greater harm. Enforcement is only possible when unambiguous guidance on remediation for child labor is written into standard requirements.

- Combine stringent requirements prohibiting child labor with real-time remediation

### Best Practice Applied

When child labor is detected, the GoodWeave Standard prescribes real-time remediation that is sensitive to the situation and does not put the affected child or adult at greater risk.

Remediation procedures are clearly written into the requirements for producers, subcontractors and home-based units. This facilitates the removal of the child and ensures that no other child will replace them. Whenever possible, producers are introduced to GoodWeave community-based initiatives that build a shared understanding of the rights of the child and make child labor unacceptable.

In cases where child labor is found during a production site visit or inspection, GoodWeave works with the producer to address the issue and take steps for remediation, which can include removal of the child from the work, and rehabilitation and educational opportunities to ensure the child does not enter into worse forms of work.

Find more information on this topic in the brief dedicated to Remediation.

## ENCOURAGE IMPROVEMENT OVER TIME

In GoodWeave's experience, an effective standard acknowledges the wider reality around child labor. Progressive or improvement requirements in a standard challenge producers to continually improve their practices.

When considering improvement requirements:

- Base all expectations in the local reality
- Encourage progress

## Best Practice Applied

GoodWeave clearly communicates the intentions of its Standard and the desired impact. No child, or forced or bonded labor is at the core of the GoodWeave Standard and certification claim. Progressive principles on labor rights and environmental practices that support this core are incorporated.

Each Progress Principle is supported by progress criteria. Compliance with these criteria is not mandatory for certification, however the criteria are verified annually to guide producers in self-assessed progress and support their continual progress. Over time, as a greater number of producers demonstrate compliance, some of the criteria may become core Standard requirements. This gradual phasing in of requirements is not overly burdensome to producers and it ensures a focus on the most egregious labor rights violations like child labor.

## LEARN MORE

Find more information on eliminating child labor in GoodWeave's five-part series of best practice at [www.goodweave.org](http://www.goodweave.org) or contact [capacity-building@goodweave.org](mailto:capacity-building@goodweave.org).

