

**Data for Children
Collaborative**
WITH UNICEF

Cote d'Ivoire

YOUNG PEOPLE ADVISORS

INSPIRE Case Study



Supported by



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OVERVIEW

In 2020, the Data for Children Collaborative with UNICEF (DCC) generously funded the End Violence Lab to coordinate a series of regional systematic reviews on INSPIRE strategies to end violence against children called: *Accelerating What Works to End Violence Against Children: A multi-country study*. As part of the post award process the DCC asked the End Violence Lab to read and respond to their Youth Engagement Workbook. It asked a provocative question: How will you meaningful engage young people?

We were INSPIRED!

In response, the EV Lab proposed a series of youth-centred activities to complement the review project supporting a growing trend to deliver meaningful research initiatives *with* children and young people. Notably, systematic reviews are too often completed with little or no inputs from the end-users to ensure that findings make sense. We addressed this working with a male/female team of young people from Brazil, China, Cote d'Ivoire¹, Colombia and Uganda. We subsequently launched the Young People Advisors (YPA) programme, a co-designed approach to discuss violence prevention, to map our progress addressing such a technically complex topic and to generate case studies with young people from all 5 countries.

¹ A female team member left the programme due to demands for schooling outside of Cote d'Ivoire.



PUBLICATION REVIEWED

Karimli, L., Rost, L. & Ismayilova, L. (2017). Integrating Economic Strengthening and Family Support to Reduce Work-Related Health Risks among Children in Poor Households: Burkina Faso. *Journal of Adolescent Health*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2017.07.007>

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INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT

Latest global estimates indicate that the number of child labourers has reached 160 million worldwide. In 2020, it was estimated that one in ten children in the world are forced into child labour. A joint publication by UNICEF and the ILO Child Labour warned that global progress to end child labour has stalled for the first time in 20 years.² In Africa, the numbers of child labourers are high, with more than 59 million children involved in hazardous work. In sub-Saharan Africa population growth, extreme poverty, and inadequate social and child protection measures have led an additional 16.6 million children to child labour over the past four years.³

In West Africa, rates of child labour are very high. Burkina Faso, the site for this INSPIRE intervention, has the highest proportion of children considered to be child labourers.⁴ Child labour is directly related to poverty. The difficult living conditions of households in Burkina Faso have been well documented. A 2010 survey of the National Institute of Statistics and Demography (INSD) shows that nearly 44% percent of the population live below the poverty line. Ten years later, little has improved, with almost 40% of the population living below the national poverty line. There are also huge geographic variations of poverty. In the Northern region, 70% of the inhabitants live in poverty, a national record, compared to less than 10% in the capital city of Ouagadougou.⁵

Many of these conditions can lead to increased pressure for children to work and help with household chores or to bring in other sources of income. Children in Burkina Faso are

² UNICEF and ILO (2021) [Child Labour: Global estimates 2020, trends and the road forward](#).

³ UNICEF and ILO (2021) [Child Labour: Global estimates 2020, trends and the road forward](#).

⁴ UNICEF (2016) The [State of the World's Children 2016 Statistical Tables](#).

⁵ WORLD BANK (2021) La Banque mondiale au Burkina Faso: [Burkina Faso Vue d'ensemble](#).



engaged or forced to work in some of the worst forms of child labour, including farming and commercial sexual exploitation, sometimes because of human trafficking. Children also perform dangerous tasks in cotton harvesting, as Burkina Faso is the top cotton producer in Africa.



METHODS

The intervention operated in three provinces of the northern region (Yatenga, Zondoma and Passoré) and was implemented by a non-profit organisation called Trickle Up.⁶ This was the first randomised controlled trial of its kind at the village level in Burkina Faso. There were three 'arms' to the study: 1) an economic strengthening intervention for women/caregivers; 2) economic strengthening combined with family coaching addressing child protection issues around child labour and early marriage; and 3) a control group for comparison. The study also looked at different forms of hazardous work and children's health issues.

The intervention used a microfinance approach that is a 'graduated' programme and based on work originally done in Bangladesh.⁷ First, women form a small savings group. Second, the women receive instruction in livelihood planning and household management training. Third, the women received cash assistance. Fourth, the women received coaching provided by trained field workers. In this study, participants included women and children—in each household, one female caregiver and one child between the ages of 10–15 years old were enrolled in the study. A total of 360 households participated.

As noted, in the first arm of the study women received only economic strengthening. In the second arm of the study, families received the same economic strengthening, and all household members (including fathers) received monthly family coaching sessions addressing the hazards of child labour, risks of child separation and issues of early and forced marriage. The Government of Burkina Faso and Ministry of Social Action helped to

⁶ Karimli, L.; Rost L.; Ismayilova, L. Integrating Economic Strengthening and Family Support to Reduce Work-Related Health Risks among Children in Poor Households: Burkina Faso; 2017.

⁷ Hashemi S.M.; Umaira W. *New pathways for the poorest: The graduation model from BRAC*. BRAC Development Institute, Centre for Social Protection (CSP), United Kingdom, 2011.



develop the curriculum for the coaching, and it was implemented by a local community-based organisation. The third arm of the study was the control group—or the group where participants did not receive any intervention at that time—and this was used for comparison. The control arm received intervention upon completion of the study in 2017.

Many different measures were developed to test for a change in children's risk exposure during the intervention. One set of measures looked at children's exposure to hazards and abuse; another set examined the many types of child labour (such as work in the family or any work for payment; collecting water or wood; cooking and cleaning; and caring for the elderly and sick). A third set of measures looked at negative health outcomes because of child labour such as injuries, open wounds, dislocations, strains, stomach problems, fevers, and/or fatigue.



RESULTS

The results of the study show that both economic strengthening and economic strengthening plus coaching at the family level can decrease children's exposure to hazardous labour; these findings are similar to those found in other studies. After 24 months of participating in the Trickle Up program, children were both significantly less likely to have used machinery or heavy equipment that could lead to a serious injury (30% less likely than children in the control group) and significantly less likely to have experienced any hazardous working conditions or abuse while collecting wood (30% less likely than children in the control group). One of the more important new findings in this study is that the combined intervention of economic strengthening and coaching components—discussing cultural expectations, norms and risks around child labour and related child protection issues—has an even greater positive effect. Families receiving both the empowerment and the coaching showed a significant in child labour experience both in and outside the house.



REFLECTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The reflections and recommendations that follow come from personal reflections—as a young man who has grown up in a poor suburb of Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire. Aware that the conditions in Cote d'Ivoire are not the same as conditions in Burkina Faso, the two countries share many problems common to countries in West Africa generally.

Overall, the study shows that economic empowerment can be an effective way to help families protect children from the hazards of child labour. In my opinion, this study also clearly demonstrates how women who participate in coaching sessions can be empowered to build the capacities of those around them on child protection issues such as child education, child labour, violence against children, and the outcomes of separation of children from their families.

Cash injections to households clearly protect children but not in all cases. In many households, children may remain at risk because cash to mothers or caretakers does not automatically mean that the entire family benefits. Often, the money is insufficient, particularly in families with many children. Children are still in peril because even if it strengthens women's economic standing, and coaching provides helpful information for the family members, it does not necessarily prevent children from being exposed to work risks, including even in small chores such as sweeping or washing dishes.

Living in a precarious district, I know what happens in some families when programmes are structured to provide more support for the youngest children and less support is provided for older children. In my opinion, this effort for a single area for 24 months cannot reduce



the violence. To be effective and to raise the conditions of poverty I would make several suggestions.

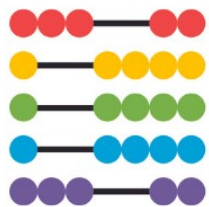
The drivers of child labour: Looking at what drives child labour is important. One issue is the lack of educational facilities—schools are too often kilometres from children’s homes. Children growing up in families experiencing extreme poverty may opt to stay at home and work. Increasing children’s access to education is key to ending child labour. In addition, or as an alternative to establishing more schools for children, countries can invest in youth vocational centres where children can safely acquire skills that prepare them for the work force—thus building skills and ensuring safer conditions for children as they become young adults.

Expanding the study geographically: Economic interventions need to be widespread. As a first step, this study should be repeated in urban areas. As a young person from Yopougon, a suburb of Abidjan, every day I see children who are involved in urban-based labour such as sorting scrap metal or working as mechanics. All of these children are young—between the ages of 7 and 15 years—and all of them are working with no protection and exposed to injuries. Children in rural areas will migrate to urban areas for more profitable jobs—this is likely the case in Burkina Faso as well.

Building prevention messaging: Given that donors and governments are unlikely to create countrywide solutions to poverty with economic empowerment we need to think more actively around how to change social norms around the acceptability of child labour. Citizen action groups like those supported by Trickle Up in Burkina Faso can play an important role. A staged, neighbourhood by neighbourhood, region by region approach to raising awareness could be highly effective. Addressing different themes such as violence



and how this intersects with other child protection issues, is clearly important and can help parents to become aware of the risks that their child will run by doing certain difficult tasks. Most parents care deeply about their child's success in life.



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