International Labour Organization

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From research to action

▶ Paraguay: National Research Agenda

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

▶ Why do we need a National Research Agenda?

Paraguay has made moderate advancements in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labour. The Government has adopted a National Strategy for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labour and Protection of Working Adolescents (2019-2024). A National Plan for the Prevention and Combat of Human Trafficking (2020–2024) was launched in 2020 to address this issue. Despite the government initiatives, the 2015 Survey of Activities of Children and Adolescents shows 47.5 per cent of children were in child labour in the rural areas. Child labour in agriculture is the main area of concern; 78.5 per cent of children in child labour were involved in hazardous work. Paraguay is a "Tier-II" country in its effort in combatting human trafficking – meaning the country does not fully meet the minimum standards for eliminating human trafficking. The country also lacks nationally representative data on forced labour.

With the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the international community committed to ending child labour in all its forms by 2025 and to eradicating forced labour by 2030 (SDG Target 8.7). The headline figures emerging in Paraguay make clear that a substantial acceleration of progress will be needed to achieve SDG Target 8.7. Moreover, the economic impacts of COVID-19 are placing unprecedented strain on Government and families, the results of which may stall country efforts to address child labour and forced labour.

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

The identification of priority areas of research will be essential to support the policy efforts of Paraguay to eliminate child labour and forced labour. It was in this light that in 2020 the ILO's "Research to Action" (RTA) project launched a process towards the development of a national research agenda. Through this participatory process, involving the academic community and experts from international organizations, policy actors, NGOs, and donors, the Paraguay National Research Agenda was established.

▶ The process in Paraguay

Mapping of existing research

An extensive mapping of research on child labour, forced labour, and human trafficking was completed in November 2021. The mapping includes recent research papers, studies, reports, and impact evaluations. The results were summarized in an annotated bibliography to inform national evidence gaps.

Identification of research priorities

An online survey and key informant interviews were conducted between March and April 2022. The process involved policy actors, the research community, funding partners, and local stakeholders. The focus was on key research priorities, knowledge gaps, data needs, funding priorities, and institutional constraints.
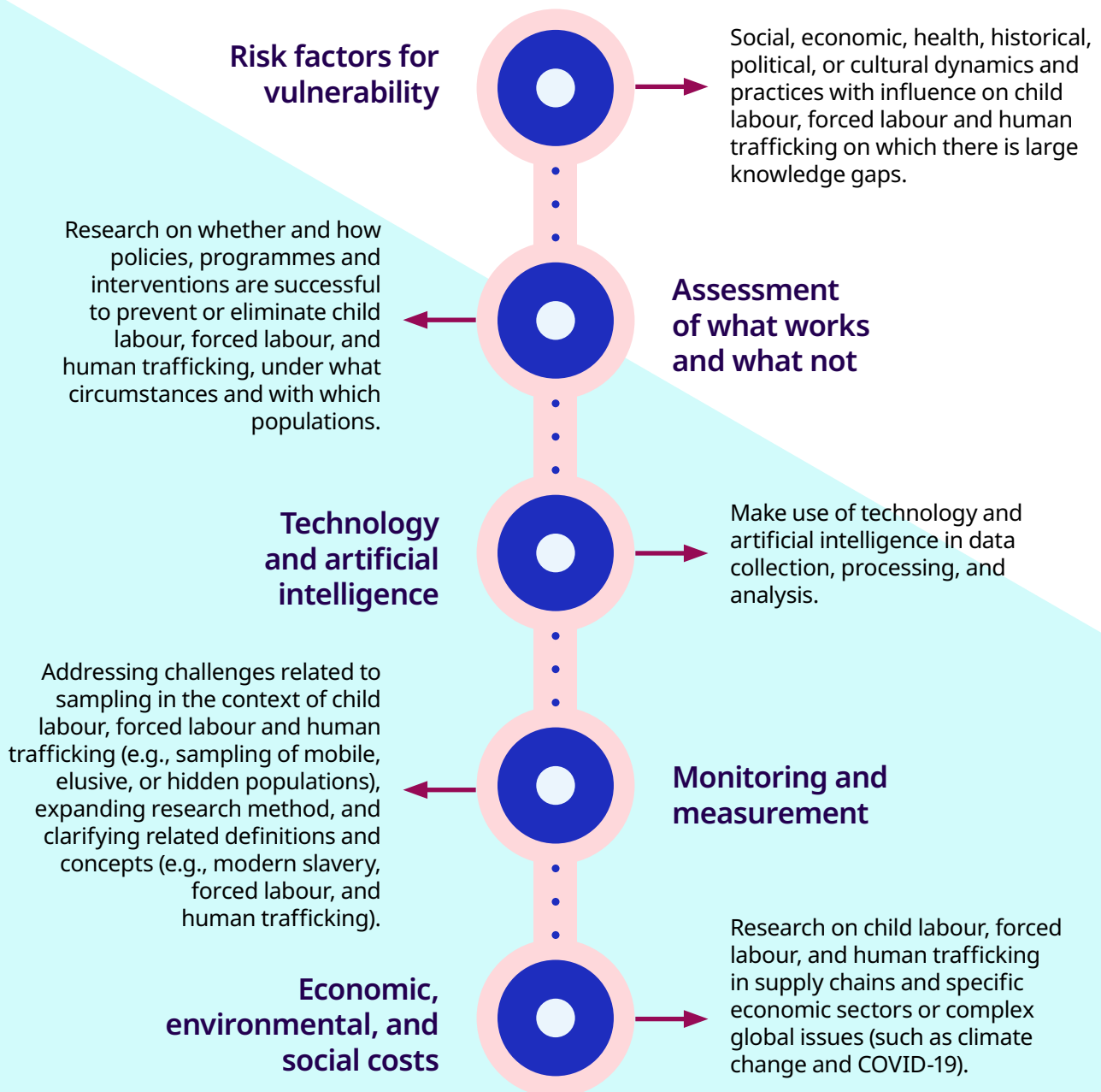
Convening of a national consultation workshop

A hybrid consultation workshop on 19 October 2022 involving over 40 representatives from the national academic community, policy actors, funding partners and experts from NGOs and international organizations was held. Representatives of the *Comisión Nacional de Derechos Fundamentales en el Trabajo y Prevención del Trabajo Forzoso* (CONTRAFOR) (National Commission of Fundamental Rights at Work and Prevention of Forced Labour) and the *Comisión Nacional Interinstitucional para la Prevención y Erradicación del Trabajo Infantil y la Protección del Trabajo de los Adolescentes* (CONAETI-Py) (National Inter-institutional Commission for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labour and the Protection of Adolescent Worker) also joined us and concluded the workshop. The survey results and key informant interviews informed the discussions at the consultation workshop where a draft research agenda was presented, discussed, and amended.

Establishing the National Research Agenda

The research agenda has a limited lifespan (3 to 5 years) and should be revisited according to the progress and challenges experienced in achieving the SDG Target 8.7.

▶ Five broad thematic areas

Risk factors for vulnerability

Social, economic, health, historical, political, or cultural dynamics and practices with influence on child labour, forced labour and human trafficking on which there is large knowledge gaps.

Research on whether and how policies, programmes and interventions are successful to prevent or eliminate child labour, forced labour, and human trafficking, under what circumstances and with which populations.

Assessment of what works and what not

Technology and artificial intelligence

Make use of technology and artificial intelligence in data collection, processing, and analysis.

Addressing challenges related to sampling in the context of child labour, forced labour and human trafficking (e.g., sampling of mobile, elusive, or hidden populations), expanding research method, and clarifying related definitions and concepts (e.g., modern slavery, forced labour, and human trafficking).

Monitoring and measurement

Economic, environmental, and social costs

Research on child labour, forced labour, and human trafficking in supply chains and specific economic sectors or complex global issues (such as climate change and COVID-19).
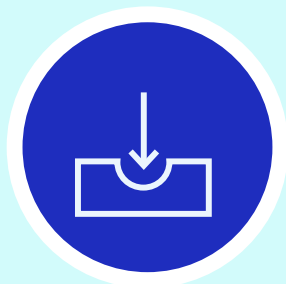
Above all, training on data collection, ethical data sharing, and data analysis are needed. Consideration should be given to the use of existing administrative and survey data to inform our understanding of these issues, especially on forced labour and human trafficking. A repository with centralised data and research, as well as the design of statistical indicators, will benefit all stakeholders by monitoring progress in policy and programmatic efforts. Moreover, multi-stakeholder discussions should be held regularly to collaborate and share experiences in combatting child labour, forced labour, and human trafficking.

▶ Main agenda

Theme	Key topics/ dimensions	Related research questions	Related policy/ programme response
Risk factors for vulnerability	Migration	What is the prevalence of child labour, forced labour, and human trafficking among migrants by gender? How does labour migration policies and regulations influence human trafficking, forced labour, and child labour?	• Decent work conditions/ related programmes (including targeting of specific services) • Social protection policies
	Informality	How does informality and poverty (multidimensional and absolute) act as drivers for child labour, forced labour, and human trafficking? Is the effect of informality on child labour, forced labour, and human trafficking different between rural and urban populations?	
	Demographics	What are the characteristics of forced labour, including families of bonded labour?	
	Child marriage	What is the relationship between child marriage and child labour?	
	Education	What is the prevalence of child labour among children at school? What is the impact of child labour on school outcomes?	
	Domestic work	What is the impact of domestic work on children's health and education outcomes (including drop-out rates and grades)?	
	Physical and mental health	What are the long-term impacts of children working in (specific) potentially hazardous types of work?	
Assessment of what works and what not	Skill development (early childhood)	What is the effectiveness of skill development/early childhood programme in reducing child labour and forced labour?	• Legal commitment • Labour recruitment practices • Education policies • Social protection and livelihood programmes
	Awareness raising and information campaigns	What is the effect of awareness raising campaigns on policy action?	
	Vocational training	What is the role of technical and vocational education and training in small and medium enterprises in reducing child labour?	
	Monitoring and law enforcement	What are the challenges in programme implementation and service delivery in the elimination of child labour, forced labour, and human trafficking? What are the challenges and strategies for law enforcement programmes and services at department, district, and community levels?	
	Survivors of forced labour and human trafficking	What strategies are effective at mitigating trauma from forced labour and human trafficking experiences?	
	Social protection and livelihood programmes	How do different social protection and livelihood programmes, such as *Tekoporã* and *Abrazo*, support the elimination of child labour and forced labour?	
Technology and artificial intelligence	Ethical data collection	What is the impact of technology and artificial intelligence in data collection in small communities and rural areas?	• Identification and referral mechanisms • Community monitoring systems

Theme	Key topics/ dimensions	Related research questions	Related policy/ programme response
Monitoring and measurement	Sampling	What is the prevalence of child labour, forced labour, and human trafficking among the under-represented population?	• Identification and referral mechanisms • Community monitoring systems
	Methods	What are the statistical indicators to monitor child labour, forced labour, and human trafficking issues in Paraguay? What are the best practices to use administrative data and survey data to analyse child labour, forced labour, and human trafficking? How can existing administrative records and social information systems be used to support research on child labour, forced labour, and human trafficking?	
	Definitions and concepts (e.g., modern slavery, forced labour, human trafficking)	How to compare findings and data collection procedures given different definitions and concepts?	
Economic, environmental, and social costs	Climate change	How do natural disasters influence the risk of child labour and forced labour?	• Labour recruitment • Due diligence • Freedom of association and collective bargaining
	Supply chains, labour unions and labour associations	What is the role of global supply chains on child labour, forced labour, and human trafficking? What is the role of workers' associations and trade unions in combatting child labour, forced labour, and human trafficking?	
	Specific economic sectors	What is the influence of governance mechanisms on specific sectors in rural and urban areas?	
	COVID-19	How has COVID-19 impacted the determinants of child labour and forced labour?	

▶ Call to action

Collaborate

Innovate

Accelerate

Throughout the consultations leading to the Paraguay National Research Agenda, the stakeholders emphasised the importance of disseminating research in formats that are useful and accessible to policy actors and to raise awareness among policy actors on the value of evidence-based policy design and implementation.
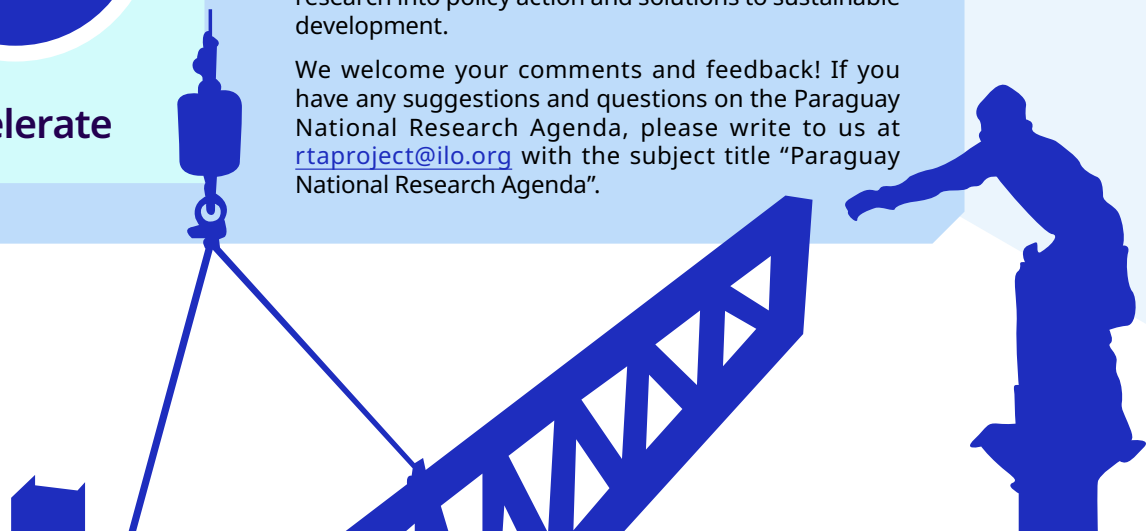
The Paraguay National Research Agenda offers opportunities to all stakeholders to initiate and support research addressing the identified priority areas. More coordination and dialogue between the governmental and research communities will help accelerate policy actions. Existing tripartite-plus policy coordination committees, such as the *Comisión Nacional de Derechos Fundamentales en el Trabajo y Prevención del Trabajo Forzoso* (CONTRAFOR) (National Commission of Fundamental Rights at Work and Prevention of Forced Labour) and the *Comisión Nacional Interinstitucional para la Prevención y Erradicación del Trabajo Infantil y la Protección del Trabajo de los Adolescentes* (CONAETI-Py) (National Inter-institutional Commission for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labour and the Protection of Adolescent Worker) have potential to support this dialogue.

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

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

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

We welcome your comments and feedback! If you have any suggestions and questions on the Paraguay National Research Agenda, please write to us at rtaproject@ilo.org with the subject title "Paraguay National Research Agenda".

▶ The "Research to Action" (RTA) project

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

The ILO's "Research to Action" (RTA) project centers on bridging the divide between policy research and policy action to tackle issues of child labour, forced labour and human trafficking. The primary objectives of the project are to increase access to evidence, facilitate understanding of available research and gaps, enhance capacity to provide evidence and fill gaps and promote new interest and engagement in the subject area. The RTA project collaborates closely with the International Organization for Migration (IOM)'s Protection Division. The RTA project is funded by the United States Department of Labor (USDOL).

▶ Acknowledgements

▶ rtaproject.org