



Concept Note for a thematic session on

Expanding social protection coverage and transition to formality to combat child labour: good practices and innovative approaches

at the 6th Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labour, Marrakech,
Morocco

Thursday 12 february 2026 – 11.15 to 13.00

1. Context

Child labour and informality are mutually reinforcing. The overwhelming majority of children in child labour are found in informal family enterprises, farms, and low-productivity activities lying beyond the reach of regulation, labour inspection, and contributory social protection systems. Informality constrains adult earnings, limits access to social insurance, keeps micro-enterprises and workers outside compliance frameworks, and weakens the institutions necessary to prevent child labour. At the same time, the absence of income security and limited access to contributory and non-contributory social protection expose households to shocks that push children into work.

While the global community has repeatedly affirmed the importance of social protection and transition to formality in tackling the root causes of child labour, the challenge today is not to restate why these measures matter, but rather to understand how countries have successfully operationalized them, and how such approaches can be scaled sustainably. This thematic session will therefore move beyond conceptual reaffirmation and provide evidence-based pathways for transformative change.

Across regions, governments, social partners and communities are adopting integrated, context-specific approaches to formalization and social protection that directly reduce child labour risks and provide an enabling environment for a structural reduction of child labour. Recent policy reviews make clear that advancing progress requires an integrated mix of complementary, context-specific policy measures – rooted in local realities, informed by evidence, and responsive to the diverse sectors and population groups affected, including children in child labour and household susceptible to it. Experiences from many countries demonstrate that when workers in the informal economy gain visibility, labour and social protection, and decent work opportunities, and higher earnings and productivity, families are less dependent on children's labour.



2. Issues to be addressed

After a brief setting of the scene, the session will explore a diverse set of concrete, field-tested policy practices that jointly address informality and the pressures that push children into work. Social insurance schemes for extending social protection to workers in the informal economy to reduce families' reliance on children's earnings will be one important area of focus. Additional policy practices in the session, selected for their relevance to child labour and scalability, will include innovative approaches for expanding the reach of labour inspection into the informal economy and sector-specific formalization approaches, for example, in agriculture, where the vast majority of child labourer are found globally.

The session will also consider innovative practices directed towards strengthening the ability of Micro and Small Enterprises to formalize, and towards leveraging new digital tools to extend formalization pathways to workers in the informal economy, in ways that are inclusive of women. Taken together, this cross-section of promising practices from different actors, sectors and regions will showcase practical solutions that are already making a meaningful difference in addressing informality and its links to child labour and to extend social protection coverage, strengthen resilience to income, health or other shocks, and prevent the use of child labour.