

CHILD LABOUR POLICY GUIDELINES

**FIJI'S SOCIAL POLICY GUIDELINES FOR FIJI FISHING INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION
PREPARED BY LRQA & CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL**

A collaboration between Conservation International, LRQA and Fiji Fishing Industry Association.
Thank you all those who provided input and feedback



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How to Use this Document

These Child Labour Policy Guidelines (Guidelines) have been co-developed by Conservation International (CI) and LRQA in consultation with local governments, fishing industry partners, local civil society organisations and worker organisations.

These Guidelines provide a practical roadmap for all Fiji Fishing Industry Association (FFIA) to develop or strengthen policies that support compliance and advance social responsibility standards. They are part of a series of policy guidelines that address various human and labour rights issues. Collectively, these guidelines form a policy guidance that aims to:

- Support FFIA members to understand what human and labour rights are and why companies should safeguard human rights and implement remediation.
- Provide step-by-step guidance on how companies can manage and safeguard human rights in own operations and supply chains.
- Signpost tools and resources to support human rights safeguards.

Recognising that implementation will vary across organisations, these Guidelines have aligned recommendations with Fiji's national laws, regional frameworks and international conventions. It also incorporates indicators from the [Social Responsibility Assessment Tool for the Seafood Sector](#) to help organisations build awareness of fundamental human rights obligations and implement operational safeguards.

Scope

The policy guidance encompasses a wide range of labour practices, including recruitment, working conditions, wages, health and safety, and worker welfare. It covers every stage of the employment cycle, from hiring to repatriation, supporting FFIA members' compliance and alignment with local law and international standards.

Specifically, it covers the following Social Improvement Areas which were deduced from the implementation of the 2023 Social Responsibility Assessment (SRA) of the Fiji Fishing Industry Longline Fleet, and the subsequent ground truthing workshop with industry, government, and local civil society organisations.

- Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) at Sea;
- Forced Labour;
- Child Labour;
- Employment Contracts;
- Corporate Responsibility and Transparency; and
- Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining.

Applicability

These Guidelines provide a blueprint for fishing companies at all stages in developing their approach to human rights. It is framed around the **Minimum, Good** or **Best** practices fishing companies and vessel owners can implement. The framework below will help companies evaluate the current maturity level of your approach to human rights, and what steps you need to take to improve your management systems.

	Framework Definition	Maturity Level of Human Rights Approach
Minimum	If the policies and procedures in this category are implemented, this will reflect minimum compliance with Fiji national legislation, regional frameworks, and SRA performance indicators.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You are in the early stages of developing your approach to human rights. You have made some commitments as a company and have basic policies and procedures in place, most of which are focused on your own operations. Policies exist but little detail is provided on operational processes, governance, worker training and communication. There is no process to monitor adherence to ensure compliance.
Good	If the policies and procedures in this category are implemented, this will reflect compliance with Fiji national legislation, regional frameworks, and SRA performance indicators, as well as efforts to go above and beyond minimum compliance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You are committed to human rights, understand what your risks and priorities are for your own operations and your supply chains. You invest in resources to prevent and reduce those risks. Your workers have received training but there is a limited/weak process to ensure compliance.
Best	If the policies and procedures in this category are implemented, this will reflect compliance to Fiji national legislation, regional frameworks, and SRA performance indicators, as well as reflecting a best practice approach to managing and addressing human rights topics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your human rights approach is led by your board and/or executive management. You are making progress in preventing, reducing and remedying risks in your own operations and your supply chains. Your workers have received effective training and there is a robust process to ensure compliance.

1. What is Child Labour?

Child labour is defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development. It refers to work that:

- Is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and/or
- Interferes with their schooling by: depriving them of the opportunity to attend school; obliging them to leave school prematurely; or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work.

Not all work done by children is child labour that is to be targeted for elimination. Whether or not particular forms of work can be classified as child labour depends on the child's age, the type and hours of work performed, the conditions under which it is performed, and the places in which the work is performed.

2. Why is it important to address Child Labour?

About 60 percent of all children engaged in child labour are active in the agriculture sector, including fisheries and aquaculture. In fisheries and aquaculture, children engage in all types of activities, from catching fish to repairing nets or processing fish, often in a way that is incompatible with school attendance and hazardous to their health. Within the Western and Central Pacific Ocean (WCPO), fishing vessels can stay at sea for extended periods of time, increasing the risk of child labour and presenting specific challenges for age verification and remediation programs.

3. What are the compliance requirements?

Fiji has ratified the international legal frameworks to address child labour, including the ILO Minimum Age Convention 1973 (No. 138) and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention 1999 (No. 182). The Employment Relations Act 2007 prohibits child labour and sets the minimum age for employment at the age of 15. Fiji's National Offshore Fishing Crew Policy (2025-2028) provides a stricter age limit for work on fishing vessels and stipulates that the engagement of personnel for all sea-based work shall not be below the age of 18 as prescribed by legislation.

International conventions also provide definition for the minimum age for employment. While Fiji has not ratified the ILO Work in Fishing Convention 2007 (No. 188), it sets the minimum age for offshore work on board a fishing vessel at 16 years of age, unless the competent authority has authorised a minimum age of 15 for persons who are (a) no longer subject to compulsory schooling as provided by national legislation, and who are engaged in vocational training in fishing or (b) performing light work during school holidays.

4. Practical Steps: What do you need to do?

This section outlines the **Minimum**, **Good** and **Best** practices for implementing child labour safeguards. See **Appendix I** for the international conventions and guidelines, and national frameworks relating to the Minimum practices, and **Appendix II** for additional tools and resources to adopt these practices in your own policies and procedures.

	MINIMUM	GOOD In addition to MINIMUM	BEST In addition to GOOD
Policies & Management Systems	<p>M1 Establish a written Child Labour Policy in accordance with the local law. The policy should at a minimum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commit to working actively against child labour. • Set the minimum age for employment on shore at the age of 15. • Set the minimum age for employment on board fishing vessels at the age of 18. • Children between the age of 13 to 15 are allowed to engage in light work or in a workplace on shore, in which their family and communal or religious groups are employed, if the employment is not harmful to their health, development or education. • Set out minimum requirements for suppliers, including labour agencies, for preventing child labour and protection of <i>young workers</i>. • Communicate and reflect the requirements of the law and your Child Labour Policy in contractual agreement with suppliers. 	<p>Embed your Child Labour Policy in written operational procedures and processes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assign oversight and responsibility to relevant senior management and across appropriate departments for implementing the policies. • 	<p>Establish monitoring system to ensure compliance with the local law and successful implementation of your Child Labour Policy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularly review and update your Child Labour Policy and minimum age for hiring to stay compliant with the local law as it changes. • Ensure your board and/or senior management endorse and own your Child Labour Policy. • Ensure your Child Labour Policy is consistently integrated and aligned with all human resources related policies. • Conduct risk assessments to identify incidents of child labour and <i>hazardous work</i> for <i>young workers</i>. • Document any child labour incidents and update your policy and procedures to support continuous improvement. • Conduct regular checks on existing suppliers and their age verification procedures. • Establish a mapping and selection process of new suppliers based on the reputation, age verification

	MINIMUM	GOOD In addition to MINIMUM	BEST In addition to GOOD
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include a remediation protocol for use in the event a child labour case is identified (see M5-M7 for additional information). 		procedures, and probability of compliance risk.
	<p>M2 Ensure <i>young workers</i> are not allowed to perform work that is likely to jeopardise their health, safety or morals, including night work or overtime.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prohibit workers under the age of 18 from engaging in <i>night work</i>, <i>overtime</i> or <i>hazardous work</i>. Only assign young workers to positions that are deemed non-hazardous. Ensure work does not interfere with education. 		<p>Implement a tracking system for all young workers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain a young worker register listing all workers under 18 with their names, dates of birth, and current job position and tasks.
Age verification and review procedures	<p>M3 Develop procedures for age verification of all workers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assign dedicated staff to handle age verification during the hiring process. Check that there is no worker employed currently below the age of 15. If there is worker aged between 13 to 15, ensure that their employment is in accordance with the requirements in M1. Check that there is no worker on board fishing vessel currently below the age of 18. 	<p>A written hiring and age verification procedure is in place and maintained. The procedure should at a minimum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cross-reference two to three different documents for verifying the age of new job applicants / recruits. This may include official government issued IDs, passports, driver's license, birth certificates, education certificates, etc. Take photocopies and maintain all documentation which establishes proof of age and include it within the applicant/worker's file. 	<p>A written hiring and age verification procedure is in place and well implemented.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Records of age documentation for all workers are maintained. Review and validate the age documentation for all workers, both current and prospective, as a routine criteria during recruitment and hiring. Maintain and update any records of child labour incidents. Monitor your records on child labour incidents to inform continuous improvement and policy adjustments.

	<u>MINIMUM</u>	GOOD In addition to MINIMUM	BEST In addition to GOOD
Training & Internal Alignment	<p>M4 Ensure that relevant staff responsible for hiring and human resources are aware of your Child Labour Policy.</p>	<p>Ensure that all staff are aware of your Child Labour Policy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate your Child Labour Policy with all staff. • Provide training on child labour risks to relevant staff responsible for hiring and human resources. • Ensure that relevant staff know what to do if they come across risks in your operations. • Maintain training records on child labour prevention. 	<p>Ensure that all staff are required to take regular child labour prevention training, at least annually.</p>
Handling cases of child labour	<p>M5 Develop a written procedure to safely protect and remove underage workers for handling cases of child labour. The procedure should at a minimum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a grievance mechanism for receiving reports of child labour. See Section 4.3 Worker engagement channels & grievance mechanisms, Forced Labour Policy Guidelines for additional information. • Immediately remove the children from hazardous conditions upon discovery of child labour. • Assign a dedicated case manager to manage the case. • Clarify the identity and age of the children. • Contact their parents or guardians to inform them of the situation. • Consult with their parents or guardians about the circumstances 	<p>Provide the children with appropriate rehabilitation and support services until a suitable solution is identified.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify educational requirements and opportunities for the children and consider their preference for schooling arrangement. • Provide transitional classes for children who have fallen behind their peer group. • Provide employment opportunities or income generating activities for parents or family member above legal working age. • Ensure that the children do not shift back into high-risk activities due to a sudden income loss and hardship. 	<p>Develop a remediation program for the affected children.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide access to education and pay for schooling if the children are below the legal age for education. • Provide young workers with vocational training and/or apprenticeship opportunities. • Involve local partners to assist in the development of a remediation program, such as child rights and child protection experts, social workers, local authorities, unions, government, and non-government organisations, and health professionals, etc.

	<u>MINIMUM</u>	<u>GOOD</u> In addition to MINIMUM	<u>BEST</u> In addition to GOOD
	of the child and the family, and why they sought work within the company initially.		
	M6 Depending on the scale and nature of the problem, notify the local labour authorities and seek their immediate involvement. You should at a minimum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain a service directory that includes local authorities to notify and seek assistance from in the event of a child labour case. • Document the child labour case and steps taken to remediate the situation and keep the records on file. 	-	-
	M7 Identify and remedy the recruitment and personnel procedures (or lack of procedures) which resulted in the hiring of under-age workers.	-	-

Appendix I: References for Minimum Requirements

	Minimum
Policies & Management Systems	<p>M1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fiji Employment Relations Act (2007) SRA Performance Indicator 1.1.3 Child labour S3 and S6 <p>M2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fiji Employment Relations Act (2007) SRA Performance Indicator 1.1.3 Child labour S4
Age verification and review procedures	<p>M3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fiji Employment Relations Act (2007) Fiji National Offshore Fishing Crew Policy (2025-2028) SRA Performance Indicator 1.1.3 Child labour S1 and S4
Training & Internal Alignment	<p>M4: The SRA Performance Indicator assess whether there are reliable and transparent data available for assessment. This requirement of internal training reflects the minimum standard for an implemented Child Labour Policy.</p>
Handling cases of child labour	<p>M5 – M7: The ILO Conventions No.138 and No. 182 provided general principles for handling child labour cases, including identifying and monitoring child labour cases, immediate withdrawal and protection when child labour is found, rehabilitation and remediation, as well as employer accountability and penalties. Fiji has ratified both Conventions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ILO C138 Minimum Age Convention ILO C182 Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention

Appendix II: Tools and Templates

	Tools	Templates
Normative sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ILO C138 Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) ILO R146 Minimum Age Recommendation, 1973 (No. 146) ILO C182 Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) ILO R190 Worst Forms of Child Labour Recommendation, 1999 (No. 190) 	-
Policies & Management Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supplier Guidance on Preventing, Identifying and Addressing Child Labour, ILO (2021) Improving the Safety and Health of Young Workers, ILO (2018) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annex A: Sample Child Labour Policy & Age Verification Procedures, Code of Conduct & Auditable Standards: Tuna Handbook, Seafood Task Force (2020) Template No Child Labour Policy, FAIR Fish project, Plan International Thailand
Age verification and review procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eliminating and Preventing Child Labour: Checkpoints app, ILO (2016) Annex II: Good practices for age verification, Supplier Guidance on Preventing, Identifying and Addressing Child Labour, ILO (2021) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annex A: Sample Child Labour Policy & Age Verification Procedures, Code of Conduct & Auditable Standards: Tuna Handbook, Seafood Task Force (2020)
Training & Internal Alignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> p.98 – 100, ILO training package on inspection of labour conditions on board fishing vessels, ILO (2021) Course: Business strategies and public-private partnerships to end child labour in agriculture, FAO elearning Academy Safety and health at work: why are youth at risk?, ILO InfoStories 	-
Handling cases of child labour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annex B: Best-practice Child Labour Remediation Procedure, Code of Conduct & Auditable Standards: Tuna Handbook, Seafood Task Force (2020) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annex XII: Child labour notification form, Supplier Guidance on Preventing, Identifying and Addressing Child Labour, ILO (2021)

Appendix III: Glossary

Term	Definition	Source
Child	All persons under the age of 18.	ILO C182 Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182)
Child labour	Work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development.	International Labour Organization
Child work	Work that does not harm a child's health or development and does not interfere with their schooling. Such activities can be positive, including helping in a family business or earning pocket money outside school hours.	International Labour Organization
Hazardous work	Employment or workplace that is injurious to health or is hazardous, dangerous or unsuitable, including attendance on machinery, working with hazardous substances, driving motor vehicles, heavy physical labour, the care of children or work within security services.	Fiji Employment Relations Act 2007
Remedy or Remediation	The process of providing remedy for a negative human rights impact and the substantive outcomes that can counteract, or make good, the negative impact. These outcomes may take a range of forms such as apologies, restitution, rehabilitation, financial or non-financial compensation, and punitive sanctions (whether criminal or administrative, such as fines), as well as the prevention of harm through, for example, injunctions or guarantees of non-repetition.	United Nations Guiding Principles Reporting Framework
Night work	Work carried out during the interval between 6:00 PM and 6:00 AM the following day.	Fiji Employment Relations Act 2007
Overtime	Hours worked beyond eight hours in a day.	Fiji Employment Relations Act 2007
Young workers	Workers who are between the ages of 15 and 24 years old. Young workers aged 15 to 17 are considered children. The type of work they do and the circumstances in which they work are subject to hazardous child labour regulations in most countries. Young workers aged 18 to 24 are considered adults and are covered by occupational health and safety laws. Despite their limited job experience, their continuing mental and physical development and their vulnerability to workplace harm, they are no longer protected by hazardous child labour regulations.	International Labour Organization