



International
COCOA
Initiative

Child labour, education and child wellbeing

Insights into the determinants of the
severity of child work

September, 2022



Why look at wellbeing and child labour?

Wellbeing is a positive outcome that is meaningful for people and for society. It tells us that people think and feel that their lives are going well.

“Health is a state of complete **physical, mental and social wellbeing** and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” World Health Organization

Looking at wellbeing helps us explore **the link between child labour and harm** – one dimension of the *severity* of child labour.



Key concepts:

When we talk about the *severity of child work*,

we mean the **extent to which work causes harm** to a child, in the short and long-term.

Harm includes **negative impacts** on a child's development, physical and mental health, learning, socioemotional life, and economic opportunities, which can be transmitted to future generations.

Like other forms of abuse and neglect, harm from child labour is determined by:

- the *duration* and *timing* of exposure
- the *type* of experience and *conditions*
- the *cumulative intensity* of adverse experiences
- the *characteristics* of the child (age, previous exposure...)
- the child's environment, including *protective factors*

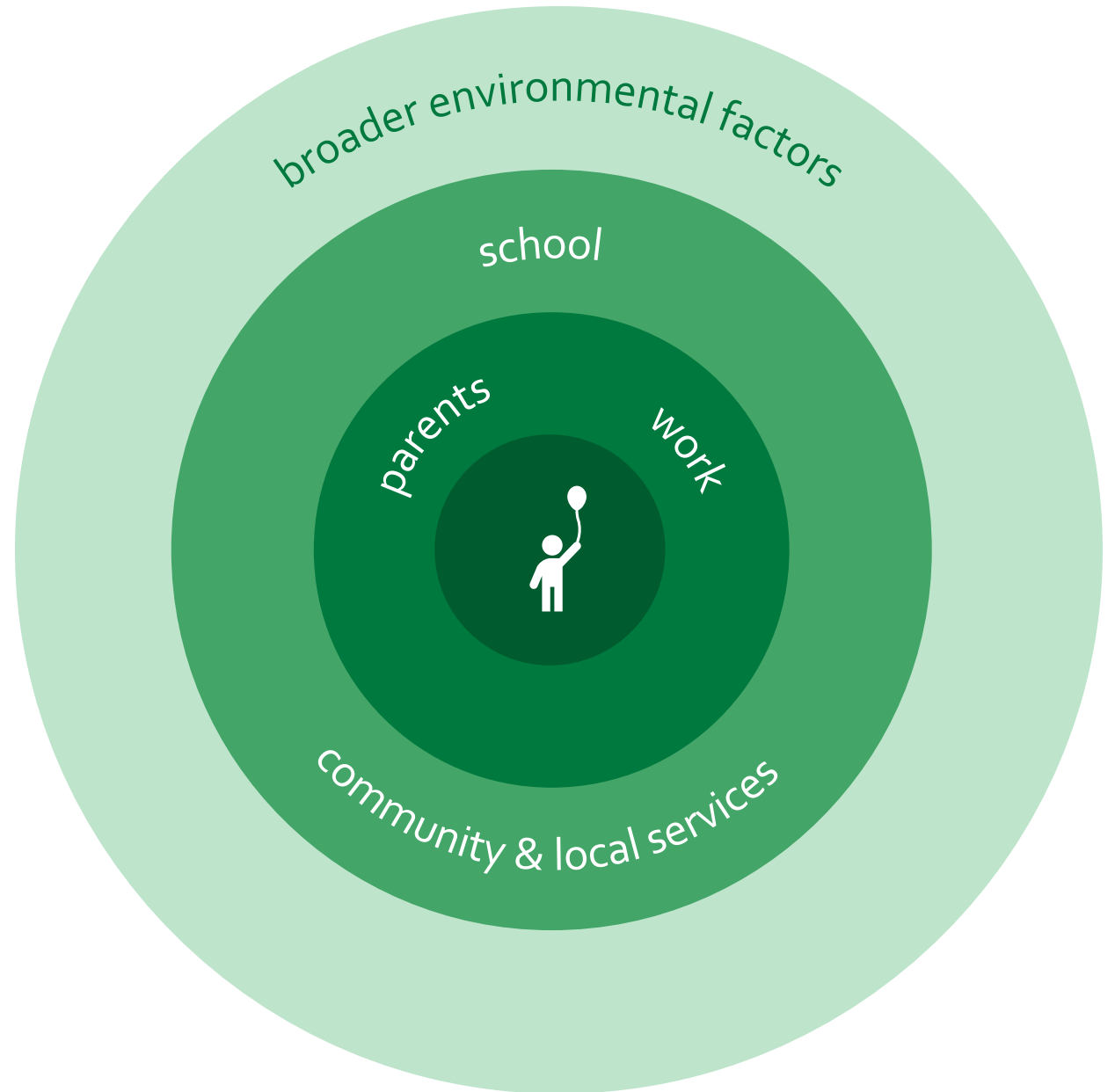
Key concepts:

The child's ecology

The environment of the child is made of layers, consisting of material realities, social relationships, and local culture and institutions.

Each layer influences the child's development, for the better (enriching experience) or for the worse (adverse experience).

These effects stack up across the layers and over time, potentially reinforcing or mitigating each other.



The study

Three research questions:

1. How is children's work, and its intensity, linked to children's wellbeing?
2. How is schooling linked to children's wellbeing?
3. How does a combination of schooling and child work affect children's wellbeing?

Sample: 2,274 children in 5 cooperatives and 3 regions of Côte d'Ivoire (Gbôklé, Nawa, San-Pédro)

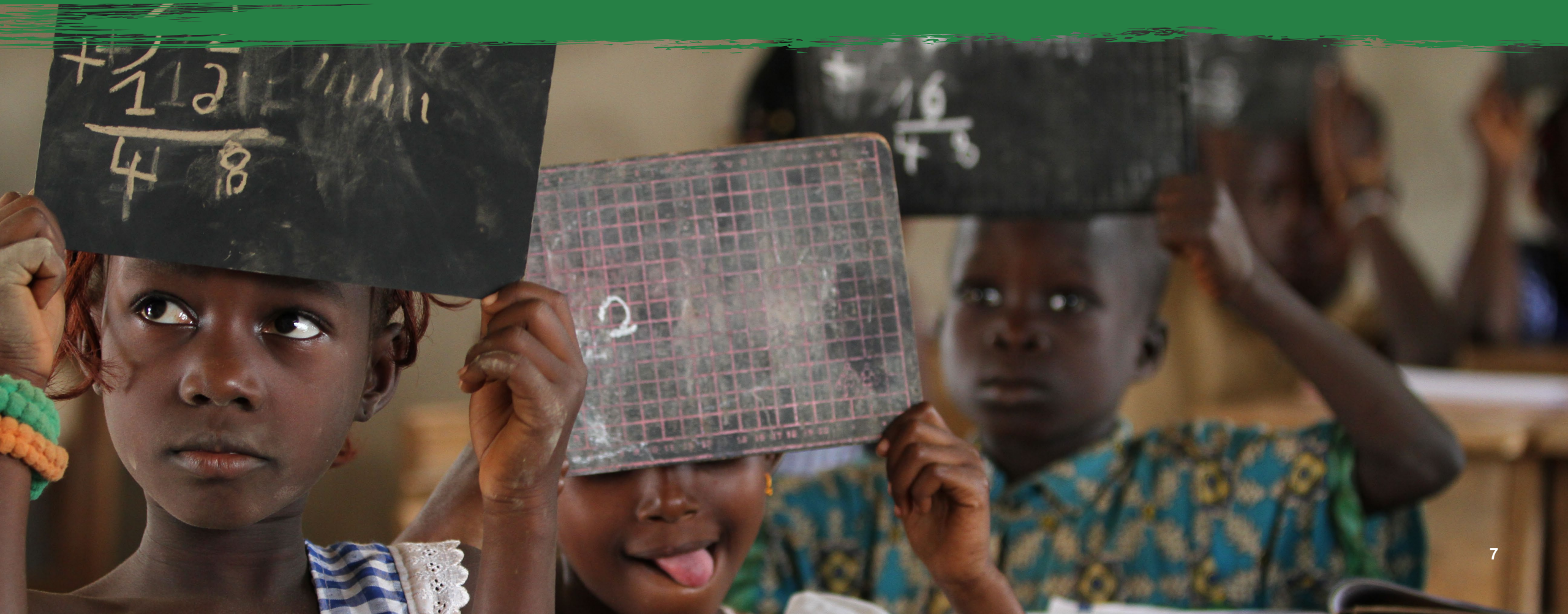
Focus: education, work, and psychological wellbeing (WHO-5)

What is the Child Wellbeing Index (WHO-5)?

Five positive statements about the child's current experience:

Over the past two weeks...	All the time	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
I have felt good	(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)	(0)
I have felt calm and relaxed	(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)	(0)
I have felt full of energy and healthy	(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)	(0)
I woke up feeling fresh and rested	(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)	(0)
I did a lot of things that interested me during the day	(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)	(0)

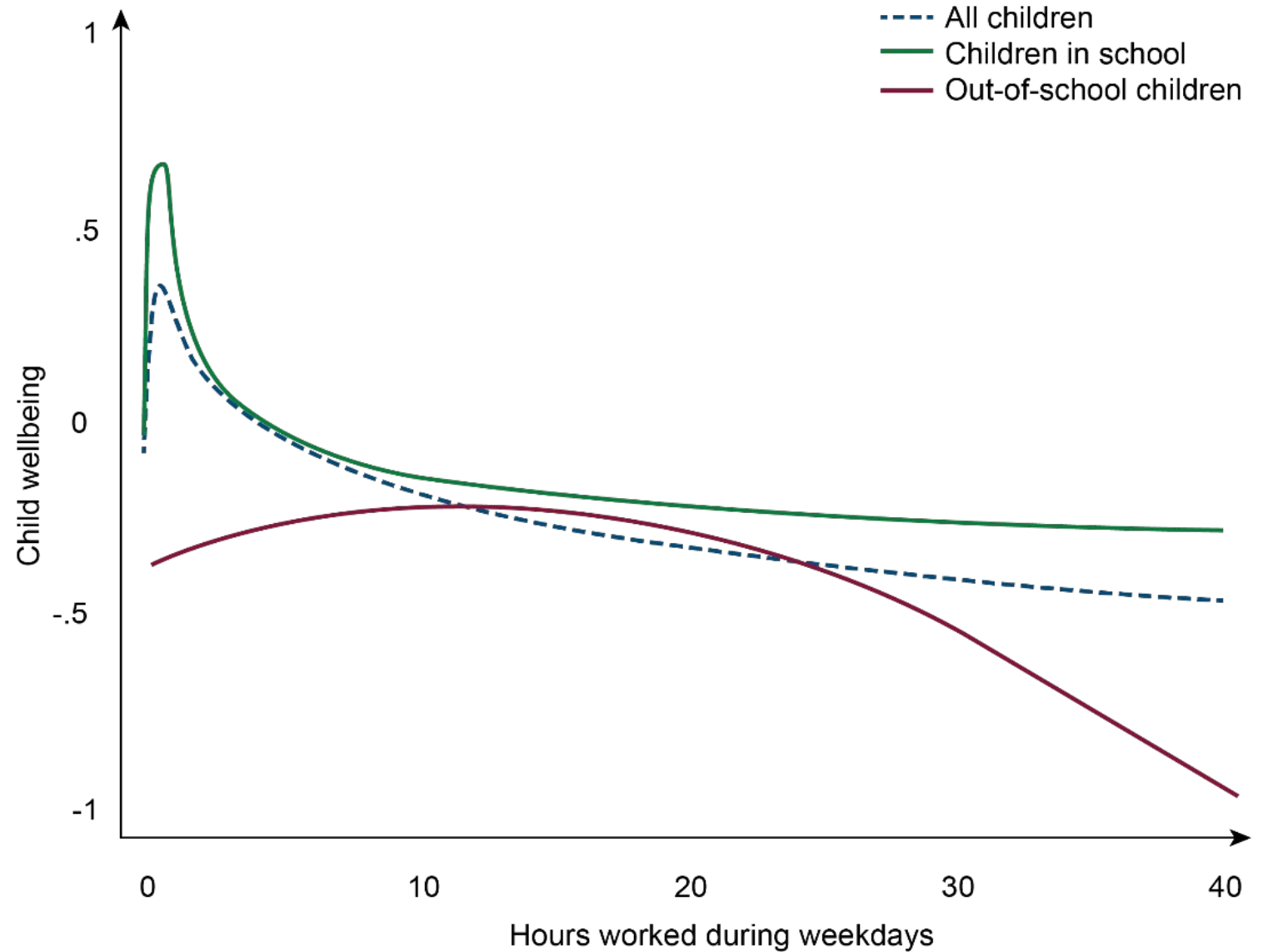
Results



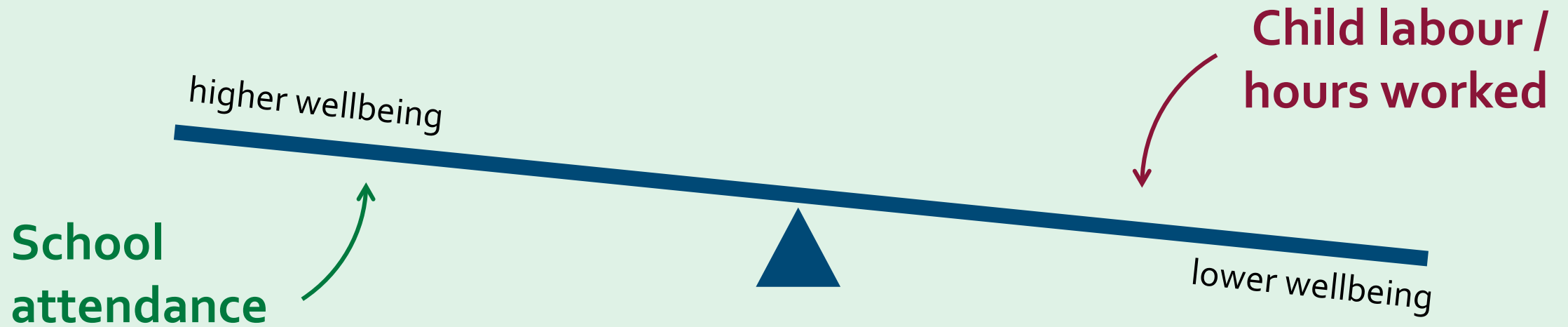
- Children attending school have higher levels of wellbeing than those who do not
- The more hours worked, the lower the wellbeing
- Children who (do certain types of) work have lower levels of wellbeing

School plays a protective role, up to a certain threshold.

Work can be harmful in 2 ways: **directly** (exposure to work), **indirectly** (deprived of protection offered by school)



These findings suggest that detrimental and protective factors **interact** :



What next?



What do these findings mean for us?

Identifying children at risk:

- **Granular data is helpful** to understand children's situation in a holistic way (school attendance, age, gender, family situation, hours worked)
- **All work can be harmful, not just work in agriculture!** (the total hours worked on weekdays counts – ie. the *accumulation* of household chores, work in agriculture and other work)

Support to prevent and address child labour:

Education helps protect children from the negative influence of other factors on child wellbeing, as well as being a fundamental child right in itself:

- Continue to support access to quality education
- Help children stay in school

The intensity of work is harmful

- Efforts should be made to reduce the total number of hours children work on *any* task, alongside ending children's participation in child labour.

What do these findings mean for us?

Monitoring progress and measuring impact

- **Wellbeing is a valuable outcome to measure** in impact evaluations, the WHO-5 tool appears well adapted to this context
- Understanding the number of hours children work is challenging, but is worthwhile if this can be used to better protect children from harm

Who to support and when?

- **Out-of-school children** should be prioritized for support (regardless of child labour status)
- Early and ongoing exposure to work are likely to increase harm: providing protective interventions to parents and younger children could help prevent and reduce harm
- Girls work more hours in total than boys, and are less likely to complete school than boys: a holistic understanding of the child's situation should help provide gender-sensitive support

Thank you

Read the report on the [ICI Knowledge Hub](#)