



CHILD RIGHTS RISK ASSESSMENT - TEA INDUSTRY SUPPLY CHAIN IN SRI LANKA SUMMARY REPORT

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Researchers:

Ines Kaempfer, Marat Yu, Canaria Gaffar and Siti Octrina Malikh

Technical Review by:

Buddhini Withana, Ranjan Wettasinghe, Ahila Thillainathan,
Ishani Kurukulasooriya and Shyamali Gnanasena

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Executive Summary

Context

The Tea sector is the largest employer in Sri Lanka with a direct and indirect workforce of over 2.5 million people, which accounts to 10 percent of the total population. Save the Children in Sri Lanka has been working with leading plantation companies in the tea industry and advocating for the adoption of a child protection policy that improves the safety and wellbeing of children living in plantation companies. As an organization, Save the Children has realized the need to deepen the understanding of child rights risks in plantation settings and also along the tea supply chain in order to identify appropriate strategies and approaches for addressing child rights issues at different levels.

Aim

The aim of this assessment was to identify potential entry points for influencing sustainable progress and improvement in the lives of children. This study was carried out in partnership with the Center for Child Rights & Corporate Social Responsibility – Hong Kong.

Method

- A quantitative survey was administered with 519 parents who worked as small holder farmers and laborers in small or mid-sized tea farms/estates.
- 19.3% of the participants were male and 80.7% were female.
- A parallel survey was conducted with 519 children of ages between 6 – 17 years, of the parents who took part.
- Six focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with three different groups of farmers and laborers and three different groups of children.
- Interviews were held with 14 key informants who are representatives of key stakeholder organisations in the tea supply chain in Sri Lanka.

Education, Health, Protection & Wellbeing: Key findings

- The fact that laborers are in a significantly worse financial state than farm owners have become an obstacle in children's access to better education and healthcare.
- The poor living conditions of laborers in mid-sized tea estates with little to no privacy poses a significant risk to their child protection, which is aggravated by the lack of community based day care options and lack of safe activity spaces for children to play.
- Small holder farmers face labor shortages during the harvest times and the increasing cost of labor and production, force them to rely on children to help during the harvest period. 73% of children started to help out on the farm before they reached their 12th birthday. This means that some children miss school, which would hinder their academic performance.
- Another Child Protection risk that children face is the use of corporal punishment by both parents at home and by teachers in school. The assessment shows that this has a negative impact on the safety of children in their homes and in school, and this subsequently affects their performance in school.

Recommendations

- Develop clear guidelines on child protection and strengthen community based child protection mechanisms
- Consider the tea pricing structure and its impact on the most vulnerable
- Build capacity with a cascading training model on child protection
- Strengthen data collection on child rights
- Conduct/enhance teachers' awareness of child protection and the needs of laborers' children
- Improve maternity protection including the right to have breastfeeding breaks
- Support community based childcare
- Conduct advocacy among government agencies on education, health insurance and child protection standards

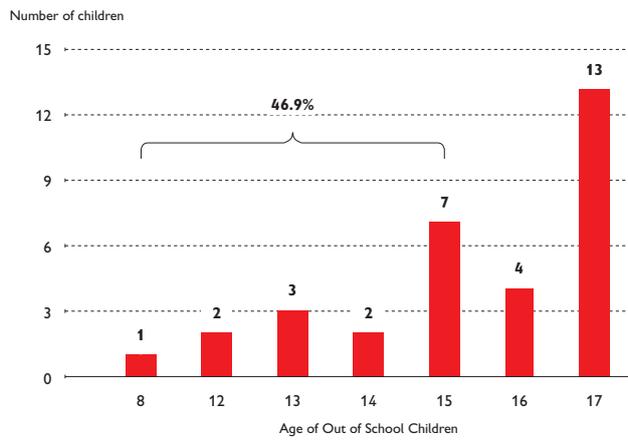
Child Rights in Tea Growing Communities

Access to Education

Age Distribution of out of school Children

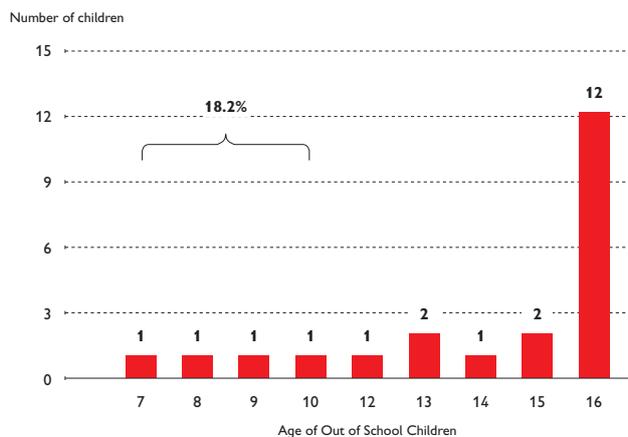
6.2% of surveyed school age children between the ages of 6-1 are not in school.

→ Chart 13: Out-of-school children by age



73.5% of children who are no longer in school have previously attended pre-school/school before dropping out. The other 26.5% have never gone to school even though they are aged 13 to 17. More than half of the children dropped out of school at the age of 16, the age at which they have completed their senior school in Sri Lanka.

→ Chart 14: Age when children dropped out of school



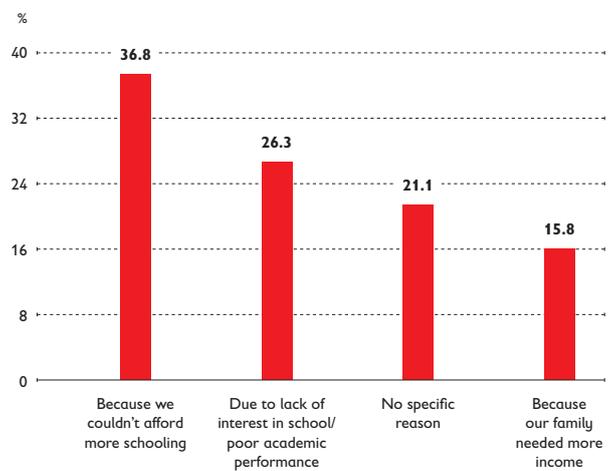
Children and Parents' reasons for dropping out

Children and Parents were both asked reasons for dropping out of school. Parents said that the most common reason was not being able to afford continued schooling for their children, which is followed by children's lack of interest or poor academic performance.

My child went until grade 8. The senior secondary school was far away and we had to pay 3600 LKR for the transportation to school. I couldn't afford it, so my child stayed at home

— a smallholder farmer

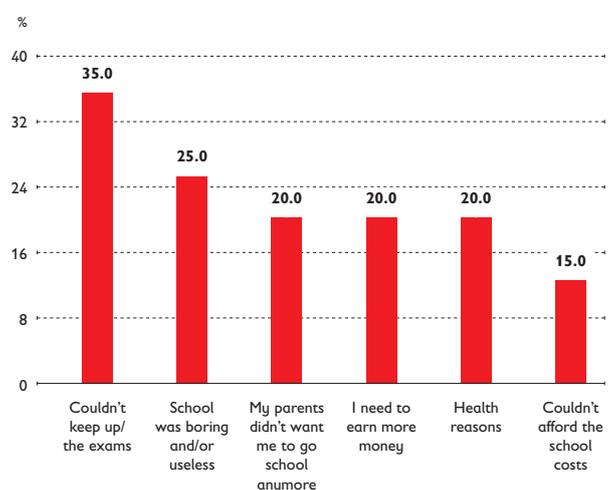
→ Chart 15: Parents' reasons for their children discontinuing school



Farm Owners vs. Labourers

Looking at the parents with children under 18 who dropped out of the school, we observed that the children of laborers are far more likely to drop out compared to children of farmers. While only 1.3% of farmers have children under 18 who are no longer in school, 4.3% of laborers have school dropouts within this age group.

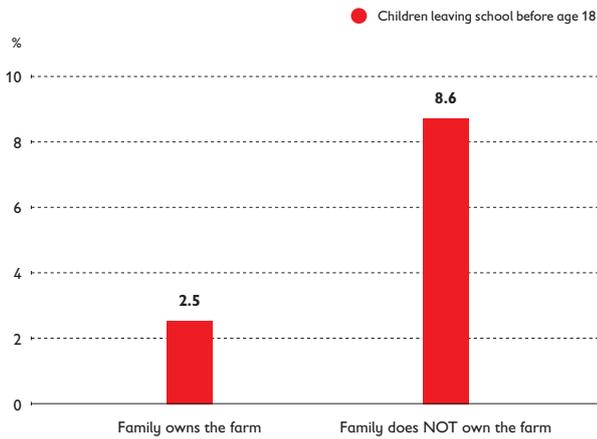
→ Chart 16: Children's reasons for discontinuing school



Family’s financial wellbeing and access to education

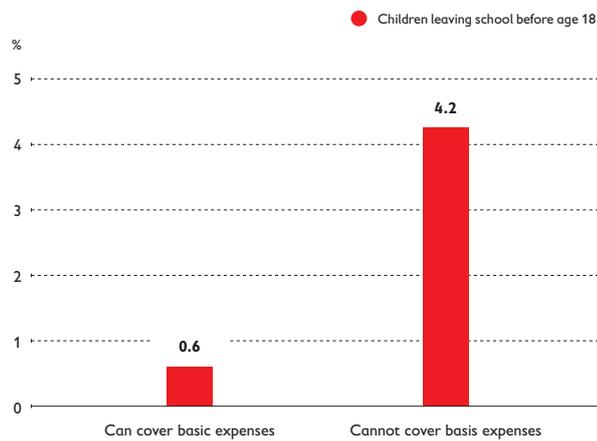
Most Families who have children that dropped out of school before 18 cannot afford their basic living expenses.

→ Chart 17: Family owns the tea farm/estate vs. children leaving school before age 18



We suspected that this difference might be due to the financial hardship laborers experience and therefore looked at the connection between families’ purchasing power and the likelihood of children dropping out of school.

→ Chart 18: Family income covering basic living expenses vs. children leaving school before age 18



Single Parent households and children’s education

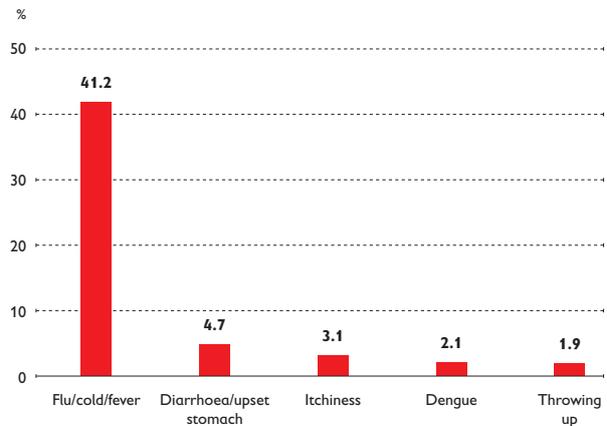
Children living with one parent or other guardians are much more likely to drop out of school than children living with both parents.

Children’s health conditions and access to healthcare

Laborers’ children experienced nutrition and/or hygiene related health conditions significantly more than the farmers’ children.

The surveyed parents echoed their children’s answers by stating that the flu or the common cold is the most frequently experienced health issue that their children are inflicted with.

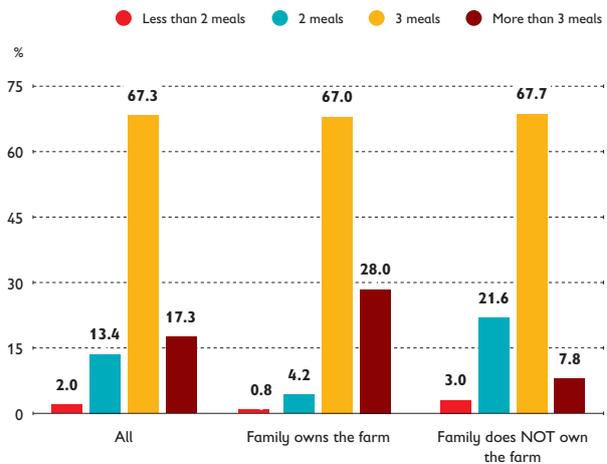
→ Chart 20: Common conditions children experienced in the past one month (according to children)



Nutrition

A considerable portion of laborers’ children (21.6 %) eat two meals or less in a day.

→ Chart 22: How many times do you eat per day?



Laborers’ children consume fruits and animal based proteins significantly less often than farmers’ children.

Child protection risks in tea growing communities

Children who live in a housing facility of a tea estate feel significantly less safe than children living in their own homes.

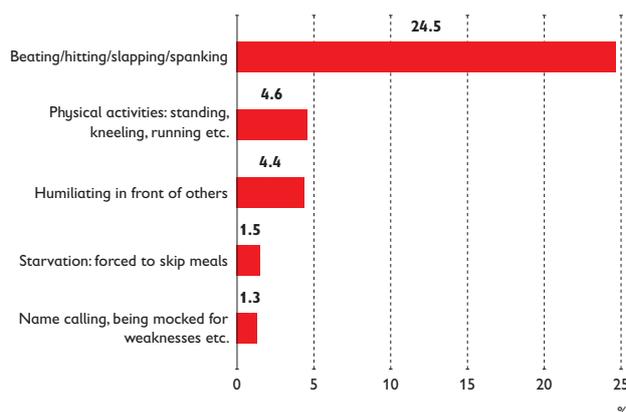
Witnessing Violence

34.7 % of children who participated in the survey said that they have witnessed a violent fight at least once and 21.8 % of children said they often witnessed violence. 14.4% of those violent fights took place at home.

Physically and verbally aggressive punishment at home

36.3% of children were physically punished in the past six months by means of spanking, beating and slapping etc. at home.

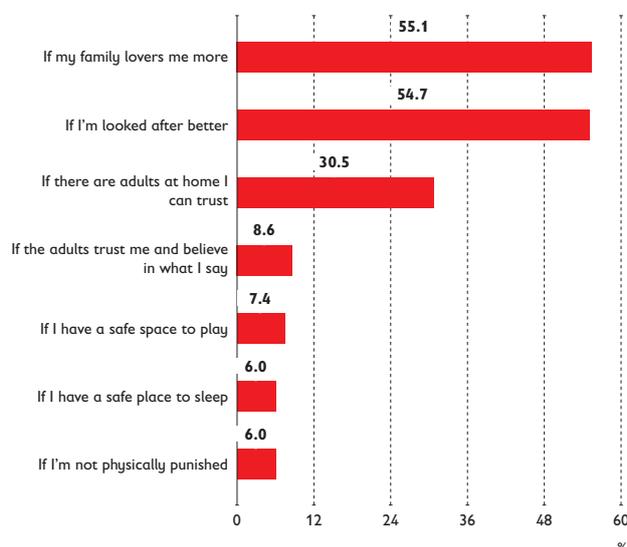
→ Chart 26: Do you know if your children are punished at home through the following methods?



What it would take for children to feel (even) safer at home

More than half the children expected more love (55.1%) and care (54.7%) from their families, and about one third (30.5 %) liked to have an adult at home whom they can trust.

→ Chart 27: How would you feel safer at home?



The safer children felt at home, the higher they self-rated their school performance.

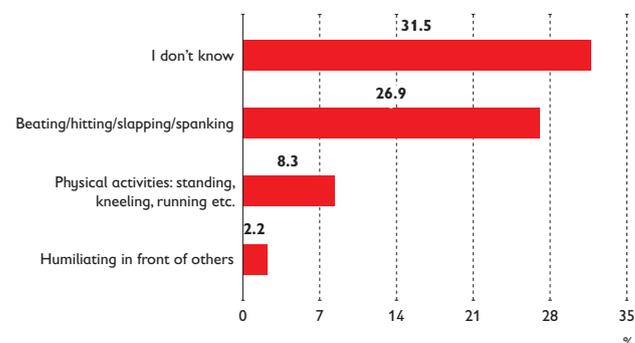
Physically and verbally aggressive punishment at school

I don't like going to school because teachers hit us when we cannot do the schoolwork... some with sticks and some with their hands

— A Farmer's child

26.9% parents are aware that their children have experienced corporal punishment such as beating, hitting, slapping and spanking at school.

→ Chart 28: Do you know if your children are punished in day care, pre-school or school through the following methods?

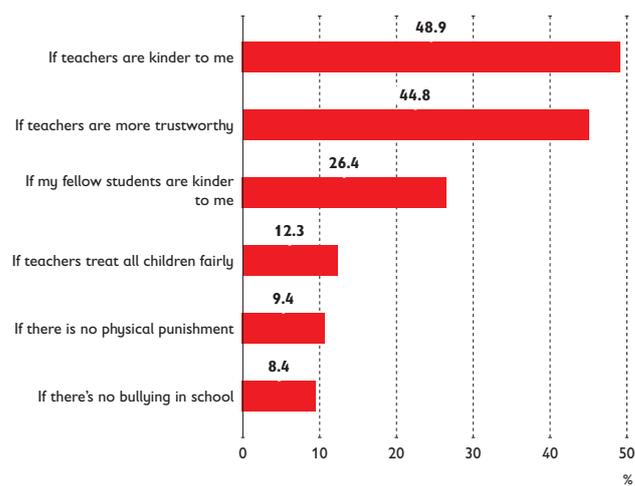


74.5 % of the parents agree that “teachers or administrators should be allowed to physically punish children at school, for example, by hitting a child with a hand or an object, as long as it isn't excessive.”

What it would take for children to feel safer in school

The most important change children expected to see is a change in their teacher's attitudes – they wanted their teachers to treat them more kindly. An unexpected finding was their lack of trust in the teachers, with 44.8% wanting teachers to be more trustworthy.

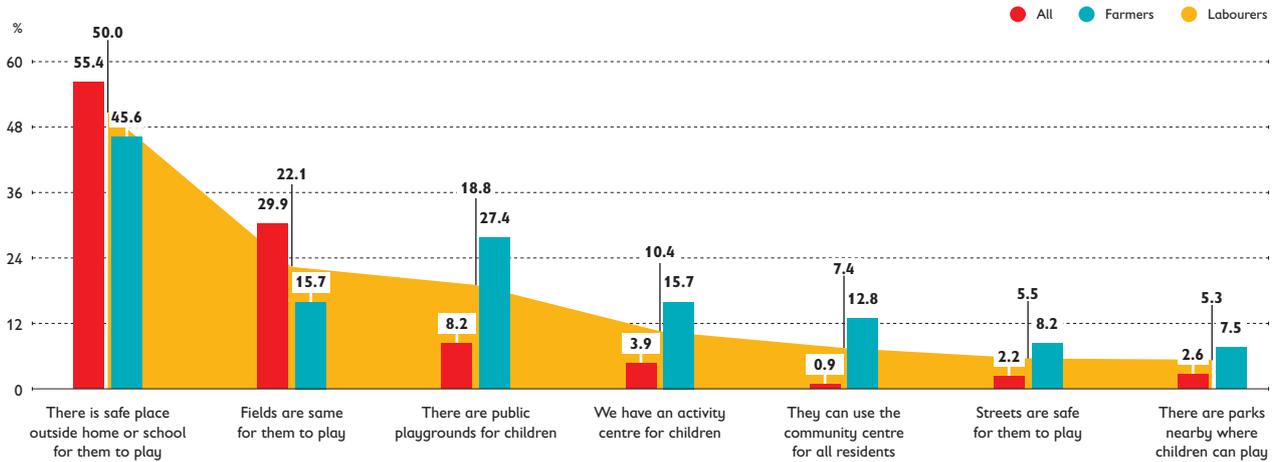
→ Chart 29: How would feel safer in school?



Safe space to play

Half of the families let their children play only at home and/or school because they don't find it safe for them to play in the neighbourhood or community.

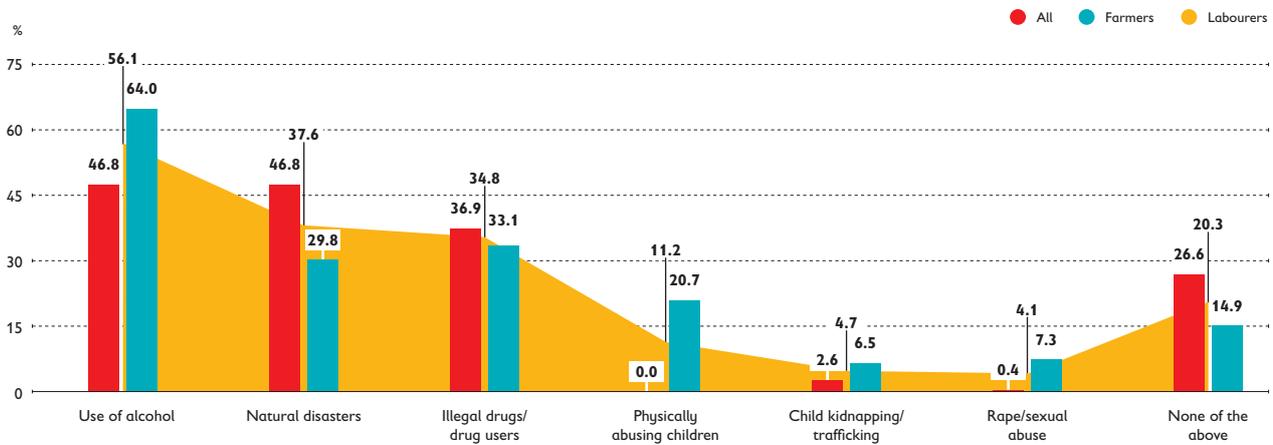
Chart 30: Are there any safe places in your neighbourhood for your children to play?



Perceived risks in the communities

79.9 % of parents believe that there are potential risks/ dangers in their community for children.

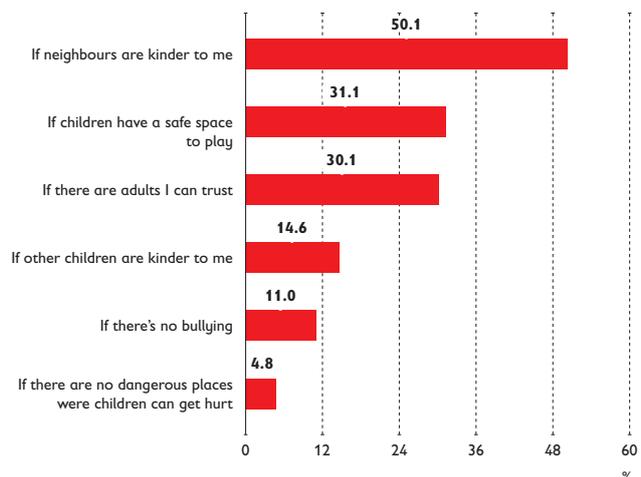
Chart 31: What potentials risks/dangers do you think exist in your community/neighbourhood for children?



What it would take for children to feel safer in their communities

The most significant change children wanted was better treatment/attitude from the adults, or in other words, kinder neighbors (50.1%). The second biggest change identified by children mirrors what half of the parents said : that they would like to have safer places in their community to play.

Chart 32: How would you feel safer in the community/ neighbourhood?

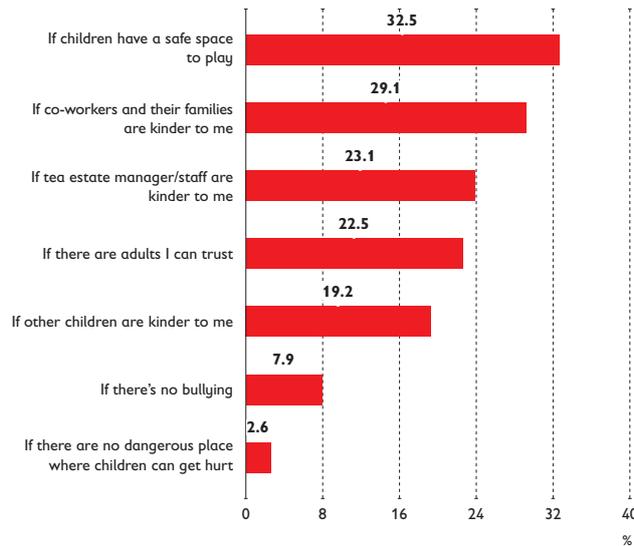


At the tea estate

30% of surveyed children live in housing facilities in tea estates, and that is where children feel least safe.

What it would take for children to feel safer at the tea estates

Chart 33: How would you feel safer in the tea estate?



Childcare needs and gaps

The longer the hours parents worked, it was less likely for them to have enough time to care for their children.

We have to leave for work at 6.30 am. There is hardly any time to attend to the needs of children

— female labourers

Labourers, more than any other surveyed group, felt they don't have enough time to spend with their children.

Chart 34: Do you think your work hours allow you to have enough time to care for your children?

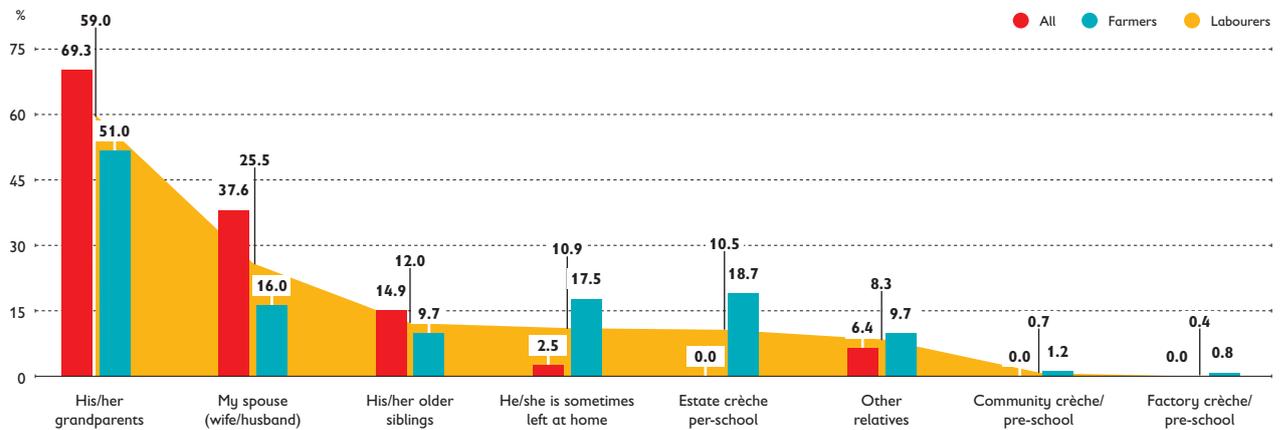
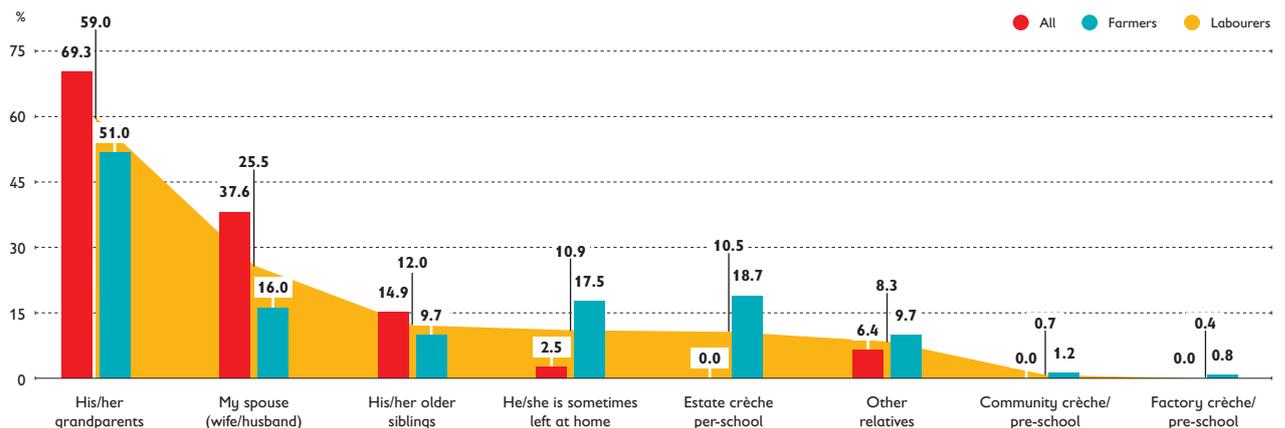
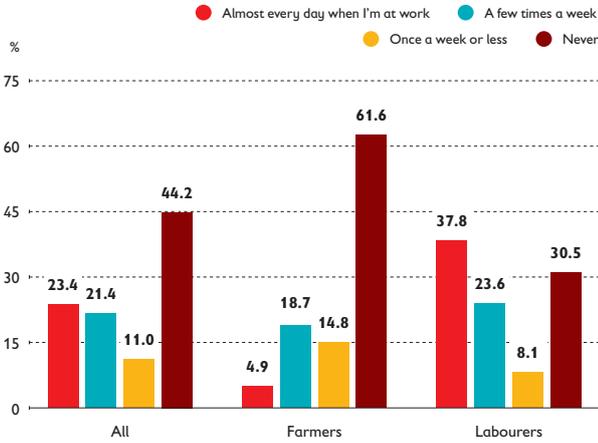


Chart 35: Who takes care of your child/children when you are away from home/at work?



Labourers children are left unattended significantly more than farmers' children.

Chart 36: How often are your children left without the care of an adult?

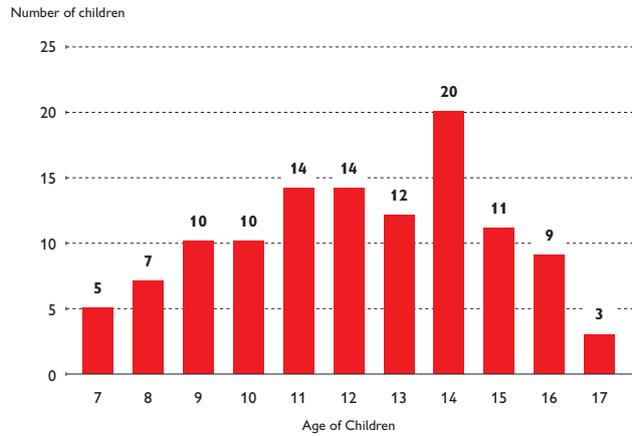


The longer parents worked, the more likely it was for the children to be left unattended.

Children's involvement in parents' work

Few parents (3.3%) said their children help on the farm, but more children (22.1%) claimed to do so.

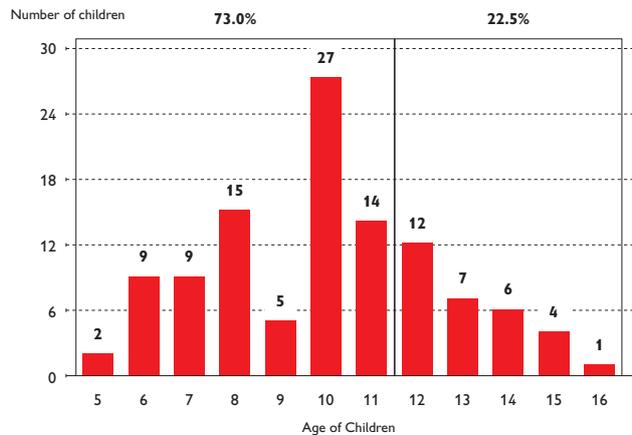
Chart 37: Age of children who help parents with farm work



Age when children started to help in the farm

73% of children had started to help out on the farm before the age of 12. As can be seen in chart 38, there is a risk of child labour when children start helping out on the farm at a young age.

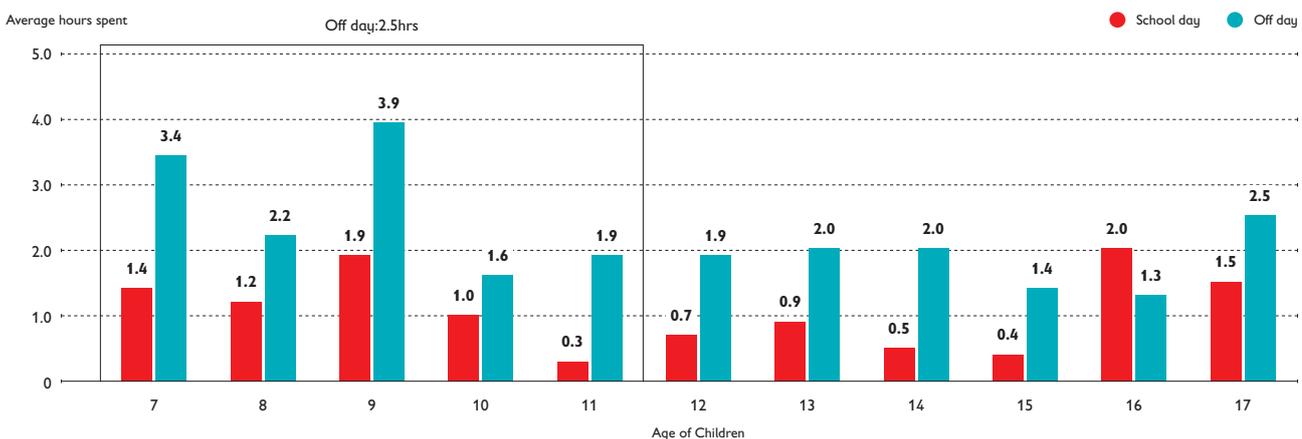
Chart 38: Age when children started helping their parents with farm work



Work hours of school children

School children spend 0.9 hours on farm work on a school day and 2.2 hours on weekends and holidays.

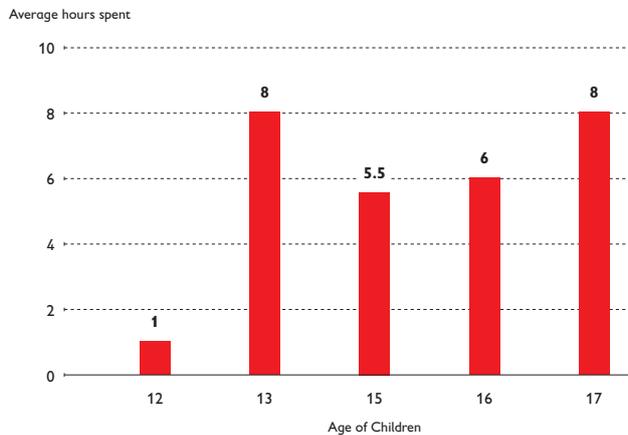
Chart 39: Average hours school children spend on farm work per day



Work hours of out of school children

The children who are not in school work an average of 5.6 hours on a regular work day.

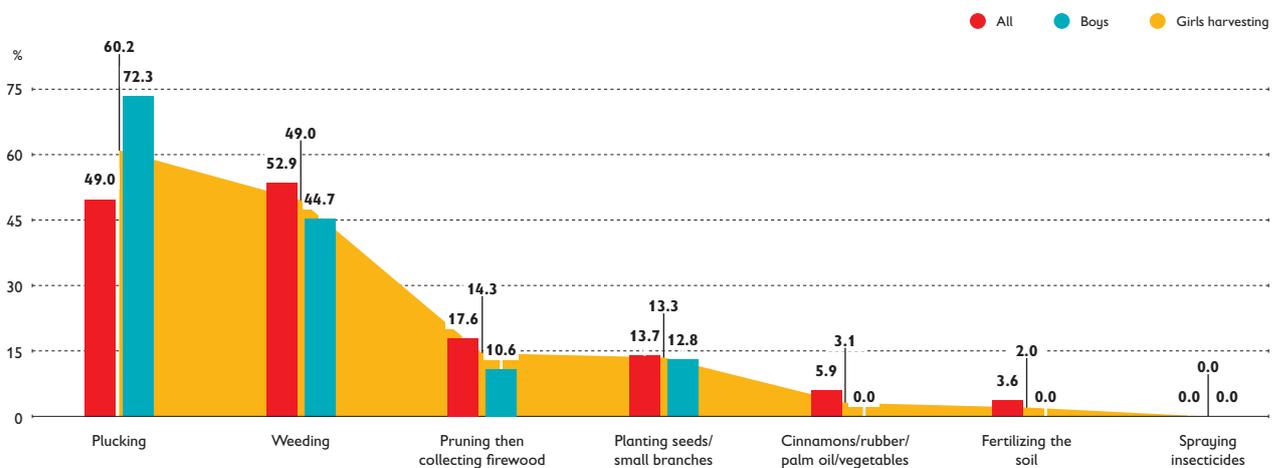
→ Chart 40: Average hours out-of-school children spend on farm work per day



What Children do on the farm

It is unlikely that children are engaging in hazardous work, but the possibility does exist.

→ Chart 41: What types of work do you do on the tea estate?



More than half of the children (51.3%) working on the tea estate described their work as very difficult.

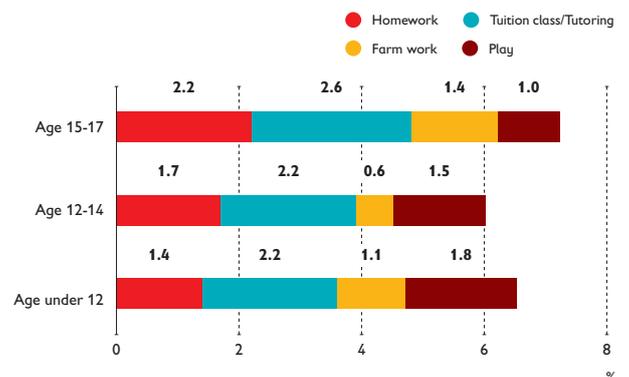
→ Chart 42: Typical after-school hours on a school day

Impact on School Performance

16.5% of school children who help on the farm say they sometimes miss school because of work. Helping with the farm work can have a negative impact on education if it causes absenteeism.

Right to play

Children have less than two hours a day for play on average throughout all age groups.



Maternity leave and breastfeeding

Maternity leave

Exactly half of the mothers said that they took maternity leave.

We work as long as we can when we're pregnant. After childbirth, there is no salary if you do not go to work. After delivering the baby, some of us rest for a week and go back to work. If we don't work for a month, our husbands will have to work so much more, and we will have to completely reply on them for expenditure

— female labourers

Breastfeeding

Some labourers look after the child for four or five months during the breastfeeding period without coming to work... but some of them might lose their jobs if they do not go for months. So they have no option but to leave the child and go to work

— smallholder farmer who employs labourers

We get scolded if we are found coming home. There is no official break for breastfeeding

— labourer in a mid-sized estate

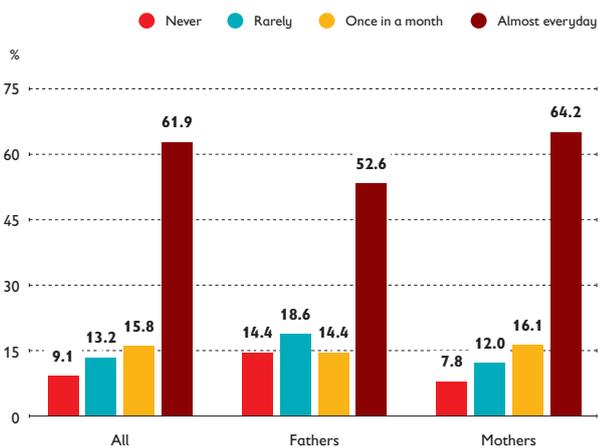
Sometimes we don't have enough breastmilk because we don't eat on time, we don't eat properly... and sometimes, we can't feed the baby on time

— smallholder farm labourer

Parents' awareness of violence against children

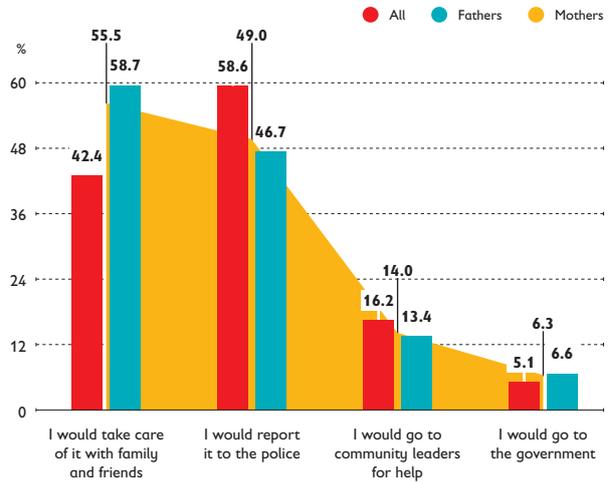
The majority of parents (61.9%) alert their children about the need to protect themselves from harm and violence on a daily basis.

Chart 43: How often do you speak to your children about how to protect themselves from harm and violence?



More than half (55.5%) of the parents would choose to deal with instances of physical harm against their children themselves with the help of family and friends.

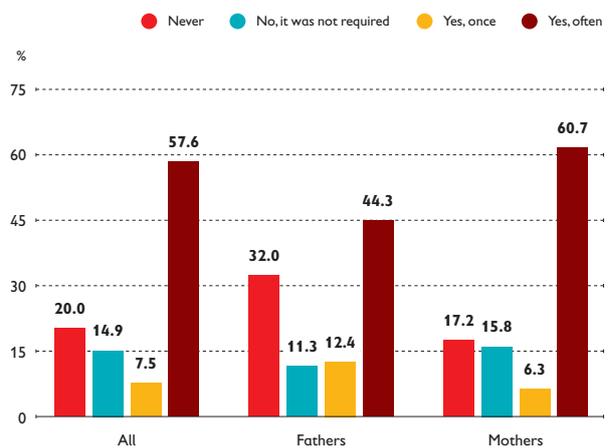
Chart 44: What would you do if someone physically harmed your children?



Parent Child Communication

More than a third of parents (35.0%), never encouraged their children to talk about experiences of harm, abuse or violence.

Chart 45: Have you ever encouraged your children to talk to you if they experience any form of harm, abuse or violence from others?



In the following table, we used a **Risk Assessment Criteria Matrix** based on ISO 31000¹, which lists the key issues we found through the research. It also lists the contributing factors to the risks, the potential impact of such risks on child rights and assigns a ranking in the order of probability (likelihood of such risks occurring) and magnitude (consequence, the strength of impact).

Unit of Analysis	Risk	Contributing Factors	Potential Impact	Initial Risk		
				Consequence	Likelihood	Risk Ranking
1. Livelihood of Parents and their Children ²	1.1 Low income levels in particular of labourers: nearly half earn less than the Sri Lankan minimum monthly salary for workers	There are significant gaps in income between farmers and labourers. Price pressure and instability seems to be balanced on the back of farmers, and payment for labourers is kept at the minimum possible market price, thus relying on the vulnerability of labourers.	Right to survival Risks to children's health	3	5	H
	1.2 Only about a third (35.1%) of surveyed participants can cover their basic expenses, with many families struggling to pay for their children's education	While schools is theoretically free, parents told of high side-fees for commuting to school, tuition classes and extracurricular activities. This is particularly true for labourers, who are at greater risk of not being able to cover basic needs.	Right to protection Risks to children's health and safety Right to develop Access to education	5	4	Vh
2. Health	2.1 Labourers and their children are far more likely to experience health issues	Health issues for adult labourers are strongly linked to their manual labour. Labourers' children experienced nutrition and hygiene-related illnesses significantly more than farmers' children.	Right to survival Right to develop	4	3	H
	2.2 The majority of parents and children are not covered by any insurance. The majority of parents (71.7%) paid for their medical expenses out of pocket	While the situation for children is slightly better than among parents due to health insurance coverage through a school insurance scheme, the overall informality of parents' work leads to a very widespread lack of employer-based insurance coverage. Parents choose to pay for private healthcare when possible because medical institutions in the rural areas have minimal facilities for patient care.				

¹ "ISO 31000 is an international standard published in 2009 that provides principles and guidelines for effective risk management. It outlines a generic approach to risk management, which can be applied to different types of risks (financial, safety, project risks) and used by any type of organisation." <https://risk-engineering.org/ISO-31000-risk-management/>

² As of 1 January 2016, the national minimum wage for all workers in Sri Lanka is Rs 10,000 per month or Rs 400 per day
Invalid source specified.

Unit of Analysis	Risk	Contributing Factors	Potential Impact	Initial Risk		
				Consequence	Likelihood	Risk Ranking
4. Children Engaged in farm Work	<p>4.1 Few parents (3.3%) say their children help with the farm, but more children (22.1%) claim to do so</p> <p>4.2 73% of those children start to help out in the farm before their 12th birthday</p> <p>4.3 School children spend 0.9 hours on farm work on a school day and 2.2 hours on weekends and holidays</p> <p>4.4 Children engaging in hazardous work is unlikely, but it happens</p> <p>4.5 Helping with the farm work can have a negative impact on education if it causes absenteeism from school</p> <p>4.6 Children of all age groups have less than two hours per day to play on average</p>	<p>Smallholder farmers face labour shortage during harvest seasons.</p> <p>The high cost of production might be the driving factor in smallholder farmers relying on their children's help during harvest season.</p> <p>Labourers are paid a daily wage only if they meet the daily quota set by the estate. Children of labourers help their parents to ensure the daily quota is met.</p> <p>There are exceptional cases of children doing excessive work that is not appropriate for their age.</p> <p>Lack of day-care/after school centre options and safe space to play might drive children to the fields.</p>	<p>Right to protection and right to develop Children may do hazardous work when helping their parents, especially when the workload during the harvest is high; Farm work reduces the time children have to spend on education and recreation.</p>	3	5	H
	<p>5.3 31.2% children indicated being physically punished in the past six months by means of spanking, beating and slapping etc.</p> <p>5.4 26.9% of parents are aware that their children experienced corporal punishments such as beating, hitting, slapping and spanking at school</p>	<p>Parents seem largely supportive of some level of mild corporal punishment with 75.5% of the parents at least somewhat agreeing that "teachers or administrators should be allowed to physically punish children at school, for example, by hitting a child with a hand or an object, as long as it isn't excessive."</p>	<p>Right to protection Children have the right to protection from all forms of violence, abuse and maltreatment. Corporal punishment in school is a violation of that right.</p>	4	4	
7. Maternity Leave and Breastfeeding	No maternal protection in mid-sized estates and smallholder farms, no paid maternity leave, no official breastfeeding breaks	<p>Poor nutrition of pregnant and breastfeeding women, especially among labourers.</p> <p>Little to no family savings, especially among labourers, which therefore limits their ability to take a break during pregnancy or while breastfeeding.</p>	<p>Right to survival & to develop Insufficient nutrients for children to grow, stay healthy and develop to their full potential.</p>	4	4	H



Save the Children International
18, Sinsapa Road
Colombo 6
Sri Lanka
Telephone: +94 (0) 11 255 5336
Fax: +94 (0) 11 255 5077, +94 (0) 11 255 5477
srilanka.savethechildren.net

Find us on:



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