



FAO's Work on Eliminating Child Labour in Agriculture 2007 – 2010

January 2011



Prepared by the Rural Employment Team

*Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)*

1. The problem of Child Labour in Agriculture

Worldwide, agriculture is the economic sector where by far the largest share of working children is found; some 60 percent of the world's child labourers are agricultural workers, and many of them work in hazardous occupations¹. Some 129 million girls and boys aged 5 to 17 years old work in crop and livestock production, as well as in forestry, fisheries and aquaculture, helping to supply some of the food and drink we consume and the fibres and raw materials we use to make other products². The highest incidence of child labour is reportedly in sub-Saharan Africa, and the overwhelming majority are unpaid family workers³.

Child labour is defined by the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) Convention No. 138 on Minimum Age, 1973, and the ILO Convention No.182 on Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999. It is work that harms children's well-being and hinders their education, development and future livelihoods. Child labour is work that is damaging to a child's physical, social, mental, psychological and spiritual development, because it is work performed at too early an age or under hazardous conditions. It deprives children of their childhood, their dignity and rights.

When children are forced to work long hours in the fields, their ability to attend school or skills training is limited, preventing them from gaining education that could help lift them out of poverty in the future. Girls are particularly disadvantaged as they often undertake household chores following work in the fields. Children who do not complete their primary education are likely to remain illiterate and never acquire the skills needed to obtain decent employment and contribute to the development of a modern economy and agriculture⁴. Child labour strongly undermines the efforts to promote decent youth employment, which is a key element in revitalizing agriculture around the world.

Due to these facts, FAO recognises that efforts to progressively eliminate child labour worldwide should be enhanced, with priority given to the elimination of the worst forms of child labour in agriculture. The worst forms of child labour, as defined by the ILO Convention No. 182⁵, include all forms of slavery, use of children in armed conflict, trafficking of children, commercial sexual exploitation, the use of children in illicit activities and hazardous child labour. The latter category is particularly relevant for agriculture⁶.

It must be stressed, however, that not all activities that children undertake in agriculture are bad for them or would qualify as work to be eliminated under ILO Convention No. 138 or

¹ Source: ILO 2010

² Source: ILO 2010

³ Source: ILO 2010

⁴ UN Global Compact <http://www.unglobalcompact.org/aboutTheGC/TheTenPrinciples/principle5.html>

⁵ ILO Convention No. 182 defines the worst forms of child labour as: a) all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict; b) the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances; c) the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties; and d) work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.

⁶ In addition to the ILO Conventions covering child labour there are also some sector specific standards and national laws set by governments, the industry and non-governmental organisations including Fair Trade, SA8000 standardisation and the United Nations Global Compact. The social criteria for the certified company imposes that the company should respect all ILO Conventions ratified by the country in which they operate. For those issues for which the ILO Conventions are not ratified the certification standards apply directly. These also include no child labour below 14, occupational health and safety and maximum allowed working hours.

No. 182. Age-appropriate tasks that are not hazardous and do not interfere with a child's schooling and right to leisure can be a normal part of growing up in a rural environment. Indeed, many types of contributions to the household's livelihoods can be positive for children, providing them with practical and social skills for work as adults. Improved self-confidence, self-esteem and work skills are attributes often found in young people engaged in some aspects of farm work. However, the prevalence of hazardous child labour⁷ in comparison to the above-described, educative household help, is alarmingly high in agriculture, and as such it severely undermines decent work, sustainable agriculture and food security principles.

Low family incomes and poverty, the absence of schools and affordable, relevant and quality education, the lack of regulations and enforcement, and ingrained attitudes and perceptions about the roles of children in rural areas are only some of the numerous factors which make child labour in agriculture particularly difficult to tackle. Unless a concerted and much-accelerated effort is made to address this problem, especially its root causes such as poverty and food insecurity, it will be impossible to achieve the goal of eliminating all worst forms of child labour by 2016. A complex and holistic approach is needed to successfully eliminate child labour in agriculture.

2. International Partnership for Cooperation on Child Labour in Agriculture (IPCCLA)

A reinforced and global effort is underway to eliminate child labour in agriculture, especially hazardous child labour, and both the ILO and FAO are playing leading roles. To strengthen the worldwide movement on the elimination of child labour, a *Declaration of intent on cooperation on child labour in agriculture*⁸ was signed as part of the World Day Against Child Labour in Agriculture on 12 June 2007. Through the signing of the Declaration of Intent, these organizations have pledged to work together to:

- Promote cooperation and achieve policy coherence on child labour among the Partners, and to develop policy and programme links especially at the field level;
- Create awareness of and mainstream child labour concerns into existing activities, programmes and projects of agricultural organizations and help agricultural agencies and bodies to understand how the elimination of child labour in agriculture, especially hazardous child labour, contributes to achieving organizational mandates;

⁷ Sub-paragraph (d) of Article 3 of the ILO Convention No.182 describes what is popularly referred to as "hazardous child labour (HCL)". HCL is work in dangerous or unhealthy conditions that could result in a child being killed, or injured (often permanently) and/or made ill (often permanently) as a consequence of poor safety and health standards and working arrangements. Hazardous child labour is the largest category of child labour with an estimated 126 million children out of 218 million child labourers working in dangerous conditions. *This is the type of child labour where cooperatives can be most effective in terms of their business operations.* Both ILO Conventions 138 and 182 state that hazardous work should not be carried out by anyone under 18 with certain qualifications concerning young workers.

⁸ The Declaration of Intent has been signed between the following partners: International Labour Organization (ILO), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP), and the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF).

- Promote action and cooperation in operational activities aimed at improving rural livelihoods, creating alternative income-generating activities;
- Promote action and cooperation in operational activities to ensure that children do not carry out hazardous work in agriculture;
- Promote opportunities for decent youth employment in agriculture and in rural areas.

3. FAO's Work on Eliminating Child Labour in Agriculture since June 2007⁹

Since the signing of the Partnership declaration, a wide range of activities relevant to child labour elimination have been continued and new activities have been carried out or initiated.

3.1 Awareness raising and increasing knowledge on child labour elimination

- **Participation in global and regional child labour conferences**

FAO and members of the Partnership participated in "**The Hague Global Child Labour Conference 2010**. Towards a World without Child Labour. Mapping the Road to 2016". The Conference was financed by the Netherlands and organized by the Dutch Government with the ILO. The Partnership members issued a joint statement on child labour in agriculture and some agricultural concerns were considered in the declaration of the Global Conference, the Roadmap for Achieving the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour by 2016. Additionally, FAO supported the organization of a technical workshop on Child Labour in Agriculture during the Conference.

FAO also participated in the **South Asia Regional Consultation on Child Labour in Agriculture and Allied Activities** that took place in New Delhi, India (July 2010).

- **Conference on Child and Youth Migration in West Africa**

FAO (Regional office for Africa/ESW) co-organized a panel on child labour in agriculture during the Conference on **Child and Youth Migration in West Africa: Research Progress and Implications for Policy** (organized by University of Sussex and University of Ghana) held in June 2009 in Accra.

- **Workshop on Gender and Rural Employment**

The FAO/ILO/IFAD workshop on Gender and Rural Employment included child labour in agriculture and particularly its gender aspects as one of the topics discussed. (Rome, March 2009). ESW contributed a paper on gender dimensions of child labour in agriculture. More information is available at: <http://www.fao-ilo.org/more/workshop>. The workshop outcomes are captured in the publication "Gender dimensions of agricultural and rural employment: differentiated pathways out of poverty" <http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/i1638e/i1638e00.htm> and a series of policy briefs, including "Breaking the rural poverty cycle: Getting girls and boys out of work and into school", launched in January 2011 and available at:

⁹ Activities reported on are those in which the Rural Employment Team was or is directly involved in and is therefore not an inclusive report, even though it clearly covers the majority of FAO activities directly dealing with child labour elimination.

- **International Partnership for Cooperation on Child Labour in Agriculture meetings**

The first meeting of the International Partnership for Cooperation on Child Labour in Agriculture (IPCCLA) was held in May 2008, and it established how the Partnership would function. In line with the *Roadmap for Achieving the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour by 2016*, adopted during The Hague Global Child Labour Conference, May 2010, the Partnership members have, during their last meeting in July 2010, reached an agreement upon: i) regions and countries for joint work and collaboration; ii) potential donors and strategies for joint resource mobilization; iii) a joint work plan.

- **Presentation to FAO Council on child labour in agriculture**

The Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division (ESW) gave a presentation to the FAO Council on decent work and rural employment in agriculture, in November 2010. The presentation focused on child labour in agriculture and the global momentum and partnerships underway to tackle this problem, as well as the important role FAO and ministries of agriculture have to play. The presentation also included information on global initiatives and partnerships for achieving decent rural employment, especially for youth.

- **Joint ILO/FAO training course on Child Labour in Agriculture**

A joint training course on Child Labour in Agriculture was conducted for some 40 FAO staff members at FAO Headquarters on 17th – 18th October 2007.

- **Celebrating and promoting the World Day Against Child Labour (WDACL)**

Since 2007, FAO Headquarters and the ILO Representation in Rome have organized an event on the occasion of the WDACL to serve as a catalyst for the growing worldwide movement against child labour. In 2009 and 2010, the events in Rome were organized also with the Understanding Children's Work Project (an ILO/WB/UNICEF research cooperation project). In 2009 and 2010, FAO Ghana also organized an event to give attention to the WDACL.

- **Newsletter on Participatory Approaches and Child Labour in Agriculture**

The FAO Participation Website Team produced in September 2009 a Newsletter focusing on Participatory Approaches and Eliminating Child Labour in Agriculture.

<http://www.fao.org/Participation/Web%20Newsletter/No18/Newsletter18En.htm>

- **Study on Child Labour in Agriculture in Ghana**

In 2007 and 2008, a country study on *Child Labour and Children's Economic Activities in Agriculture* was carried out in Ghana, in collaboration with the Humboldt University Berlin. In close collaboration with national partners and the ILO, a methodology was designed and field research was undertaken. The results were presented in a report, policy briefs and at a national workshop attended by over 70 experts and stakeholders. The study focuses on the relatively under-studied sub-sectors of artisanal fisheries and livestock keeping, but also builds on lessons learned on child labour in the cocoa sector. The report contains recommendations for FAO and its partners on how to address child labour in agriculture. The Ghanaian Ministry of Food and

Agriculture is currently creating awareness on the issue of child labour in agriculture among its extension staff; FAO supports this wherever possible.

<ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/012/al001e/al001e00.pdf>

3.2. Mainstreaming child labour concerns and providing technical advisory services on child labour

- **Guidance document on integrating decent work in FAO country work**

The FAO Rural Employment Team, with funding support from an ILO/EC programme, has produced the publication “Guidance on how to address rural employment and decent work concerns in FAO country activities”. The document is aimed at FAO representatives and managers at country level to assist them to better integrate decent work concerns, including child labour elimination and prevention, in their activities. It builds on the results of FAO’s CEB Toolkit for Promoting Employment and Decent Work self-assessment. The guidance document is available on the FAO-ILO web site: http://www.fao-ilo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/fao_ilo/pdf/DecentWorkGuidance_impagWEB_DEF.pdf

- **IPCCLA missions to Mali and Malawi**

As part of the IPCCLA, FAO-ILO-IUF organized a joint mission to Malawi in Dec. 2010, including knowledge-sharing and planning workshops with key stakeholders. The planning session resulted in a draft workplan of activities to be undertaken by national stakeholders to better address child labour in agriculture in the framework of the National Action Plan on child labour. Some of the actions identified include capacity development of the Ministries of Labour and Agriculture and other agricultural stakeholders, the establishment of child labour focal points, involvement of agricultural stakeholders in child labour committees, better integration of the issue of child labour in agriculture in policy and development plans and programmes, data gathering, including in fisheries and livestock, and awareness raising.

FAO and the ILO also organized a joint mission to Mali in January 2011 to foster knowledge sharing between labour and agricultural stakeholders in order to reduce child labour in agriculture, identify with national partners priority areas for action, analyze the situation in terms of knowledge, capacity, institutions and programmes, and identify entry points for strategic support by the Partnership for country policy, programmes and activities already under way.

- **Policy support on rural employment and decent work for the promotion of equitable and sustainable livelihoods in Malawi and Tanzania**

As of January 2011, FAO is undertaking, with the financial support of Sweden, a new three-year project that aims to improve the livelihoods of small-scale rural workers, particularly women and youth, in both the formal and informal rural economy in Malawi and Tanzania. The project will also support the prevention and reduction of child labour, especially its worst forms, in agriculture. The project aims to contribute to national efforts to create an enabling environment for the effective promotion of rural employment and decent work in Malawi and Tanzania. The project will strengthen the capacities of the governments and other stakeholders in the country, including by enhancing their knowledge base and technical expertise on rural employment and decent work, particularly in the context of climate change.

- **Dialogue with FAO units on the relevance of child labour within their work**

Discussions have been initiated to explore levels of awareness and interest on the topic of child labour in core Divisions at FAO headquarters as well as to identify possible actions to raise awareness on child labour among staff and to address child labour concerns in their ongoing work.

- **Workshop on Child Labour in Fisheries and Aquaculture**

The FAO Workshop on child labour in fisheries and aquaculture, organized in cooperation with the ILO, was held in Rome from 14-16 April 2010. There were 35 participants including invited experts and staff of ILO and FAO. It generated guidance on the process of developing guidance materials on policy and practice in tackling child labour in fisheries and aquaculture, as well as inputs in terms of contents. Workshop participants agreed on conclusions and recommendations relating to the nature, causes and consequences of child labour in fisheries and aquaculture and how to address them through legal and enforcement measures, policy interventions and practical actions. Participants identified specific priority actions for immediate implementation and specified cross-cutting issues that needed to be taken into account in all interventions. The full report of the workshop, including the conclusions and recommendations, is available on the FAO-ILO web site: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/i1813e/i1813e00.pdf>

The expert consultation also provided technical inputs for a joint ILO/FAO publication on guidance for eliminating child labour in fisheries and aquaculture, which will be prepared under the leadership of the ILO.

- **Regional Initiative on Child Labour in Cocoa**

FAO (through its Sub-Regional office for West-Africa) is part of the Regional Initiative "Combating worst forms of child labour on West African cocoa farms" and has contributed to the project's first joint position paper. This initiative is coordinated by the Secretariat of the Sahel and West-Africa club/OECD and Funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belgium.

- **Children in the crab value chain in Benin**

Mainstreaming child labour concerns in FAO's programmes, projects and activities is an important work area, in particular in situations where it is found that production involves children. An example of this was the technical support provided to a FAO project supporting the crab value chain in Benin. In a study on employment in the sector, it was found that much of the crab collection was done by minors. Advisory services from ESW (through the Regional Office for Africa) have resulted in child-specific (pilot) interventions in the crab value chain, such as income-generating activities in crab production within the formal schools.

3.3 Promoting opportunities for decent youth employment in agriculture and in rural areas

- **Rural Youth Employment Paper and positioning FAO's work on youth employment**

Promoting decent work for rural youth can be a way to fight child labour in agriculture, especially for girls and boys aged 15-18. FAO has undertaken a first documentation of the employment situation of rural youth in developing countries, through the analysis of data on their employment status (quality and quantity of work) and reflections on prospects for youth in and outside of agriculture. "Rural Youth Employment in Developing Countries: A Global View" is available at: http://www.faoilo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/fao_ilo/pdf/Vandergeest_2010_RurYouthEmpl_150_ppi.pdf

Building on the knowledge of this paper, a second: "Rural youth employment: A global analysis of opportunities and constraints for achieving decent work for rural youth" is currently being finalized. It includes discussion on the interconnections between child labour, education and youth employment. It highlights the negative consequences of child labour for their labour-market and life experiences. The interference of child labour with schooling and the informal and hazardous nature of the work often lead to youth and adult work that is not decent. The paper emphasizes the importance of addressing child labour when trying to improve education outcomes and lifetime human capital potential, and also how support to improve labour market entry for youth will help prevent the WFCL.

- **Integration of child labour in the Junior Farmer Fields and Life Schools (JFFLS)**

In recent years, ESW has been promoting JFFLS in 17 countries and some 18,000 students have benefited from this life-skills-oriented learning approach. The prevention of child labour has always been an implicit element of the JFFLS approach, through its emphasis on child protection as a guiding principle as well as through its aim to promote decent work in agriculture for youth. Furthermore, through the linkages to formal schooling, the focus on achieving food security and by providing better decision-making skills for participants, JFFLS can reduce vulnerability to exploitation, including child labour.

However, awareness-raising on the harmful effects of child labour and stimulating the debate about the topic among children and their communities was not yet part of the JFFLS approach. ESW has therefore, in 2008 and 2009, expanded previous conceptual and operational JFFLS activities and introduced a **child labour prevention training module**. The module is intended to be used within the JFFLS programme in various countries and, with a set of practical exercises, sensitize the JFFLS participants, their parents or guardians and their community on child labour and its harmful effects on children. The facilitator's guide is available at: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/i1897e/i1897e.pdf>

- **FLIP Ghana (Farming and Livelihood Improvement Programme)**

FAO collaborated with Dutch and Ghanaian NGOs in a joint project that promotes organic farming among youth in deprived communities and teaches life and farming skills to vulnerable children. Awareness-raising on child labour in agriculture is part of the life-skills curriculum. FAO shared expertise and materials on the Junior Farmer Field and Life School (JFFLS) approach and provided support to project design, monitoring and evaluation. The aim of the project is to build capacity on rural youth employment within both civil society and

government in Ghana. Funding has been provided from SOS Kinderdorpen and the Dutch Government Schokland Fund. FAO provided staff time and training materials.

- **Promoting decent youth employment at country level**

ESW provides technical support services and lead technical unit services to a growing number of UN Joint Programmes, in which FAO, together with other UN agencies and other partners, is promoting decent youth employment. The list of countries and projects currently covered include:

- 1) **Nepal** - UNJP/NEP/004/UNJ Jobs for Peace
- 2) **Honduras** - UNJP/HON/038/SPA Human Development for Youth: Overcoming the Challenges of Migration through Employment
- 3) **Tunisia** - UNJP/TUN/034/SPA Engaging Tunisian Youth to Achieve the MDGs
- 4) **Mozambique** - UNJP/MOZ/094/UNJ Promotion of Youth Employment
- 5) **Gaza & West Bank** UNJP/GAZ/003/SPA Culture and Development in the Occupied Territories and OSRO/GAZ/901/QAC and OSRO/GAZ/909/SPA Enhancing Livelihoods and Entrepreneurship Skills through JFFLS
- 6) **Sudan** - UNJP/SUD/063/SPA Creating Opportunities for Youth Employment in Sudan
- 7) **Malawi** - UNJP/MLW/034/ED Promoting Rural Youth Employment and Empowerment
- 8) **Comores** - Jobs for Peace
- 9) **Uganda** - Youth Employment and Peace (upcoming)

4. Way Forward

FAO will work through the Partnership in Malawi, Mali, and a third country (to be determined) to provide strategic support to the National Action Plans on child labour. FAO will also incorporate child labour in its work on decent work and rural employment in Malawi and Tanzania. In addition, it will take action in certain countries to reduce child labour in fisheries and aquaculture. FAO will also undertake a number of actions to reduce hazardous child labour in particular.

The guidance document on mainstreaming rural employment and decent work, including child labour, will be widely disseminated to FAO decentralized offices, and enhanced by taking into account feedback from users when applying the guidance document in their work. Dialogue will continue within FAO to raise awareness on child labour and to explore areas for collaboration. Work on youth employment and synergies between child labour reduction and decent youth employment will be strengthened, including through Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools.

As part of the Partnership workplan, FAO will contribute to the production of a number of knowledge products on child labour in agriculture, including in specific sub-sectors.

Since financial and human resources currently available for FAO work on child labour in agriculture are limited, FAO will also seek to mobilize additional resources.