



International  
Labour  
Organization



*The Hague Global Child Labour Conference*

Report of Workshop on  
**Political will: Action against child labour in agriculture**  
(11 May 2010, 11.15-12.30 hrs.)

**The workshop on child labour in agriculture concluded that the 2016 target requires focusing on fighting worst forms of child labour in agriculture through a wide range of measures, including integrating child labour concerns into the sustainable development policies and food security and cross-sectoral policies and programmes. Urgent action is needed to regulate employment in the agriculture sector and to allocate resources proportionate to this challenge. A wider range of rural stakeholders, companies and consumers will be needed for the Roadmap to achieve its objectives.**



**Proceedings**

The topic of the workshop was: Political will: Action against child labour in agriculture. Agriculture is the sector with the largest number of workers. The workshop reviewed the scope and nature of child labour from industrial plantations to household farms, from fishing to forestry and discussed some of the current challenges and opportunities specific to eliminate child labour in agriculture.

*Rapporteurs: Paola Termine (IPEC) and Jordy van Honk (Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality of the Netherlands).*

**Keynote presentation by Ms Eve Crowley (Keynote speaker and chair)**

Dr. Eve Crowley is the Deputy Director of the Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations. Before, she held several posts in FAO (from 2001), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and other international research, non-governmental and international organizations in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. She holds Ph.D. and M.Phil. degrees in Anthropology from Yale University. Dr Crowley's field work in rural communities in which child labour was prevalent, particularly in Africa, has inspired her deep commitment to reducing poverty and supporting global and national efforts to address child labour as a major form of social inequality.

Dr. Crowley in her keynote presentation provided a global overview of the prevalence of child labour in agriculture, fisheries, and livestock and the particular challenges that these related sub-sectors pose for eliminating child labour, given the predominance of poverty in rural areas. FAO's role, some options for addressing child labour in agriculture and the importance of partnerships to address the complexity and magnitude of the problem were also underscored.

Poverty and child labour interact in a vicious cycle and are mutually reinforcing. In rural areas, there is need to fight poverty and hunger in order to fight child labour. Agriculture is the largest employer of children, mostly occurs in subsistence farming, family based and small scale, agricultural employment is informal, hazardous, unpaid, invisible, with limited outreach of unions. Child labour in agriculture is not homogenous as there are specific issues in farming, fisheries and aquaculture, and livestock. Main causes of child labour in agriculture are: poverty, few livelihood alternatives, inadequate education systems, seasonality, migratory lifestyles, cultural practices, low levels of awareness, absence of appropriate national policies, inadequate or unenforced labour laws, weak capacities to inspect and enforce application of labour laws, few channels for legal assistance/appeal.

Ms Crowley presented some recommendations to tackle child labour in agriculture:

1. Promote cooperation and achieve policy coherence
  - Working towards integrated UN responses
  - Cross sectoral engagement/coherence in national action plans, policy formulation and implementation
2. Create awareness and mainstream child labour concerns
  - Mainstreaming in agricultural and rural development policies and programmes
3. Promote operational activities to improve rural livelihoods
  - Strengthen programmes for livelihoods diversification, labour saving technologies, and training for health and safety
4. Promote opportunities for decent rural youth employment
  - build entrepreneurial skills, rural youth organizations
5. Promote operational activities to eliminate hazardous work in agriculture
  - Identify worst form in agriculture through informed risk assessment
  - Identify substitutes for hazardous substances, technologies and practices
  - Develop more relevant school curricula and promote alternative vocational and life-skills trainings.

**Presentation by Mr. Felix Blay Kenyah, Schedule Officer for Child Labour in the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA) of Ghana**

Mr Kenyah has 20 years working experience in Agricultural Extension, and is working on Child Labour since 2004. Mr Kenyah is Member of the National Steering Committee on Child Labour; and Member of the Technical Working Group of the National Programme for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour in Cocoa (NPECLC) of Ghana.

Mr Kenyah's presentation focused on the experiences and challenges of MOFA in the implementation of child labour prevention programmes in Ghana. As part of a project of the International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), in 2003, the Ministry of Employment and Social Welfare (MESW) invited the representation of MOFA on the National Steering Committee on Child Labour. MOFA thus increasingly became involved in child labour issues and is a member of the Technical Working Group of the National Programme for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour in Cocoa (NPECLC). Regional and District Desk Officers on Child Labour were appointed and trained. Main challenges that remain are, however, the acceptance of child labour as an issue under MoFA's mandate, and mobilization of resources.

**Presentation by Sue Longley, International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers associations (IUF)**

Ms Sue Longley is the Coordinator of agriculture of the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers associations (IUF).

Ms Longley started work with the British agricultural workers' union and moved to the international union representing agricultural workers in 1991. She is on the Boards of the International Cocoa Initiative and the Elimination of Child Labour in Tobacco foundation and represents the IUF in the Global partnership on child labour in agriculture. She was secretary to the Workers' Group in 2000 and 2001 in the negotiations for ILO Convention 184 on safety and health in agriculture and in 2008 for the general debate on rural employment for poverty reduction.

Ms Longley's presentation focused on action by trade unions in agriculture to eliminate child labour in agriculture, and suggestions for targets for policy coherence around sustainable agriculture/food security/elimination of child labour in agriculture. IUF represents 377 affiliated unions in 122 countries and is part of the International trade union confederation (ITUC). Specific unions' action against child labour include: specific commitments in collective bargaining agreements (e.g. in the Uganda tea sector); awareness raising/community mobilization; organizing self-employed workers (e.g. in Ghana, GAWU); organizing small farmers (e.g. CONTAG, Brazil, including on land reform issues); promoting occupational health & safety; organizing and/or servicing migrant workers in agriculture. Specific IUF action include: International Framework agreements - e.g. Chiquita; engaging TNCs in food processing; Elimination of Child Labour in Tobacco Foundation & International Cocoa Initiative; participation in the Partnership for cooperation on child labour in agriculture (ILO, IFAD, IFAP, FAO, IFPRI/CGIAR & IUF). Ms Longley stressed that IUF calls for a new approach to agriculture that places right to food and decent work in agriculture at its centre, that does not rely on child labour but has a skilled, trained and fairly remunerated workforce, and that is environmentally sustainable.

## **Remarks by Mr. Hellmut Hans Teja Förtsch –President of the Agricultural Employers’ Association (Namibia)**

Mr. Förtsch is a full- time farmer and he is currently Vice Chair, of the Agricultural Employers' Association, affiliated to the Namibia Agricultural Union and the Namibia Employers Federation, after having served for the past 14 years as an executive member of this association.

Mr. Förtsch’s presentation addressed some challenges of child labour in agriculture in Namibia. Among these: inter- ministerial coordination and cooperation is often ad-hoc, low level and lengthy, Namibian legislation addressing child labour is hidden in various laws and regulations, few officials (extension officers, police, teachers) dealing with the rural (farming) community are informed about child labour and can take action, other issues like HIV/AIDS receive far more attention and donor support. Trade Unions are only active in the formal work places (urban and commercial farming), and the sparse population density and distances between workplaces in Namibia’s make their outreach limited.

Commercial (Freehold) Farmers face political and marketing pressures to comply with legislation in general, while subsistence (Communal) Farmers, face other issues such as that often are not registered as employers organizations, their educational and operational levels vary, and that traditional farming methods like livestock herding and low margins push the use of child labour. Farm workers are generally illiterate or educated up to primary school level, normally live with their family and colleagues comparably isolated on their employer’s farm, and are to a large extent dependent on their employer’s infrastructure (e.g. for transport, medicines).

Mr. Förtsch mentioned some good practices to address child labour in Namibia, for example:

- Establishment of the tripartite Namibia Agricultural Labour Forum (NALF), an inclusive body accommodating also the non- registered subsistence farmers
- Since 2002 a negotiated minimum hourly wage which accommodates also the ad- hoc labour needs of subsistence farmers.

### **Discussion on the four main issues:**

**The workshop aimed at asking for guidance to participants on priority actions for international organizations and stakeholders in agriculture, including the International Partnership for cooperation on child labour in agriculture.**

The issues for discussion, with some of the recommendations obtained at the workshop were:

- a) **How can ministries of agriculture and ministries of labour better coordinate to step-up action against child labour in agriculture? Which concrete actions can governments promote within the next two years that will really penetrate the informal economy and help reach the goal of eliminating the worst forms of child labour in agriculture?**
  - Need for global coherence (at national and international levels) and continued action

- Cross sectoral efforts are essential both at global level and at national level.
- Need a broad based holistic development approach that targets poor rural households is essential (cash transfer, Bolsa Familia, NREGA, infrastructure development, schools meals, incentives for rural teachers, innovative extension services and decentralized approaches. The Junior Farmer Field and Life School has proved to be a successful and could be scaled up.
- It is critical to develop a model of agriculture that is sustainable and that includes the elimination of child labour. Green jobs are an opportunity to make agriculture more dynamic to take this forward. (There are a number of existing tools and guidelines with which to work: code of conduct for responsible fisheries, good agricultural practice frameworks, voluntary guidelines for the right to food)
- The partnership to eliminate child labour in agriculture will need to include a wider range of stakeholders in Agriculture (World Bank, donors, producer organizations, employers organizations) if it is to be successful in 6 years.
- We may need to begin to look beyond 2016 to try to tackle child labour more generally, and not only in its worst forms. This is an on-going process and will take time.

**b) What are effective ways of mobilizing social partners, cooperatives and other rural institutions, including informal farmers' and workers' associations, towards the elimination of child labour in agriculture? How to improve outreach of social partners in small-scale agriculture, fisheries and forestry?**

- Need for a wider range of stakeholders (ministries of health, churches, farmer organizations, companies)
- In rural areas, definition of child work is not well understood. Society at large needs to understand the long term costs of child labour.

**c) How can labour legislation and core labour standards be effectively applied to agriculture, especially in small-scale and informal undertakings?**

- Simply formalizing the informal economy is not going to get us there in 6 years. This process is too slow and the share of child workers in the informal economy is too large.
- Attention needs to be paid to child labour occurring in agriculture of developed countries, such as in the United States, as per the report issued by Human Rights Watch.

**d) How best can developing country national governments and donors contribute resources to reaching the goal of eliminating the worst forms of child labour in agriculture? Should efforts focus on better governance of global value chains or on ensuring adequate returns to small scale producers in general?**

- Resources should be allocated proportionately to the share of the problem. There have been many years of underinvestment in agriculture (by donors, countries and international funds) which contributed to increasing poverty and child labour in rural areas. Investments in agriculture, to increase its productivity and sustainability are the first step to eliminate child labour in agriculture.
- Agriculture is diverse. Includes informal and more organized work attached to global value chains to small and informal. Child labour is concentrated in small, informal, labour intensive agriculture (mechanization and rural labour saving

technologies help to reduce it). However, the importance of value chains as sub-sectors where quick wins in the elimination of child labour can be obtained needs to be considered.

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- Agriculture can be part of the solution to big global issues such as climate change, water shortage and food security. Child labour should be included in these discussions.
- More success in secondary industries (food processing) than in primary industries (food production).
- The private sector plays a key role in stimulating agricultural suppliers to increase sustainability in general and exclusion of child labour in particular. The example of the cacao value chain is promising and should be followed.
- Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies and codes of conduct can help in the road towards exclusion of worst forms of CL in agriculture.

Powerpoints and text of interventions are available on request (email [termine@ilo.org](mailto:termine@ilo.org)).