

**Child Labour Book Series  
Corporate Social Responsibility  
for Farmers, No. 3**



# **CHILD LABOUR, COMMERCIAL AGRICULTURE AND ROLE OF TOBACCO**



3

**International  
Programme on  
the Elimination  
of Child Labour  
(IPEC)**

## Child labour book series: Corporate social responsibility for farmers, No. 3:



# Child labour, commercial agriculture and role of tobacco farmers

International  
Programme  
on the Elimination  
of Child Labour (IPEC)

International Labour Organization (ILO)

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## INTRODUCTION

Eliminating Child Labour in Tobacco Growing (ECLT) Foundation is an initiative by the tobacco corporate sector launched in Geneva in 2002 (office was officially opened in 2001) to address child labour in commercial agriculture. The Foundation believes that needs of each country are unique, needing the full engagement, participation and pro activeness of local populations. The foundation promotes rights of children to schooling, family life, security, safety and healthy upbringing. The ECLT works in close partnership with key national actors such as government, employers associations, trade union, tobacco growers, community, civil society and the corporate sector to comprehensively and sustainably address child labour in agriculture.

In principle, the ECLT supports the ILO Conventions which prohibit hazardous work for children under the minimum age of employment and therefore advocates against use of child labour in hazardous commercial agriculture, particularly the use of machinery and agrochemicals by children in tobacco farming or activities that hamper school enrolment, attendance, performance and retention. The approach emphasized by the foundation is multi sectoral due to the complex and multi dimensional nature of the child labour problem and therefore common strategies include prevention, withdrawal, protection, capacity building and improving livelihood of communities. The foundation has supported activities such as integration of child labourers into formal education or skills training, strengthening education infrastructure, support to non formal education, income generation grants to families and youths, improving access to markets, provision of basic health services, strengthening agricultural methods and increasing awareness. .

Tanzania began taking action against child labour in 1994 when a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the ILO and the Government of Tanzania aiming to tackle the child labour problem. ILO International Programme on Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) which begun in 1995 supported the implementation of activities that targeted capacity building, direct action (prevention, withdrawal and protection), provision of educational opportunities and improving livelihoods. Although specific interventions to eliminate child labour in tobacco agriculture begun when the nation identified commercial agriculture as one of the worst forms of child labour sectors and therefore needing immediate interventions, the national and international commitment to take action against hazardous child labour in agriculture had begun through international conventions. The ECLT Foundation is supporting the production of the booklet through the project called “Towards sustainable action for prevention and elimination of child labour in tobacco farming in Urambo district, Tanzania.”

This booklet is one in a set of three booklets that aims at educating stakeholders about the problem of child labour, the national policies, legislation and strategies and the specific hazards of engagement of children in tobacco farming. Readers are encouraged to read the full set in order to get a full understanding of the problem and interventions at both a national and global levels.

## CHILD LABOUR IN TOBACCO FARMING

### Introduction

More than 100 countries in the world grow tobacco. China is the largest producer followed by the USA, Brazil, India, Zimbabwe and Turkey. Tobacco is a crop that will continue to be grown for many years as its demand increases. Tobacco is a legally traded agricultural commodity which apart from its growing demand, contributes to household income, poverty reduction, contributes to national GDP and foreign exchange earnings. However, the adults who work in the plantations and even in small farms are paid very low and therefore engage their children to supplement the income.



According to the findings of the IPEC Rapid Assessment Study (IPEC, Investigating the Worst Forms of Child Labour, children working in Commercial Agriculture, 2001) and the IPEC/COMAGRI situational assessment of hazardous child labour study (2003) the existence of hazardous child labour in the tobacco sector is rampant. Research findings indicate that children working in farms and plantations and those who are at risk from engaging in CL predominantly come from poorest and most vulnerable groups of society. Tobacco farms attract children of different educational, social and economic backgrounds ranging from those without education to those with education. In both cases, poverty is the primarily the predominant push factor.

Findings from the situation analysis study indicate the following supply factors:

- Economic expectations of families and children under 15 years
- Push factors such as poverty levels and lack of reliable household income
- Poor agricultural marketing systems including lack of information about markets and micro-credit opportunities
- Very families have other sources of income
- Weak negotiation powers of small holder farmers
- Vulnerability levels of women and children
- Low savings and poor productive resources
- Children's need to meet their educational and other basic needs
- Children tempted by their peers
- Irresponsible parenthood among some parents

These studies show that children working in the tobacco farms and plantations work under poor conditions e.g. long working hours without food, extreme heat, carrying heavy loads, risk of injuries from snakes and other animals, thorns, exposure to agrochemicals including inorganic fertilizers and pesticides without protective gear.

From the demand side, child labour in tobacco farms is perpetuated by weak institutions and a poor policy and legal framework, cheap labour provided by children, lack of equipments and inputs by farmers and lack of access to credit facilities by farmers to enable them purchase tools. (ILO, Rapid Assessment Report, Trafficking of Children from the Refugee Camps in Kigoma to Work in tobacco Farms, 2001).

#### **SUMMARY**

Tobacco growing is a world wide occurrence that is destined to expand. However, it is a crop that is highly labour and capital intensive. Due to this fact, many of the farmers use children because they supply cheap labour. On the other hand, it is often not the choice of children to enter into child labour in tobacco farming, many of the children are forced to do so because they come from families that are income poor. Understanding the link between child labour in tobacco farms and the push and pull factors can assist farmers in identifying mechanisms for the reduction of employment of children in tobacco farms.

## HAZARDS OF TOBACCO FARMING AND RISK ASSESSMENT

### Introduction

Children who work in tobacco farms work throughout the year and on average, they spend about 3 to six months working on tobacco farms for three up to 10 hours a day. The cyclic nature of activities performed on tobacco farms between the month of July to June the following year create an environment where the child misses school, is over worked and exposed to hazards.



In July, children are involved in carrying working tools and farm products on their heads and shoulders for longer hours. In August, they prepare seedbeds. In September, they plant the seeds. In October, they water tobacco seedlings which involve fetching water and watering twice a day - for an average of a two hectare farm. In November they transplant tobacco seedlings and transport them to farms. In December, they spray fertilizer which involves application of chemicals and spraying of pesticides. In January, they earth up tobacco terraces which involve frequent weeding and pruning of tobacco leaves and between February and July, they pick, plait and cure mature tobacco leaves which also involves building of tobacco curing burns. In more general terms, a study conducted by Kajjace and Kanyala (1998) in the Urambo District stated that tobacco growing employers expect the working children to do the following activities in tobacco plantations:

- Clearing tobacco and other crops plantations;
- Making bricks;
- Domestic works;
- Constructing tobacco drying sheds;
- Preparing tobacco nurseries;
- Sowing tobacco seedlings;
- Watering tobacco seedlings;
- Transplanting tobacco seedlings and tilling tobacco ridges;
- Fertilizing tobacco plants;
- Weeding tobacco and other crops;
- Cutting poles and logs of firewood;
- Carrying poles and logs of firewood from forests;
- Plucking tobacco leaves;
- Hanging tobacco leaves on poles in tobacco drying sheds;
- Smoking tobacco leaves;

- Hanging out tobacco leaves from poles in dryingsheds;
- Plaiting tobacco leaves;
- Grading tobacco leaves;
- Tying tobacco leaves in bundles;
- Selling tobacco;
- Burning tobacco stems, and
- Harvesting other crops.

## Assessing the risks of child labour in tobacco farming

Every farmer has the responsibility of ensuring that the place of work for their employees is safe and risk free. The farmer can do this by assessing the risk. This is a process where the farmer looks around the farm to identify all the things that might cause potential harm. In case a farmer cannot identify the risks, they can engage a leaf technician or someone with the technical knowledge. Other farmers may have also experienced some risks in the past, these are important to know.

For example, tobacco farming poses the following risks to children:

Activity	Risk
Growing	Cuts from sharp instruments; carrying heave loads of water to water seedlings
Harvesting	Carrying heavy loads of tobacco; exposure to poison from young tobacco leaves; exposure to the smell of the tobacco
Weeding	Spraying fertilizers exposes them to dangerous chemicals
Curing	Carrying heavy loads, exposure to heat for a long time

The objective of assessing the risk is two fold, one it creates a sense of responsibly among farmers and secondly, it provides an opportunity for the farmer to deal with the hazards, particularly if the farmer will be using the labour of young people between the ages of 15- 24. In removing the hazard, the farmer is obliged to follow the ILO Safety and Health in Agriculture recommendation (2001). The recommendation states that the farmer has to do the following:

- Eliminate the risk
- Control the risk at the source
- Minimize the risk
- If the risk remains, ensure use of personal protective equipment and clothing at no cost to the worker

Agrochemicals for example are a hazard for both children and adults. In dealing with this risk, the farmer is expected to do the following”.

## Use of agrochemicals in tobacco farming: Risk assessment

Target	Risk	Action
Children	Exposure to chemicals harms their physical development and because they are not aware to this risk, they are less cautious	<b>Eliminate the risk.</b> Children should not be exposed to any chemical as the extent of the damage/risk for children is extremely high
Young people between the ages of 15 -24	Exposure to chemicals harms them	<b>Eliminate the risk.</b> Training young people about the nature of risk involved and creating a safe work system for them where they do not come into contact with the chemical
Adults	Exposure to chemicals is dangerous to them, but the risk is low because adults understand this and will take measures to avoid exposure	<b>Minimize the risk and provide protective gear</b>

**Steps of evaluating risks:** The first step is to identify the hazard in the activities. This can be easily done because there are many activities involved in tobacco growing; each of the activities should be evaluated separately.

Secondly the farmer needs to determine who is at most risk if exposed to the hazard (who is likely to be harmed, how and whether the risks are controlled). At this stage the various hazards will have been identified and the age and gender of people involved in carrying out that activity will be known. The task of the farmer is to evaluate how each of the employees of different ages and gender is affected.

A third step is to consider the preventive and protective measures. For each category of potentially affected people, a measure should be highlighted. Those that face the highest risks should be immediately removed from the risks.

### **SUMMARY**

There are many risks associated with tobacco growing for children. These risks range from physical, psychological and intellectual. The physical risks are more pronounced as the nature of the activity requires many hours of work and carrying heavy loads. The farmer is advised to always take precaution when employing. To assist him in evaluating the nature of the risk and the steps to take, the ILO has designed a tool of assessment (risk assessment), a process that a farmer can follow to determine the extent of the risk and how to deal with it. The risk assessment process is not complicated.

## NATURE OF RISKS FOR CHILDREN WORKING IN TOBACCO FARMS

### Hazards of tobacco farming

- *Hours of work*

Most of the children work full time, on average, 10 hours a day with limited time for breaks. This automatically impacts on their attendance to school and contributes to loss of future possibilities for a better life for the child. In addition, even if a child is able to attend school, the long hours working on the farms will have disrupted their attention span as they are likely to be tired.



Long hours of work deny the child of their right to rest and play. It is important for farmers to understand that the right to rest and play is not a luxury for children, but it is important for their physical, moral and psychological growth. Children who have limited time to rest and play are often moody, irritable and difficult in modulating impulses and emotions.

- *Carrying of heavy loads*

Tobacco agriculture involves the carrying of heavy loads at various stages from planting to curing. When young children are involved in the carrying of these loads, they are likely to suffer back pains, muscle pains, tension neck syndrome (as many carry the loads on their heads), swelling of the wrist and fore arm and many other dangerous diseases for children.

- *Ergonomics and exposure to high temperatures*

The general work environment in many cases is not conducive for children. Some stages of tobacco processing require exposure to smoke and high temperatures. Many adults have indicated that the continuous exposure to smoke during the processing period affects their eye sight. For children this is worst, as it affects their sight even during school time (for those who manage to go to school), it also has long term effects on their sight.

- *Cutting tool*

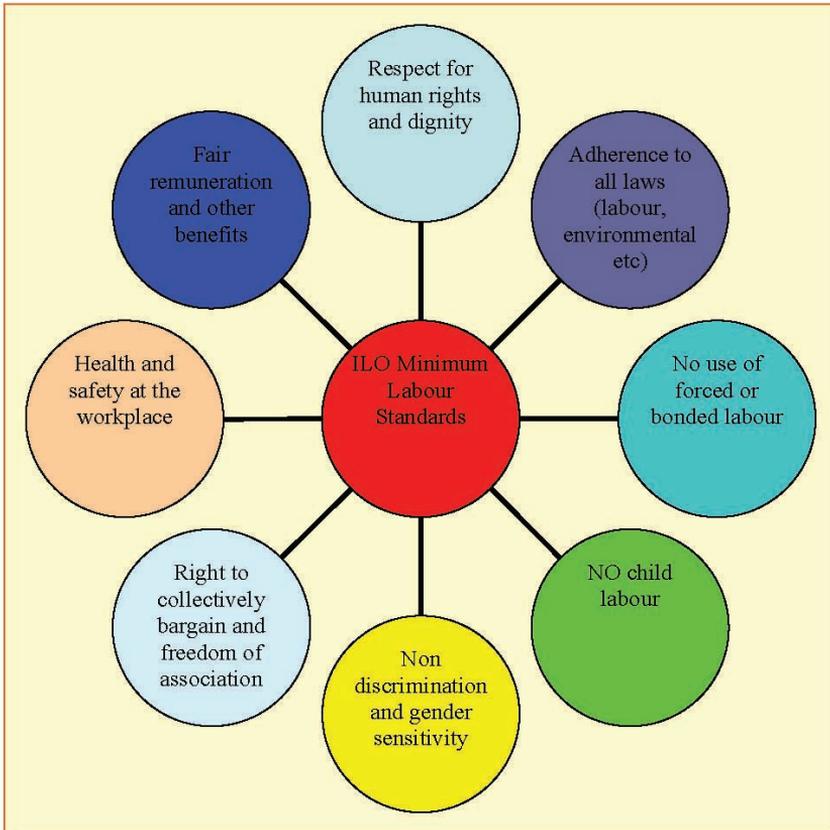
Children's physiological make up does not accommodate the use of certain tools used in tobacco farming. This is because these tools are often made for adults and not children. When children use the tools, the risk of being cut or harmed is higher than that of an adult. Children have been reported to have faced serious injuries as a result of using sharp instruments.

- *Exposure to agrochemicals*

All chemicals used in tobacco farming are dangerous to children and children should not be exposed to them. Farmers need to understand the risks of each of the chemicals and pesticides used in the tobacco plant. The leaf technician or a district agriculture officer can assist in elaborating on the risks of each chemical. Pesticides can seriously harm or even kill children. The death may be slow but sure to happen if a child is exposed to the chemical.

**SUMMARY**

Children are exposed to all types of risks when engaging in tobacco farming. It is the responsibility of both the farmer and community level structures to make regular assessment of the risks involved in farming and how to eliminate such risks for children and young people.



## ROLE OF TOBACCO FARMERS IN ELIMINATING CHILD LABOUR

### Practicing corporate social responsibility

The first important task for the farmer is to ensure that they actively participate in all activities regarding child labour elimination in tobacco farming. Participation can happen in many ways:



- *Participating in child labour committee activities*

Child labour committees at village level are the structures that are responsible for monitoring the trend of child labour. Members of the committees include local government, community members, members from faith based organizations, members from community based organizations and non governmental organizations and private sector. The structures work on behalf of the community, they are often bodies that volunteer to do this work. Farmers can actively take part in the work of the committee by volunteering to undertake tasks.

- *Supporting education initiatives*

Farmers have an important role to play in supporting the education needs of poor children. the contribution to education can be done by supporting individual children or supporting schools. It is clear that a significant number of the children who work are doing it so that they can get their school and other basic needs. Instead of the employing the child, the farmer can support the child in attending school by meeting their education needs and letting them attend school. Children who are above the age of 14 can be employed to do light work after school and after they have done their school work for a maximum of two hours, during the daytime.

- *Creating decent work standards for young people*

As soon as the farmer is enlightened about risk assessment in tobacco farming and how to eliminate, minimize, control or reduce the risks, they can decide what work is suitable for young people in accordance with the national legislation, policy and ILO standards. Employing young people between the ages of 15-24 is an opportunity for farmers to get labour for their workers and set standards so that the workers are not exploited or harmed. However, minimum standards must be adhered to in accordance with the national laws of employment. In a study undertaken by TPAWU in Urambo (2003), young girls and boys highlighted the following as important for them in a secure and decent work environment:

Girls	Boys
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protective gears during work</li> <li>• Access to health care/insurance (employer's liability)</li> <li>• Employment security as many are casual labourers</li> <li>• Allocation of time for leave and rest</li> <li>• Means of addressing sexual abuse and harassment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better wages and fringe benefits</li> <li>• Protective gears during work</li> <li>• Access to health care (employer's liability)</li> <li>• Lighter work for boys less than 18 years</li> <li>• Allocation of time for leave and rest</li> <li>• Employment security as many are casual labourers</li> </ul>

• *Ensuring ILO minimum standards at the workplace*

Every farmer can have minimum standards practices at the farm. These standards will apply to all the workers, they include:

**Promoting gender equity and equality:** The way women and men boys and girls interact in the economic and social spheres determines productivity. It is important for farmers to understand that boys and girls have different experiences in the society. Children are socialized from an early age to copy the gender roles for their parents. This affects the decisions they make and their response to a number of opportunities. Boys and girls often have different motivations and reactions to be engaged in child labour or to attend school. Although poverty and lack of opportunity are the driving forces in child labour, there are other underlying causes leading to different decisions between girls and boys.

In Urambo, the main producers in households are women and children but it is the men who have the final say on household income expenditures. There is high prevalence of gender stereotypes that have predetermined women as perpetual subordinates to their husbands. Tabora is amongst the lowest regions in terms of percentages of women who contribute to decision making at household level (23%) as compared to regions with highest percentages Kilimanjaro (82%), Mwanza (89%) and Shinyanga (80%). Ironically, it is also a region where majority women say that wife beating is justified with reasons (29%) as compared to the lowest region Kilimanjaro (8%), Kagera (9.4%) and Mwanza (8.2%). Men need to take an active part in promoting gender equality (Kaijace and Kanyala (1998).

**SUMMARY**

Elimination of child labour is possible if there are concerted efforts to create an environment where there is 0-tolerance on child labour. It is the responsibility of farmers to make risk assessments and determine the conditions of work for different categories of people. Young people and children must be protected from risks associated with tobacco farming and at the same time, decent work conditions should be continuously created for young people, basing on their legal rights and in accordance with the national and international law and policies. Farmers must also pay due regard to gender issues and the levels of currently inequalities in Urambo. Inequality directs impacts on productivity and therefore ways of addressing this challenge must continuously be sought.

## CONCLUSION

Practicing corporate social responsibility is both a moral and legal duty. Farmers have the primary responsibility of protecting children from risks associated with tobacco farming. Ways to assist farmers to do this have been developed; these mechanisms should be used to their fullest potential.





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