

Elimination of Child Labour in Commercial Agriculture project (COMAGRI)

The project was a sub-regional project implemented in five countries: Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, and Uganda Zambia. The project started in 2001. COMAGRI aimed to withdraw children from hazardous work in commercial agriculture and prevent them being trapped in these situations. The Programme raises awareness at all levels of government and civil society about the dangers of child labour and strengthens their capacity to deal with it.

Programme Development Objective: To contribute to the elimination of worst forms of child labour in commercial agriculture in Tanzania

Immediate Objectives By the end of the project, the capacity of governmental, non-governmental, community, employers' and workers' organizations will be strengthened, to identify and eliminate hazardous child labour in farms and plantations; 1,200 children working under hazardous conditions in selected plantations in five countries will have been withdrawn and rehabilitated and their families provided with viable alternatives to exploitative child labour; A further 2,000 at-risk children prevented from prematurely entering the labour market.

Programme Strategy A strong focus on the prevention of child labour. Targeted action to combat hazardous and exploitative child labour in selected farms and plantations. On the basis of rapid assessments on worst forms of child labour in the tobacco sector (done in 2000/2001), a baseline study on hazardous child labour in the tea sector (done in 2002), situation assessment of hazardous child labour in tobacco farming (done in 2003) and conducted in the four project districts, project sites with a high incidence of hazardous child labour were selected for participation in the programme. The specific hazards faced by child workers in the tea and tobacco vary considerably in farms and plantations, depending on the crop, the size of the farm/plantation, and the level of awareness and action among the concerned partners, especially the employers and managers. Particular attention is given to children who are specially at risk (i.e. those under the age of 12 years and the girl child). In addition to the 1,200 children targeted in this programme, about 2,000 other children are benefiting from awareness raising programmes; monitoring mechanisms at the community level, development of strategies to be incorporated in the Children Development Policy changes as well as from changes in society's attitudes towards the exploitation of children in hazardous work.

Families weighed down by poverty are provided with training, information savings and credit facilities, on how to start and manage income generating activities; and provided with grants to start small income-generating projects. The project also strives to educate and convince parents that education for their children will yield long term benefits.

In order to have a larger impact, the project strives to link up with other development programmes active in the target areas, support Government to play a central role, and encourage employers to provide much-needed local input. COMAGRI therefore is acting as a catalyst for change and it is expected that project results will attract more commitment from communities, government and other stakeholders to fight against the worst forms of child labour in commercial agriculture.

Strong community involvement, awareness raising and the withdrawal of child workers. A step-by-step removal and community-based monitoring of children in exploitative and hazardous work is carried out through the Child Labour Monitoring System. Community Child Labour Committees (CCLCs) have been set up in communities. Members of the committees include representatives of employers and/or managers of estates/plantations/commercial farms, trade unions, parents of working children, local government officials, health workers, teachers, and other influential community members. Balanced gender representation is encouraged to ensure the needs of mothers and the girl child are adequately represented. Where possible, designated labour inspectors do participate in the CCLCs.

The rehabilitation of 1,200 child workers in selected farms and plantations follows a three-pronged strategy and all the interventions for child workers and their families is implemented through partner agencies identified by IPEC/COMAGRI.

1. For working girls and boys below 12 years the packages of alternatives have a non-formal education component (i.e. COBET classes where children are trained in basic literacy and numeracy skills) and formal school education.
2. For older working girls and boys in the age group of 12-14 years, the strategy focus skills training that would lead them on to gainful employment as young adults. Efforts are made to discuss with vocational skills trainers to prepare tailor made programmes for these children.

For older working adolescents between the ages of 15 and 18 years, the strategy provides them with vocational training, according to their gender needs. This is based on the assumption that many in this age group prefer to learn a skill or trade that would guarantee them employment. COMAGRI also link micro-credit facilities existing in the project areas to alternatives provided to families so that the income status of the household is improved and younger siblings are prevented from entering the labour market prematurely. When children are withdrawn from hazardous work, it is be crucial to look at the impact of withdrawal on the economic survival of the family. Family income is therefore supplemented by providing families with income generating opportunities to replace the loss of income.

Employers' organisations representing the commercial agricultural sector have an important role to play and are responsible for a wide range of activities from

awareness-raising to participating in CCLC meetings. Estate/plantation owners are also encouraged to contribute to the cost of social services in and around plantations to show their commitment to the success of the project.

Raising the awareness of adult workers is critical. Children usually work alongside adults; often their parents. Such adult workers are in the best position to provide guidance to the children and to bargain collectively with employers to ensure child labour is not used. Workers' organisations active in the commercial agriculture e.g. the Tanzania Plantation and Agricultural Workers Union (TPAWU) have played a key role in a wide range of activities ranging from awareness-raising, withdrawal and rehabilitation of children to monitoring collective bargaining arrangements at the workplace level.

Institutional Framework: The Ministry of Labour is the primary organ responsible for carrying out regular inspection visits and for providing advisory services to employers. Employers' Organisations, Workers' Organisations, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Local Government Authorities, Non-Governmental Organisations and Community-based Organisations

Community Level: The CCLCs are the central unit at the community level. The committees are kept informed of progress with programme implementation and in turn, provide information to the social partners, labour inspectors, and district child labour coordinator, on issues of concern at the community level.

National Level: The National Inter-sectoral Coordination Committee is overseeing COMAGRI programme progress through its Technical Sub-Committee and the Sub-Committee on Child Labour in Mining and Agriculture.

Districts covered: Lushoto, Korogwe, Muheza and Urambo, targeting children working in tea farms and plantations (in the first three districts); and targeting children working on tobacco farms in Urambo district.