

# RURAL DEVELOPMENT through DECENT WORK

FOR GROWTH, PRODUCTIVE JOBS, INCOME, FOOD SECURITY, GOOD WORKING CONDITIONS, EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES, RIGHTS, VOICE, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, CRISIS RESILIENCE



International Labour Office

People

Rural Policy Briefs

## Eliminating child labour in rural areas through decent work

*Widespread poverty, limited access to education, and lack of enforcement of labour laws are among the main causes of the prevalence of child labour in rural economies. Sustainable elimination of child labour in rural areas needs to address its roots causes and promote decent work for adults.*

### Why action is needed

- Child labour is a violation of human rights.
- Child labour is also an immense burden for economic and social development. It perpetuates the vicious cycle of poverty and hampers sustainable development of rural communities and individuals.
- Especially in rural areas, where school drop-out rates can be high and work hazards severe, child labour interferes with accumulation of human capital as it substitutes to schooling and damages children's minds and bodies. In the longer term, stunted skills lead to low productivity and incomes of rural populations.



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### Facts and figures

- Rural areas host 75 percent of the world's poor, with 2.1 billion living on less than USD 2 a day, and 880 million living on less than USD 1 a day.<sup>1</sup>
- Child labour is mainly a rural issue. Out of 215 million of child labourers worldwide, 129 millions are in agriculture alone.<sup>2</sup>
- About 60 percent of child labourers aged between 5-17 years work in agriculture, in contrast to 7 percent in industry and 26 percent in services.<sup>3</sup>
- Agriculture is among the three most dangerous sectors to work in at any age, and even more dangerous for children. Data show that around 60 percent of hazardous work of children is in agriculture.<sup>4</sup>
- Only 1 in 5 child labourers are in paid employment – the large majority are unpaid family workers.<sup>5</sup>
- Rural children, particularly girls, tend to begin work at a very young age, sometimes when they are 5-7 years old.<sup>6</sup>
- Without considering household services, on average, boys make up 63 percent and girls 37 percent of child labour in agriculture in the age group 5-17 years.<sup>7</sup> But 92 percent of girl child labourers in the age group 5-14 also perform household chores, as compared with 67 percent of boys.<sup>8</sup>

- Child labour undermines adults' decent work, as children constitute cheap labour that may compete with adult labour, and lead to adults accepting employment contracts below minimum wage, for instance. The vast majority of child labourers are unpaid family workers in rural areas, where family undertakings are more widespread.
- Poverty, few livelihood alternatives, insufficient education systems, seasonal work, migratory lifestyles, cultural practices, low levels of awareness, low unionisation, inadequate or unenforced labour laws, and lack of decent work for adults are among the main causes of the persistence of child labour in rural areas.
- Child labour is a result of supply and demand factors. Among the main ones:<sup>9</sup>

On the supply side...

- ◆ Shortage of labour force at peak agricultural times
- ◆ Need to supplement household income to meet basic needs
- ◆ Limited incentives to invest in education
- ◆ Traditional attitudes towards child labour seen mainly as a way of transferring important skills

On the demand side...

- ◆ Preference for children as they are paid lower wages (or are altogether unpaid)
- ◆ Unfair labour contracts for adults (such as piece-work) that in practice require children's participation to achieve a living wage
- ◆ Low productivity and labour intensive technology of rural undertakings, making them dependent on child labour
- ◆ Perception that children are more docile, less aware of their rights and easier to exploit
- Availability of and access to schools can be limited in rural areas, and curricula are often not relevant to the needs of agricultural communities. In addition, most rural work is seasonal or migratory and incompatible with school calendars.
- Child labour interferes with schooling in terms of lower enrolment, higher dropout rates and lower performance.



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- Girls' roles in performing household chores and in water, firewood and fuel collection make them more disadvantaged in terms of school attendance and achievement.
- Rural child labour is often invisible as it is hidden in remote farms, in mountain areas herding livestock, in domestic work in private homes, in informal rural enterprises and markets, in mines, in forest exploitations.
- Productive activities in rural areas can be very hazardous and children are more at risk than adults because their bodies and minds are still developing and they are often less able to judge risks. Among the main risks are:
  - ◆ long periods of stooping and repetitive movements
  - ◆ carrying heavy loads over long distances
  - ◆ work in extreme temperatures and without access to safe water
  - ◆ exposure to chemicals, organic dusts and biological hazards
  - ◆ exposure to psycho-social hazards, abuse and sexually transmitted diseases, increased by isolation and poverty
- Rural smaller and informal workplaces do not have occupational health and safety systems in place that could lower exposure to hazards for adults and children.

## Policy options

Eliminating child labour requires addressing its root causes, including poverty and failures in labour markets along the four pillars of decent work.

### Improve rural livelihoods and create decent employment for youth and adults

- Ensure an adequate number of productive, quality jobs, which provide income to cover at least basic needs.
- Mainstream child labour considerations and decent work into agricultural and rural development policies. This requires knowledge exchange and collaboration among governments, workers', employers' and rural producers' organizations. The main objective should be to always take into account the impact on child labour and adult employment of any rural development



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## What is child labour?

- A child is defined as any person under 18
- Child labour is defined based on a child's age, hours and conditions of work and activities performed. Child labour interferes with education and is damaging for a child's health and development. In the context of rural family farming and other undertakings, it is important to recognize that some light participation of children in productive activities not affecting their health, schooling nor personal development can be regarded as acceptable and thus contribute to the inter-generational transfer of skills
- The ILO Minimum Age for Employment Convention, No. 1973 (No. 138) sets the minimum age for children to work at 15 in general, 13 for light work, and 18 for work considered hazardous. In the case of developing nations, the general minimum age can be set at 14 and the one for light work at 12
- The ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) defines worst forms of child labour as all forms of slavery, trafficking of children, forced recruitment for armed conflict, use of children in illicit activities, sexual exploitation, and hazardous work. Hazardous work, that should be listed nationally, is work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm children's health, safety or morals

and investment policy, so as to ensure that rural development creates decent and sustainable jobs for youth adult.

- Address the interactions between adult and child employment, for example through regulating employment contracts so as to limit the use of piece work contracts and quotas that provide incentives for the use of child labour.
- Ensure gender equitable access to land, training, agriculture extension services, technologies and inputs, business development services and microfinance.
- Encourage the development of child-care facilities, accessible and at a safe distance from worksites.
- Enhance decent work opportunities for youth. Youth can be safely employed in agriculture and other rural activities if good safety and health at work are ensured. Risk assessments of health and safety at workplace can be used to guide in the elimination or substitution of hazards such as pesticides, and help turn hazardous work of children above the minimum age into safe and decent youth employment.
- Enhance access to quality and relevant education and training opportunities in rural areas. To be effective, incentives for school enrolment need taking into account constraints and needs of different target groups, for example adjusting school holidays to seasonal agricultural calendars, providing school feeding and starter kits, and linkages to potential employers for vocational training for older children.
- Promote skills development mechanisms adapted to local needs and availabilities, including informal apprenticeship, and build links bridges between formal and informal mechanisms.

### Promote social protection to reduce rural households' vulnerability

- Ensure minimum income security to reduce households' need and incentives to generate income from child labour, and at the same time to allow households to spend more on education.
- Integrate some targeting or conditionality based on child labour and children's school attendance in safety nets and



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cash transfers, so as to provide additional incentives for household to send children to school instead than to work.

- Extend rural communities' access to social protection, such as old-age pensions, basic health services, maternity benefits, social assistance and public work programmes.
- Support micro-insurance programmes to smooth risks associated with natural disasters and adverse climatic conditions, which can affect agricultural production, and micro health insurance programmes to protect rural families from loss and disability of breadwinners.

### Review and apply laws on child labour in agriculture and rural areas

- Ratify and implement ILO child labour Conventions (C. 138, C. 182), and other Conventions regulating employment in the rural and agricultural economy, such as C. 184 (Safety and

## Box 2

### Good practices in eliminating child labour in rural areas

- In **El Salvador** the Association of Sugarcane Producers, the government and the ILO signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2002 to eradicate child labour in the sugarcane sector. Its strategy, based on the creation of an enabling policy environment and a package of interventions such as awareness raising, capacity building, improvement of educational services and skills training, and organization of community-based child labour monitoring mechanisms, helped withdraw and rehabilitate over 7,000 child labourers between 2003 and 2009.<sup>10</sup>
- In **Cambodia**, where child labour is common in salt production, rubber plantations, and fishing/shrimp processing, an ILO-IPEC project (2001-2004) used extensively labour inspectors to promote occupational safety and health guidelines among employers through awareness raising, social dialogue, capacity building and close monitoring. This allowed withdrawing 599 children from hazardous work, preventing some 2691 children from entering hazardous work, and assisting some 642 self-help groups' families to reduce dependence on child labour.<sup>11</sup>
- In **Côte d'Ivoire**, where children may leave their rural villages, heeding the promises of recruiters from urban areas and from Nigeria and Ghana, IPEC's Project "Combating the trafficking in children for labour exploitation in West and Central Africa"(LUTRENA) with the NGO African Emergency Assistance, created local vigilance committees (LVCs) to stop child trafficking at its source. Since 2005, it managed to repatriate 430 children and re-enrol over 3,500 children in school.<sup>12</sup>

### Tackling child labour through the integrated area-based approach

Eliminating child labour in a rural community requires addressing all forms of child labour jointly to avoid that as a result of interventions children shift sectors or locations while continuing to work. ILO's Integrated Area-Based (IAB) approach promotes an integrated programme of interventions, based on the involvement and cooperation of local communities, government, employers' and workers' organizations. Stakeholders are supported in identifying the root causes of child labour, and promoting alternatives.

In Mongolia, an ILO-IPEC project targeted child labourers in small-scale informal mining through: 1. Policy coordination, implementation and capacity building 2. Public awareness and attitude 3. Knowledge/data base and research 4. Child labour monitoring 5. Direct actions to withdraw children from the worst forms of child labour 6. Law enforcement 7. Social partnership and collaboration. The project strategy ensures long-term and effective solutions to child labour through building commitment, ownership and partnership at the local level. As a result, each target area has developed its own action plan, adopted by the local Parliament, to eliminate the WFCL as a priority.<sup>13</sup>

Health in Agriculture Convention), C. 188 (Work in Fishing Convention), C. 141 (Rural workers Organizations Convention), C. 110 (Plantations Conventions), C.81 (Labour Inspection Convention), and C.129 (Labour Inspection in Agriculture Convention).

- Review national labour legislation so that it fully applies to rural areas and agriculture, including small scale and family farms and other informal rural and agricultural undertakings, as well as sub-contracting arrangements in supply chains.
- Develop, in tripartite consultation among government, employers' and workers' organizations, hazardous work lists that define jobs, activities and working conditions prohibited for children under age 18 (as per C. 182). The list should ensure proper coverage of tasks and conditions in rural areas, especially considering small scale informal undertakings, family farms and aquaculture, livestock keeping, informal rural enterprises and processing plants.
- Build the capacity of labour inspectorates to cover rural areas and enforce application of labour laws in rural undertakings. Provide training in occupational health and safety, including through agricultural extension agents and rural labour inspectors, to improve working conditions and increase capacity to make informed judgments as to when activities are safe enough for children above the minimum legal age.

### Promote social dialogue targeting child labour in rural areas

- Promote the organization of formal and informal employers', rural producers' and workers' associations and cooperatives, and promote their involvement in scaling-up action against child labour.
- Support the outreach of workers' and employers' organizations to self-employed rural workers in small-scale and family farms and non-farm activities, informal, family and migrant workers, and their sensitization and mobilization against child labour.
- Support collective bargaining throughout supply chains, and include clauses on child labour.
- Enhance representation of the interests of smaller rural producers and farmers, especially those producing for domestic markets that may receive lower attention in national policy and where child labour is most prevalent.

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## ILO's role

- Eliminating child labour is one of the four core areas covered by the 1998 ILO *Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work*, and it remains central to the mission and standard-setting activities of the ILO. It is also a key element of the *Decent Work Agenda*.
- Lending support to ratify and implement a substantial set of over 30 Conventions having an important implication for child labour in rural areas.
- As a tripartite organization where governments, workers and employers are equally represented, the ILO is in a unique position to negotiate mutually acceptable international labour standards and policies on child labour elimination, and to work in close partnership with agencies of national governments, employers' and workers' organizations to implement them.
- The ILO's International Programme for the Elimination of Child labour (IPEC) is the largest single technical assistance programme that focuses on the elimination of child labour worldwide. Its mission is to promote the effective elimination of child labour, with priority given to the worst forms that are globally targeted for eradication by 2016.
- Currently over 14 ILO projects in 33 countries focus on rural and agriculture child labour.
- At the global level, IPEC promotes the worldwide movement to combat child labour in partnership with ILO constituents, international and national organizations, and corporate entities.
- In 2007, ILO led the constitution of the "International Partnership for Cooperation on Child Labour in Agriculture", including ILO, FAO, IFAD, IFPRI, agricultural producers' organizations and IUF<sup>14</sup>, to 1) raise awareness on child labour in rural areas, especially in agriculture, 2) increase the access of rural children to quality education, 3) promote safer and more sustainable agriculture and rural development, 4) reduce child labour and 5) promote decent work.
- In collaboration with the ILO's International Training Centre (ITC-ILO), the ILO provides training programmes and capacity development workshops to develop capacity of staff in labour and agriculture institutions to address child labour in the context of decent work and sustainable rural development.



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- <sup>1</sup> World Bank: *Agriculture for Development*, World Development Report 2008 (Washington D.C.: 2007)
- <sup>2</sup> ILO: *Accelerating action against child labour*, Report of the Director-General, International Labour Conference, 99<sup>th</sup> Session (Geneva: 2010), pp. 6-7.
- <sup>3</sup> ILO: *Accelerating action against child labour*, Global Report under the follow up of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (Geneva: 2010)
- <sup>4</sup> ILO: *Children in hazardous work - What we know, what we need to do* (Geneva: 2011)
- <sup>5</sup> Op. cit., ILO: *Accelerating action against child labour* (Geneva: 2010), p. 5
- <sup>6</sup> ILO: *Tackling hazardous child labour in agriculture: Guidance on policy and practice* (Geneva: 2006), p.3
- <sup>7</sup> Op. cit., ILO: *Accelerating action against child labour* (Geneva: 2010), p. 12
- <sup>8</sup> Blanco Allais, F.: *Assessing the gender gap: Evidence from SIMPOC surveys* (Geneva: 2009)
- <sup>9</sup> Murray U., Termine P., Demeranville J.: *Breaking the rural poverty cycle: getting girls and boys out of work and into school*, FAO-IFAD-ILO Gender and ruralemployment policy brief no. 7 (Rome: 2010)
- <sup>10</sup> ILO: *Elimination of the worst forms of child labour in sugarcane sector: A different world is possible (El Salvador)* (Geneva: 2010)
- <sup>11</sup> ILO: *Good Practices and Lessons Learnt in Combating Hazardous Work in Child Labour. Salt Production (Kampot), Fish/Shrimp Processing (Sihanoukville) and Rubber Plantation (Kampong Cham) Sectors* (Cambodia: 2005)
- <sup>12</sup> ILO: *Going the distance to stop child trafficking: Local vigilance committees (West Africa)* (Geneva: 2010)
- <sup>13</sup> ILO: *Area-based integrated interventions against the worst forms of child labour (Mongolia)* (Geneva: 2010)
- <sup>14</sup> 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); Agricultural producers' organizations; International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF)

## Links

- ILO-IPEC webpage on child labour in agriculture: <http://www.ilo.org/ipec/areas/Agriculture/>
- "International partnership for cooperation on child labour in agriculture" <http://www.ilo.org/agriculture-partnership>
- FAO-ILO joint webpage on child labour in agriculture: <http://www.fao-ilo.org/fao-ilo-child/>
- ITCILO Page on training child labour: <http://www.itcilo.org/en/the-centre/areas-of-expertise/labour-rights/child-labour>
- Understanding Children's Work: <http://www.ucw-project.org/>

## Tools

- ILO: *Training resource pack on the elimination of hazardous child labour in agriculture* (Geneva: 2005)
- ILO: *Tackling hazardous child labour in agriculture: Guidance on policy and practice* (Geneva: 2006)

- ◆ FAO and ILO: *Child labour prevention in agriculture JFFLS training module (Rome: 2010)* <http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/i1897e/i1897e.pdf>
- ◆ More tools on child labour are available at: [http://www2.ilo.org/pls/apex/f?p=109:3:1396169550994795::NO::P3\\_SUBJECT:CHILDLABOUR](http://www2.ilo.org/pls/apex/f?p=109:3:1396169550994795::NO::P3_SUBJECT:CHILDLABOUR)
- ◆ <http://www.fao.org/economic/esw/esw-home/esw-population-dynamics/children-youth/esw-child-labour/en/>

## Other Materials:

- ◆ FAO-ILO recommendations on child labour in fisheries and aquaculture: <http://www.fao-ilo.org/fao-ilo-child/workshop-2010/en/>

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