



INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP FOR COOPERATION ON
CHILD LABOUR IN AGRICULTURE

Statement of the African Regional Workshop of
rural workers' trade unions and small producers'
organizations to exchange experiences of
“Organizing against child labour”

Accra and Kpando-Torkor, 26-30 September 2017,
held under the auspices of the International Partnership for Cooperation
on Child Labour in Agriculture (IPCCLA) and hosted by the General
Agricultural Workers' Union of the Ghana Trades Union Congress (GAWU)

ADOPTED in Accra, 30 September 2017

*“AN AFRICA WHOSE DEVELOPMENT
IS PEOPLE-DRIVEN, RELYING ON THE
POTENTIAL OF AFRICAN PEOPLE,
ESPECIALLY ITS WOMEN AND YOUTH,
AND CARING FOR CHILDREN.”*

Aspiration 6, Agenda 2063
of the African Union



Preamble

We, representatives of rural workers' trade unions, national trade union centres, and small producers' organizations, including cooperatives, from 13 countries in the African Region, have met in Ghana in a spirit of friendship, under the auspices of the International Partnership for Cooperation on Child Labour in Agriculture (IPCCLA), to exchange our experiences of organizing against child labour.

The IPCCLA was established in 2007 by the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD); the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR); and the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF).

We thank our hosts, the General Agricultural Workers' Union of the Ghana Trades Union Congress for the hospitality they have extended to us in Accra and in Kpando-Torkor.

Our organizations have different structures, with memberships in crop production, fishing, animal husbandry, forestry and aquaculture, producing diverse crops and products in diverse parts of local and global supply and value chains in the rural economy, both formal and informal. Yet we share a common commitment to support the sustainable eradication of child labour in agriculture and in the wider rural economy in the African Region by 2025 as proclaimed in Target 8.7 of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.



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A. The new Global Estimates of child labour, and child labour in African agriculture

1. We note that the new ILO Global Estimates of child labour for 2012-2016 indicate that 152 million are still in child labour around the world. Though the number is still declining, it is falling much more slowly than before. Unless this trend is reversed and progress is greatly accelerated, our goal of eliminating child labour by 2025 will not be reached.
2. We are dismayed that, despite our efforts and despite the almost universal ratification by African member States¹ of ILO Convention no. 138 on minimum age and Convention no. 182 on the worst forms of child labour, the face of child labour - and particularly of child labour in agriculture - is increasingly the face of the African child. The new ILO Global Estimates indicate that child labour directly affects one in five of the children in our Region, in which the number in child labour has increased to 72 million. This is intolerable. Africa now accounts for 47 per cent of child labour worldwide - for the first time more than in any other region.



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3. Moreover, we note with concern that the number of children in child labour in agriculture worldwide has increased substantially to 108 million since 2012. We note that the vast majority of this is performed as unpaid family work because families depend on the income their children earn or because their enterprises depend on the work of their children in order to function. We note also that much of this work is hazardous. Child labour in agriculture now accounts for 71 per cent of all child labour worldwide and 85 per cent of all child labour in Africa. The 62 million children in child labour in African agriculture account for 40 per cent of all child labour in all sectors worldwide. Neither our region nor the wider world will reach SDG target 8.7 unless child labour in African agriculture receives the attention it requires.

¹ Liberia and Somalia have yet to ratify ILO Convention No. 138; Eritrea has yet to ratify ILO Convention No. 182

4. Alongside the global determination to eliminate forced labour, which affects 21.5 million adults, and the attention which must be paid to school-to-work transition of older children of legal working age and to ensuring for them a future of decent work in the rural economy, the needs of the 152 million children in child labour, including the 4.3 million child victims of forced child labour and trafficking, must be addressed.
5. Some 73 million children in child labour worldwide are under the age of 12. We are particularly concerned that the needs of youngest children and their transition from early childhood to school are not being met. In particular, and as an urgent priority, appropriate measures must be taken to end the initial entry of children into child labour.



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B. Our shared experience and recommendations

6. Our direct experiences of child labour in our world of work demonstrate that child labour in African agriculture has both common and varied features.
7. We note that it exists in low and middle-income countries alike and that family and community poverty, caused by inadequate incomes and absent or inadequate social protection and public services – not least universal, free, compulsory, quality education at least until the legal minimum age for work – are both causes and consequence of the intergenerational reproduction of child labour.
8. We note that low incomes are caused by inadequate wages for paid workers, and by inadequate and fluctuating prices paid to small producers. This is especially true of informal employment relationships and informal enterprises. We also note that many family enterprises lack the investment, skills and inputs required to increase the

productivity of adults and youth of working age, to end their dependence on the child labour of their children, and to promote their transition from the informal to the formal economy.

9. We note that, in some countries in our Region, conflict, natural disasters or the HIV&AIDS pandemic continue to create orphans and child-headed households, who need appropriate and adequate social protection to counter their extreme vulnerability to child labour.

10. Child labour is also driven by discrimination and social exclusion and represents a major brake on sustainable development in Africa and elsewhere. Women perform most of the work in the rural economy - in the workplace and in the home - and their education and empowerment has exponentially beneficial effects on the well-being of families and communities. Yet many rural people, in particular women, are unable to access land or credit. Women and girls working in agriculture may be vulnerable to sexual violence and abuse.



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11. The elimination of child labour is an essential component of our efforts to achieve all the SDGs and is, in turn, supported by them, in particular those concerning decent work, rural development, poverty reduction, food security, social protection, education, health, and just, inclusive and peaceful societies.

12. We note also the rich and varied experiences of our organizations in our workplaces and communities and have met to exchange those experiences, in particular with regard to:

a. **sensitizing our members and their communities**, including traditional leaders, about child labour, through innovative use of communications, technology and media; not least:

- through the entry-points of awareness raising about hazardous work and occupational safety and health, including the use of pesticides. A workplace that is not safe for adults cannot be safe for a child; and
- financial literacy; and
- countering those traditional and religious beliefs that are inimical to children's human rights;

b. **supporting the self-organization of those who earn their livelihoods in the rural economy** by strengthening our organizations, including by opening membership to informal economy and own-account workers and by modifying our dues systems accordingly;

- c. **strengthening of our collective, representative voice**, including for:
 - collective bargaining with employers, not least in plantation agriculture; and
 - product price negotiations to improve adult incomes; and
 - to influence and promote relevant public policies, legislation and regulation, including mainstreaming child labour concerns in national, sectoral and district policies and their implementation; and for
 - d. **ending the dependence on child labour of family farms and enterprises** through the upgrading of skills, access to inputs and credit, including through the development of community savings and credit unions, sustainable and appropriate technologies and alternative practices, so they improve often low productivity and become viable enough to employ adults in decent work.
13. Our organizations are committed – through our policies, grass-roots organizing, bargaining and business practices – to supporting the eradication of child labour in the rural economy. Where we are present and active in the rural economy and where we are able to participate fully in social dialogue in its various forms, child labour is absent or less prevalent. We have identified common elements of our organizations’ promising practice that have contributed to progress. We have developed successful, innovative models – among them sectoral agreements, integrated community and area-based approaches, and strategies for upgrading enterprises, which we have discussed and learned from in our workshop in Accra.
14. We note however that, in some countries of our region, barriers exist in law or practice to the full exercise of our universal right of freedom of association, and gaps in legislation persist. These constraints hinder our organizations from representing our members:
- a. in negotiations with employers for better wages and conditions; and
 - b. with buyers for better purchasing practices and fair prices for our products; and from
 - c. strengthening our collective voice – and the voice of the communities in which our members live and work – to demand that governments and public authorities meet their obligations with regards to the provision of social security and public services, including public education and health services for all. All governments in the Region should ratify and implement ILO Conventions nos. 87 and 98 on freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining.
15. We remind the world that the agricultural sector is essential for its food security and yet many of our members and their communities are threatened by food insecurity. Food security requires a productive agricultural workforce with the prospect of decent working lives and livelihoods. Respect for agricultural work in the education system and wider society, the professionalization and upgrading of skills in agriculture, and the promotion of decent youth employment are essential. Diversification and investment in food-processing and infrastructure, which add quality and value to locally grown produce, and improved market access can contribute significantly to economic growth, industrialization and decent jobs in rural areas, and reduce pressures for rural-urban migration.
16. Education provision, in particular in rural areas, must be improved to ensure enrolment, attendance, achievement and to combat drop out. Free, quality, compulsory, public education for all children, at least until the minimum legal age for work, requires

significant investment in safe, child-friendly and accessible schools; decent work for teachers and other education workers; and improved and wide curricula and teaching skills that respect the importance of work in agriculture. Farmer field schools for adults and youth, and enhanced technical and business education provision in rural areas have a key role to play. In addition, more resources must be allocated to ensure universal, functional literacy and numeracy, including of adults.

17. Attention must be paid to those youth above the minimum age for work but still under 18 and who are neither in employment nor in education or training. Ensuring that they are either in decent youth employment or in continuing quality education or training is essential for their own social and economic rights. It is also urgently needed to protect them against vulnerability to forces of violent extremism, which are present in a number of our countries and which are also a cause of forced displacement.
18. Strategies must be developed to mitigate the loss of agricultural land to urban expansion and desertification, which are also causing rural unemployment and migration and displacement from rural to urban areas, where children are vulnerable to entering child labour in the urban informal economy.
19. Safe and sustainable work in agriculture requires the ratification and implementation of relevant international instruments, including the ILO Conventions on labour inspection, rural workers, and occupational safety and health in agriculture,² the Rotterdam Convention and the FAO/WHO International Code of Conduct on Pesticide Management; the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries; and the OECD-FAO Guidance for Responsible Agricultural Supply Chains. Labour inspection and agricultural extension services have crucial roles to play in combating child labour and in reaching rural communities and workplaces, ensuring respect for other labour rights and supporting the upgrading of enterprises. Governance and management of small producer production, as well as improved working conditions, productivity and incomes can be assisted by the promotion of well-functioning and democratic cooperatives in line with ILO Recommendation no. 193.
20. Governments and public authorities bear the primary responsibility for implementing policies to combat child labour, which should be developed and enhanced through tripartite social dialogue. Mainstreaming child labour prevention and remediation into relevant public policies and national budgets concerning decent work, labour markets and value chains; respect for all fundamental rights at work; agricultural sector development including investment in appropriate technologies, support for small producer organizations and the expansion of democratic cooperatives; poverty reduction and food security; social security and other public service provision, in particular education and health, requires appropriate national budget allocations, better inter-ministerial cooperation and improved functioning of national tripartite (plus) steering committees on child labour.
21. Multinational and national enterprises should comply with the terms of the ILO Tripartite Declaration on Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy and with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and integrate fully the promotion of decent work and the eradication of child labour into their business activities.

² These include the following Conventions (and their accompanying Recommendations): 110 on plantations; 129 on labour inspection in agriculture; 141 on rural workers' organizations; 184 on safety and health in agriculture, 188 on work in fishing; and Recommendation 132 on tenants and share-croppers.

22. Governments and development partners, international organizations and financial institutions, and regional and sub-regional entities must ensure that rights-based development and the eradication of child labour in the rural economy in Africa are adequately supported. Development partners should provide consistent and predictable assistance that supports nationally-determined development priorities in line with the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation and the continuing relevance of the Accra Agenda; and the African Union Agenda 2063 and the subsequent Addis Agenda for Financing for Development.
23. Prevention is the only sustainable cure for the scourge of child labour. Our concerns are addressed specifically to the challenge of child labour, but reflect an integrated decent work approach. We call for an appropriate balance between enforcement – which must always be conducted in the interests of the child but cannot alone eliminate child labour – and a massive increase in resources allocated to eliminating the root causes of child labour, understanding that child labour cannot be eliminated without full respect for all fundamental rights at work.
24. We commit to continuing our cooperation through the International Partnership for Cooperation on Child Labour in Agriculture and the ILO-International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour and Forced Labour. We address our statement to the members and duty-bearers of our organizations, to our partners, our governments, to enterprises, to the international community and to development partners, and call on them, within their respective mandates, to support our key recommendations, which the eradication of child labour in African agriculture and in the wider rural economy require. In particular, we address our shared concerns to the Fourth Global Conference on the Sustained Eradication of Child Labour, to be held in Buenos Aires, 14-16 November 2017.



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