



► Child Labour and Forced Labour in Uganda.

February 2023

Accelerating action for the elimination of child labour in Uganda's tea and coffee supply chain.

ACCEL Africa Project

AT A GLANCE

- **SECTORS:** Tea and Coffee.
- **DISTRICTS COVERED:** Buikwe, Sironko, Mbale, Bulambuli, Kabarole, Hoima and Kikuube.
- **BENEFICIARIES:**
 - Vulnerable children (5-17 years old)
 - Adult workers, families and communities in the tea and coffee supply chains.
 - Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MoGLSD).
 - Employers and workers organizations.
 - Private and Public Sector Enterprises, including Cooperatives; and organisations of small producers/ own account workers operating in the rural and informal economies in the tea and coffee supply chains.
 - Primary schools.
 - Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) engaged in child labour and child protection issues.
- **PARTNERS:** Government at central and district level, Federation of Ugandan Employers (FUE), National Organization of Trade Unions (NOTU), Central Organization of Free Trade Union (COFTU), Kyambogo University, Platform for Labour Action, SOMERO Uganda, Nascent Research and Development Organization (Nascent RDO), Ugandan Women Efforts to Save Orphans.
- **DURATION:** 4.5 years (November 2018 – June 2023).
- **IMPLEMENTATION:** MoGLSD, Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS), FUE, NOTU, Nascent RDO, Kyambogo University, Uganda Cooperative Alliance (UCA).
- **BUDGET:** \$1,767,824
- **DONOR:** The Netherlands.

Child Labour in Uganda

Child labour has increased substantially over the last years in Uganda. In 2017, 14% or 2 million children between the

age of 5 and 17 were found in child labour¹. In 2022, this was risen to 39.5% (37.9% girls and 40.9% boys) or 6.2 million children². In rural areas the prevalence is 42.3%, with Karamoja (55.6%), Lango (52%), Elgon (47%), Busoga

¹ National Household Survey 2016/2017, Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2017.

² National Labour Force Survey, Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2021.

(46%) and Acholi (45.7%) as the subregions with the highest prevalence. Child labour is the highest among the age bracket 5 to 11. Concretely, 58% of the children aged 5-11 are performing work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful and/or interferes with their schooling and as such undermines their potential and the potential and the development of society.

Child labour is found in many economic sectors and predominantly in the agricultural sector. Agricultural sectors in which child labour is reported are sugarcane, rice, tea, coffee, tobacco, livestock and fishing. Other economic sectors who suffer from child labour are the extractive industry (gold mining, sand mining and stone quarrying), construction, domestic services and commercial sexual exploitation.

There are several factors contributing to the prevalence of child labour in Uganda. These are high levels of poverty and vulnerability, the impact of HIV/AIDS and recently COVID-19 and Ebola, very low social protection coverage, limited decent work opportunities, limited legal protection and lack of enforcement, absence or weak realization of other fundamental principles and rights at work³, high and prohibitive cost of education and negative cultural norms.

The drivers of child labour specific related to the coffee and tea supply chain are the farm gate price, the household and rural poverty, food insecurity, high price volatility, weak price negotiation capacity of small producers, the limited added value capacity and the effect of climate change on production. Crop diversification is often put forward as a solution, but this is not always feasible for a smallholder farmer with little financial means. Therefore, any action aimed at prevention and elimination of child labour, needs to be accompanied by an improvement of agro-economic practices and labour-saving techniques and technologies to reduce the engagement of children in child labour.

To reverse this negative trend the MoGLSD adopted the second National Action Plan on the Elimination of Child Labour (NAP) in 2021. The five-year action plan has put forward 5 priority areas: i) a stronger legal, policy and institutional framework, ii) partnerships and coordination, iii) increased access to social protection, education, skills development and social assistance, iv) more research and advocacy, v) robust monitoring and evaluation. Its aim is to reduce child labour with 4% by 2025 and to withdraw and

rehabilitate 100,000 children from child labour and provide skills development training to 200,000 children.

The third National Development Plan (NDP III) 2020/21 – 2024/25 of Uganda also recognizes child labour as one the development challenges, especially in agriculture and mining. Therefore, it prioritizes the strengthening and development of mechanisms to prevent incidences of child labour in the agro-industrialization sector and the provision of a framework for eradication of child labour in the mining industry.

Acknowledging that the private sector and business have contributed to the development of the country, the National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights, which was adopted in 2021, also points out to the negative and undesirable impact of labour exploitation and increased use of child labour. Therefore, it emphasizes the need for a harmonious relationship between business and communities by respecting human rights in business operations through increased compliance of human rights and accountability, remedy mechanisms for victims, coordination, due diligence and capacity building of all stakeholders, including private sector.

Child labour in coffee and tea.

Coffee is Uganda's most important agricultural export product and is widely grown in over 80 districts. In recent years the production and export has increased significantly. In the financial year 2021/22, Uganda exported 6.26 million coffee bags worth 862.28 million USD compared to 6.08 million bags worth 559.16 million USD the previous year⁴. The production of coffee beans is dominated by small-scale producers who are responsible for 53% of the total production. It is estimated that 1.7 million households grow coffee with a mean plot size of less than one acre. The proportion of female-headed coffee households is about 40% (680,000 households).

Uganda is Africa's second largest producer and exporter of tea after Kenya. In 2018, tea was the country's fifth largest export sector - 2.2% of Uganda's total export - and its export earnings were estimated at US\$ 91 million. Close to 80,000 farming households are involved in the production and it supports over 150,000 skilled and unskilled workers. Approximately one million people directly derive their livelihood from tea growing. Tea estates produce 54% of

³ These are freedom of association, collective bargaining, non-discrimination and occupational safety and health.

⁴ [Uganda's coffee exports for FY2021/22 hit 6.26 million bags despite drought, Uganda Development Authority, Kampala, 14/07/2022.](#)

the tea while the smallholder tea growers contribute 46% of the total acreage. Tea is produced in over 25 districts of Uganda.

An ILO labour force demand study in the coffee supply chain⁵ revealed that because coffee growing is labour intensive, done mainly at small-scale level and through the use of rudimentary equipment, most coffee farming households fall short of the required labour. Since smallholder farmers have also limited access to financial services, they opt for the use of child labour to fill the labour gap. In addition to lack of access to finance, smallholder coffee and tea growers face challenges in terms of limited supply of quality inputs, lack of bargaining power with traders and buyers, inadequate marketing channels and adverse effects of climate change on production.

ACCEL Africa Project

To address child labour in supply chains on the African continent, the ILO has been implementing since 2018 the *Accelerating Action for the Elimination of Child Labour in supply chains in Africa* (ACCEL) project. The project intervenes in six African countries⁶ and 5 supply chains⁷. In Uganda, it was decided in consultation with national stakeholders to focus on the tea and coffee supply chain.



Supply Chain and Innovative Approach

The ACCEL Africa project has adopted a supply chain and innovative-systems approach to tackle child labour that moves away from project-based downstream interventions towards strengthening existing systems that are critical to tackle root causes of child labour. Through a supply chain

approach, the ILO focuses mainly on the lowest tiers of the supply chain where child labour is the most widespread. However, other tiers of the supply chain are also targeted through working with informal networks, supply, production and national and international markets. Strong engagement with private sector and with relevant industry bodies and fora as well as with national and global union federations to support adoption and monitoring of responsible business conduct and transparency are an integral component of the project.

To respond to the problem of child labour in coffee and tea growing, ACCEL Uganda provides direct livelihoods support and financial inclusion services to coffee and tea smallholders, technical, vocational and post-training as well as labour market integration support to victims of child labour in the age bracket of 14-17. It also explored the role of Village Saving and Loans Associations (VSLAs) in the fight against child labour through coverage of basic needs of children and sensitizing members within the community on child labour. In addition, the project supported VSLAs in obtaining access to complementary formal services by linking them to formal service providers through digital platforms that can be accessed by basic mobile phones.

OBJECTIVES

The ACCEL Africa project has three result areas:

- 1) **Policy, legal and institutional frameworks are improved and enforced to address child labour in global supply chains**
- 2) **Innovative and evidence-based solutions that address the root causes of child labour in supply chains are institutionalized.**
- 3) **Strengthening partnerships and knowledge sharing among global supply chain actors working in Africa.**

In Uganda, the ACCEL Africa project pursued the implementation of the inter-related result areas 1 and 2.

⁵ Study on labour demand and supply in coffee value chain in Uganda: implications for child labour and social finance services, Nascent Research and Development Organization, 2021.

⁶ Malawi, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Uganda, Egypt and Nigeria.

⁷ Gold, cocoa, tea, coffee and cotton.

KEY RESULTS

1) Policy, legal and institutional frameworks are improved and enforced to address child labour in global supply chains.

- Supported adoption of new National Action Plan on Child Labour (2020-2025).
- Child labour [ILO SCREAM](#) methodology mainstreamed into national curriculum for professional distance education.
- National Child Labour Policy 2006 reviewed.
- Labour Inspection Check List revised to incorporate child labour concerns.
- Supported UBOS to conduct a baseline child labour survey in the tea and coffee sector⁸.

2) Innovative an evidence-based solutions that address the root causes of child labour in supply chains are institutionalized.

- 5,526 children withdrawn from child labour and 1218 children aged 14-17 received vocational and technical training in tailoring, hairdressing, motor-cycle mechanics, welding and computer. Upon graduation, 130 started their own income generating activity, while 49 were retained by their trainer or got other employment opportunities.
- 405 women in VSLAs were supported in enhancing their livelihoods through value addition.
- Approximately 1,000 coffee and tea farmers in 55 VSLAs have onboarded into a [digital platform](#) that supports them in obtaining access to formal financial services and e-learning resources in areas of financial education, good agricultural practices and life skills.
- 1,212 farmers and members of coffee and tea cooperatives received training on child labour elimination in farm activities.
- 20 compliance audits conducted by FUE of some of its members to ascertain existing gaps in their policies and to support them in developing child labour policies.
- 6 radio talk shows on child labour in Mbale organized by NOTU.

- Development of standard guidelines for NOTU members to integrate child labour concerns in collective bargaining agreements.
- 80 participants from 21 private sector companies received support on child labour due diligence. The 80 participants were drawn from the Personnel and Human Resource Managers, Estate Managers, Factory Managers and Out-growers Supervisors.
- 195 district local government officials from eastern and western Uganda were empowered on how to address child labour issues.

LESSON LEARNT

- Engaging employers at different levels and through varying tools and means in accelerating action against child labour has positive effects in promoting more sustainable results.
- Leveraging the power of digital platforms supports vulnerable populations to increase access to financial services for member-based organizations.
- Increase understanding of child labour among coffee and tea farmers, and among private sector actors as well as the negative effects on business operations is an essential requirement to eliminate child labour.



Immaculate Nabilya, beneficiary of life skills and vocational training, Buikwe District, 2022 © Nascent RDO.

⁸ Baseline survey report was validated, but final report not yet published.



VSLA Group meeting in Sironko District, 2022 © Nascent RDO.

LOOKING FORWARD

To scale up the fight against child labour in Uganda and building upon the work done so far by ACCEL Africa, the ILO identifies the following actions for scaling up the prevention and elimination of child labour in Uganda:

- Geographical scaling up of current ILO interventions in coffee and tea value chain to address child labour in other sectors (e.g. sugarcane, cocoa, rice, mining) and promote an [integrated area-based approach](#).
- Increase collaboration with private sector in coffee and tea, including on the aspect of social financing with the private financial sector.
- Explore and pilot use of digital awareness raising platforms on child labour as a cheaper, faster and more effective alternative for traditional awareness raising.
- Improve synergies between social protection mechanisms and prevention and elimination of child labour through increased protection and reduced vulnerability of agricultural workers and people working in the informal economy.



Wamboya Sulaiman, Sironko District, 2022 © Derrick Ssentumbwe, Nascent RDO.

Wamboya Sulaiman is a coffee and banana farmer and father of 18 children. Not making enough income to support the family, he sent his children to the village into child labour to supplement the household income. With support of the ACCEL Africa project, Wamboya joined a VSLA group and got a loan, which he used to diversify his revenue by investing in trading business. His revenue increased and he managed to get some livestock, allowing him to pay the school fees of his children. One of his children in child labour was withdrawn from child labour and received vocational training in mechanics from the ACCEL Africa project. He now works as a mechanic.

Click [here](#) for the full story.

► I was sending my children to the village into child labour to support our family. Nascent RDO together with the ILO took us through life skills and VSLA trainings. I can now take care of my family and pay school fees.

► **Wamboya Sulaiman** / coffee and banana farmer / Sironko District

Accelerating action for the elimination of child labour in Uganda's tea and coffee supply chain.

References

- [Engaging employers at different levels and through varying tools and means in accelerating action against child labour.](#)
- [FUE: A Training Handbook for Employers on Child Labour.](#)
- [Provision of technical and vocational education and training and post-training to vulnerable youth.](#)
- [MobiPay: Using technology to improve family incomes and reduce child labour.](#)
- [Training of private sector companies on child labour and due diligence.](#)



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands

► <https://www.ilo.org/accel-africa>

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