International Labour Organization | ACCEL Africa

Good Practices

Uganda - Engagement of the Federation of Uganda Employers (FUE) in the fight against child labour

Responds to the following criteria

- Responsiveness
- Relevance
- Replicability
- Efficiency
- Effectiveness
- Sustainability.

Main stakeholders

Ministry of Education and Sports; Federation of Uganda Employers (FUE); McLeod Russel Uganda Limited; Bugisu Cooperative Union (BCU).

Description

This practice focuses on the comprehensive work against child labour carried out by the **Federation of Uganda Employers (FUE)**. It portrays the importance of engaging employers at different levels and through varying tools and means in accelerating action against child labour.

FUE is the only umbrella organization representing employers in Uganda, with over 600 direct members and 27 sectoral associations, in which tea and coffee are both represented. The sphere of influence of FUE cuts across the public and private sectors, which is instrumental in creating public-private partnerships to eliminate child labour sustainably.

Furthermore, FUE is a member of a number of the tripartite forums for child labour established in the country, such as the National Steering Committee on the elimination of child labour and other local child labour monitoring committees at national and district levels.

FUE played a crucial role in implementing the Uganda National Action Plan (NAP) for Eliminating All Forms of Child Labour 2020/2021–2024/2025. Under the NAP, efforts by FUE to eliminate child labour had accelerated, especially with the support of ACCEL Africa project. Moreover, within the framework of the NAP's and FUE's commitment against child labour, it underwent a wide variety of activities that complement each other, aiming to target all FUE members but, more specifically, those in the tea and coffee sectors.

To focus efforts within the tea and coffee supply chains, FUE signed Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with McLeod Russel Uganda Limited and Bugisu Cooperative Union (BCU).

McLeod Russel Uganda Limited is the largest tea producer and exporter in Uganda. It includes six tea estates, and was already active in supporting livelihood projects and providing direct services to at-risk children within the tea- and coffee-growing and producing districts. However, after its partnership with FUE, it intensified such efforts. For example, it played a significant role in education and ensuring that community schools were established in the six tea estates it operated in.

The **Bugisu Cooperative Union** (**BCU**) is a Ugandan agricultural cooperative federation, established in July 1954 by a group of coffee farmers. BCU represents 300 cooperatives and smaller associations of coffee farmers. The activities reached many farmers at upper, middle and lower tiers of supply chains, managers of companies, relevant staff, leading farmers and farmers at lower levels of the supply chain.

The activities FUE-BCU implemented in the eastern region were carried out through BCU's network of 300 cooperatives. The types of activity were awareness raising of lead farmers and out-growers in four zones (each zone is three or four sub-counties) in different coffee-growing districts of the country.

These activities were focused on the importance of education and the current national and international legal framework as per the FUE employers' guide. Similarly, district officials (chief administrative officers, community development officers and police officials) received capacity development on child labour laws, policies and strategies. This last enables them to continue the awareness raising process initiated by BCU at the local level through community and council meetings. In addition, some other awareness raising activities carried out through BCU, included leveraging radio communications to inform the audience about the risks of child labour.

Process

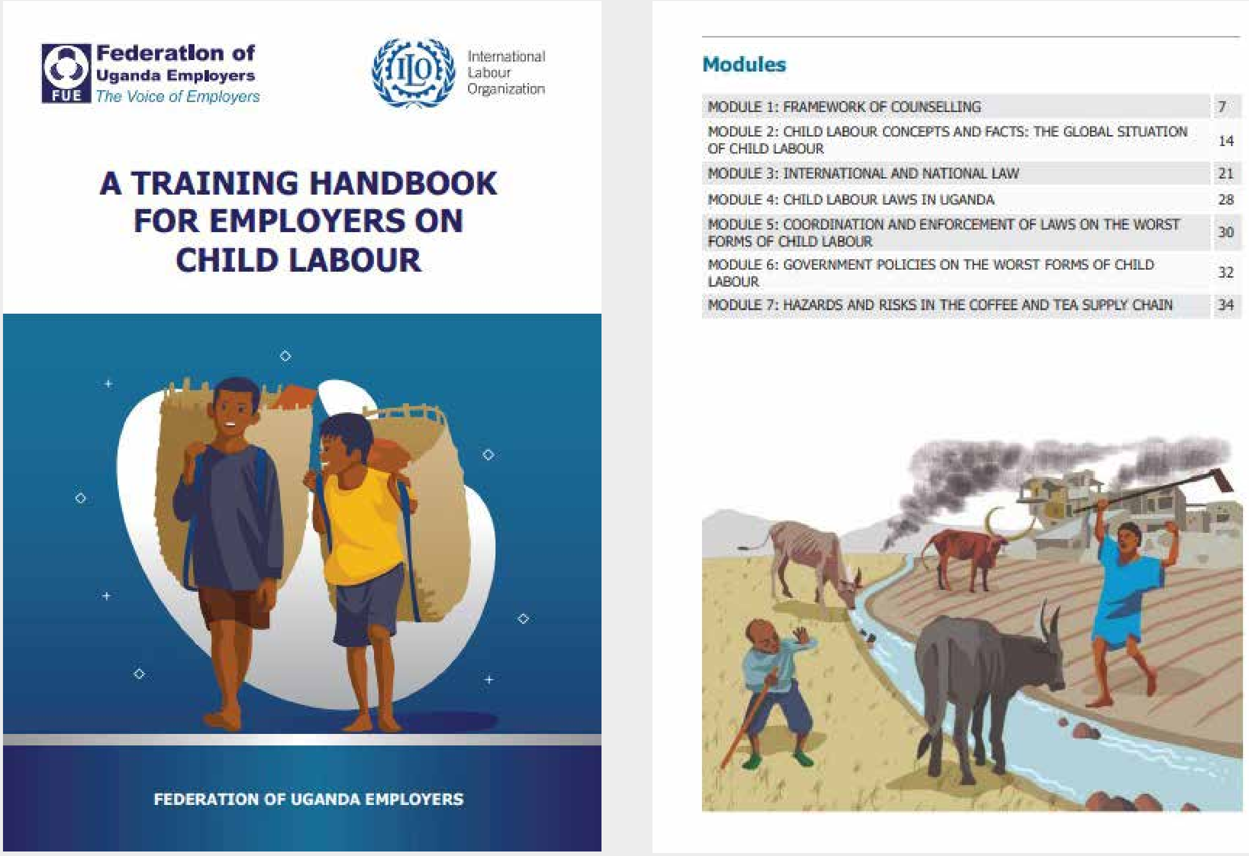
In collaboration with ACCEL Africa, FUE carried out a specific value chain analysis (VCA) in six districts, of which two were in the western tea-growing region and four in the eastern coffee-growing region. These served to assess where child labour is most used in tea and coffee supply chains. The results of this analysis indicated that 53 per cent of children were engaged in child labour alongside their parents. Furthermore, children were estimated to work an average of 8.2 hours per day, which denied them their right to education and rest. This information was very useful for FUE, McLeod Russel Uganda Limited and Bugisu Cooperative Union, as it allowed them to identify the steps to be taken at the different levels of their supply chains to eliminate child labour.

Similarly, FUE conducted a needs assessment of member companies to ensure due diligence, especially regarding child labour in the tea and coffee supply chains, in which the challenges arising from COVID-19 and its effect on child labour were highlighted. The assessment aimed explicitly at the following: learning about employers' knowledge of child labour, especially in supply chains; its potential causes and consequences within their context; and what could be done to prevent it or stop it.

The needs assessment survey was conducted as follows:

Farms	In three separate farms, two in western Uganda dealing strictly with tea and one cooperative society in the east (Bugishu Cooperative Union).
Data collection	28 leaders from different companies and cooperatives were interviewed, and data were collected from at least 60 managers in the tea and coffee supply chains.
Statistical approach	A mixed methods statistical approach was used to carry out the assignment and primary data were obtained from 20 heads of department from Kisaru tea estate, 20 from Bugambe tea estate and 20 zonal leaders from Bugisu Cooperative Union. Secondary data were obtained from the Uganda National Household Survey of 2019/2020.
Training programme	In addition to the information collected, there was an assessment of other training materials and case studies developed elsewhere. When all the information was collected and completed and secondary data consolidated, a training programme was designed and developed into a handbook.
Areas for training	The main areas identified for training included child labour concepts and facts; the global situation of child labour; international and national laws and child labour laws in Uganda; coordination and enforcement of laws on the worst forms of child labour; government policies on the worst forms of child labour; hazards and risks in the tea and coffee supply chains and how to prevent or manage them; and psychosocial counselling.

▶ **Figure 1. Training handbook of the Federation of Uganda Employers (FUE)**



Modules

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It was recommended that training on the above-mentioned topics should be conducted for top-level managers and farm leaders, who would then need to sensitize others along the different levels of the supply chains of tea and coffee.

Handbook

Considering the training needs and gaps identified, a handbook was developed to ensure that companies do not resort to child labour, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic (figure 1). This handbook was used to train 43 key management officials from tea companies.

Legislation, policies and strategies

240 lead farmers from tea companies and coffee cooperatives were sensitized on child labour legislation, the ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) and Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), and policies and strategies for eliminating child labour. They are now champions in the fight against child labour. Sensitization then trickled down to a further 2,400 farmers at the grass-root level, in the lower tiers of the supply chains.

Local government officials

60 local government officials were sensitized from the eastern and western regions (chief administrative officers, internal security organizations, district community development officers, labour officers, Councillors, local council chairpersons and police child protection units).

Employers' guide

Alongside the handbook, an employers' guide on elimination of child labour was also developed by FUE to ensure compliance with the labour laws by all member companies and their supply chains. However, this guide highlights the importance of promoting children's education as a fundamental strategy towards eliminating child labour. The lack of access to education was mentioned frequently within the assessment as one of the main reasons for child labour, in addition to poverty.

National legal framework on child labour

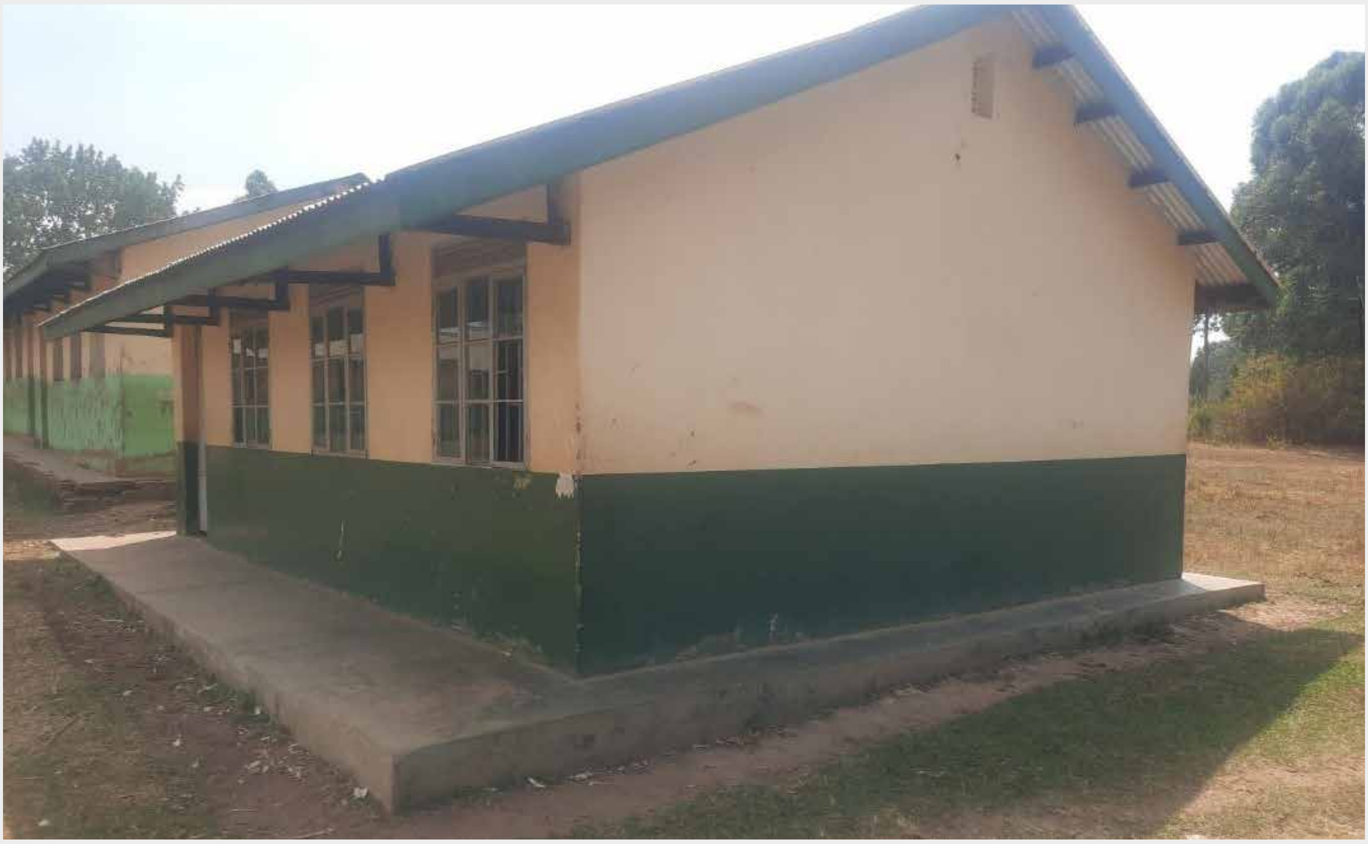
The guide highlights the importance of social dialogue as one of the major tools contributing to the elimination of child labour. In addition, it includes the existing national legal framework on child labour and education and highlights best practices that can help eliminate child labour. Moreover, it provides some directives that employers can take towards eliminating child labour.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR), communal educational and livelihood support

After McLeod Russel Ltd signed the MoU with the FUE:

Support	The company continued to support ten schools by constructing additional classroom blocks with lightning arrestors to accommodate more children for the out-growers. To improve health and sanitary conditions in schools, the company also constructed pit latrines on five estates.
School	The schools originally built by the company were handed over to the Government.
Community schools	As part of their CSR and their aim to prevent child labour in the six tea estates under McLeod Russel, the company established ten community schools within those six estates. Six of these schools were established on land that belonged to the companies, while four others were established on land owned by the local communities.
Educational standards and procedures	All of them were handed over to the Government and the Ministry of Education and Sports to operate as per their educational standards and procedures.
Nursery schools	McLeod Russel also established six nursery schools, one in each of the selected tea estates, alongside the community schools. The nurseries receive children between 3 and 6 years old, while the community schools receive children between 6 and 12 years old.
Medical clinic	Moreover, McLeod Russel Limited also established a medical clinic alongside one of the established community schools. The clinic serves the whole community at subsidized rates.

▶ **Figure 2. Kyabaseke Primary School classroom block built by Bugambe Tea Estate**



▶ **Figure 3. Bugambe Tea Health Centre III (company-owned) which provides free services to company employees and services at subsidized rates for the community**

Awareness raising

Activities for farmers

FUE also carried out different awareness-raising activities for farmers with a set of actors along the tea and coffee supply chains, starting with company managers and lead farmers and continuing with out-growers. In addition, FUE used the public and private media to address the public at large. These activities were carried out using an employers' guide that was developed for that purpose.

Radio and TV talk shows

In addition, five radio and two TV talk shows were held. The talk shows were organized in English and the local languages. They were broadcasted on the national TV stations of Kampala as well as private TV stations. These awareness-raising activities included messages on the dangers of child labour and the importance of education.

FUE campaign

FUE also disseminated information, education and communication materials on the dangers of child labour during the World Day Against Child Labour commemoration to all its member companies, partners and out-growers.

Advisory services

Advisory services

An interesting and unique initiative was studying the potential of having FUE provide advisory services for compliance to member companies based on a partial fee. A feasibility study by the Federation showcased thematic areas of interest for FUE members, who then agreed that the cost of such advisory services would be shared amongst them, 50 per cent to be paid by FUE and 50 per cent by members.

Training package

FUE developed a special training package on child labour due diligence, and member companies had their personnel trained on its use and compliance and due diligence methods, especially from human resources.

Enabling factors

1. The Federation of Uganda Employers had the political will and commitment to fight child labour in all sectors. However, it gave special attention to child labour in tea and coffee supply chains due to their socio-economic significance locally and internationally. This was also the ACCEL Africa project's focus in Uganda. Tea and coffee are major commodities in international trade and therefore have high returns for Uganda.
2. FUE is knowledgeable about the different strategies in the fight against child labour. These included sensitization of companies, creating formal partnerships with key membership companies and mobilizing them to provide extra support for children in selected tea-growing districts, as well as training on child labour due diligence, providing advisory services to companies, raising the awareness of the public at large, and so on.
3. The companies that FUE partnered with had already established some relevant CSR projects and therefore were ready to establish more as needed: it was not something new to them. This was especially true for McLeod Russel.
4. FUE is the sole representative body of employers in Uganda, with over 600 member companies, and this provided an entry point for them.

In brief

Employers' organizations can play an instrumental role in combatting child labour in both the formal and informal sectors, as seen in this practice. Based on carefully assessed needs and ACCEL Africa's support, FUE developed a set of tailor-made tools. These tools were designed with the involvement of company managers and lead farmers, thereby making them appropriate to employers and producers at the grass roots in the tea and coffee supply chains.

Furthermore, **FUE complemented capacity building and awareness raising on child labour with direct services at the field level in the tea estates.** These included the establishment of community schools, nurseries, medical clinics, and wellness and livelihood initiatives. These were especially supported by the largest tea company in Uganda and a partner of FUE, McLeod Russel Uganda Limited. Therefore, FUE provides ideas for a comprehensive approach by employers to child labour rather than a fragmented one.

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