

Education and child labour in agriculture

Access to quality [education](#) in rural areas is key to keeping children out of child labour. Rural areas however are often characterised by a lack of or poor quality of schools and infrastructure, high turnover rates of teachers (especially in remote areas), limited pedagogical materials, curricula with little relevance for rural lives, poor and variable rates of rural school attendance, and lower levels of educational performance and achievement. In addition, children may also have to walk long distances to and from school. Girls face further obstacles, such as traditional attitudes that do not value girls' education. They also may face the risk of abuse during long commutes. Seasonal migration presents an additional challenge for education. Schooling is often disrupted, and even if children have access to schooling at their destination farm, fishing area, or pasture, it can be difficult to rejoin the formal education system upon their return.

Strategies in improving access to education must include minimizing the direct and indirect costs associated with schooling and providing additional incentives for attendance such as school-feeding programmes or conditional cash transfers which improve attendance and performance. Ensuring availability of schools, resources and trained teachers needs to go hand in hand with efforts to tackle cost barriers to access.

School attendance can perhaps be improved by adjusting the school calendar to some short seasonal peaks in agricultural labour demand, but the principle remains that children below the minimum working age should be in school rather than in the field and the engagement in hazardous activities must not be allowed for anyone below-18.

To reach out-of-school children, non-formal or second-chance education can be important for child labour elimination. For those of school age, wherever possible such education should support transition to formal education.

Education should be relevant to the needs of its students and the community. In rural communities relevance can be increased by combining skills for sustainable rural development and safety and health in agriculture together with the general curriculum, for example through approaches such as the [Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools](#).

Ministries of education and member-based organizations representing teachers and other stakeholders have an important role to play in addressing the challenges faced by rural children and eliminating child labour. Under the [Education for All Initiative \(EFA\)](#), every country must systematically and effectively monitor progress towards the EFA goals, including school attendance. This provides an excellent opportunity to monitor children who are missing from school because of child labour.

The [Education Management Information Systems \(EMIS\)](#) is designed to collect and analyze data on the educational system, to improve planning, resource allocation, monitoring, policy formation and decision making and can complement child labour monitoring programmes or initiatives.

Additional information

[The Education for Rural People \(ERP\) Initiative](#)

[IPEC: Rooting out child labour from cocoa farms. A manual for training education practitioners: Ghana \(ILO, 2007\)](#)

Targets education professionals to address the special needs of current and potential child labourers by encouraging them to stay in school and complete their education. The manual was produced under IPEC's West Africa Cocoa/Agriculture Project (WACAP) to combat hazardous and exploitative child labour in cocoa and commercial agriculture. The manual is complemented by a training resource pack for farmers and a series of four papers that synthesizes the knowledge and experiences acquired from implementation of the WACAP programme.