



► Child labour and forced labour in Burkina Faso

February 2023

Eliminating child labour and forced labour in the cotton, textile and garment value chains: an integrated approach The *CLEAR Cotton* and *Towards SDG Target 8.7* projects

Key points

- Projects co-funded by the European Union and the International Labour Organization (ILO) and by Germany (BMZ).
- Duration: 5 years (March 2018 – February 2023).
- Regions covered: Boucle du Mouhoun, Hauts-Bassins, Cascades, South-West, Centre-West, Centre, Centre-East.
- Beneficiaries: Children and their families working at any level of the cotton, garment and textile value chains; victims of forced labour and workers at risk of forced labour; key ministries and other governmental agencies; public regional authorities; employers' and workers' organizations; cotton cooperatives and their organizations; enterprises; media.
- Implementation: by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the local implementing partners.
- Partners: Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Protection (Directorate of the fight against child labour, Regional Directorates of Labour and Social Protection); Ministry of Education, Literacy and Promotion of National Languages (Permanent Secretariat of the Strategy of Accelerated Schooling - SP-SSA/P); National Employers Federation (*Conseil National du Patronat Burkinabè* – CNPB); National trade union (*Unité d'Action Syndicale* – UAS); National organization of cotton producers (*Union Nationale des Producteurs de Coton du Burkina* – UNPCB); civil society organizations; media.

Situation of child and forced labour

The issue of child labour is a major concern in Burkina Faso and the country is committed to combating this scourge through legislative and policy measures. The country has ratified the main international conventions on child labour, including Convention No. 138 on the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment and Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour. The minimum age of employment and compulsory schooling has been set at 16 years, with an exemption for

light work for children aged 13 years or older. Since 2009, the country has had a list of hazardous work prohibited for children, which was revised in 2016.

However, despite these efforts, the eradication of child labour, particularly in the agricultural sector, remains a challenge. Child labour is high in rural households, regardless of their profile or livelihood. Indeed, a study of 2018 on child labour in cotton-producing areas¹ shows that 46.7 percent of children aged 5-17 in these areas are in child labour and 25.7 percent are engaged in hazardous work. The proportion of children involved in hazardous

¹ Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation, 2018, *Baseline study on child labour in cotton producing areas of Burkina Faso*.

work increases with age: 21.7 percent for 5-12 year olds, 32 percent for 13-15 year olds, and 47.6 percent for 16-17 year olds.



Nihani Kohoun, farmer that withdrew his son from the cotton fields, 2021 © ILO

The large number of children working in the cotton sector in Burkina Faso is mainly due to the labour-intensive cotton production system and small family farms, as well as poverty, lack of access to education, and lack of alternative income-generating activities. Many children engaged in cotton-related activities work long hours, well beyond the limit set by the national law, and may receive little or no pay. Children may also handle harmful pesticides and work in isolation, exposed to extreme temperatures, without adequate food or rest, and in conditions that can seriously impair their physical and psychological development. Often, this work comes at the expense of their education.

Child labour in cotton growing, as in most agricultural activities, is particularly difficult to combat due to factors such as the seasonality of agricultural production, migration, lack of technology, workplace hazards and awareness, limited access to schools, weak labour inspection and law enforcement in rural areas, and entrenched social attitudes about the role of children. Children's work is often invisible when they assist their parents. Children also work on a piecework or quota basis on large farms, sometimes within migrant worker families.

Burkina Faso is also committed to combating forced labour, by ratifying ILO Conventions No. 29 (on forced

labour) and No. 105 (on the abolition of forced labour), international and regional conventions on trafficking in human beings, by enshrining the prohibition of forced labour in the Constitution, and by adopting a legislative arsenal on the subject (Labour Code of 2008, Law No. 029-2008/AN on the fight against trafficking in persons and related practices, in particular).

The study carried out within the framework of the project² has shown that forced labour remains a very marginal practice in cotton production. However, it is difficult to say that forced labour is non-existent on cotton farms, as it is hidden and the majority of farms are family-based.

► The collaboration between the ILO and FAO

Child labour has been at the heart of the ILO's mandate since its creation in 1919. As the originator or member of multiple programmes and initiatives (IPEC+; the Alliance 8.7, the World Day Against Child Labour, etc.), the ILO works to address the needs of the 160 million children still in child labour worldwide. In the framework of the CLEAR Cotton project, the ILO decided to rely on the FAO's expertise in rural community development and its tools, such as Dimitra Clubs, Farmer Field Schools (FFS) or Village Savings and Credit Associations. The two organizations therefore acted together through complementary interventions, targeting the same villages or communities.

The projects CLEAR Cotton and Towards SDG Target 8.7

The CLEAR Cotton project aimed at contributing to the elimination of child labour and forced labour in the cotton, textile and garment value chains in target producing countries. The project worked following an integrated approach, both by production area – covering all producing regions in the target countries – and by value chain – acting at all levels of the national cotton value chain. This approach allowed the project to address the basic needs of children and families at risk, working with local and national actors in the cotton sector. The specific objectives were:

- Enhanced compliance with legislative and regulatory frameworks and implementation of policies to eradicate child labour and forced labour in the cotton, textile and garment value chains.

² ILO, 2022, *Les principes et droits fondamentaux au travail dans les sociétés coopératives de producteurs de coton au Burkina Faso: une évaluation des besoins*, PEASA (ILO: Geneva, 2022). Available in French here: www.ilo.org/global/topics/child-labour/publications/WCMS_865655/lang--fr/index.htm.

- Reduced recourse to child and forced labour by local communities with enhanced economic opportunities in selected cotton growing/processing districts.

The project *Towards SDG Target 8.7* supported and extended the actions undertaken within the framework of the CLEAR Cotton project.

Main results

Policy and research

- Support to the development and validation, through a participatory process, of the **National Action Plan 2022-2023 of the National Strategy to Combat the Worst Forms of Child Labour (SN/PFTE) 2019-2023**.
- Support to the **national child labour survey**.
- **130 representatives of communal authorities and members of the Community Child Protection Networks and Cells** were trained to take child labour into account when drawing up communal development plans in 5 communes in the South-West region.
- Study on the **capacity building needs of cotton producers' cooperatives** in terms of fundamental principles and rights at work.
- The National organization of cotton producers (UNPCB) adopted a **strategic plan for the elimination of child labour in cotton production**.

Capacity building

- The child labour inspection system has been strengthened through the development of a **child labour monitoring application**.
- **54 actors of the Strategy for Accelerated Schooling (SSA/P)** - Permanent Secretariat and deconcentrated structures of the Ministry of Education, representatives of implementing partners NGO - have been trained to better take into account the fight against child labour in the implementation of the SSA/P.
- Monitoring of children from SSA/P centres has been improved and strengthened through the implementation of an **integrated and automated SSA/P data management system**.
- **114 employer representatives** (26 trainers and 88 regional representatives) and **102 worker representatives** (42 trainers and 60 regional representatives) were trained to mainstream child and forced labour issues in their actions.
- **78 leaders, technicians and members of cooperatives** were trained to better integrate

fundamental principles and rights at work as well as cooperative principles in the functioning and actions of cotton cooperatives, based on the national study carried out within the framework of the project.

- **34 journalists and communicators** were trained on child labour and how to report on it.

Awareness-raising

- **Communities and cotton producers in the target regions were sensitized of the need to abandon child labour and to send children to school**, through many actions and means (peer-to-peer awareness-raising, Farmer Field Schools, celebration of the World Day Against Child Labour, music competitions, forum theatre, Dimitra club, radio broadcasts, etc.).



Zorata Sama, beneficiary of the SSA/P, 2021 © ILO

Direct support to affected communities

- Establishment of **30 community bodies and 5 child protection networks** in the Hauts-Bassins and South-West regions.
- **978 children aged 9-13 years were withdrawn from child labour** and returned to the formal system through the SSA/P centres.
- **705 children aged 14-17 were withdrawn from child labour and reintegrated via vocational training and apprenticeships** in ten trades and in entrepreneurship.
- **590 households benefited from training, and 500 of them from financial subsidies**, for the development of income-generating activities (IGAs).
- The beneficiaries of the IGAs were structured into **29 Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs)** and linked with local microfinance institutions.

► We no longer see children doing heavy work in the fields. This is not possible, we have raised awareness. The message has been passed on.

► **Jean-Michel Somé** / President, Provincial organization of cotton cooperatives of Ioba.

Good practices

- The capacity building of local actors will contribute to the sustainability of the actions on the ground. Some of them have already planned awareness-raising actions.
- The implementation of the SSA/P has proven to be an effective strategy in the fight against child labour through the (re)integration of out-of-school or drop-out children, thanks to the involvement of parents.
- The complementarity between the schooling and IGA offers, in particular the cash modality targeting women and conditioned on the schooling of children, is a factor in the sustainability of the project's results.
- The inclusive approach has enabled a strong involvement of the project beneficiaries and the information and expectations provided by themselves have been integrated into project's interventions.

Lessons learned

- Eliminating and preventing child labour in agriculture requires an integrated approach, including through close collaboration between labour, agriculture, education and social protection actors, social partners and CSOs.

- In cotton production, child labour is linked to the social understanding of the role of the child, not just to poverty. It is important to complement livelihoods support with broader awareness raising actions.
- Involving producers, smallholders, small and medium enterprises and their umbrella organisations in the direct implementation makes it possible to mobilise actors at the grassroots level so that they take ownership of and adhere to the fight against child and forced labour.

Next steps and challenges

- Support the expansion of SSA/P as an effective instrument to (re)integrate displaced children, who are at high risk of child labour and forced labour, into the formal education system.
- Apply the integrated approach and lessons learned from the CLEAR Cotton project to address the growing problem of child labour in other sectors, including gold panning. Gold panning is considered hazardous work and one of the worst forms of child labour.
- Provide adequate social protection for farming families, to mitigate their vulnerabilities to shocks, on the basis of the data collected by the national household survey (ongoing).

► Resources

- [Project results in Burkina Faso](#)
- [Results of the FAO component](#)
- [Testimony of child beneficiaries of the SSA/P](#)
- [Testimony of a girl beneficiary of vocational training](#)
- [Testimony of a parent who withdrew his child from the fields](#)
- [Music Against Child Labour competition 2021](#)

► www.ilo.org/clearcotton



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