



► Eliminating child labour and forced labour in the cotton, textile and garment value chains: An integrated approach

At a glance



Countries covered

Burkina Faso, Mali, Pakistan and Peru



Duration

5 years: March 2018 – February 2023



Beneficiaries

- Children and their families working at any level of the cotton, garment, and textile production chains;
- victims of forced labour and workers at risk of forced labour;
- key ministries and other governmental agencies;
- employers' and workers' organizations;
- enterprises, and
- media.



Partners

Governments, employers' and workers' organizations, private sector, cooperatives, civil society organizations, media



Implementation

International Labour Organization (ILO)
in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)



Budget

Co-funding by the European Union (€ 7.5 million) and the ILO (€ 1.5 million)

Context

Cotton is one of the world's most widely grown crops and most important agricultural commodities.

It is grown in more than 75 countries. In 2017-2018, the total global production of cotton amounted to 27 million metric tons. Cotton is also the most used textile fiber in the world as it provides the raw material for 40-50% of all textiles in its form as cotton lint.

Directly and indirectly affecting significant portions of the population, cotton production and the textile and garment sectors are responsible for income, food security of millions of farmers' families across regions and employment generation. They occupy a strategic position in the development of poverty reduction policies and programmes. By generating income as an exports commodity, for example, cotton production contributes to the growth of the economy as a whole. Considering its use in the textile production chain, cotton also contributes to the generation of additional income and employment opportunities in various sectors.



Objectives

The project aims at contributing to the elimination of child labour, in all its forms and in particular its worst forms, and forced labour in the cotton, textile and garment value chains in target producing countries. It seeks to promote enhanced national legislation and policies, to address the basic needs and rights of children engaged or at risk of child labour, and of victims of forced labour. The project combines integrated area-based and value chain approaches to cooperate with governments, social partners, local farmers and communities industries.

Outcomes and main activities

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.

- Review the policy, legal and regulatory framework at national level in line with the International Labour Standards, to identify gaps and provide concrete recommendations through tripartite frameworks;
- map the cotton, textile and garment value chain taking into consideration fundamental principles and rights at work;
- collect qualitative and quantitative data collected on the prevalence of child labour and forced labour in the cotton, textile and garment value chains at country level;
- strengthen the institutional capacity of the country through their formal compliance mechanisms for the elimination of child labour and forced labour in the supply chain;
- strengthen the capacity of employers' and workers' organizations in eliminating child labour and forced labour and cotton, textile and garment production workers to exercise their right to freedom of association and other fundamental worker rights;
- develop proposals for the mainstreaming of child labour and forced labour issues into existing national, regional and local policies and social programmes and validate them by key stakeholders.

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

- Develop community-based multi-stakeholder monitoring and remedial mechanisms to combat child labour and forced labour with additional focus on gender issues;
- support due diligence initiatives and grievance mechanisms concerning child labour and forced labour along the value chain;
- strengthen livelihoods of local and vulnerable families and good agricultural practices that are emphatic on not engaging children in child labour and on identifying alternative practices;
- raise awareness on child labour and forced labour in cotton, textile and garment value chains;
- develop model youth and women employment and self-employment schemes and their supporting functions;
- improve children's access to education in cotton production areas.

Addressing child labour and forced labour in the supply chains

The sustainability of the cotton, textile and garment supply chain requires a positive impact on labour issues concerning farmers, workers, their families and communities. To increase the sustainability of the cotton and garment industries, small producers and workers should be empowered to exit from poverty in decent conditions in full respect of their freedoms.

Child labour and forced labour are both present in the supply chain across the globe. Child labour is found in particular in Africa and Asia where cotton production systems are labour intensive and/or dominated by small-holder farms or by tenancy and sharecropping. Child labour is also a particular issue for fashion because most of the producers requires low-skilled labour and short time delivery. Some tasks are perceived to be even better suited to children than adults. In the cotton, textile and garment value chains, there are indicators of forced labour, such as bonded labour, withholding wages, restriction of movement, excessive overtime, abusive working and living conditions involving also adolescent labourers.

As part of past and ongoing initiatives, governments, employers' and workers' organizations, private companies, producers and their organizations, and civil society organizations are reshaping their roles to strengthen the governance and the sustainability of the supply chain, including appropriate mechanisms to eliminate child labour and forced labour.



Global estimates

Child labour

160 million

children aged 5-17 are in child labour



Globally, 160 million children aged 5-17 are engaged in child labour.

79 million

of them are in hazardous work



79 million of which are exposed to hazardous work, one of the worst forms of child labour.

21.6%

of children in Africa

5.6%

of children in Asia



92.2 million is to be found in Africa; 48.7 million in Asia and the Pacific; 8.3 million in the Americas; 2.4 million in the Arab States; 8.3 million in Europe and Central Asia.

20% of African children (1 in 5) are in child labour; 7.4% of Asian children are in child labour.

70%

of child labour is in agriculture



70% of child labour is in agriculture.

Cotton is one of the most common commodities produced with child labour and forced labour in at least 18 countries.

Forced labour

27.6 million

men, women and children are victims of forced labour



27.6 million men, women and children were victims of various forms of forced labour, including forced labour exploitation, forced sexual exploitation and State-imposed forced labour.



The CLEAR Cotton project “Eliminating child labour and forced labour in the cotton, textile and garment value chains: an integrated approach” is co-funded by the European Union (EU) under the Development Cooperation Instrument and implemented by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

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