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Tobacco production and child labour

**Assessment of the situation based on
independent publicly available information**

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Abstract

Tobacco production is often associated with child labour. This work provides information, based on public quotes, of the activities of the tobacco sector in the fight against child labour, through either the Elimination of Child Labour in Tobacco-Growing Foundation, funded by the main tobacco companies, or through individual programmes of the tobacco companies which are described by independent organizations.

The ECLT Foundation is recognised as one of the best examples of industry partnership to fight child labour.

Background

One of the main charges against tobacco-growing is that it is a major cause of child labour.

The Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) has set up a Working Group on economically sustainable alternatives to tobacco-growing. The Working Group summarized in such a way the impact of tobacco growing on child labour: “The study group discussed issues related to exacerbation of poverty by tobacco farming, in particular two issues related to social disruption: bonded labour and child labour. Although contractual arrangements trap farmers in a vicious cycle of debt, leaving them with few opportunities and little time for healthy practices, the tobacco industry has taken no responsibility for the resulting poverty or child labour. Children as young as 5 years of age are used in tobacco farming, contravening basic human rights and labour conventions. The group noted that the International Labour Office supports action against child labour in tobacco growing, particularly through the Eliminate Child Labour in Tobacco Growing Foundation, which has multiple partners, including the tobacco industry”.¹

This small piece of research is based only on data published by independent organizations which have no vested interests in tobacco. There is only a quote from the ECLT Foundation, which can be considered credible as any Foundation registered with and under the supervision of the Swiss authorities.

Some facts on child labour

According to the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC)’s 2011 report², 215 million children around the world work. 53% of them are involved in hazardous work. Agriculture is the sector with the most child labourers.

A recent study by the US Department of Labor highlights that there is evidence of child labour in 70 countries and in 118 sectors (nearly equally divided between agricultural activities and handcraft/industrial activities).³

Some common causes of child labor are poverty, parental illiteracy, social apathy, over population, ignorance, lack of education and exposure, exploitation of cheap and unorganized labor. The HIV/AIDS pandemic adds a new and tragic dimension to the problem of child labour in many countries around the world. Millions of children have been orphaned

¹ FCTC : « Study group on economically sustainable alternatives to tobacco growing (in relation to Articles 17 and 18 of the Convention)”, 4.9.2008, http://apps.who.int/gb/fctc/PDF/cop3/FCTC_COP3_11-en.pdf

² International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), “Children in hazardous work – What we know, what we need to do”, 2011, <http://www.ilo.org/ipecinfo/product/viewProduct.do?productId=17035>

³ US Department of Labor, “List of goods produced by child labor or forced labor”, 2010, <http://www.dol.gov/ilab/programs/ocft/pdf/2010TVPRA.pdf>

by the death of one or both parents from HIV/AIDS. Millions more will be. High mortality among adults in their reproductive and productive prime (15-49 years) and the number of children growing up without a responsible guardian have complex inter-generational impacts on the world of work. With a lack of adult mentors and limited prospects for schooling, children miss out on the developmental skills and technical know-how needed to access decent work in their adult lives. The impact of HIV/AIDS on communities and families undermines the process of socialization of children in its broadest sense, inverting care-giving roles and giving rise to social exclusion and loss of identity.”⁴

The UNICEF database provides some data on the major tobacco producing countries with emerging and developing economies. These data, linked to the US Department of Labor report on child labour, provide some perspective on the issue:

Country	% of population <18 years ^{5, 6}	Orphaned children <17 years ⁷	Orphaned children <17 years as % of total population ^{8, 9}	Evidence of child labour in tobacco ¹⁰
Brazil	31%	No information available	No information available	yes
India	38%	31,000,000	2.6%	no
Malawi	54%	1,000,000	6.7%	yes
Pakistan	46%	4,200,000	2.4%	no
Zimbabwe	47%	1,400,000	11.1%	no
Mozambique	50%	2,100,000	9.1%	yes
Tanzania	51%	3,000,000	6.8%	yes
Zambia	53%	1,300,000	10.2%	yes
Indonesia	31%	4,700,000	1.9%	yes

A very high percentage of children <18 years means that there are fewer adults to provide for them and especially fewer revenues in terms of taxes, which are the normal means for governments to provide funds for infrastructure such as schools. In comparison, in the Western world the percentage of orphans on the total population is <0.6% and the percentage of children <18 years on the total population is around 16% in Europe and Japan, and around 20-25% in Canada and the US, respectively.

Major activities of the tobacco sector to fight child labour

Children work in tobacco growing, since this is a labour-intensive agricultural activity taking place mainly in developing countries. This fact cannot be denied. At the same time it cannot be denied that the tobacco sector is well aware of this problem and it is actively working to solve it. In the same words of the IPEC report mentioned a few lines above, “Agriculture has witnessed some of the best examples of employer leadership in addressing hazardous work of youth. Some of the large industry associations have been involved: cocoa, tobacco,

⁴ IPEC; “Facts on the HIV/AIDS crisis and child labour”, http://www.wotclef.org/documents/fs_hiv_0303.pdf

⁵ UNICEF database, http://www.unicef.org/statistics/index_countrystats.html (as accessed on 27 January 2012)

⁶ World Bank: “Indicator database”, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL>

⁷ UNICEF database, http://www.unicef.org/statistics/index_countrystats.html (as accessed on 27 January 2012)

⁸ UNICEF database, http://www.unicef.org/statistics/index_countrystats.html (as accessed on 27 January 2012)

⁹ World Bank: “Indicator database”, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL>

¹⁰ US Department of Labor, “2009 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor”, www.dol.gov/ilab/programs/ocft/pdf/2009OCFTreport.pdf

sugar, tea and coffee, as well as more localized industries, such as flower production and palm-oil and rubber plantations.”¹¹

In June 1999, the International Tobacco Growers Association (ITGA) and the International Union of Food, Agriculture, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Association (IUF) signed a joint statement on the issue, which was witnessed by the ILO¹². In doing so, the ITGA and the IUF recognised the need to contribute to the elimination of child labour in the tobacco growing sector and to provide children with an upbringing that gives them the best chance to succeed in all aspects of life. Following this first initiative, British American Tobacco (BAT) joined the effort and signed a memorandum of co-operation with the IUF and the ITGA in July 2000. Within this new international partnership, the three organisations agreed to work jointly to combat child labour in tobacco growing. They agreed to involve all the stakeholders in the tobacco sector in order that child labour no longer plays a role in its production. This new partnership was officially launched in Nairobi in October 2000 in an international conference, “Eliminate Child Labour: Establishing Best Practice in Tobacco Farming”, whose objective was to establish a permanent infrastructure to address the issue and provide a framework for ongoing action. Following the Nairobi conference, The ECLT Foundation office was founded in October 2001 in Geneva and registered with the Swiss Department of Internal Affairs. It includes among its members ITGA, IUF, BAT, Philip Morris International, Altria, Japan Tobacco, Imperial Tobacco, Scandinavian Tobacco, Swedish Match, Universal Leaf Tobacco, Alliance One International, Sunel Tobacco Company, Premium Tobacco, and Hail and Cotton. The ILO sits on the Foundation Board as an advisor.¹³ Therefore the ECLT Foundation consists only of tobacco industry (the largest paying base of the Foundation), tobacco growers and trade union in the tobacco sector.

It is clear that child labour is a problem, which poses a great dilemma: how do companies address the presence of child labour in their supply chain, particularly in locations where child labour is relatively common and where there is evidence that removing income-generating opportunities will push children into deeper poverty or other forms of exploitation? As it is well described by the UN Global Compact's Human Rights and Business Dilemmas Forum, there are several options, and the ECLT Foundation is considered as a good example of producing independent research, funding local community-based projects and sharing best practice.¹⁴

The ILO, as a Board advisor of the ECLT Foundation, is well-informed about its activities and when it mentions them, speaks with the highest degree of authority. The Foundation was mentioned in the ILO 2002 report “A future without child labour” as an example of tripartite cooperation.¹⁵

In an interview released to the UN System Network on Rural Development and Food Security in 2003, the then Director of the ILO-IPEC, Mr. Frans Röselaers, quoted three examples of success in reducing child labour with the help of IPEC: one of them is the ECLT Foundation: “Another example is the partnership created with the tobacco industry in several countries in east and south Africa. This partnership tackled child labour by analysing the situation of children workers in small farms and plantations, setting up schools and

¹¹ International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), “Children in hazardous work – What we know, what we need to do”, 2011, <http://www.ilo.org/ipecinfo/product/viewProduct.do?productId=17035>

¹² University of Minnesota, Human Rights Library: “Joint Statement by the International Tobacco Growers' Association (ITGA) and the International Union of Food, Agriculture, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Association (IUF): International Agreement Signals Fight Against Child Labour in Agriculture”, <http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/links/itga-iuf.html>

¹³ Elimination of Child Labour in Tobacco-growing, <http://www.eclt.org/about-us/history>

¹⁴ UN Global Compact, Human Rights and Business Dilemmas Forum : ECLT: Bringing tobacco stakeholders together” , http://human-rights.unglobalcompact.org/case_studies/child-labour/

¹⁵ ILO: “A future without child labour”, 2002, http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/@publ/documents/publication/wcms_publ_9221124169_en.pdf

increasing attendance. The partnership also gave assistance to parents to help them improve their income situation.”¹⁶

In its 2006 report “The end of child labour: within reach”, the ILO again mentioned the IPEC’s partnering and strategic alliances with organizations such as the one in tobacco growing had significant effects in the elimination of child labour.¹⁷

In a different report in 2006, “Child labour, tobacco, AIDS”, the Director of IPEC, Mr. Guy Thijs, declared that “The continuing collaboration between ILO and the ECLT Foundation demonstrates how international organizations and multi-sectorial initiatives of this nature can effectively work together under a shared vision for a world where children do not have to work at too early an age, where their parent can aspire for decent work. IPEC is grateful to associate itself with the ECLT Foundation and hopes to continue to pursue joint efforts for long time in the future.”¹⁸

In 2007, in its magazine “World of Work” the ILO spoke once again of the support given by IPEC to multi-stakeholder initiatives concerning a specific crop and involving stakeholders along the commodity supply chain for that sector, such as the one in the tobacco sector.¹⁹

The trade unions International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers’ Associations (IUF), who are among a founding member of the ECLT Foundation and are the implementing partner of the ECLT projects in Kyrgyzstan, describe in great detail the activities and the achievements of the Foundation²⁰ and quote its work also at major events such as as the ILO Global Child Labour Conference that took place in the Hague in May 2010.²¹

In its 2008 action guide on child labour, another trade union, ITUC, also quotes the ECLT Foundation’s activities as one of the few examples of partnership to achieve results in the elimination of child labour.²²

In a formal submission to the US Government’s Consultative Group to Eliminate the Use of Child Labour and Forced Labour in Imported Agricultural Products, the ECLT Foundation described itself in the following way: “The ECLT Foundation addresses the drivers of child labour in the tobacco-growing sector. ECLT Foundation is a partnership of tobacco growers, tobacco companies and workers’ unions. We work with communities and local government, as well as children, to change attitudes and provide increased access to basic services and livelihoods. ECLT is active in tobacco growing areas where child labour is prevalent. We work in Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, the Philippines and Kyrgyzstan. We have a diverse range of partners including the government in the Philippines, a multilateral agency (ILO) in Tanzania, a workers’ union in Kyrgyzstan and non-governmental

¹⁶ ILO-IPEC/UN System Network on Rural Development and Food Security: “Interview with Mr. Frans Röselaers, Director of ILO’s International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour, 2003, http://www.rdfs.net/news/interviews/0312in/0312in_ILO%20Child%20Labour_en.htm

¹⁷ ILO : « A world without child labour : within reach », 2006, <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/reim/ilc/ilc95/pdf/rep-i-b.pdf>

¹⁸ ILO: “Child Labour, tobacco, AIDS”, 2006,

¹⁹ ILO: The end of child labour: Millions of voices, one common hope”, http://oit.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/--dgreports/--dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_090161.pdf

²⁰ IUF: “Kyrgyzstan: The Project on Eliminating Child Labour in Tobacco Growing: about 3 000 children free from work, the micro credits helping families to eke out”, 2010, http://www.iuf.org/wdacl/2010/02/kyrgyzstan_the_project_on_elim.html#more

²¹ ILO-FAO Workshop : « Political will : Action against child labour in Agriculture », from the ILO Global Child Labour Conference, The Hague, May 2010, http://www.fao-ilo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/fao_ilo/pdf/Political_will_Action_against_CL_in_agr.pdf

²² International Trade Union Confederation ITUC”Mini Action Guide – Child Labour”, 2008, http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/guide_CL_EN_Final.pdf

organisations elsewhere. All projects have national project advisory committees which reflect the tripartite make-up of the ECLT Board (companies, growers and unions).²³

The US Department of Labor acknowledged the work of the ECLT Foundation in Uganda, Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia, Philippines, Kyrgyzstan, and Tanzania, and also the work done by British American Tobacco to eliminate child labour in their supply chain.²⁴

The Global March Against Child Labour, an international movement created to mobilise worldwide efforts to protect and promote the rights of all children, especially the right to receive a free, meaningful education and to be free from economic exploitation and from performing hazardous work, acknowledges the contributions of the ECLT Foundation and welcomes closer collaboration with a multi-stakeholder initiative in the tobacco sector.²⁵

The ILO and the International Organization of Employers, together with the US Business Council and the US Chamber of Commerce held an international business forum to address child labor and described the ECLT Foundation's activities as an example among the six sectors chosen.²⁶

In the ten years of activity the ECLT Foundation invested in projects with a holistic approach in several tobacco producing countries: Kyrgyzstan, Malawi, Mozambique, Philippines, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

- Kyrgyzstan: the ECLT has supported projects in Kyrgyzstan since January 2005, which have been implemented by the agricultural trade unions who have set up a system of micro-credit for tobacco farmers.²⁷ The projects were also highly commended by a research of the American University in Central Asia: "Compared to the state program that I described above, this one is a small scale project; however it is one of the most effective approaches to eliminate one of the worst forms of child labour. Giving the micro credit for farmers with low interest rates is a positive externality: Bai-Tushum has their 8% interest rate, farmers are equipped with better agricultural equipments, community is aware of the negative consequences of child labour, and the most important outcome is that child labour in tobacco growing is reduced."²⁸
- Malawi: The Foundation has supported projects in Malawi since it was created. The first project (2002-2006), under the coordination of TECS, was implemented by CRECCOM, the Nkhoma Synod and Total Land Care.²⁹ The Government of Malawi is involved in the projects as a member of the steering committee.^{30, 31} The second project (2006-2010), was coordinated first by TECS and successively handed over to

²³ ECLT Foundation, "Submission to Consultative Group to Eliminate the Use of Child Labour and Forced Labour in Imported Agricultural Products", http://www.fas.usda.gov/info/Child_labor/ECLT.pdf

²⁴ US Department of Labor: "Annotated Bibliography of Standard Practices to Reduce Child Labor and Forced Labor in Supply Chains", 2011, <http://www.dol.gov/ILAB/programs/ocft/2011-Std-Pract-Reduce-Child-Forced-Labor-Supply-Chains-AB508.pdf>

²⁵ The Global March Against Child Labour : <http://www.globalmarch.org/news/090611.php>

²⁶ ILO/OIE/US Business Council/US Chamber of Commerce : « International Business Forum on Engaging Business - Addressing Child Labor", 2009, http://www.ioe-emp.org/fileadmin/user_upload/documents_pdf/international_level/child_labour/atlanta_casestudies.pdf

²⁷ IUF: "Kyrgyzstan. The Project on Eliminating Child Labour in Tobacco Growing: about 3 000 children freed from work, the micro credits helping families to eke out", <http://www.iuf.org/wdacl/> (as accessed on 13 January 2012)

²⁸ J. Nurkulova, American University in Central Asia ICP: "Analytical materials - Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor in Kyrgyz Republic", <http://www.open.kg/en/analytics/?id=135> (accessed on 13 January 2012)

²⁹ Total Land Care: "Integrated Child Labour Elimination Project (ICLEP)", <http://www.totallandcare.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=%2F5OVjcMx4U4%3D&tabid=79&mid=423>

³⁰ UNHCR: "Malawi", <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/4e8c39841a.pdf> (as accessed on 10 January 2012)

³¹ UN Department of Labor: "Malawi", <http://www.dol.gov/ilab/media/reports/tda/tda2008/Malawi.pdf>

CRECCOM and was implemented by CRECCOM, Total Land Care, LifeLine Malawi and the Nkhoma Synod, and was further extended into 2011. The current project (2011-2015) is coordinated by Save the Children and implemented by Save the Children, CRECCOM, Total Land Care and Yonoco.³²

- Mozambique: ECLT funded a project coordinated by the American Institutes for Research in 2007-2009.³³
- Philippines: ECLT funded projects implemented by the Department of Labour from 2003 to 2009.^{34, 35, 36}
- Tanzania: ECLT funded two projects which were coordinated by with the ILO, the first from 2003 to 2006³⁷ and the second from 2007 to 2010^{38, 39}. The current (2011-2015) project is coordinated by Winrock International.⁴⁰
- Uganda: ECLT funded three projects with the local NGO CODECA in 2003-05⁴¹, in 2006-08 which was extended to 2009, and again in 2010-2012.
- Zambia: ECLT funded two projects which were implemented by the local NGO Hodi in the Southern Province: one from the end of 2005 to the end of 2008⁴², extended then to 2009, and the other from 2010 to 2011.

Best practice

Tobacco companies' activities on the elimination of child labour are not only limited to the ECLT Foundation. Companies have either independent programmes or work in cooperation with governmental agencies or non-governmental organizations.

Examples of independent programmes in Malawi are described in a report that the Government of Malawi submitted to UNICEF in 2005. These programmes range from the activities on the elimination of child labour of the tobacco growers' association and the tobacco exporters' association, the employment policies, the construction of schools, food security, health and sanitation.⁴³

³² Indian-NGO.com: "Malawi NGO's launch US\$ 8m anti-child labour programme", http://www.indian-ngo.com/2011/11/latest-ngos-news-part-1-dated-on_30.html

³³ American Institutes for research: "Independent Midterm Evaluation of the Reducing Exploitive Child Labor in Mozambique (RECLAIM) Project", 2007, http://www.dol.gov/ilab/projects/sub-saharan_africa/Mozambique_RECLAIM_meval.pdf

³⁴ Letter from the Philippines Ambassador Mr. W:C: Gaa to the US Secretary of Agriculture Hon. T. Vilsack, 4.5.2010, http://www.fas.usda.gov/info/Child_labor/Philippines_on_childlabor_in_Agri_2010.pdf

³⁵ Department of Labour, Philippines: "Philippine Program Against Child Labor Plan of Action 2008-2010",

³⁶ United States Department of Labor: "2007 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor – Philippines", <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/48caa48837.html> [as accessed on 13 January 2012]

³⁷ ILO: "IPEC action against child labour 2006-2007: Progress and future priorities", <http://www.ilo.org/ipecinfo/product/viewProduct.do?productId=7650>

³⁸ ILO: "Project profile – Towards sustainable action for prevention and elimination of child labour in tobacco farming in Urambo district, Tanzania ", http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/afpro/daressalaam/download/urtproject_profile.pdf

³⁹ ILO: "Combating Hazardous Child Labour in Tobacco Farming in Urambo District, Phase II – UTSP, Tanzania", http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_mas/---eval/documents/publication/wcms_126633.pdf

⁴⁰ Winrock International: "Fact sheet: Prosper: Eliminate child labour in tobacco farming in Tanzania", <http://www.winrock.org/fact/facts.asp?CC=6366&bu=>

⁴¹ United States Department of Labor, "2006 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor – Uganda", http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/publisher_USDOL_UGA_48d7495923.0.html

⁴² HODI website, "The Elimination of Child Labour in Tobacco Growing (ECLT)", Project background profile (as downloaded on 12.1.2012), <http://www.hodi.org.zm/index.php?sid=1888>

⁴³ Ministry of Gender, Child Welfare and Community Services of Malawi: "Study on violence against children in Malawi", 2005, <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/CRC/docs/study/responses/malawi.doc>

The Ministry of Labour of Malawi, in the submission of a project proposal to Plan International, also quotes the training provided by the leaf merchant Limbe Leaf Tobacco Company, a subsidiary of Universal Leaf Tobacco, to growers on the issue of child labour.⁴⁴

In Kazakhstan, the NGO's Verité describes the activities of Philip Morris International in ensuring that farmers have fair conditions of employment.⁴⁵ In the NGO's words "the company has demonstrated its intention to improve its social performance by taking a range of concrete initial steps, and shown a willingness to engage with Verité and other stakeholders about how to address labor practice issues. We will work with PMI to ensure that the company's new policies and practices will be effectively implemented and over time lead to tangible improvements for workers on tobacco farms."

In Brazil the tobacco sector joined forces in 1998 to fight the work of children and youngsters in tobacco field and to promote the education of tobacco farmers' children. This programme, called "O futuro é agora! (The future is now)", was then developed into a larger programme "Crescer Legal (Grow legal)": it is a joint action of the Tobacco Industry Syndicate Sindifumo, associated companies and the Association of Brazilian Tobacco Growers Afubra. Its objective is to prevent and fight the work of children and youngsters in tobacco growing through raising awareness among farmers and the community and also through social projects promoted by the members of the programme, with the approval and participation of public and private organizations at national and international level. In 12 years the programme approached more than 180,000 tobacco farmers in the Southern states of Brazil and them aware of the rights of children and youths and of the importance of children's education, working alongside different partners in the tobacco sector, companies, organizations and authorities.⁴⁶

Cooperation between the tobacco sector with government takes place in Argentina, where the National Commission for the Eradication of Child Labor organizes workshops with tobacco on child labor⁴⁷ and tobacco companies are part of the Company Network against Child Labour.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Government of Malawi: " Kasungu district action plan on child labour - Presented to the Chief Executive Officer - Nigerl Chapman, Plan International", 13.1.2010

⁴⁵ Verité: "Verité statement on the release of our report to Philip Morris International on tobacco farming in Kazakhstan", http://www.verite.org/sites/default/files/images/Verite_Report_for_PMI_on_Kazakhstan-2_May_2011.pdf

⁴⁶ Crescer Legal: "Program for the Eradication of Child and Adolescent Labor in the Cultivation of Tobacco", <http://www.crescerlegal.com.br/v1/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/folder-Crescer-Legal-SindiTabaco.pdf> (as accessed on 13 January 2012)

⁴⁷ United States Department of Labor: "2008 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor – Argentina", 2009, <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country..USDOL..ARG..4aba3ef2c.0.html>

⁴⁸ Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security, Argentina : « Red de Empresas contra el Trabajo Infantil", <http://www.trabajo.gov.ar/conaeti/institucional/infantil.html> (accessed on 13 January 2012)