



Governments urged to act on child labour

Today, *Eliminating Child Labour in Tobacco Foundation* (ECLT) joins forces with the International Labour Organisation (ILO), IUF¹ and global agricultural agencies to call for action to end child labour in tobacco and agriculture.

The agricultural sector employs nearly 70 per cent of child labour globally – that is 132 million girls and boys aged between 5-14 years old. This is of particular concern as agriculture is one of the most dangerous and under-regulated industries, along with mining and construction. Child labour is common in areas and countries where tobacco is grown.

'Child labour denies children their right to an education and a route out of poverty. When children don't go to school they are less likely to send their own children to school, creating a self-perpetuating cycle. The main driver for child labour is poverty, for which there are no simple solutions. However governments could be doing more to prioritise this issue. ECLT and our partners are supporting Governments to act against child labour. We call on international donors to support Governments more on this,' explains Joanne Dunn, Executive Director of the ECLT Foundation.

ECLT's programmes have shown how an holistic approach to the issue can bring about lasting impacts for children. ECLT programmes tackle both the causes and the symptoms of child labour. With ECLT partners based in Kyrgyzstan, Malawi, the Philippines, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia, the Foundation is calling on governments to take action in four key areas.

1) Governments should apply laws on child labour. There are many laws in place protecting children and prohibiting child labour but these laws are not always enforced. Government should apply the minimum legal working age to jobs in agriculture by funding enforcement mechanisms including inspectorates. The Government should also prohibit hazardous work for all children under 18 and define the list of hazardous activities as is required by their ratification of ILO's Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention 182.

2) The most important contributor to child labour is poverty. Governments should ensure that its poverty reduction strategies support the elimination of child labour. They should lobby donors to fund this as a key aspect of their social protection agendas.

3) Another issue that makes children more vulnerable to child labour is the lack of access to good quality education. Governments should be supported to overcome the gap in education between

¹ International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations

urban and rural areas. They should make efforts to provide education either free or at a cost that parents can afford. Governments should ensure that their education programmes include rehabilitation and access to education for child labourers as part of the 'education for all' agenda.

4) Governments should pay special attention to the needs of orphans and vulnerable children who are more at risk of becoming child labourers. Governments should work with multinational employers, unions and other groups to support orphans and vulnerable children and ensure they are not exploited.

UN agencies (ILO-IPEC², FAO³ and IFAD⁴) have joined forces with IUF and producers' organisations⁵ to raise visibility of child labour in the agricultural sector. Their aim is to address child labour in agriculture, especially hazardous child labour, as part of the growing worldwide movement to eliminate child labour. The World Day Against Child Labour 2007 marks the beginning of this new and important partnership. **Ends**

Notes to Editor:

1) The ECLT Foundation is an innovative and unique initiative, which is supported by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), and aims to combat child labour in tobacco growing. Its members are representatives of the trade unions, the tobacco growers and corporate sector, including:

- the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers Associations (IUF);
- the International Tobacco Growers Association (ITGA);

ECLT partners' Steering Committees also have representation from producers, companies, unions, government representatives and the ILO. The projects comprehensively address the causes and impacts of child labour. The approach offers an excellent example of how other players, donors, NGOs and government, can mainstream child labour policies into all areas of their work.

2) What is child labour?

Child labour is work that harms children's well being and hinders their education, development and future livelihoods. Child labour is work which, by its nature and the way it is carried out, harms, abuses and exploits the child or deprives the child of an education.

Hazardous child labour is work in dangerous or unhealthy conditions that could result in a child being killed, or injured or made ill as a consequence.

Not all work that children undertake in agriculture is bad for them or is work that we seek to eliminate. Age related tasks that are of lower risk and that do not interfere with children's schooling or right to leisure time are not at issue.

² International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC)

³ Food and Agricultural Organisation

⁴ International Fund and Agricultural Development

⁵ International Federation of Agricultural Producers