



## ECLT Foundation Programme in Kyrgyzstan, 2005-2007

# Elimination of Child Labour in Tobacco-Growing in Kyrgyzstan

### Description of the Programme

#### Programme background

A piece of research conducted in 2001 by the International Labour Organization and its Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (ILO/IPEC) established the prevalence of child labour in Kyrgyzstan, including in agriculture.



Highlighted regions where the programme will be implemented

- A study commissioned in 2003 by the International Union of Food and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF) estimated that among child labourers employed in agriculture, 50% were engaged in seasonal work, 28% in part-time and 22% in full time work. 80% of the child labourers surveyed mentioned that poverty was the main factor forcing them to work.
- Although tobacco production has dropped in Kyrgyzstan since independence in 1991, it still is an important crop, which is mainly grown in the southern district of Osh and in the western region of Ala Buka.
- The Kyrgyz government has ratified ILO Conventions 138 (Minimum Working Age), 182 (Worst Forms of Child Labour) and 184 (Safety and Hygiene in Agriculture).

### Programme objectives

#### Micro-credit unions

Rural poverty is the main reason behind child labour in Kyrgyz tobacco-growing. The main obstacle for small growers to improve their living standards is the lack of opportunities to access micro-credits, due to high interest rates. Therefore, providing tobacco farmers with micro-credit facilities has been identified as the most efficient method of improving their living conditions and livelihoods. As a result, it becomes easier for them to send their own children to school and hire an adult workforce instead.

A cooperation agreement has been signed with the largest micro-credit institution in the country, Bai Tushum, which was set up in 1994 by the World Bank, USAID and the Swiss Cooperation Agency. This semi-commercial institution has developed into a big success with a credit reimbursement rate between 90 and 100 per cent.

Through Bai Tuhsum, micro-credits will be provided to groups of farmers, each group comprising of around 10 farmers, most of them involved in tobacco-growing. 30 to 35 such groups will be set up. USD 2,500 will be provided to each group, with an annual

interest rate of 8% (compared with up to 30% in commercial credits). Thanks to these micro-credits, small-scale projects will be developed by each group and focuses on:

- purchasing (or renting) agricultural equipment;
- crop diversification, purchasing fertilizers and high quality seeds;
- hiring adult workers during the tobacco crop peak seasons;
- developing irrigations schemes;
- renting additional land.

Farmers in each group will share co-responsibility for returning the credit and guaranteeing that they will not use child labour. Total amount of micro-credits provided under the programme will be: US\$75,000.

### **Awareness-raising on child labour**

24 workshops on the hazards and consequences for children involved in tobacco-growing will be held with farmers, women and youth organisations, teachers and councils of the elderly. Leaflets and posters will be produced in Kyrgyz, Uzbek and Russian languages. National and local media will be used.

### **Development of cooperatives**

Following the collapse of the Soviet collective farming system (kolkhoz), each farmer works individually, usually on a very small piece of land. There is therefore the need to develop new forms of democratic cooperatives so that these farmers benefit from gains of larger scale infrastructure. Experts will be hired to help develop four to six cooperatives.

### **Other support**

- Provide assistance to 300 of the most vulnerable families (school material, school uniforms)
- Provide assistance to schools (equipment, textbooks, etc)
- Provide medical assistance to 300 vulnerable children.

### **Programme direct beneficiaries**

1,200 children and their families will be targeted under the programme implementation.

### **Expected results at the end of the programme**

The local population is aware of the hazards linked to the use of child labour and is convinced by the necessity to fight against it

Farmers have improved their livelihoods and living conditions thanks to micro-credits and cooperatives. As a consequence:

- There is a decrease in the use of child labour;
- There is an increase in school attendance and decrease in school drop-outs;
- The adult workforce is hired instead of children;
- Schools are better equipped and have become more attractive.

### **Programme structure**

A steering committee has been set up and registered officially in Bishkek. It comprises: representatives of trade unions - Agricultural Workers Union (AWU), which is a member of the IUF; tobacco companies - Imperial (Reemtsma), Dimon and Stansun; UNICEF; "New Generation Programme" - a child development programme under the auspices of the Prime Ministers' Office; the Ministry of Agriculture.

A programme coordinator has been hired and is based in AWU's office in Osh. Progress visits will be undertaken on a regular basis by members of the steering committee. An external and annual financial audit will be performed.

The programme will be implemented in two districts: Nookat and Ala Buka.

### Budget

The overall programme budget is USD 170,000 spread over two years. The breakdown is as follows:

Micro-credits	46%
Awareness-raising	12%
Other material support	12%
Administration, monitoring	24%
Contingency and audit	6%
	<b>100%</b>

The programme has started in February 2005 and will end in January 2007.

### Further information on programme

For the latest documents on the programme visit the Kyrgyzstan page in the Projects and Progress section on [www.eclt.org](http://www.eclt.org).

Geneva, 1 March 2005