



ECLT Foundation Programme in Kyrgyzstan, 2010-2013

Elimination of Child Labour in Tobacco-Growing in Kyrgyzstan

Description of the programme

Programme background

A piece of research in 2001 established the prevalence of child labour in Kyrgyzstan, including in agriculture. ECLT programmes run since 2005 have established successful interventions to reduce child labour in tobacco growing. A third and final phase of the programme will create sustainable mechanisms to eliminate child labour through increased family income and integration of alternative labour.



Highlighted regions where the programme will be implemented

- 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.
- According to the "Hygiene assessment of working and health conditions of children working in tobacco industries of agriculture in the Kyrgyz Republic" study financed by the ILO/IPEC children involved in tobacco industries are exposed to the following conditions:
 - High air temperature;
 - Low relative humidity;
 - Increased level of solar radiation;
 - Stringing tobacco leaves in dusty, poorly aerated premises;
 - Cold from damp tobacco leaves through contact (during collection and stringing tobacco leaves);
 - Intoxication by tobacco alkaloids, pesticides, mineral fertilizers;
 - Using water from ditches which contain pathogens of infectious and parasitological diseases (helminthosis, lamblia, and others), toxic chemicals.

As a result of working in such conditions children get sick. Nearly a third of working children suffer diseases of blood and hemopoietic organs. One in five children suffer infectious and parasitological diseases.
- 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

Increased awareness of the consequences of child labour and strengthened project mechanisms that capitalising on local resources

Working Groups established during previous ECLT programme phases will be strengthened to manage project activities. This will include supervision and evaluation of the project. Working groups will organise awareness raising activities through education, health care and local self-government authorities. The newly established village health committees will be involved and there will be work on reaching schoolchildren through self-governance bodies (school parliaments). The project will collaborate with Family and Children Support Departments, which were created under rayon (district) state administrations. In the beginning the activities will be focused on collection of quality information on working children in the rayon. This data will identify the priority areas for the local Working Groups.

World Day Against Child Labour on 12 June will be marked each year to raise awareness about the negative consequences of child labour. Activities will include picture, composition, photo and essay competitions. Such activities will be organised in association with the rayon Education Departments and Child Creativity Centre. A social awareness clip on child labour will be shown on public TV broadcasting nationwide.

Improved living standards of farmers in more tobacco growing areas

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 adults.

In the third phase, the project will be expanded to eight local state administrations in Nookat, where tobacco production is the primary type of plant production. It will also continue to work with current mutual aid groups in Alabuka. 74 groups in 37 villages in Nookat and 19 groups in Alabuka will be supported with microcredits, a total of 93 Mutual Aid Groups in two rayons.

The creation and development of credit unions and farmers' cooperatives

Following the collapse of the Soviet collective farming system, each farmer works individually, usually on a very small piece of land. There is therefore a need to develop new forms of democratic cooperatives so that farmers benefit from the efficiencies of working with large scale infrastructure. Working in cooperatives also allows the joint purchase of machinery which also negates the need to use child labour. The project will harness the increased support for cooperatives from both the Government and GTZ the German Technical Development Agency.

During the third phase, the project will facilitate creation of cooperatives in project rayons and provide assistance to procure agricultural machinery. From the beginning of 2010 the project will help farmers working in cooperatives, by allocating loans for machinery for two to three years. The technical credit will be given out through an independent microcredit agency that is disbursing credits to farmers' groups.

Improved family access to social services

The project will:

- Enable 200 former child labourers to enjoy a ten day summer school. Summer school includes information about children's rights, physical activities and play;
- Address the medical complaints of former child labourers by establishing a medical rehabilitation centre;
- Provide financial assistance to secondary schools in project areas to ensure provision of vocational training in alternative forms of employment;
- Provide income generating assistance, through mutual aid groups, to the most vulnerable families in each of the villages targeted.

Direct beneficiaries

3,000 children and their families will benefit directly from the programme. A further 34,000 children will be reached through their schools with information about the hazards of child labour and their rights.

Expected results at the end of the programme

The local population is aware of the hazards linked to the use of child labour and no longer believes it acceptable to either use child labour or subject their own children to 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 options for children.

Programme structure

A central Working Group has been set up. It comprises: representatives of trade unions - Agricultural Workers Union (AWU), which is a member of the IUF; tobacco companies - Alliance One Tobacco Osh, Imperial (Reemtsma); relevant government ministries; international agencies - ILO/IPEC and UNICEF; the Child Protection Centre, Save the Children and the Centre of Solidarity. The Working Group meets quarterly to give strategic input and oversight to the project.

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

Budget

The overall programme budget is US\$552,909 over four years. This final phase of the programme starts in January 2010 and ends in January 2013.

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.

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