

# FAO and its work on the elimination of child labour in agriculture

Agriculture, including fisheries, aquaculture and forestry, employs most of the world's working children and, at the same time, is the sector with the least progress in the elimination of child labour. FAO recognises the strong need to work progressively towards ending child labour in agriculture.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that worldwide 215 million children, aged between 5 and 17 years, are child labourers, of which 115 million are engaged in hazardous work. ILO also estimates that **60% of the world's child labourers, about 129 million, are working in agriculture.**

The overwhelming majority of boys and girls working in the agricultural sector are unpaid family workers, as only one in five of them is paid for their work. This means that their participation in the labour market is mostly hidden and informal which makes it more difficult to identify these child labourers and to adequately apply mechanisms for the prevention and elimination of child labour in this sector.

Gender differences are also embedded in the nature of children's work. Rural children, particularly girls, often begin to work at a very young age, when they are 5 to 7 years old. Girls are particularly disadvantaged as they undertake household chores in addition to agricultural work and therefore tend to work more hours than boys. In general, rural girls are more likely to work as domestic labourers and are more involved in post-harvest activities while rural boys are more likely to engage in handling of livestock or fishing.

## Preventing child labour in agriculture

Many child labourers in agriculture work in hazardous occupations since, according to ILO, agriculture is among the most dangerous work environments. However, boys and girls are often exposed to different work-related physical and mental hazards because of the gendered division of their tasks.

According to ILO conventions, child labour is work that harms children's well-being and hinders their education, development and future livelihoods. When children are forced to work long hours in the fields, their ability to attend school or skills training is limited, preventing them from gaining education that could help lift them out of poverty in the future.



FAO, a founding member of the International Partnership for Cooperation on Child Labour in Agriculture (IPCCLA), is committed to contributing towards the elimination of child labour in agriculture. Since the adoption of the Partnership in 2007, the organisation has been working on a number of activities and interventions for the prevention and elimination of child labour in agriculture. Some of these include:

## Expert workshop on child labour in fisheries and aquaculture

FAO organised, in collaboration with the ILO, a workshop of experts on child labour in fisheries and aquaculture, from 14-16 April 2010. Core recommendations of the workshop have informed The Hague Global Child Labour Conference (May 2010) and have been considered in the preparation of the new work plan of the IPCCLA.

## Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools (JFFLS)

JFFLS is a programme designed by FAO's Rural Employment Team which promotes decent employment and entrepreneurship among rural youth. It aims to empower vulnerable youth and provide them with the livelihood options and gender-sensitive skills needed for

long-term food security while reducing their vulnerability to destitution and risky coping strategies. JFFLS was initiated in 2004 and operates in several countries in Africa, the Middle East and South Asia. It contains a child labour prevention training module. (see also Dimitra Newsletters 13 and 18)

## Study on child labour in agriculture in Ghana

In 2007/08 FAO contracted and technically supported the Humboldt University of Berlin to conduct a country study on child labour and children's economic activities in agriculture in Ghana. The study focuses on child labour in artisan fisheries and livestock keeping and also builds on lessons learned from studies on child labour in the cocoa sector.

More information can be found on the joint FAO-ILO website:  
[www.fao-ilo.org/fao-ilo-child](http://www.fao-ilo.org/fao-ilo-child)

## FAO Focal Point for Child Labour Prevention in Agriculture:

Bernd Seiffert,  
FAO Rural Employment Team,  
E-mail: [bernd.seiffert@fao.org](mailto:bernd.seiffert@fao.org)

If you are aware of good practices that have effectively reduced child labour in agriculture, we would be very interested to hear about your experience!