

Conference on Child and Youth
Migration in West Africa
9th-10th June, 2009
Accra, Ghana.

**Child and Youth Migrants' Working
Conditions especially in Agriculture
in Rural Areas**

Background

- The Agriculture sector is the area where over 70 percent of child labour/work can be found(IPEC,2006)
- Estimates have it that about 132 million children under 15 years of age work on farms and plantations all over the world
- Boys , girls and the youth have historically been and continue to be part of the world's workforce in the Agriculture sector in rural areas.

Background(con't)

- As the majority of work in rural areas is agriculture, 9 out of 10 working children in rural areas are engaged in agriculture.
- The sheer numbers of children involved in agriculture child labour/work and other characteristics makes very challenging to manage.
- What is more disturbing is that many of the world's child labourers/workers in agriculture undertake hazardous labour i.e work that can threaten their lives, limbs, health and general well being

Background (con't)

- In terms of fatalities, agriculture ranks second only to mining. Agriculture is also a sector where many children are denied education.
- It serves as a barrier to access to education and/skills training and generally presents them with limited possibilities of economic and social mobility and advancement in later life.

Age of entry

- Children become farm labourers/workers at a very early age
- Many children, particularly rural children begin work as young as age 5, 6 or 7.
- However, it is those who are aged 10 and above that are usually captured by official statistics.
- The work that children perform in agriculture is often not visible and unacknowledged because they assist their parents or relatives on the family farm or they undertake piecework or work under a quota system on plantations or larger farms, often as part of migrant workers.

Characteristics

- Child migrant workers may come from a different part of a country or other countries. Wherever they come from, they are often heavily disadvantaged in terms of remuneration/pay, social protection, housing and medical protection
- The migrant labour force often consist of whole families, although only the head of the family may be the only one formally employed in most cases

Characteristics(con't)

- In many situations children of migrant workers work next to their parents but do not appear on the payroll.
- Children who work alongside their parents may have been accompanying them to the fields from infancy.
- Migrant and seasonal workers need their children to work in order to achieve a living wage as much work is paid on a piece- rate basis.

Studies/Assessments.

- In the year 2002, study on child labour on some 1,500 cocoa farms in Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana and Nigeria was carried out by the Sustainable Tree Crops Programme of the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture in cooperation with IPEC revealed that hundreds of thousands of children were engaged in cocoa farms.
- Many of the child labourers came from countries like Burkina Faso, Mali and Togo.

studies/Assessments

- A Rapid Assessment report on Child labour in five Commercial Oil Palm and Rubber Plantations in Ghana in March, 2005 by ILO and the Ghana Employers Association revealed that about 41.2 % of the family of the working children are migrants.
- While 72% of the working children originate from the area of the plantations about 28 migrate from surrounding and distant communities from the western, central, Eastern and Volta Regions.

Experience from programme implementation

- On the Time Bound Programme of support to Ghana government, some interesting discoveries were made in the implementation of an Action Programme in the North and South Districts. Children who originally migrated to the area (mainly sent there by their parents to support their relatives in fishing) transferred to cattle herding as they realised it to be more lucrative
- These children migrated mainly from parts of the Volta Region.

Working conditions (specific to the Plantations)

- It is an established fact that hazards impacting on adults also affect children even more seriously.
- As children are still in the process of growing up, their normal development can be severely endangered by conditions that might not constitute a danger to adults.
- Due to their limited working capacity, children are generally, more prone to occupational injuries than adults due to inattention fatigue, poor judgement and lesser knowledge.
- The children are put into tipper trucks and dropped off at the farm gates

Working conditions(con't)

- They do not wear protective gears(gloves , boots etc).
- They work long hours and handle equipments without the appropriate training.
- Exposed to the vagaries of the weather(had to work wherther rain or shine)
- The latex smells, children get swollen hands.
- They are not provided with drinking water and toilet facilities

Working conditions(con't)

- The supervisors are tasking and very harsh
- Children working on the plantations are exposed to a lot of hazards such as snake and Scorpion bites.
- Work with sharp tools which often
- Work up to 12 hours per day with an average of 6 hours.
- They had no work breaks

Potential Hazards (Rubber plantations)

Tasks performed	Potential OHS Hazards.
Tapping and collection of latex	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• falling particles• wounds from plantations• falling down• fumes from stimulants
Nursery- Use of Chemicals(fertilizers, fungicides, weedicides)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• inhaling and coming into contact with chemicals
Processing of latex into technically specified rubber	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• cuts from use of machines• Scent from latex• Spraying of plantation spreads into communities

Potential Hazards (palm plantations)

Tasks performed	Potential OHS Hazards.
Harvesting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Picking fronds• Cuts from knife• Snakebites
Processing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High exposure to heat from boiler and steam released at various points
Boiler, Sterilizers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Steam from boiler and sterilizers
Field	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Snake bites• Falling fruit bunches, pricking fronds• Falling particles and debris• Particles falling into eyes
Mechanical Workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cuts from machines

Hazards (cattle herding in North and South Tongu)

- Snake bites
- Exposure to the vagaries of the weather
- Sometimes the children are attacked by the Cattle
- Beaten by other farmers when the cattle stray into their farms to destroy their crops
- Work for between 10-12 hours a day
- Their lunches not catered for and have to resort roasting food to cater for their lunch
- They are often exploited at the end of their term- usually not given the cattle they worked for with the excuse that they left the cattle to destroy other people farms.

END OF PRESENTATION

Thank You Very Much