



Pesticide Discussion Forum Summary Digest

Issue 4 of 2021

Forum Date: 22nd April 2021

Addressing hazardous child labour and reducing risks posed by hazardous pesticides.

Child labour is defined as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential, and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development. It refers to work that is mentally, physically, socially, or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and/or interferes with their schooling by: depriving them of the opportunity to attend school; obliging them to leave school prematurely; or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work. Handling and using pesticides are considered hazardous work and is not allowed for children below the age of 18. Not everyone is equally exposed to hazardous pesticides for biological and social and economic reasons, some groups can be more at risk and vulnerable. Children can be exposed to pesticides directly, by mixing and applying them, or indirectly, when playing in fields where pesticides have been used or at home, where pesticides are stored in containers in inadequate and dangerous conditions. As children's bodies and minds are still developing, they are especially susceptible to the potentially toxic effects of pesticides. The Rotterdam Convention Secretariat (NSPRD) based in FAO and the Child Labour in Agriculture Prevention team within the Decent Rural Employment team in ESP (FAO) have established a long-term collaboration which plays an important role in detecting and reducing the risks posed by hazardous pesticides, identifying high-risk and hazardous scenarios as well as identifying vulnerable groups in many regional contexts, including children.

This document is a summary of the University of Cape Town's Division of Environmental Health's Pesticide Community of Practice held on the 22nd of April 2021 on "Addressing hazardous child labour and reducing risks posed by hazardous pesticides". This digest presents the issues, points raised, and information shared by participants in response to the three questions prepared by the presenters, Nadia Correale and Lalaina Razafindrakoto. A total of 57 participants joined the live discussion and 4 people blogged their responses. From the members who attended, 75% were from Africa, 3% were from Europe; 2% were from South East Asia, 2% were from America, 1% was from Eastern Mediterranean and 16% were classified as other.

About the Presenter



Nadia Correale is a Social Protection and Community Development Specialist in the Rotterdam Convention Secretariat at FAO. Her main area of expertise is the occupational exposure to pesticides and the monitoring and collection of data on pesticide poisoning in rural communities with extensive field experience in different countries in Africa, Latin America, and Eastern Europe. Prior to joining FAO in 2014, she worked in Spain, UK and Brazil in agroecology, social protection, and community empowerment. She holds a master's degree in International relations and a Bachelor's degree in Social, Political and Institutional Communication.



Lalaina Razafindrakoto is currently working as a Child Labour Expert for FAO's Inclusive Rural Transformation and Gender Equality Division (ESP). Over the last 13 years, she has been working in child labour globally, especially in Africa and Asia (Madagascar, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, Nigeria, the Philippines, Uzbekistan, Mali and Burkina Faso). Her areas of expertise include child labour in supply chains, project management, capacity building, monitoring and other technical advisory services. She holds a post-graduate diploma in Economics.

DISCLAIMER: The information below represents the opinions of members participating from different countries expressed during the discussion and shall not necessarily be taken to reflect the official opinion of the DEH, UCT, FAO, SIDA or KemI.

PRESETED BELOW ARE THE THREE QUESTIONS AND RESULTING DISCUSSION INPUTS FROM PARTICIPANTS:

Question 1: Which agricultural sector or local value chain is known to have a high prevalence of child labour as well as high use of hazardous pesticides in your country or the country you work in and which pesticides are used most?

SOUTH AFRICA: In rural areas, we have experienced a high number of child labour in small scale/family farms where there is crop production. Methamidophos, aldicarb, magnesium organophosphates are some of the pesticides used in the agricultural sector. In livestock, it is common to see children herding. They are also tasked with manual washing ticks off from cows and goats.

ZIMBABWE: Horticulture, cotton, tobacco tea farms and other crop production farms are the major sectors with high prevalence of child labour, especially in the rural areas. Aldicarb, dimethoate, endosulfan, methomyl, oxamyl, fenamiphos, dimethoate, malathion, carbaryl, copper oxychloride 85 WP, organophosphates, acetamiprid, nemesis and dioxathion are the commonly used hazardous pesticides in the agricultural sector, which children can be exposed to.

RWANDA: Child labour is an issue as approximately 316 children are involved in hazardous work where 78.9% of them are working in the agriculture sector. We observed a high prevalence of child labour in the tea value chain, especially during the harvesting stage.

In addition, some other value chains such as coffee and horticulture value chains involve child labour especially for the mulching practices and during the harvest.

NIGERIA: Child labour is common among low-income farmers in rural areas. Farmers in these poverty endemic areas would allow their kids to help due to the absence of mechanization.

KENYA: Child labour is predominant in smallholder farming (i.e., crop production, horticulture, and vegetable and cereal farming) and livestock. Additionally, children help with various activities on the farm like planting, weeding, application of pesticides and harvesting where pesticides like diazotol, diazinon, duduthrin, oxamyl are widely used.

INDIA: Cotton seed farms, floriculture and vegetable sector uses more child labour in India. Often organophosphate and pyrethroids are widely used in these settings.

ZAMBIA: Production of cotton and tobacco involve the use of HHPs, to which children are exposed. The horticulture industry in Zambia has a lot of participation from the children. Pesticides like dichlorvos, metalaxyl, dithane M-45 and Chlorothanil are usually used. Specifically, cotton production involves the use of chemicals such as cruiser (Thiamethoxam), and Gaucho (Imidacloprid), which are seed treatments. Tobacco production involves the use of, bifenthrin, imidacloprid, chlorpyrifos, acephate, imidacloprid, coragen and glyphosates.

MALAWI: Child prevalence is high in the crop production sector especially in tobacco farming where imidacloprid is most used. Children work alongside their parents in all stages of fieldwork starting from the nursery to the final curing stage. During peak periods of transplanting or leaf picking children to spend days out of school and in the field. The most used pesticides are fenvalerate, imidacloprid, tebuconazole, deltamethrin, thiacloprid and pendimethalin.

ESWATINI: Children under the age of 18 work in the agriculture fields before they go to school. However, Eswatini has an act that protects children from child labour. Therefore, you hardly find children working as commercial farmers.

TOGO: Cash crops such as coffee and cocoa as well as cotton and vegetable crops are of concern for child labour in Togo. The most frequently used pesticides are glyphosate.

IRAN: Child labour is prevalent in rice paddies, apple orchards, citrus orchards and many other crops which are most are in the Northern Provinces of Iran by the Caspian. As a result, children may get directly or indirectly exposed to dangerous pesticides.

UGANDA: Child labour is high in crop production (i.e., vegetable and fruit) where children get involved in the production activities which include protection of the crops through spraying. Children get exposed to pesticides through direct or indirect involvement.

TANZANIA: The horticultural and cotton sector are areas where children labour is practised through handling pesticides and spraying. Insecticides and fungicides are the most frequently used pesticides.

SENEGAL: Child labour is prevalent in the agricultural sector (mostly in vegetable production). Children help with the labour and can often be responsible for spraying pesticides against pests, especially in small-scale farms.

Question 2: What would you consider as the best approach for tackling child labour with pesticide exposures and who should be sensitized first on this issue?

EDUCATION SYSTEM

The effects of pesticide exposure on children's health should be tackled through the education system as part of the syllabus to bring awareness. An example is the syllabus for primary schools in Zimbabwe where agriculture safety is included. Additional measures should be in place such as information campaigns in rural areas to raise awareness of child labour and its impacts. However, training /education is low on the hierarchy of control which means there should be strong monitoring.

REMOVAL OF HIGHLY HAZARDOUS PESTICIDES (HHPs)

HHPs need to be phased out and removed from agriculture as poverty is much harder to address. And there are viable alternatives (safer pesticides, but even better Integrated Pest Management without the use of pesticides). Eliminating HHPs is important, but if the regulatory bodies do not stop the sale thereof, then it is very difficult. One concern may be removing pesticides from use to protect children and others may create other labour-intensive alternative practices.

AWARENESS

Organizations for commercial workers should be sensitized to discourage the hiring of children as labourers in the agricultural sector. Additionally, the parents and community members who work in small-scale farms should be sensitized to the negative impact that pesticides have on the health and well-being of children. Giving the right information to stakeholders on the risks of pesticide risks to children, and how children are exposed to pesticides are fundamental to protect them from child labour in the field. When working on sensitizing different stakeholders it is important to consider/address misinformation that is could be provided by pesticides salespersons.

FARMER EDUCATION

Education forums amongst small-scale farmers and vulnerable communities in agricultural areas would help mitigate pesticide exposure and discourage child labour.

IMPROVE SOCIAL SYSTEMS

The best form of intervention would be to provide safer alternative sources of livelihoods, as poverty is the main driver of child labour. Child headed families are a big issue that is exacerbated by poverty.

National policies should be put in place to assist these families with the appropriate government policies (i.e., free universal primary education).

MULTI-SECTORIAL

Department of Social Services, Agriculture, Immigration Offices, Police Services, Home Affairs, the entire agriculture value chain, parents, and community leaders should all work together to prevent and/or rescue children working at the farms.

REGULATION

The best approach will start with governments setting laws on child labour and working together with non-governmental organisations. The use of pesticides must be regulated and applied by only Pest Control Operators who are registered with the Department of Agriculture. It is important for the ILO and OHS regulations to be amended and that the FAO/WHO provides countries with more support. Public institutions in charge of the pesticide's life cycle

should employ inspectors for better monitoring. An example is Malawi where the country's labour laws on child labour are very elaborate, and if well implemented a significant drop in child labour cases shall be seen.

PENALTIES

The best way of tackling child labour is to ensure that there is a law that criminalizes it. Policy and legislation should cover the issue of protecting children from pesticide exposure by having penalties for offenders (i.e., parents or farmers hiring). The farm owner should be made aware that child labour is a criminal offence.

AGROECOLOGY

The best approach to prevent child exposure to pesticides would be to move away from toxic agrochemicals and practice non-chemical farming methods based on the principles of agroecology. It is important to highlight and/or enforced safer alternatives with an emphasis on IPM/VPM.

Question 3: What type of national programmes and policies are in place for addressing hazardous child labour and reducing pesticide exposure in the agricultural sector in your country or the country you work in? Are there any coordination mechanisms in place among different stakeholders in your country?

ZAMBIA: In 2019, the government enacted the Employment Code Act, where 15 years old is the minimum age of employment. Additionally, the act reaffirms prohibitions against the worst forms of child labour and strengthens the authority of the labour inspectorate. The tobacco sector has taken steps to minimise child labour due to facing sanctions both nationally and internationally. However, hindering the effective coordination of efforts to address child labour, including efficacy in accomplishing mandates. There are committees established at the district level which incorporate several government departments.

NIGERIA: There has been an ongoing collaboration between Nigeria and ILO on the National Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour since 2001. There is a policy prohibiting the employment of child labour, but the enforcement is very weak. Likewise, there is a progressive phaseout on hazardous pesticides by stakeholders.

SOUTH AFRICA: There is a regulation on "Hazardous Work by Children" in South Africa that provides detail about the type of work and working hours for children. There are regulations such as Child Protection Act, Regulation on Hazardous Work by Children, RSA Constitution and the Basic Condition Act which can be put in place to protect children and reduce their pesticide exposure. There has been a memorandum of understanding which has been entered into by the South African Police Services and the Department of Labour for joint blitz inspections which normally takes place routinely and children identified receive intervention from the Department of Social Development.

MALAWI: The country's Employment Act prohibits any forms of child labour. Malawi is a signatory to the ILO Convention on the Elimination of Child Labour and to show its commitment to these obligations' government through the Ministry of Labour. Some local NGOs like Plan Malawi are on the ground educating people. Other sectors have championed the fight to end child labour in the tobacco sector (e.g., importing countries boycott the buying of tobacco to ensure children are protected. As a result, government have been forced to enact existing child labour policies).

JAMAICA: Child labour through pesticide exposure has never been seen or discussed as an issue in Jamaica. There are policies and laws regarding the employment of children, however, some children participate in agriculture work through their family business and therefore, it is not seen as labour.

ESWATINI: We have national legislation on the protection of child labour but, there is no policy or programmes on hazardous child labour.

IRAN: There are many children mostly immigrants from other countries (we have 14 neighbours) doing hazardous work.

KENYA: Apart from Ratifying the two ILO conventions, Kenya under the National Employment Act and Child Act, set out the minimum age for work at 18 years old. The government has developed child protection centres to provide counselling, housing, and reintegration services to rescued child labourers. Enforcement is done by the police, Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Ministry of Labour and local administrative structures.

ZIMBABWE: In terms of enforcement of the labour laws in Zimbabwe, the overall responsibility lies with the Ministry of Public Service, Labour, and Social Welfare, supported by the Zimbabwe Republic Police and the Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs. In terms of coordination mechanisms, several inter-ministerial committees have been formed which include National Steering Committee to Address the Worst Forms of Child labour, Ministry level of Children's Issues, Child Protection committee, Anti-trafficking Inter-Ministerial Committee and the Zimbabwe UN Development Assistance Framework.

INDIA: Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act prohibit children under the age of 14 from hazardous occupation. Ministry of Labour and Employment is the nodal agency on this matter. However, a poor coordination mechanism exists among the different stakeholders.

SENEGAL: There is an Order No. 3749 / MFPTEOP / DTSS of 6 June 2003 fixing and prohibiting the worst forms of child labour. It is in this context that we find the ban on the exposure of children to chemicals, but it does not have a rigorous legal framework that can be applied and would reduce child labour on family farms.

CAMEROON: Though the existence of several laws and conventions on the protection of child labour are apparent, no action is observed on the ground level. For example, in mining, we observe children who drop out of school for artisanal gold mining where they are exposed to mercury.

UGANDA: Based on my understanding of the context for Uganda, the employment act and policy for universal primary and secondary education do provide for the protection of children from hazardous child labour.

Tanzania: The first Time-Bound Programme launched in 2001 and a revised National Action Plan was on the Elimination of Worst Forms of Child Labour and was released in 2009. A new National Strategy on Elimination of Child labour (2018-2022) has been launched to guide national efforts against child labour over the next four years. The Strategy is framed within an overall vision of a Tanzanian in which children live free from child labour and its worst forms while enjoying their rights in a safe environment. The National Strategy identifies seven strategies to eliminate child labour.

GLOBAL: There is an old but important document prepared by FAO and WHO in 2004. It, inter alia, includes recommendations for the governments on how to reduce the exposure including such issues as pesticide availability, distribution, and trade. See this document <https://www.who.int/ceh/publications/pestipoin/en>

PRESENTER: To check which countries have ratified both conventions on child labour: https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:11300:0::NO::P11300_INSTRUMENT_ID:312327
https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100::NO:12100:P12100_ILO_CODE:C138:NO

Resources and Further Reading

1. E-learning course "Introduction to child labour in agriculture": <https://elearning.fao.org/course/view.php?id=507>
2. Handbook for monitoring and evaluation of child labour in agriculture: <http://www.fao.org/3/i4630e/i4630e.pdf>
3. [http://www.uni-kassel.de/einrichtungen/fileadmin/datas/einrichtungen/icdd/Webportal/Publications/Decent Work and Development/Child Labour and Agriculture/child labour cocoa plantation.pdf](http://www.uni-kassel.de/einrichtungen/fileadmin/datas/einrichtungen/icdd/Webportal/Publications/Decent_Work_and_Development/Child_Labour_and_Agriculture/child_labour_cocoa_plantation.pdf)
4. <http://www.ilo.org/ipecinfo/product/download.do?type=document&id=29655>
5. <https://campaign.worldvision.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Forced-and-child-labour-in-the-cotton-industry-fact-sheet.pdf>
6. E-learning course on "Pesticide management and child labour prevention": <https://elearning.fao.org/course/view.php?id=299>
7. Visual facilitator's guide "Protect children from pesticides!" <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3527e.pdf>
8. Technical note for agricultural stakeholders "Addressing hazardous child labour and reducing risks posed by hazardous pesticides": <http://www.fao.org/3/cb3586en/cb3586en.pdf>
9. E-learning course on "Addressing child labour in agricultural programmes": <https://elearning.fao.org/course/view.php?id=511>
10. SHPF toolkit <http://www.pic.int/Implementation/SeverelyHazardousPesticideFormulations/SHPFKit/tabid/3114/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

The Division of Environmental Health (DEH) Pesticide Discussion Forum is a bi-monthly online seminar for pesticide regulators and resource persons, as well as students in the postgraduate Diploma in Pesticide Risk Management (DPRM). Our aim is to provide support for managing pesticide risks and implementing risk reduction strategies. DEH is based in the School of Public Health and Family Medicine at the University of Cape Town (UCT).

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Acknowledgement: Financial assistance from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), has been arranged by the Swedish Chemicals Agency (KemI)

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<https://forms.gle/NzYH5REfUruL3jdm6>