

Actions on combating the worst forms of child labour in agriculture in the Republic of Moldova

The contribution of the National Federation of Employers in Agriculture and the Food Industry

Child labour is a problem for the Republic of Moldova and it is also a problem for other countries. In 2000, the ILO estimated that 246 million child workers aged 5 and 17 were involved in child labour, of which 171 million were involved in work that by its nature is hazardous to their safety, physical or mental health, and moral development. Moreover, some 8.4 million children were engaged in unconditional worst forms of child labour, which include forced and bonded labour, the use of children in armed conflict, trafficking in children and commercial sexual exploitation.

No country is immune to child labour. There are 2,5 million working children in the developed economies and another 2,5 million in transition economies¹. Sources and reports show figures of child labourers even in such countries as the U.S.A. which is the strongest economy of the world. An estimated 290,200 children were unlawfully employed in 1996 in this powerful economy. Some — it's not clear how many — were "older teens working a few too many hours in after-school jobs." About 59,600 were younger than age 14, and some 13,100 worked in garment sweatshops, according to an Associated Press series on child labour published in December 1997².

Unicef's 1997 State of the World's Children Report says "The growth of the service sector and the quest for a more flexible workforce in industrialized countries, such as the United Kingdom and the US, have contributed to an expansion of child labour." "Hundreds of thousands" of children work in U.S. agriculture, according to a report by Human Rights Watch published in June 2000. A 1990 survey of Mexican-American children working in the farms of New York state showed that almost half had worked in fields still wet with pesticides and over a third had themselves been sprayed."

CHILD LABOUR IN COUNTRIES OF TRANSITION, LIKE MOLDOVA

The situation on child labour in transition economies has specific peculiarities. The Republic of Moldova has been living a long, slow and contradictory economic transition. The fall in Moldova's living standards since its independence has produced a remarkable exodus of between one-fifth and one-quarter of the workforce in search of jobs abroad. This exodus led not only to lack of manpower in Moldova and other very significant problems, but also to children being left back home with their grandparents. Before their parents start sending money home, these children have to count on their own possibilities. In rural areas, the primary source of income is agriculture.

Agriculture represents one third of Moldova's GDP. Moldova has relied heavily on agriculture throughout its history and many people still make their livelihoods in this sector. Over half of the population lives in rural areas. Privatisation in agriculture was the tool for development in this sector. The history of development of agri-enterprises is the most dynamic part of the Moldovan economy, however. Entrepreneurs have associated and had formed their organisations and one of such organisations is the National Federation of Employers in Agriculture and Food Industry (FNPAIA). The FNPAIA originated from the Republican Union of Agricultural Producers "UniAgroProtect" and was established in order to give agricultural employers the possibility to participate in the social dialogue in the tripartite meeting with state authorities and trade unions.

¹ <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/inf/download/child/childday05.pdf>

² Available on www.igc.org, by searching for "child labor" on IGC sites

THE VOICE OF THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF EMPLOYERS IN AGRICULTURE AND THE FOOD INDUSTRY

FNPAIA was founded on 28 March 2003 and became member of the National Confederation of Moldovan Employers (CNPM), representing in this organisation the employers from agriculture and food industry. As representative of Moldovan agricultural employers and member of the tripartite dialogue, FNPAIA has been taking active part since then in improving the legislative framework, in adjusting the legislation to provisions of Convention 184 on Safety and Health in Agriculture.

The main goals of the organisation are to expand and increase the number of members, have a strong and sound voice at the national level, influence the state policy in agriculture, provide regular information and publicity support to agri-entrepreneurs.

The organisation helps its members in running a successful agribusiness by providing the necessary consultations, by providing access to agricultural machinery through linkages with partners and it is the organisation that represents the agribusiness in relationships with state structures by lobbying laws, which would be beneficial for developing the agricultural business.

About sixty percent of agricultural lands in the Republic of Moldova are farmed by entrepreneurs who have membership with the FNPAIA.

Although the primary goal of the FNPAIA is to assist its members with creating a conducive environment for the agri-business, since 2005 the organisation is involved with concrete activities in combating child labour in agriculture. These are the most strenuous efforts and it is the most challenging project, but also the most valuable from all aspects: human, economic, and overall development.

The challenge of the child labour project lies not only in the difficulty and painfulness of the problem, but also the efforts made by the people in the organisation. All and any activity has been planned with utmost scrupulosity and aimed at having a high impact. All stages have had their aim and logic, especially taking into consideration the need of acting within the mandate of the organisation and for achieving the objectives of the project.

The FNPAIA started with promoting among employers' communities the ILO Conventions relevant to child labour, promoting the tripartite dialogue with the social partners, conducted awareness and sensitising campaigns on the issue of child labour, discussed and convinced agri-entrepreneurs that child labour should be eliminated not only because it is hazardous, but because in the long term it is against human development, against development of the country, his/her own enterprise, but first of all, it impedes the development of the child, both physical and educational.

THE CODE OF CONDUCT FOR AGRI-EMPLOYERS ON COMBATING CHILD LABOUR

It has been a long and strenuous way to the development of a Code of Conduct for Employers on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, which implied many discussions during individual meetings, round tables, workshops, many visits to enterprises. The Code is not a document written in an office, but it is a document produced by employers themselves and it means commitment and wish to eliminate child labour at enterprises. The Code is an efficient instrument to assist enterprises in their action to eliminate child labour. There are several ways how they can do it.

The provisions of the Code are totally in line with the provisions of the labour legislation which regulates labour relations with minors. By following the text of the Code, entrepreneurs will avoid using work of children. The Code was adopted by the Council of the FNPAIA on 19 December 2007 and since then it proved to be of practical use and an effective instrument for the elimination of child labour. FNPAIA established a Monitoring Team and conducted monitoring visits to examine employers complying and acting in accordance with provisions of the Code of Conduct for employers on the elimination of the worst forms of child labour in agriculture and the food industry. The aim of these visits was to know the situation on the site and intervene, depending on findings of the Monitoring Team.

For example, the Code assisted Valentina Barbei, director of Farmer's Enterprise „Agro-Valentina” from village of Tudora, rayon Ștefan Vodă, to understand her own responsibilities as manager, for the health and development of children. The visit of the FNPAIA Monitoring Team helped her understand better the requirements of the labour law, which she thought she knew.

During a monitoring visit conducted by the FNPAIA team, Vasile Pușcaș, manager of “Sturza Agro Nord” admitted that he passed through an intensive “thinking process” and came to the conclusion that “we need to help our younger generation to grow”. This was the reason why he adhered to the Code of Conduct.

The FNPAIA Child Labour Code monitoring scheme was launched in October 2008 as a pilot initiative and it gained valuable experience. The first visits of the monitoring team have identified many cases of good practices, where agri-managers use the Code of Conduct and refuse to hire children under the age of 15, prohibit certain types of hard or harmful work to persons under 18, or set a reduced duration of work per day or per week for persons aged 15-16 and 16-18. Academician Mihai Vronschih, Chairman of the FNPAIA member Association from Balti and leader of the FNPAIA Code Monitoring Team noted that employers' interest is to hire young people with real life skills who can work with advanced machinery and new technologies in their adult life. Here we need to find a balance between education and work experience without over-stepping the line between education through work-experience and exploiting young workers.

Another conclusion of the FNPAIA Child Labour Code monitoring team is that hindering the educational process of the child will reduce his/her potential in bringing productive contributions to the society as an adult. This contradicts child's interest, employers' interest and of the society in general, who need a professional, competent and qualified work force.

The Child Labour Code monitoring is a result and an activity. It is a result of the previous advocacy work conducted by the FNPAIA and the commitment of agri-entrepreneurs to eliminate the worst forms of child labour. It is an effective effort in the elimination of the worst forms of child labour. The constant and persistent work of the FNPAIA on informing, sensitising employers, the training and creating of a network of Child Labour Change Agents in 15 regions across the country, developing of publications, implementing of policies on combating child labour, participating in an active social dialogue with partners, creating of an intolerable attitude to child labour for employers and a larger community, its presence in the mass-media, transmitting of direct messages from employers to the adolescents about the benefits of quality education as a response to child labour and other efforts on the elimination of child labour – all these made the FNPAIA partners conclude that the objectives of the project are being achieved.

All the efforts and the FNPAIA Code of Conduct for Employers on the Elimination of the Worst forms of Child Labour have contributed not only to changing of attitudes, but also to a change in the situation of child labour. Based on reports of the Labour Inspection, there are indicators

showing a reduction of the number of illegally employed children in Moldova. This is encouraging, showing that the efforts made by us have had a positive effect, which was very much expected.

The FNPAIA Child Labour monitoring is not a static event, but it is an ongoing activity. The FNPAIA is continuing monitoring of the Child Labour code and this has been made public in the mass-media, inclusively

http://www.comunicate.md/upload/2270_Comunicat_Atelier_FNPAIA_21_22_august_09_Eng.pdf , <http://www.stiri.md/ro/article/43647/fnpaia-sunt-mpotriva-muncii-copilului-n-agricultur> , <http://www.unimedia.md/?mod=news&id=12774>

THE MASS-MEDIA IS A FNPAIA RELIABLE PARTNER IN ACTIONS ON PREVENTION AND COMBATING CHILD LABOUR IN AGRICULTURE

In general, the FNPAIA has actively used the mass-media throughout its project as an effective tool for sensitising the public and creating a rectifying environment. Just as *one* example, links of the mass-media which placed articles about FNPAIA marking the World Day against Child Labour 2009, will be presented below:

Radio channels

Radio Moldova

http://www.trm.md/index.php?module=stiri_int&news_id=10031

Free Europe

<http://www.europalibera.org/content/article/1754993.html>

TV

TV 7

<http://www.tv7.md/?page=news&id=16957&list=1&lang=ro> (in Romanian)

<http://www.tv7.md/?page=news&id=16957&lang=ru&list=1> (in Russian)

Colorit TV

Newspapers & Magazines

Timpul

<http://www.timpul.md/news/2009/06/14/2654>

Jurnal de Chisinau

<http://www.jurnal.md/article/16481/>

The United Nations Magazine

http://www.un.md/key_doc_pub/un_magazines/2009/Revista_ONU_nr2-2009_02-06-09_aprobat.pdf

ECONOMIST Magazine

<http://www.eco.md/article/6485/>

“Moldavskie Vedomosti”

<http://www.vedomosti.md/?menu=number§ion=3&id=4181&page=1>

News-Agencies

Info-prim Neo

<http://www.info-prim.md/?a=8&d=2009/06/04>

<http://www.info-prim.md/?x=&y=23869>

Moldpres State News Agency

<http://moldpres.md/news/default.asp?Lang=ro&ID=111459>

Infotag

Basa-press

News Portals

Communicate.md

http://www.comunicate.md/index.php?task=articles&action=view&article_id=1745

http://www.comunicate.md/index.php?task=articles&action=view&article_id=1811

ONG.MD

<http://www.ong.md/index.php?mod=home&hmod=postbyid&id=2475>

YAM.RO

http://209.85.129.132/search?q=cache:QfKTYJ7eNjQJ:news.yam.md/index.php%3Fnext%3D17_05,2006+%22patronii+agricoli%22&cd=9&hl=ro&ct=clnk

<http://news.yam.md/index.php?next=17,05,2006>

Youth.MD

<http://www.youth.md/news.php?newsid=1475>

Agenda.MD

<http://www.agenda.md/?nD=2009/06/12>

TERRA.MD

<http://www.terra.md/ro/news/moldova/copil11/default.aspx>

E-Newsletters

National Youth Resource Centre (NYRC)

<http://www.youth.md/bulletin.php?bid=257>

CONTACT Newsletter

http://www.contact.md/files/file1_ro_1243953054.html

http://www.contact.md/files/file1_ro_1245163477.html#splin

The global statistics tend to a reduction of child labour. The Global Report under the follow-up to the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work presented by the ILO Director General at the 95th Session of the International Labour Conference in 2006 shows that the decrease is occurring most sharply in the area of hazardous work by children. The number of children involved in hazardous work decreased overall by 26 per cent, and by 33 per cent in the 5-14 age-group³.

With a new 2009 school year off, the FNPAIA Child Labour Code Monitoring Team continues its monitoring visits to agri-enterprises across the country⁴.

³ <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/relm/ilc/ilc95/pdf/rep-i-b.pdf>

⁴ http://www.comunicate.md/upload/2270_Comunicat_Atelier_FNPAIA_21_22_august_09_Eng.pdf
http://www.comunicate.md/upload/2377_FNPAIA_Soroca_Monitoring_E.pdf
http://www.comunicate.md/upload/2396_FNPAIA_Causeni_Monitoring_E.pdf
http://www.comunicate.md/upload/2499_Cahul_%20Monitoring_article%20Oct%2009_E.pdf