



Fact sheet

Fairtrade Fights Child Labour

Helping to Fight the Root Causes of the Worst Forms of Child Labour and Forced Labour

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The Challenge...

An estimated 218 million children aged 5-17, or one child in seven, are involved in work around the world. According to the United Nations, 126 million of them are occupied in the *worst forms of labour* affecting their health or education, e.g. in mines, with chemicals and pesticides in agriculture, or with dangerous machinery. Of these, 50 million work in Sub-Saharan Africa alone.

Fairtrade differentiates between working children and child labourers. Fairtrade recognizes that children work to combat their own or their family's poverty. It defines child work as work that still allows children to attend school and doesn't destabilize their education. In addition, children are not allowed tasks hazardous to their health and development. In contrast, Fairtrade defines child labour as work that is hazardous, exploitive or that undermines a child's education or its emotional and physical health. The most harmful forms of child labour include children being removed from their families, trafficking, and living in slavery-like conditions. To prevent this, Fairtrade for example calls for remediation action from employers who have previously engaged children in labour to correct the problem.

Issue at a Glance

- *Globally one child in seven is engaged in work that negatively affects his or her education, health or safety – often poverty means children work to help their families survive.*
- *Fairtrade helps address the roots of child labour by offering producers in the developing world a fair price and stable trading deals.*
- *Fairtrade's vision is to scale up with integrity. This includes boosting its capacity to recognise and respond to child labour.*

Fairtrade is committed to child protection...

Fairtrade prohibits child labour as defined above, which includes the worst forms of child labour and forced (bonded) labour. It considers the International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions 29, 105, 138 and 182 as the relevant standards on child labour – and has developed its own standards, compliance procedures and audit tools in accordance with these conventions. This means Fairtrade expects all its producers (small producer organizations as well as hired labour organizations) to meet the relevant requirements. To ensure the system works, FLO-CERT – an independent certification body – conducts regular audits. If FLO-CERT detects child labour in any of the Fairtrade producer organizations, this is considered to be a major non-compliance in the Fairtrade System.

Fairtrade is working to find solutions...

Fairtrade is committed to actively protecting children in Fairtrade certified groups and organizations from abuse and/or exploitation, and taking measures to ensure their safety. It is mandatory for all Fairtrade staff and those who represent FLO and FLO-CERT to report incidents of child abuse and exploitation, or violation of its child protection policy, to a Fairtrade designated staff member who oversees the implementation of this policy. This staff member will in turn report it to an authority or designated child protection agency ensuring the prolonged safety of the impacted children.

Child labour abuses continue to be a potential problem in desperate economic circumstances and need to be handled with sensitivity and in collaboration with the farmer and producer organizations. Fairtrade producer groups work hard to ensure their members understand what is not permitted with regard to child labour, and the FLO-CERT auditing process is an independent check to ensure these standards are adhered to. A recent audit did in fact find evidence of the worst form of child labour on a small number of individual farms. The FLO-CERT auditing process ensured this instance was discovered, and that measures were promptly taken to alleviate the situation. Instead of administering harsh punitive measures that could push children and their families into deeper poverty, the goal is to assist in solving the problem. Through FLO's Producer Services and Relations Team, FLO assists cooperatives to overcome breaches of the standards through advice, and by enabling them to access skills and resources from other experts as needed.

New Partnerships

In order to strengthen its own capacity, and extend more support to cooperatives, Fairtrade is building partnerships with leading international development organizations specializing in projects on location to protect children from the worst forms of child labour. Fairtrade is also working with more companies to ensure that farming families can benefit from fairer prices and stable trading agreements. In countries with a low Human Development Index this often means families can afford to send their children to school

Strengthening FLO's Capacity toward more Support for Farmer Groups

FLO has recruited new staff with expertise in child protection, workers rights and trade unions. As part of Fairtrade's support system, FLO provides training on a Child Protection Code of Conduct that regulates how assessment and research into allegations of the worst forms of child labor, including child trafficking, is conducted and stipulates clear procedures pertaining to the reporting on infractions. This will lead to more direct support to producers within the system who are on the frontline of tackling the global challenge of the worst forms of child labour. At the same time, Fairtrade recognizes that governments, NGOs, UN bodies and community members need to work together to find sustainable solutions to child labour.

Fairtrade upholds Child Safety

As an essential part of the Fairtrade Child Protection Code of Conduct, Fairtrade understands that its first and foremost obligation is toward the safety and welfare of impacted children. Internationally, child rights organizations and experts agree that exposing the identity of impacted children, their location, or the organizations or individuals working with them can result in threats to their health and safety, the worst forms of physical abuse, re-trafficking or detainment in even more clandestine and dangerous situation, and, in some cases, death. Therefore, Fairtrade is committed to protecting the identity of impacted children at all cost. It also calls upon every individual, entity or organization outside of the Fairtrade system that encounters the worst forms of child labor to immediately report these to the nearest designated child protection agency for immediate action and remediation.