

Chapter 7 Children bear the brunt of poverty and unemployment: Child labour in the tobacco-growing sector in Tanzania

After the adoption of the Arusha Declaration in 1967, Tanzania declared itself a socialist state with all the means of production under state control. But thirty years later, it has made a complete about turn in economic policies, adopting economic structural adjustment programme, transforming itself into a market-driven economy and reducing government intervention, as per the dictates of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The transition process has so far, negatively affected the employment levels, income levels and the economy at large.

This chapter aims at looking at the state of children in Tanzania. Secondly, it will look at the extent and the causes of child labour in the tobacco-growing sector in Tanzania. To address this overall aim of the report, the paper will provide background information on the state of the country's economic and social conditions. Lastly, the chapter will explore some of the strategies implemented and suggested by different social actors, and more importantly, the trade union movement.

Economic and labour market indicators

Tanzanian economy experienced major crises in the seventies and eighties and implemented various economic reforms to redress the situation. In the 1980s, GDP growth rate declined sharply to 1.9 percent. The reform programmes implemented in the late 1980s brought some improvements in the country's economy. By 1997, GDP growth stood at 3.5 percent, just slightly above current population growth at about 2.8 percent (Economic Survey 1998). Agriculture, which is the largest contributor to the GDP, has been experiencing a decline.

Main economic indicators in the 1990s (Economic Surveys various years)

Year	GDP growth (real) %	Agricultural growth (real)%	Inflation (%)	Exports/imports (%)
1990	4.5	6.6	35.9	28.9
1991	5.7	9.5	28.9	24.5
1992	3.5	3.5	21.9	26.5
1993	4.2	6.9	24.0	30.0
1994	3.0	0.4	35.3	34.5
1997	3.5	-	12.9	-

While there has been a significant growth in terms of service sector contribution towards the GDP in Tanzania, agriculture still remains the largest contributor. The following table reflects the contribution of different sectors to the GDP in Tanzania:

Structure of the economy (% of the GDP) (World Bank 1999)

	1987	1997	1998
Agriculture	59.2	47.3	46.3
Industry	11.9	14.3	14.1
Manufacturing	6.8	7.1	6.8
Services	28.9	38.4	39.5

Tanzania has an estimated population of 32.1 million people, with annual growth rate of 2.8 percent. The labour market indicators are outdated and we still rely on 1990/91 labour force survey as the latest is currently underway. The economically active population in Tanzania is estimated at about 15 million, half of the total population. The country has the lowest level of formal employment compared to other countries in the continent, which is estimated at one million people. The rest of the economically active population is employed in agriculture, especially in family or subsistence farming. This has influenced the relatively low levels of unemployment, which is estimated at 3.6 percent. According to the 1990/91 Labour Force Survey, agriculture is the main source of employment in Tanzania. Manufacturing provides only 2 percent of the overall employment and is predominantly based in the urban areas. Currently, agriculture provides employment to at least 85 percent of the employed population.

Social indicators

Tanzania is still characterised by extremely high levels of poverty (UNDP 1999). The UNDP (1999) ranks Tanzania 156 out of 174 countries in terms of its human development index³⁸. Between 1990 and 1997, about 34 percent of the population lived without access to safe water. And according to the World Bank (1999) about 70 percent of the entire population was estimated to be living below national poverty line between 1992 and 1998 (World Bank 1999).

Social indicators, 1992-98 (World Bank 1999)

Poverty (% of population below national line)	69
Life expectancy at birth (years)	47
Access to safe water (% of population)	24
Illiteracy (% of population age 15+)	60

³⁸ The HDI (Human Development Index) value for each country will indicate how far the country has to go to attain certain defined goals: an average life span of 85 years, access to education for all and a decent standard of living. The HDI reduced all three basic indicators to a common measuring rod by measuring achievement in each as the relative distance from the desirable goal. The HDI shows the distance the country has to travel in order to reach the maximum value of 1.

By the end of the 1990s, Tanzanians had not enjoyed any improvements in their living standards. They had a per capita income of US\$ 580 and this constituted just more than a third of the average per capita income in sub-Saharan Africa (Quarterly Economic Review July-September 1999).

Children in Tanzania

The World Bank 1999/2000 estimates that more 10 million people of the entire Tanzania population are children. This means that between 30 and 35 percent of the entire population are children, and about 38 percent of the children are between the age of 10 and 14 years (World Bank 1999/2000). These figures together with high poverty rates, create high dependency ratio in the country (the proportion of the population that is economically inactive versus the economically active population whom they thereby depend upon).

Simultaneously, children born and grow up under difficult social conditions in Tanzania. According to the UNDP (1999), about 27 percent of children under five years were underweight between 1990 and 1997. Compared to low income countries, Tanzania experienced slightly higher infant mortality rate and had low gross primary enrolment compared to both Sub-Saharan Africa and low income countries.

Children's conditions in Tanzania (World Bank 1999)

	Tanzania	Sub-Saharan Africa	Low income countries
Infant mortality (per 1,000 live births)	85	91	69
Child malnutrition (% of children under 5)	31
Gross primary enrollment (% of school-age population)	66	77	108

Child labour in Tanzania

“Hazardous child labour remains a serious problem of social concern both in Tanzania in general and in Tabora region in particular, in that it is still the most important source of child exploitation and abuse” (Kaijace and Kanyala 1998:p.X).

In the 1980s, Tanzania experienced poor economic performance which in turn resulted in the decline in real wages and delivery of social services, especially health and education. According to Kaijace and Kanyala (1998) the decline in economic performance and provision of social services forced many children to seek employment in order for them to supplement their family-income. In the context of Tanzania, child labour is considered to be the practice of employing children whose age is below 15 years.

There are no reliable figures on the extent of child labour in Tanzania, even from the studies that have been conducted in different areas and districts of the country. It is estimated that child labour is practiced in the agricultural sector, especially in tobacco plantations and in the informal sector. The figures we have from the research undertaken by the Tanzania Federation of Trade Unions (TFTU) indicates that of the 9 million Tanzanian children under the age of 15, only 5 percent is involved in one form or another of child labour (Gumbo 1999). An executive summary of the ICFTU report estimates that almost 30 per cent of the children between the age of 10 and 14 years are working in Tanzania. Also, the number of children employed in the tobacco farms depends on the size of the farm – the smaller the farm, the smaller the number of children employed. As a result of the heavy activities involved in the tobacco-growing sector, many children employers prefer to employ boys rather than girls. Kaijace and Kanyala (1998) have reflected that the labour force in the agricultural sector is made up by male working children comprising standard VII leavers, illiterates, and drop outs from primary education aging between 13 and 15 years old.

A study conducted by Kaijace and Kanyala (1998: pp.43-44) in the Urambo District argued that tobacco growing employers expect the working children to do the following activities in tobacco plantations:

- Clearing tobacco and other crops plantations;
- Making bricks;
- Domestic works;
- Constructing tobacco dryingsheds;
- Preparing tobacco nurseries;
- Sowing tobacco seedlings;
- Watering tobacco seedlings;
- Transplanting tobacco seedlings and tilling tobacco ridges;
- Fertilising tobacco plants;
- Weeding tobacco and other crops;
- Cutting poles and logs of firewood;
- Carrying poles and logs of firewood from forests;
- Plucking tobacco leaves;
- Hanging tobacco leaves on poles in tobacco dryingsheds;
- Smoking tobacco leaves;
- Hanging out tobacco leaves from poles in dryingsheds;
- Plaiting tobacco leaves;
- Grading tobacco leaves;

- Tying tobacco leaves in bundles;
- Selling tobacco;
- Burning tobacco stems, and;
- Harvesting other crops.

The study also indicated that children employed in the agricultural sector and more importantly, those involved in tobacco plantation, are seasonally paid from between 50 000 and 100 000 Tanzanian shillings (TShs). In most instances, the agreements between the employers and the working children would indicate that the children are to be paid once after the selling of tobacco in either May or June when the tobacco growing season ends. The arrangement is different from child labour in the informal sector. In the informal sector, the working child is paid a monthly pay ranging between 4 000 and 6 000 TShs. But the child labour has to finish the agreed work before the payment can be processed.

Kaijace and Kanyala (1998) have also indicated in their study that there are three broad hazards facing children involved in the tobacco-growing sector. The three hazards are:

- Consequences of *dangerous working environment* including; injuries, falling sick, burns, humiliation, snake bites, malnutrition and death;
- Consequences of *excessive physical strain* including; loss of reasoning capacity and being overworked for longer hours;
- Consequences of *the act of the working child to migrate his/her own place of domicile* includes the loss of one's progressive ethical moral values and permanent loss of education.

Causes of child labour

Number of factors and arguments have been cited in the literature around the causes of child labour in Tanzania. But, only two arguments are taking the centre stage in Tanzania; poverty and the demand for child labourers by employers. Several studies have shown that children are engaged in child labour mainly because their families are poor. According to the Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1998, some children are forced into prostitution or child labour by parents or guardians in need of extra income³⁹.

Secondly, the liberalisation of the economy and introduction of economic structural adjustment programmes has marked a shift from state provision of subsidies on social

³⁹ TFTU research has also indicated that there is a clear correlation between family size and child labour. About 49 percent of working children come from families ranging between five and eight children, while only 10 percent from families with one or two children.

services like education and welfare. This had a negative implication for poor parents and the unemployed communities. It meant that they had to share the cost with government of providing education for their children. Many families found it difficult to provide their children with school fees, uniforms, books and other educational requirements. Thus, forcing many children to drop out from schools. Most of dropouts looked for employment as an alternative to supplement their household income.

Thirdly, Kaijace and Kanyala (1998) argued that the demand for cheap labour by most employers was another reason for children to be involved in child labour. They further continue to argue that employers in Tanzania prefer children below the age of 15 because they are cheaper and less demanding compared to adult employees. Thus, we can conclude that the prevalence of child labour in Tanzania is a result of “*push-pull*” effect.

Strategies to eliminate child labour

According to Bequele and Myers (1995), to address and protect working children from hazardous child work should begin by making “invisible vulnerable children” and hazards they are exposed to, “visible”. The effort to eradicate or even eliminate child labour would require number of actions and measures. This includes;

- The need to strengthen awareness-creation efforts;
- The need to eradicate national and household poverty;
- Provision of affordable and quality education. The cost-effective mechanisms should be introduced in the education sector on proven grounds for parents unable to afford the rising costs of primary education, and;
- The enforcement of national laws and local by laws requires the backing of the general public and the involvement of the non-governmental sector from the village level.

Trade unions under the Tanzania Federation of Trade Unions (TFTU) have introduced a programme and campaigns aimed at ending child labour in the country at large. The programme was aimed at repatriating children working in commercial farms, and house-girls and boys in the cities to their homes (Gumbo 1999). The programme has been hailed as a success as the primary school attendance has increased from 50 percent to 70 percent in 1998. The success of the programme was articulated by the Programme Secretary, Vicky Kanyoka that;

“One of the successes of the TFTU’s programme has been that more than 600 working children in Dar es Salaam city, Iringa, Ruvuma and Tunduru withdrew from domestic work, while attendance in schools around commercial farms increased” (Gumbo 1999).

TFTU has attempted to end child labour by providing alternatives to the children and their parents/guardians in order for children not to work. The alternatives include the following (Gumbo 1999);

- Provision of entrepreneurship and small business development education to parents, assisting them with school fees and uniforms. Under the programme about 500 pupils were supported;
- Community-based child labour committees have been established in collaboration with village authorities. The committees identify families that qualify for the support.

The government of Tanzania has been criticised by the union that it has failed to enforce laws, which encourage employers to build daycare centres at working places. Regardless of the criticisms, the government of Tanzania in 1998 ratified the ILO Convention No. 138 of 1973, the Minimum Age Convention. Also, the Parliament of Tanzania is to discuss the ratification of Convention No. 182 of 1999, the Worst Forms of Child Labour, in October 2000.

Secondly, to address the problem of child labour, the government provides for seven years of compulsory education to children up to the age of 15 years. The law also prohibits the employment/working of children under the age of 12 in the formal wage sector both in rural and urban areas. Also, the Minister of Education has launched a programme aimed at bringing children from poor families into schools at an earlier stage. The goal of the programme is “to motivate children to stay at school by preparing them for school and creating an interest for learning through early childhood education” (Haspels and Jankanish 2000:151). The Ministry of Education conducted surveys on school enrolment and child labour. Awareness raising took place amongst school committees and ward co-ordinators about the importance and need to set up early childhood centres and educate them about child labour issues. The Ministry also trained about 50 pre-school teachers and developed a manual for child labour to be used by primary schoolteachers and school committees. The Ministry of Education concluded that the programme succeeded in generating enthusiasm for school among children, parents and teachers (Haspels and Jankanish 2000). Contrary this the introduction of the legislation, ICFTU (2000) argues that there are many children working on farms and the same time the schools are experiencing between 30 and 40 percent dropout.

The law also makes provision for the employment of children between the ages of 12 and 15 on a daily wage and on a day-to-day basis, between the hours of 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. According to ICFTU (2000), there about 5 000 children engaged in seasonal employment on sisal, tea, tobacco and coffee plantations and at least 3 000 children work in unregulated gemstone mines⁴⁰.

On the other hand, business community in Tanzania has taken initiatives to curb child labour. The Association of Tanzania Employers (ATE) started awareness raising programme on the extent of child labour on sisal estates in 1995. They held a workshop for estate owners and managers to discuss child labour and the improvement of working conditions in the estates. One of the outcomes of the workshop was;

⁴⁰ Children working on plantations generally receive low wages than their older counterparts.

“an agreement by the participating employers to exclude working children from tasks that are dangerous and hazardous, provide protective gear, set up a co-operation arrangement with teachers and parents to curb child labour, and improve school enrolment and education standards in primary schools located on the estates” (Haspels and Jankanish 2000:234).

The workshop also set the long-term and short-term goals for sisal estate owners and managers. The following table summarises the goals as agreed in the workshop.

Long-term and short-term goals for estate owners and managers (Haspels and Jankanish 2000:234)

Long-term goals	Short-term goals
To improve labour inspection through the provision of transport.	Provision of protective gear.
Establishment of credit facilities to provide opportunities for workers in the informal sector to generate income.	Introduction of payment-by-results schemes to improve the earnings of adult employees.
Establishment of secondary day school and vocational training centres and also, the establishment of dispensaries, welfare and day-care centres.	Prohibiting child labour in hazardous tasks.

To ensure the successful implementation of the programme, ATE recommended the establishment of committees to oversee the process. The committees were made up of sisal estate owners, regional labour and education offices, trade unions and community leaders.

There are other initiatives undertaken by other civil society organisations. Various IPEC partner agencies have intervened to change the situation relating to high incidences of child labour in Tanzania. Programmes implemented by these agencies included; public awareness-raising on child labour and using drama groups. The Tanzania chapter of the African Network assisted the drama groups for the Prevention and Protection Against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN). ANPPCAN involved school-teachers and cultural officers to organise and train 26 drama groups (involving 795 primary school children). The aim was to sensitise rural communities about child labour and eventually prevent child labour on plantations (Haspels and Jankanish 2000).

The process resulted in the reduction of between 25 and 30 percent of incidences of child labour on the plantations in the Iringa region and school enrolment and attendance improved (Haspels and Jankanish 2000). Also, the Village governments made land-lease arrangements for the landless peasants to enable them to earn income and withdraw their children from plantations. Simultaneously, the Village governments instituted by-laws against child labour in the Iringa region.

Concluding remarks

The escalation of child labour in Tanzania is a result of both socio-economic conditions, especially poverty and institutional failures. In order to address the problem of child labour will require government to introduce developmental policies. Development poli-

cies aimed at creating employment for adults and also ensuring that social services like, education and health facilities become accessible to the poorest of the poor. It should be stated that the introduction of policies and legislation do not necessarily imply that the programmes would be implemented thus, it will require vigilant civil society to ensure that they are implemented. Secondly, it will be important that parents and guardians of working children are educated about the effect of child labour on their children's development and on the creation of employment opportunities for adults.