

Helping Children Reclaim Their Lives: Reducing Child Labor in Tanzania through Education

Tanzania



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In rural Tanzania, one out of three children between the ages of 10 and 14 work outside the family. They labor as farm workers, miners, domestic servants, and prostitutes, often under abusive and exploitive conditions.

Detrimental Working Conditions

Commercial agriculture in Tanzania employs large numbers of these youngsters. They provide much of the manual and machine-based labor on tobacco, coffee, tea, sugarcane, and sisal plantations. (Sisal is a fibrous crop from which rope is manufactured.) For example, in one area of the coastal region, 30 percent of the sisal plantation workers are children aged 12 to 14. They labor up to 11 hours per day with no specific rest periods, six days a week. Their wages are half that of adults, while nourishment and lodging are inadequate. Only half have completed primary school. Some plantations require as much as 14-, 16-, or even 17-hour work days. Mines and quarries also employ large numbers of youth who spend most of their days toiling above or below ground in very hazardous conditions. They risk injury from dust inhalation, blasting, mine collapse, flooding, as well as illness from silicosis.

Young girls are often lured away from their rural families with schemes that promise lucrative employment in towns and cities, only to be exploited as underpaid domestic servants that work as many as 16 or 18 hours per day. Domestic servitude in urban areas also make for an easy transition to child prostitution, which is a growing industry in Tanzania. As much as 25 percent of child prostitutes are former domestic servants.

Why Such Widespread Child Labor?

Poverty is one obvious reason for such widespread child labor in Tanzania. Over 50 percent of Tanzania's 36 million people live in extreme poverty, surviving on less than one US dollar per day. Many parents feel their survival is dependent on sending their children to work. Fortunately, income generation loan programs, also known as micro-credit disbursements, have had some success in giving families an economic boost.

Meanwhile, Tanzania's education system has drastically declined over the last 20 years due to funding cuts and teacher shortages. Currently, either no education is available or it is of such poor quality that it makes little sense for parents to send their children to school. Close to half the children are not enrolled, while the majority of those enrolled also work and are in constant danger of dropping out. If high quality education were made available, many more children would attend and fewer would enter the labor force. Education plays a critical role in combating child labor.



Boys in community learning center

An Innovative Educational Strategy

To address this need for high-quality basic education, Education Development Center (EDC) and its partner, Research Triangle Institute (RTI), are key players in a program called Time-Bound Program on Eliminating Child Labor in Tanzania, which is funded by the US Department of Labor. EDC and RTI are establishing community learning centers in the 11 Tanzanian districts that have the highest incidence of child labor. 200 Interactive Radio Instruction (IRI) lessons for each of the first four grades will be developed in these centers. IRI is an innovative methodology that uses radio broadcasts that summon the participation of groups of listening students while their activities are facilitated by onsite teachers. The IRI curricula will include Swahili, mathematics, English, science, social studies, essential life skills, and navigating Tanzania's job market. International Labor Organization (ILO) and other NGOs are also identifying children who work, negotiating with employers, and bringing them to the community learning centers for their participation. When children complete the fourth grade, they will be assisted to integrate back into the formal school system or into a vocational program to prepare them for more stable, less dangerous work in the years ahead.

Meeting these specialized educational needs for child laborers, however, requires a multi-prong strategy that involves whole communities. First, EDC and RTI are developing public awareness campaigns that will inform communities about the hazards of child labor, the new educational alternative, and how they can assist with child attendance. In addition, a consultation process is being created that will unite NGOs, schools, local governments, churches, employers, and other public and private organizations to form the institutional support essential to halting the most

dangerous forms of child labor and to eventually integrate child laborers back into the formal school system.

For further information about this project, contact Nadya Karim-Shaw at nkshaw@edc.org or Gaelle Simon at gsimon@edc.org

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[U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of International Labor Affairs](#)

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[Children as Partners - working to reduce child labor through child participation](#)