



ILO Should End Cooperation with Tobacco Industry

Tobacco industry CSR activities undermine progress on health and development and stifle the ability of tobacco workers to express their freedom to associate and bargain collectively.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is the sole UN agency that still accepts sponsorship from an industry whose products kill 7 million people globally per year; instead the ILO should implement the UN model policy to prevent tobacco industry interference.

During the meeting of its Governing Body from 8-22 March 2018, ILO should finally align itself with decision of the UN Economic and Social Committee (ECOSOC) and decide to end its cooperation with the tobacco industry!

Tobacco companies have a long-standing history of denying health risks, fostering poverty wages and condoning unsafe working conditions among tobacco farmers and workers, interfering with the implementation of anti-smoking policies, suppressing legitimate worker organizing efforts and using corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities to enhance the public reputation of their harmful practices. In recognition of this, the World Health Organisation Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) includes a provision ("Article 5.3") that calls on Parties to the treaty to enact strong measures to protect public health policymaking from the undue influence of the tobacco industry. As of today, 180 countries and the EU are Parties to the FCTC.

Tobacco Growing is Precarious and Hazardous Work

Despite growing awareness of the harms of smoking, the global cigarette industry remains one of the most profitable industries in the world selling a harmful product. Cigarette retail value is estimated to be worth US\$ 683.4 billion.¹ However, it is not the workers and farmers who profit. Tobacco growers in developing countries do not determine leaf prices nor have any control over them. Wages paid to plantation workers are accordingly very low, hardly providing a livelihood. Prices are almost exclusively dictated by big multinational companies (MNC). Multinational cigarette manufacturers and leaf buying companies have structured supply chains that marginalize those at the bottom and use opaque contracting systems to obscure their obligations to the workers who produce their products. There are documented cases of the tobacco industry retaliating against workers who attempt to organize and set up "yellow" trade unions in Brazil in an attempt to keep wages and leaf prices low and weaken the bargaining position of the workforce.²

Despite the tobacco industry's rhetoric about occupational safety in farming practices, growers and plantation workers continue to face harms at different stages of cultivating tobacco. Unlike other agricultural crops, tobacco readily exposes many growers to chemical hazards, aside from pesticides, just by handling the tobacco plant. Tobacco growers and farm workers, including children, are at risk of green tobacco sickness (GTS), caused by dermal absorption of nicotine from skin contact with tobacco leaves. Tobacco farmers and farm workers are also frequently exposed to high levels of agrochemicals (i.e., insecticides, herbicides, fungicides, fumigants, growth inhibitors, and ripening agents) throughout the growing cycle.^{3 4 5} A series of these grave problems are referred to in documents prepared by the ILO itself (GB.329/POL/6 and GB.331/POL/5).

¹ Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids. The Global Cigarette Industry Factsheet. December 2016
http://global.tobaccofreekids.org/files/pdfs/en/Global_Cigarette_Industry_pdf.pdf

² Angela Cordeiro, Francisco Marochi and Jose Maria Tardin. A Poison Crop -- Tobacco in Brazil. Global Pesticide Campaigner, Volume 8, Number 2, June 1998

³ Ohayo-Mitoko et al., 1997. "Acetylcholinesterase Inhibition as an Indicator of Organophosphate and Carbamate



Tobacco CSR is Covert Advertisement, Not Effective Remedy

ILO currently cooperates with organisations sponsored and controlled by the tobacco industry which conduct CSR activities in an attempt to undo some of the harm the original business of their donors, selling cigarettes, causes. Since 2002, ILO has received more than US\$ 15 million from tobacco companies and its subsidiaries. This type of cooperation, which is the last of its kind on UN level, effectively puts the fox in charge of the henhouse and provides a platform for representatives of the tobacco industry and their dependents to cast themselves as part of the solution to a problem they caused knowingly. Moreover, the projects in question do not even address the hazards that harm farmers and workers in tobacco growing developing countries, as indicated by trade unions active in the tobacco sector.^{6 7 8} The tobacco industry's publicised attempts at representation and agendas to improve the welfare of tobacco farmers and communities remain tokenistic at best, as tobacco growers and farm workers remain socio-economically vulnerable and exploited. This observation also holds and is documented for the organisations in question that are currently giving money to ILO.^{9 10 11} In order to avoid exactly this type of scenario, the WHO FCTC Articles 5.3 and 13 Guidelines recommend a ban on tobacco-related CSR activities because they are a form of sponsorship. More than two dozen countries have issued such a ban.¹²

ILO Needs to Seek Alternative Funding Free of Vested Interests

Despite almost two decades of tobacco CSR activities, the programs have been unsuccessful in making any significant progress towards their declared goal of reducing child labour in tobacco production in the project countries. However, the programs have allowed the tobacco industry, through non-profit entities over which it has financial and administrative control, to collaborate with the ILO, boost its public image, and gain access to high-level government officials in the target countries. The FCA would like to remind all 181 Parties to the FCTC again that Articles 5.3 and 13 Guidelines call for a ban on CSR activities by the tobacco industry. The decision at the upcoming meeting of the ILO Government Body should reflect the intention of these articles. ILO and its member states, if willing, can find alternative funding for the projects in question instead of accepting funds from a business with a vested interest in the status quo of widespread child labour and weak collective bargaining structures.

Poisoning in Kenyan Agricultural Workers'. *International Journal of Occupational and Environmental Health* 3 (3):210-20

⁴ Cornwall et al., 1995. "Risk Assessment and Health Effects of Pesticides Used in Tobacco Farming in Malaysia." *Health Policy Plan* 10 (4): 431-37

⁵ Salvi et al., 2003 "Neuropsychiatric Evaluation on Subjects Chronologically Exposed to Organophosphate Pesticides." *Toxicology Science* 72:267-71

⁶ TOAWUM. Open letter to ILO. 29 Sep 2017. <https://unfairtobacco.org/en/tobacco-workers-to-ilo-quit-tobacco-industry/>

⁷ Farm Labor Organizing Committee, press statement, "Floc Addresses Eclt Board In Geneva: Freedom Of Association Is Key In Ending Child Labor," April 8, 2016, <http://www.floc.com/wordpress/tag/child-labor/>

⁸ International Union of Foodworkers, *Adopted Resolutions of the IUF 27th World Congress, Geneva, 29 August – 1 September, 2017*, "Call for action – human rights for workers in tobacco growing," pg. 35, www.iuf.org/w/sites/default/files/resolutionsforwebsite_0.pdf

⁹ Otanez MG, Muggli ME, Hurt RD, Glantz SA. Eliminating child labour in Malawi: a British American Tobacco corporate responsibility project to sidestep tobacco labour exploitation. *Tob Control*. 2006;15(3):224-230. doi:10.1136/tc.2005.014993

¹⁰ Marty Otanez and Stanton Glantz. Social Responsibility in Tobacco Production? Tobacco Companies' use of Green Supply Chains to Obscure the Real Costs of Tobacco Farming. *Tob Control*. 2011 Nov;20(6):403-411.

¹¹ Centre for Social Concern. Malawi at 52: Using Tenants at the Expense of Decent Work in the Tobacco Value Chains. 2017. Pg. 22

¹² Assunta, Mary: Good country practices in the implementation of WHO FCTC Article 5.3 and its guidelines, 2018, <http://www.who.int/fctc/publications/fctc-article-5-3-best-practices.pdf>.



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