

13 YEARS OF IMPACT: WORKING AGAINST CHILD LABOUR IN KYRGYZSTAN'S TOBACCO-GROWING COMMUNITIES



For immediate release

BISHKEK, Kyrgyzstan, 28 November 2017 – Since January 2005, ECLT, together with its partner, the Alliance for the Protection of Children’s Rights (APCR), has implemented five projects in the Nookat and Alabuka Districts of southwestern Kyrgyzstan to address child labour in tobacco-growing communities. The projects focused on withdrawing children from working in the fields, to expanding their access to vocational training, to supporting families with microloans and helping them form or join existing cooperatives so parents can hire more adult labour or agricultural machinery and reduce their need for child labour. ECLT’s involvement in the elimination of child labour in Kyrgyzstan first started in 2003, when the Agricultural Workers Union reported the widespread use of child labour in agriculture, including in tobacco growing.

Since 2013, and through ECLT’s IMPACT Project and partnerships:

- 10,370 children were withdrawn from labour and enrolled in school;
- 1,200 children benefited from after-school programmes;
- 1,900 teenagers graduated from vocational training;
- 18,200 people were trained on child labour issues;
- 4,900 parents benefited from microloans; and
- US\$2.5 million was invested in Kyrgyzstan to fight child labour since 2005.

For the past two years, ECLT has funded the IMPACT Project’s “Sustainability Phase” to support farmers during their transition from tobacco, resulting from the 2015 departure of several major tobacco companies, which ceased their operations in the country due to the global market’s low demand for the duibek leaf variety grown in Kyrgyzstan. Notably, tobacco production has steadily decreased in the country over the past several years, compared to the volumes produced during Soviet times.

The Sustainability Phase effectively concludes ECLT’s presence in Kyrgyzstan. To mark its 13 years of efforts to end child labour, a formal Closure Ceremony was organised in Bishkek on 28 November 2017 with project partners and stakeholders, including

representatives from the national and local government, trade unions and beneficiaries. The event also included the presentation of the independent study results, which assessed ECLT's approach and impact between 2005 and 2017. The study revealed a reduction in child labour in tobacco growing, an improvement in farmers' purchasing power thanks to microcredits and a better understanding of children's rights and the dangers of child labour among children and their communities.

During the ceremony, the ECLT Foundation officially handed over the ownership of the microloan fund, worth a total of USD 540'000, to the APCR. ECLT's Programme Manager, Karima Jambulatova, shared: "Despite closing our activities in Kyrgyzstan, by leaving the microloan fund with the Alliance for the Protection of Children's Rights, we rest assured that it will continue benefitting current and former tobacco farmers' households, improving their access to microfinance and ensuring that children are not used for labour."



For further information:

Created in 2000, the Eliminating Child Labour in Tobacco Growing (ECLT) Foundation is a global leader in preventing child labour in tobacco agriculture, and improving the lives of children in tobacco-growing areas. The Foundation brings together the stakeholders of the tobacco supply chain, including its largest group, the growers, along with leaf suppliers and manufacturers, to leverage impact. With the adoption of the Pledge

of Commitment and Minimum Requirements on combatting child labour by member companies in 2014, ECLT promotes and advances responsible business practices that are in line with international standards.

The ECLT Foundation strengthens communities, advocates for improved policies and advances research so that tobacco-growing communities can both benefit from agriculture and ensure health, education and safety for their children.

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