

Report

Roundtable on the EU's commitment to education and the elimination of child labour in the EC's aid programming to ACP countries'

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On Tuesday 27th of November 2007 the stop child labour – school is the best place to work campaign organised a roundtable in Brussels to discuss the EU's contribution to strategies which aim to support education programmes and eliminate child labour in a number of African countries. With representation from North and South civil society organisations, members of the European Parliament, the European Commission, ACP Embassies and Permanent Representatives, the roundtable facilitated lively discussion and debate on the key issues.

Christopher Wakiraza from Kids in Need in Uganda and Manuel Henrique, project coordinator of the Millennium Village project of Welthungerhilfe in Mangué, Angola, presented the child labour situation in their countries where HIV&AIDS, poor quality of education and conflict contribute to the persistence and increasing incidence of child labour. They recommended the inclusion of integrated strategies to combat child labour and they noted that the elimination of child labour is a precondition for development, not a by-product of it.

According to UNICEF, 30% of children between the age of 5 and 14 are working in Angola. This is partially due to instability which caused many refugees and displaced persons. From 1961 to 2002, 4.5 million people were displaced due to conflict – 65% of whom were under the age of 15¹. Manuel Henriques noted that the Angolan government does not invest enough in the social sectors of health and education and that support from the international community is needed in order to strengthen the education system - the best mechanism for the elimination of child labour.

Christopher Wakiraza presented research showing that child labour was on the rise in Uganda. This is due to high dropout rates in schools caused by poor quality education and a high incidence of HIV&AIDS. He concluded that the increase in child labour was a direct result of lack of action in social sectors. In this regard, he urged European and African leaders meeting at the EU-Africa Summit to identify specific financial allocations to social sectors when they officially approve aid programmes worth over €20 billion.

Policy measures and strategies at both community and national levels are necessary to eliminate child labour. Therefore civil society and trade unions should be consulted when establishing concrete policy measures. This approach is supported by the Dutch Member of Parliament, Thijs Berman, vice-chair of the Development Committee in the European parliament and member of the delegation to the ACP/EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly.

He stressed the need for debate on the elimination of child labour as a condition for development, not as a condition for aid. He also stressed the need for appropriate programmes and strategies. Local NGOs and Trade Unions must also become stronger to implement these programmes and strategies, he said. He also noted that the *“the EU has to do its homework and make child labour a priority not in words but in action”*.

¹ footnote from report The European Commission's commitment to Education & the elimination of child labour, A report by alliance2015 Stop Child labour campaign, November 2007

The report: *The European Commission's commitment to Education & to the elimination of Child labour* focuses on the current EU policy on child labour and highlights the extent to which these stated policies are reflected in the Country Strategy Papers of 5 African countries. The research reviews the draft Country Strategy Papers of Angola, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The main conclusion of the report is that education and child labour are not sufficiently addressed in the Country Strategy Papers of the EU ACP countries.

Recommendations contained within the report include the need for inclusive strategies that:

- include an increase in expenditures for education;
- include child labour concerns in each activity of the EU policy, for instance within trade and regional integration programmes;
- contribute to coherence in EU policy with regard to education and child labour. Where education is a priority sector the issue of child labour should be incorporated as a key element for the realisation of MDG2;
- provide information on the division of labour between the donors on education and the elimination of child labour;
- justify the selection of priority sectors and demonstrate democratic ownership.

In the roundtable debate, discussion focused on the provision of 40% of EU aid budget to general budget support and questions were raised about how it could be ensured that this aid would contribute to the elimination of child labour and the provision of full-time quality formal education. It was noted that correct indicators need to be identified to measure how the issues of child labour and education are being addressed at the policy level.

The Country Strategy Papers under review, with the exception of Tanzania, do not include any reference to child labour. As these Country Strategy Papers will be implemented through annual action plans, it is crucial that civil society and trade unions are invited to make inputs into the development of these plans. In country, civil society needs to get more involved in this policy process at the implementation level. The school is the best place to work campaign must continue to work with southern partners and look at how civil society can become more involved in these processes.. When lobbying donors, the campaign must ensure that a clear reference to an integrated strategy for the provision of education and the elimination of is included in all policies and strategies for development cooperation.

The next opportunity to lobby for on these issues is the EU Africa Summit in Portugal in December, where the Country Strategy Papers will be signed and adopted.

To see the elimination of child labour and the provision of full-time formal and quality education as a condition for development, the following actions are recommended:

- In the delivery of aid to the developing countries indicators for the elimination of child labour should be included in the general budget support;
- Facilitate scrutiny of the Country Strategy papers by members of parliament in developing countries as well as the European Union;
- The Economic Partnership Agreements should mention that the elimination of child labour is a condition for development;

- Reference to the elimination of child labour should also be addressed in HIV & AIDS and conflict-resolution policies.
- Consultation with civil society and trade unions should be improved in policy formulation, implementation and monitoring;
- Mechanisms for data collection should be improved