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PRESS RELEASE

Child labour on the rise in Hoima and Kikuube districts

HOIMA- 8th April 2021: A baseline report from the Uganda Bureau of Statistics has indicated that child labour in the two districts of Hoima and Kikuube stands at 26 per cent (74,000 children). This is higher than the national average of 15 % as of 2016/17 National Labour Force Survey. When household chores were included, the rate of Child Labour rose to 31 per cent.

The study revealed that 3 out of 10 children (29%) were engaged in Hazardous work ¹or worked for longer hours while the proportion of working children in commercial crop farming was 18 per cent.

The report has been launched at Miika Eco Resort Hotel, in Hoima city today 8th April, 2021.

Child labour refers to Children 5-11 years engaged in any economic activity; or children 12-13 years doing work other than, light work “or do work beyond 14 hours a week”; or children 14-17 years involved in hazardous forms of labour or working for an equivalent of 43 hours in a week or beyond.

“Children and youth remain a very vulnerable group in the heart of the development process evident from the levels of child Labour in the country now at 15 percent from the National Labour Force Survey 2016/17,” noted Michael Sijje Ogen Principal Statistician at UBOS who represented the ED UBOS.

The study was undertaken during December 2019 by UBOS in collaboration with Elimination of Child Labour in Tobacco (ECLT) Foundation in the two districts located in the Albertine Graben. The study focuses on different forms of child labour in different sectors including tea, sugarcane, tobacco and fishing.

It was revealed that 32 per cent of the children combined schooling with work while 19 per cent were out of school at this early age. Three in 10 children of the school going children missed at least a school day between May and June, 2019 – the peak harvest period for tobacco in the region.

Child labour prevalence in forestry and fishing and in commercial crop farming were nearly global at 89% and 93.5% respectively. Services registered the least rate of child labour at 38.9%.

¹According to the Employment Act No. 6, 2006, hazardous work by children includes;

- Children working in industries gazetted as hazardous
- Children working in occupations gazetted as hazardous
- Children working for long hours i.e. more than 43 hours a week
- Working conditions e.g. working at night

“There was a general lack of awareness among the communities on what child labour entails and many parents felt that children must help family members with work but were ignorant of the negative impact of certain kinds of work to children,” explained Sharon Apio, Senior Statistician at UBOS.

Respondents in Focus Group Discussions attributed child labour to poverty situations and the need for children to meet their own basic needs.

“When you are poor, you have to work hard, collectively as a family to get out of poverty,” said a woman in Kyabaseke, Kikuube district, the study reports.

A 16-year-old boy in Buhirigi, Hoima said, “It’s from my own tobacco garden that I get school fees.”

Other reasons for engaging in child labour were the need for children to contribute to household income and food security and acquiring skills and experience at an early age.

“There is need for multipronged strategies aimed at attitude change in a bid to eliminate Child Labour such as explaining the negative consequences of child labour and the benefits of school-going,” Apio noted.

She further appealed to Government to intensify efforts geared towards improving household incomes such as Improving agriculture through the National Agriculture Advisory Services (NAADS).

Eddie Wambewo, Executive Director ECLT Foundation noted that the issue of child labour has now moved from tobacco sector to sugar cane and fishing activities.

“We shall have to develop joint programmes and interventions with tea, sugar, tobacco, oil and gas to address the vice of child labour in the Albertine Graben especially that there is going to be an influx of people as we head into the development stage for the oil and gas sector,” Wambewo added.

The stakeholders meeting held at Miika Eco Resort Hotel resolved that there should be joint effort in addressing child labour from different actors including those in the tea, sugar, tobacco, oil and gas and fishing.

The meeting was attended by different stakeholders among them district officials, representatives from private sector, government, Media, Non-Governmental Organizations operating in the districts of Hoima and Kikuube.

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