

Use of child labour in the cotton sector of Uzbekistan: agenda for human rights advocacy

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The socio-economic portrait of the phenomenon

- 457 thousands school children are mobilized each season for the period of up to 2.5 months, from the beginning of September to the end of November (Children from Tashkent city are not touched);
- There are no written instructions issued. All instructions are given orally or by phone.
- The age of mobilized children: normally beginning from the 7th grade (12 y.), but sometimes from the 3rd grade (8 y.) and younger.
- An example: In 2004 in Pap district (Ferghana Valley) even children from year two and three were mobilised. Azamat Buronov, 8, was often being lost on the cotton field because his height is almost the same as of the cotton bush

The living conditions at the cotton farm

- Most often children are taken from their home and live at the cotton farm. They live in **badly accommodated buildings**, **sleep on the earthen or concrete floor**;
- Rural children sometimes stay at home but have to **foot walk** to the cotton farm which may be up to 4-5 km from the village. They way lays along high ways without side-walk what leads to car incidents.
- **Lack of drinking water** at the farms: it is brought in tanks and not disinfected properly
- Nutrition: on the breakfast: **tea, bread and sugar**; on lunch and supper: **macaroni without meat**. Children are often fall in debt for meals after the season and don't receive any salary for their work.
- There is **no conditions for personal hygiene** (hot water, separate tents for girls etc.)

Conditions of work and 'incentives' for discipline

- **No contracts** are used in attracting children for work.
- The duration of working day is **10 hours**
- The obligatory norm for cotton collection is set in between **30 and 50 kg**
- An example of child productivity: in 2004 120 kids from one school in Kashkadarya collected during the season 6.93 tons of raw cotton. In case of duration of the season of 45 days it means each child collected per day **57 kg** in average.
- If failed to fulfil this norm the school student can be beaten or lambasted before the other students.
- The 'deserters' risk to be excluded from school or have to buy off by paying a bribe

Child labour and law: ILO core standards

Country	Freedom of association and collective bargaining		Elimination of forced and compulsory labour		Elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation		Abolition of child labour	
	Conv. 87	Conv. 98	Conv. 29	Conv. 105	Conv. 100	Conv. 111	Conv. 138	Conv. 182
Kazakhstan	13:12:2000	18:05:2001	18:05:2001	18:05:2001	18:05:2001	06:12:1999	18:05:2001	26:02:2003
Kyrgyzstan	31:03:1992	31:03:1992	31:03:1992	18:02:1999	31:03:1992	31:03:1992	31:03:1992	11:05:2004
Tajikistan	26:11:1993	26:11:1993	26:11:1993	23:09:1999	26:11:1993	26:11:1993	26:11:1993	08:06:2005
Turkmenistan	15:05:1997	15:05:1997	15:05:1997	15:05:1997	15:05:1997	15:05:1997		
Uzbekistan		13:07:1992	13:07:1992	15:12:1997	13:07:1992	13:07:1992		

Child labour and Law

- 'The Law on the Foundations of State Youth Policy' (1991)
 - «it is not permitted to attract school and university students to work during the learning process, except of cases when such a work **corresponds to the chosen speciality** and is **a form of learning and production practice**, or cases of **voluntary collective or individual work** in the time free from the study session. Such a labour is accepted at the condition of properly concluded **contract** in accordance to labour and civic law.
- Labour Code, chapter 241:
 - Prohibit the use of children on any works that can **damage their health condition, security and morality**'

Official justification for the use of child labour

- ‘Children feel obligated to their homeland and always are ready to work when the homeland needs help’

(Ismat Achilov, deputy mayor of Karshi, 2004)

Child labour and revenues:

(calculated at the assumption of 20 kg collected per day per person)

Regions	No of children on cotton, thousand	cotton collected, tons	cotton fibre, tons	gross income in world prices, mln USD	salary	Gross income minus labour cost, USD
Khoresm	27	24,323	8,027	9	0.33	8.7
Andijan	45	40,277	13,291	14	0.55	13.4
Kashkadarya	44	39,947	13,182	14	0.55	13.5
Buhara	29	26,076	8,605	9	0.36	8.6
Namangan	39	34,735	11,463	12	0.48	11.5
Ferghana	55	49,169	16,226	17	0.68	16.3
Jizak	20	18,066	5,962	6	0.25	5.8
Samarkand	54	48,268	15,929	17	0.66	16.3
Surhandarya	36	31,971	10,551	11	0.44	10.6
Syrdarya	13	12,054	3,978	4	0.17	3.8
Navoi	16	14,364	4,740	5	0.20	4.8
Tash. Oblast	48	42,750	14,107	15	0.59	14.4
Karakalpakstan	31	27,614	9,112	10	0.38	9.6
Total	457	409,613	135,172	143	6	137

Child labour and revenues:

(calculated at the assumption of 40 kg collected per day per person)

	No of children on cotton, thousand	cotton collected, ton	cotton fibre, ton	gross income in world prices, mln USD	salary	Gross income minus labour cost, USD
Khoresm	27	48,600	16,038	18	0.67	17.3
Andijan	45	81,000	26,730	28	1.11	26.9
Kashkadarya	44	79,200	26,136	28	1.10	26.9
Buhara	29	52,200	17,226	18	0.72	17.3
Namangan	39	70,200	23,166	24	0.96	23.0
Ferghana	55	99,000	32,670	34	1.35	32.6
Jizak	20	36,000	11,880	12	0.50	11.5
Samarkand	54	97,200	32,076	34	1.33	32.7
Surhandarya	36	64,800	21,384	22	0.88	21.1
Syrdarya	13	23,400	7,722	8	0.33	7.7
Navoi	16	28,800	9,504	10	0.40	9.6
Tash. Oblast	48	86,400	28,512	30	1.18	28.8
Karakalpakstan	31	55,800	18,414	20	0.76	19.2
Total	457	822,600	271,458	286	12	273.7

Child labour and revenues: summary

- Children produce in between the 5th and 10th of national output.
- The child labour cost constitutes only 4% of the overall cotton revenue children produce
- Most of the profit is appropriated by the central government, namely by President controlled agents.

Civil society response

- **At the wave of Perestroika, the civil society (mainly environmentalists) addressed the following issues:**
 - The **monoculture** of cotton. As a result of protests the size of lands allocated for cotton had been reduced twice
 - The use of **pesticides**. As a result, the amount of chemicals have reduced, but mainly to economic reasons
 - **Forced labour**. As a result, children only from capital have been released from forced work on cotton field.
- **Nowadays HR groups are in the forefront:**
 - 'Ezgulik' in its parallel report to the Human Rights Committee
 - 'Ezgulik' and 'Veritas' by their press-releases raised public awareness on this issue
 - Local activists, Shuhrat Ganiyev (Buhara), Bahtior Hamroyev (Jizzoh), Saidmurod Kuchkarov (Kashkadarya), Salima Kadyrova (Samarkand) reported on the dire conditions under which children are employed on cotton fields
 - Independent journalists and online editions report periodically on this issue (Uznews.net, Ferghana.ru)
- **But the domestic civil society, due to oppressive policy of the ruling regime, has been so far very weak in withstanding these irregularities, and must be supported by international actors**

Agenda for advocacy: whom to blame

- In other countries the use of child labour is a consequence of 'bad governance' and underdevelopment
- In Uzbekistan it is a result of a deliberate state policy
- Conclusion: Uzbekistan government deserves direct sanctions

Agenda for advocacy: rule of law

- **Commitments**

- – encourage the Uzbek government to sign and ratify conventions on child labour

- **Implementation**

- – ensure that the Uzbek government implement the signed and ratified conventions

Agenda for advocacy: target issues to be addressed

- Option one: **Abolish the practice of forced child labour**
 - Implement genuine reforms in the cotton sector and economy; fair pricing (now it is 10 times less than the world prices).
- Option two: **Step by step improvement.** At the first stage:
 - **Reduce the period** of time of the seasonal work to from 2-3 months to 15 days
 - Secure work and living conditions that would meet **hygiene standards** (drinking water, nutrition; hot water for hygiene);
 - **Fair payment**: exclude payment arrears; exclude billing for meals and living conditions.

Channels of sanctions and encouragements



- EU as a ultimate and biggest market of textile produced from Uzbek cotton.
- Stick and carrot approach:
 - EU import restrictions
 - ILO as an instrument of monitoring and negotiation