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### **CHILD LABOUR IN AGRICULTURE IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA: FEATURES AND ONGOING CHALLENGES**

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*This study has the aim to evaluate the participation of the Moldovan children in agricultural work, noting its adverse effects on children's health, safety, and education. Highlighting a lack of updated data and research within Moldova in the agricultural sector, this study employs a detailed methodology encompassing national statistics, expert surveys, and international convention reviews. The paper underscores the need for improved education, income, and employment strategies. It emphasizes the importance of policies and collaborative efforts to protect children from exploitative labour, advocating for a collective approach to ensure their well-being and future prospects.*

**Keywords:** *child labour; children in difficulty; agriculture; education; school attendance; Republic of Moldova.*

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According to prominent organizations as ILO and UNICEF in 2022 about 160 million children — including 63 million girls and 97 million boys — were part of the global workforce. About half of these working children, totaling 79 million, were involved in perilous tasks that directly endangered their well-being, safety, and ethical growth. Around 70% (112 million) of these children and today were still working in the agricultural sector. Thus, this research focuses on child labour in agriculture, and its general goal is to determine the participation of children in agriculture in the Republic of Moldova and to determine if this labour is not harmful for them or divert them from school activities. Child labour as defined by the International Labour Conventions 138 and 182, encompasses work done below the minimum employment age, disrupts a child's mandatory education, or compromises their health and safety. It's crucial to emphasize that no child under 18 should be exposed to hazardous work. However, not all tasks undertaken by children are classified as child labour; certain activities contribute positively to a child's learning and skill development. Significantly, there exists a substantial dearth of data regarding child labour in agriculture within the Eastern Europe and Central Asia region. Official statistics lack this information, prompting a specialized survey conducted by experts. Also, the objective of this research is the perfecting of the policies and programs in agriculture and food security, specifically in tackling the mitigation and thwarting of child labour in this field in Republic of Moldova, which is a country in Eastern Europe. So, the purpose of the paper is to assess the involvement of Moldovan children in agricultural labour and its negative impact on their health, safety, and education. It points out the scarcity of recent data and studies in Moldova, particularly in the agriculture field, and utilizes a thorough approach that includes national statistics, expert surveys, and reviews of international conventions.

The issue of children labour is studied frequently in scientific literature, from which many papers are surveys and from which below can be mentioned a few most recent ones. M. Bourdillon (2006) analyzes the relationship of children and work in scientific literature. From one side part-time working benefits children and their families economically and socially and doesn't affect school performance negatively. From opposite side any child work can be seen as harmful. The author stresses the compatibility of work and school and argues against failure in studies of considering child work prevention costs on children themselves. R. Srivastava (2019) finds poverty and illiteracy as main causes of children being employed in hazardous work which are accentuated by societal attitudes that emphasize exploitation and abuse. This has devastating results on children's educational attainment, health and future perspectives outside unskilled labour jobs. J. Zhuang (2019) discusses the ban of children labour. He found that legal intervention was helpful in formal sector activities, but not in non-formal ones. He found that educational results of children offered by the labour ban were mixed and because child labour is not the only obstacle to education. Health consequences were unknown because it was not a priority for child labour programs without support services for children labour ban affects

negatively nutrition needs for subsistence. C. Ihejieta (2020) stresses the need of recognizing the viewpoints of children and the specificity of work itself because complete abolishment of child labour may redirect children to worse types of child work that are unconditional. In case of Republic of Moldova there are no recent studies on the child labour. The actual study aims to cover the gap of understanding the current situation of children labour in Moldova after around more than a decade of last studies in the area.

In order to accomplish the goal of identifying the current state of issue of children labour, especially, in agriculture where the issue is most pressing and specifically in the Republic of Moldova two approaches were used — from one side — the analysis of statistical data of National Bureau of Statistics of Moldova, of the data reports of UNICEF and other international organizations, mapping the legislation covering children work topic, from another side — the analysis of the data of surveys directed to experts in areas where children labour may occur or adjacent fields. Four types of questionnaires were sent to four groups of experts from different fields: local public administration, school, hospital and entrepreneurship. According to ILO methodology<sup>1</sup>, the questions covered such aspects as: “number of cases of children labour, labour description, number of worked hours, interplay between labour and school, causes of children labour, age of working children, information on children labour issues, gender differences, recommendations of reducing and abolishing children labour in agriculture”.

#### **DATA AND FACTS ON CHILD LABOUR IN AGRICULTURE FROM ILO, UNICEF, NATIONAL STATISTICS AND ANY OTHER DATA AVAILABLE FROM INTERNATIONAL OR GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS**

The Research of Small Agricultural Producers (RSAP)<sup>2</sup> serves as the primary source for information about the farming activities of small agricultural producers. This includes: i) family households engaged in rearing livestock, poultry, or bees and growing crops near their homes and in gardens, whether within or outside of villages; ii) small-scale peasant or farmer households, as well as individuals allotted land shares under the Land Code of the Republic of Mol-

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<sup>1</sup> Working Children in the Republic of Moldova: The Results of the 2009 Children's Activities Survey. International Labour Organization; ILO International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour; National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) of the Republic of Moldova — Chisinau: ILO, 2010. URL: [https://statistica.gov.md/public/files/publicatii\\_electronice/piata\\_fortei\\_de\\_munca/Munca\\_copiilor\\_raport\\_eng.zip](https://statistica.gov.md/public/files/publicatii_electronice/piata_fortei_de_munca/Munca_copiilor_raport_eng.zip) (accessed on: 08.02.2024).

<sup>2</sup> Activitatea agricolă a micilor producători agricoli în Republica Moldova. Biroul Național de Statistică al Republicii Moldova. Ed. 2023. 32 p. URL: [https://statistica.gov.md/files/files/publicatii\\_electronice/Activitatea\\_agricola/Activitatea\\_agricultura\\_editia\\_2023.pdf](https://statistica.gov.md/files/files/publicatii_electronice/Activitatea_agricola/Activitatea_agricultura_editia_2023.pdf)

dova (with its amendments and additions), who have not officially registered their agricultural operations, and operate on less than 10 hectares of land. The RSAP aims to gather detailed data on these agricultural producers' activities, including land characteristics, livestock presence, production volumes, consumption and expenditure on agricultural production, the distribution of agricultural output, and income from farming. The RSAP conducts annual surveys to collect this data.

The RSAP methodology includes: a) using statistical-mathematical techniques to select the sample of households and small-scale farmers for the study; b) collecting data through interviews conducted by trained personnel; c) conducting surveys throughout the year with annual rotation among households.

Data collection involves interviewing households using specific tools (questionnaires, methodological guidelines, interviewer's manual, etc.), and annual figures on land areas, animal stocks, production volumes, incomes, expenditures, and agricultural activity costs, as well as labour force usage, are derived from quarterly data. This information is crucial for calculating agricultural macroeconomic indicators, including intermediate consumption, added value in agriculture, and for preparing food resource balances. Small agricultural producers are identified as small-scale farmer households owning up to 10 hectares of agricultural land, individuals allotted land but who have not officially registered, and households working their own land for food and other needs. Peasant or farmer households are entrepreneurial activities using privately owned or utilized land for farming. This category also includes individuals given land shares who haven't registered their operations formally. Agricultural lands refer to land shares allocated under the Land Code for agricultural use by small-scale farmers and unregistered landowners. Expenses and consumption in agricultural production cover the costs of materials, services, labour wages, mandatory social and health insurance contributions, land and asset leasing fees, etc. Income from agricultural activities includes earnings from selling crops and livestock, leasing land and equipment, providing services, selling assets, and receiving subsidies and other financial support related to farming.

The share of Moldova's production of the agricultural sector (agriculture, forestry and fishing) in GDP in 2022 has reached 10.1%. The number of enterprises in the same year in agricultural sector was 5454 units, which is 8.7% of total number of enterprises. Its average number of salaried personnel constituted 39697 persons, which is 7.5% of total number of personnel in enterprises of Moldova. The value of turnover in agricultural sector accounted for 27900.14 million MDL (circa 1402.14 million EUR at average exchange rate in 2022) or 4.6% of turnover per total economic activities. From the agricultural sector the share of enterprises of crop and animal production, hunting and related service activities accounted for 97.5% of enterprises, 90.6% of salaried employees and 97.9% of turnover, in case of forestry and logging —

0.9% of enterprises, 8.5% of salaried employees and 1.8% of turnover and for fishing and aquaculture — 1.7% of enterprises, 0.9% of salaried employees and 0.2% of turnover. By size, majority of enterprises from agricultural sector are of micro size (83.6%), followed by small ones (13.9%), medium ones (2.3%) and big ones (0.2%).

The number of rural population that was employed in agricultural sector in 2022 was 169.8 thousand people of which men — 62.2%. The group of 15-24 years old represented 4.7% of employees in the sector (2.6% for women and 5.9% in case of men). The number of those of this age group with primary education or no education has been 0.2 thousand (all men), with gymnasium studies — 4.7 thousand (3.9 thousand men and 0.8 thousand — women), with secondary school studies — 0.6 thousand (all men). The number of peasant (farmer) households that use agricultural land (as of May 1) for the year 2022 was 135.0 thousand, of which 97.2% — registered rural (farmer) households with the surface of agricultural land up to 10 ha and 2.8% — peasant households (farmers) with the surface of agricultural land of 10 ha and above. Agricultural land at the beginning of the year 2022 was 2227.0 thousand hectares. The shares of this land by categories of land owners are the following: enterprises and organizations — 41.8%, peasant (farmer) households — 26.4% (of which with the average surface of land smaller than 50 ha — 20.3% (from which with the average surface of land smaller than 10 ha — 84.9%)), households (lots next to the house and gardens) — 14.9%, the members of the orchard associations and lot holders for vegetable growing — 0.2%, other land owners — 16.8%. For households that have only lots near the house from the total revenues obtained from agricultural activity the following is the structure: 83.0% from the sale of agricultural production (including processed products) (31.5% — vegetables and 51.5% — animal husbandry), 4.3% from the provision of services (of works) to third parties, 12.7% — other incomes. For households that have lots next to house and farm land from the total revenues obtained from agricultural activity the following is the structure: 86.2% from the sale of agricultural production (including processed products) (45.1% — vegetables and 41.1% — animal husbandry), 6.4% from the provision of services (of works) to third parties, 7.4% — other incomes. In the structure of consumption and expenses regarding the goods and services procured for the production of agricultural production on the surveyed households for those households that have only lots near the house the share of payment of the work of employed workers was 6.7% and the share of the payment for the execution of agricultural works (tillage, sowing, harvesting, etc.) — 20.5%, for those households that have lots next to house and farm land the share of payment of the work of employed workers was 7.3% and the share of the payment for the execution of agricultural works (tillage, sowing, harvesting, etc.) — 29.3%. A significant portion of children in Moldova, especially in rural areas, are involved in agricultural labour and/or household chores. This reality finds validation in various national and global reports, in-



cluding UNICEF's 2000 estimation<sup>3, 4, 5, 6</sup> indicating that 37.1% of Moldova's children aged 5 to 14 were involved in labour activities. The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2018)<sup>7</sup> reported 97.3% of children aged 5 to 14 involved in agricultural-related child labour. The U.S. Department of Labour (2019) detailed children's involvement in various agricultural activities such as cultivating and gathering crops, harvesting fruits, and tending to farm animals. This involvement extended to forestry tasks such as transporting heavy loads and engaging in fishing activities, which included responsibilities like fish feeding.

The Children's Activities Survey (fourth quarter of 2009) of NBS RM as part of larger and routinely conducted Labour Force Survey found 29.8% of children aged 5 to 17 were economically active, with a notable presence in agriculture (95.3%)<sup>8, 9, 10</sup>. The Children's Activities Survey has also revealed that an estimated 178,000 children in Moldova aged 5 to 17, were economically active participants in the labour force. Notably, high rates of employment were observed among very young children, peaking at 17.6% among boys aged 5 to 11. As children matured, the rate of employment continued to rise, reaching around 50% for boys and 35% for girls aged 12 to 14 and 15 to 17, respectively. Despite the prevalence of child

<sup>3</sup> Arends D., Ianachevici M., Nemerenco M. et al. Children in the Republic of Moldova: Situation analysis 2016. Chisinau, Report of UNICEF, 2017. 99 p. URL: <https://www.unicef.org/moldova/media/861/file/SitAn-2016-EN.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Sandu V., Birtha M., Ianachevici M. et al. Situation analysis of children and adolescents in Moldova. Vienna, Report of UNICEF, March 2022. URL: <https://www.unicef.org/moldova/media/8361/file/Situation%20Analysis%20of%20children%20and%20adolescents%20in%20the%20Republic%20of%20Moldova!.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Global Childhood Report 2021. The Toughest Places to be Child. Save the Children Federation. USA, 2021. 16 p. URL: <https://www.childhealthtaskforce.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/2021-global-childhood-report.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Ramsak A. Update of the situation of children and youth in the Republic of Moldova 2016-2019. Chisinau, Report of UNICEF, 2019. URL: <https://www.unicef.org/moldova/en/reports/update-situation-children-and-youth-republic-moldova> (accessed on: 08.02.2024).

<sup>7</sup> Working Children in the Republic of Moldova: The Results of the 2009 Children's Activities Survey. International Labour Organization; ILO International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour; National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) of the Republic of Moldova — Chisinau. URL: [https://statistica.gov.md/public/files/publicatii\\_electronice/piata\\_fortei\\_de\\_munca/Munca\\_copiilor\\_raport\\_eng.zip](https://statistica.gov.md/public/files/publicatii_electronice/piata_fortei_de_munca/Munca_copiilor_raport_eng.zip) (accessed on: 08.02.2024).

<sup>8</sup> 2004 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labour — Moldova. United States Department of Labour. Bureau of International Labour Affairs. 22 September 2005. URL: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/48c8ca6537.html> (accessed on: 08.02.2024).

<sup>9</sup> Working Children in the Republic of Moldova: The Results of the 2009 Children's Activities Survey. International Labour Organization; ILO International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour; National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) of the Republic of Moldova — Chisinau. URL: [https://statistica.gov.md/public/files/publicatii\\_electronice/piata\\_fortei\\_de\\_munca/Munca\\_copiilor\\_raport\\_eng.zip](https://statistica.gov.md/public/files/publicatii_electronice/piata_fortei_de_munca/Munca_copiilor_raport_eng.zip) (accessed on: 08.02.2024).

<sup>10</sup> Working Children in the Republic of Moldova: The Results of the 2009 Children's Activities Survey. Overview. ILO, NBS RM. Chisinau: "Nova Imprim" SRL, 2010. 56 p. URL: [https://statistica.gov.md/public/files/publicatii\\_electronice/piata\\_fortei\\_de\\_munca/Munca\\_copiilor\\_sinteza\\_eng\\_2009.pdf](https://statistica.gov.md/public/files/publicatii_electronice/piata_fortei_de_munca/Munca_copiilor_sinteza_eng_2009.pdf)

labour, the weekly working hours remained relatively low, averaging about nine hours per week. Regarding the nature of employment, a vast majority of working children — 94.9% boys and 96.0% girls, were engaged in agricultural activities. Most of these children performed unpaid agricultural work for their households. Only a small fraction, 7.2% of boys and 4.1% of girls, were involved in paid labour. Transitioning to paid work often meant shifting away from agricultural roles to other employment sectors. Agriculture accounted for the largest portion of the employed population, encompassing 23.6% of prime-age adults (25-64 years) and a striking 41.0% of younger individuals aged 15 to 19. Analyzing the occupational distribution within child labour in agriculture revealed a substantial concentration in elementary occupations. Approximately 92.2% of child labourers (92.1% boys, 92.3% girls) were engaged as unskilled agricultural workers, while a small percentage, 1.2% (boys — 1.1%, girls — 1.3%), held positions as skilled agricultural workers. There are also gender disparities in child labour. A study by the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Social Protection RM (2020), conducted by IOM and IMAS, funded by USAID, and guided and coordinated technically by USA CDC<sup>11</sup> highlighted a gender discrepancy in paid work or other forms of compensation with males (22.8%) highly more engaged than females (11.5%) within the past year (of the study). Employment locations varied, with farms or gardens being common for both genders but more males working in unspecified places. For females employed for payment, common work sites included farms or gardens (37.1%) and restaurants, hotels, cafes, or bars (25.4%). Among males working, frequent locations were farms or gardens (31.9%), other unspecified places (20.8%), and restaurants, hotels, cafes, or bars (14.3%)<sup>12</sup>.

According to Educational Discontinuation and Employment Among Youths (2015 Study by NBS RM<sup>13</sup>) 2.5% of youths aged 15 to 29 were not in school and had not completed their education. As reason for discontinuing studies is the desire to work as a significant factor, accounting for 10.7% of the reasons (representing 47.6 thousand individuals). Employment is mostly in agriculture — among those who left school to work, 19.1% found employment in the agricultural sector, including skilled agricultural employment — specifically, 8.0% of these working youths were engaged as skilled workers in fields such as agriculture, forestry, hunting, fish farming, and fishing. This group primarily consisted of men from rural areas. These roles are recognized under one of the Major Occupational Groups according to the Classifier of Occupations in the Republic of Moldova.

Child labour has an impact on education. The End of Childhood Report 2021 indicated that 16.3% of children aged 5 to 14 in Moldova were involved in child labour (starting work life), significantly higher than in Ukraine (3.2%).

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<sup>11</sup> Gross intake ratio to the last grade of primary education, both sexes (%). UNESCO Institute for Statistics. URL: <http://data.uis.unesco.org/> (accessed on: 08.02.2024).

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Tranziția de la școală la muncă. Chișinău, Biroul Național de Statistică, 2015. 30 p. URL: [https://statistica.gov.md/public/files/publicatii\\_electronice/Cercetarea\\_TSM/Sinteza\\_TSM\\_2015.pdf](https://statistica.gov.md/public/files/publicatii_electronice/Cercetarea_TSM/Sinteza_TSM_2015.pdf)

A 2015 study showed 2.5% of youths aged 15 to 29 were out of school, with a desire to work cited by 10.7% as the reason for discontinuing their education. Moldova's Out-of-school rate was reported at 17.1%, with non-attendance reasons among adolescents including completion of schooling and the need to work. Here should be reiterated that discontinuing school is an important factor related to focus on work life for children. Regarding the reasons for school non-attendance and labour market involvement the Report "Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labour"<sup>14</sup> — Moldova highlighted labour market involvement as the main reason for school non-attendance (18.3% of all surveyed pupils, with nearly double the number of boys compared to girls). Other factors contributing to absenteeism include poverty (5.1%), pupils working with their parents in household tasks (2.3%), and daily work alongside parents (3.26%), with significantly more boys than girls affected<sup>15, 16</sup>. As per the findings from the «Violence Against Children and Youth in the Republic of Moldova: Findings from a National Survey» (2019)<sup>17</sup>, among females aged 13-17 who were not attending school, a primary reason (74.1%) cited was either completing their schooling or having finished it. For males in the same age group (7.3% not attending school), a common reason (58.7%) was also completion of schooling. Another prevalent cause among non-attendees was the need to work, accounting for 9.6% of females and 35.1% of males. Based on the most recent data from the End of Childhood Report 2021<sup>18</sup>, the Republic of Moldova holds an End of Childhood Index Ranking of 86 out of 186 countries (having been at 76 in 2017 and 84 in 2020). The indicator for the Out-of-school rate (which measures children of primary and secondary school age not attending school) in the Republic of Moldova stands at 17.1% (compared to 17.9% in 2017 and 16.5% in 2020). For example, this rate is higher than in Ukraine (5.7%). A more detailed account of attendance and enrollment in school can be found in T. Colesnicova (2021).

<sup>14</sup> 2019 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor: Moldova, I. Prevalence and Sectoral Distribution of Child Labor, Bureau of International Labour Affairs of USA. U.S. Department of Labour. URL: [https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ILAB/child\\_labor\\_reports/tda2019/Moldova.pdf](https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ILAB/child_labor_reports/tda2019/Moldova.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> Metodologia de calculare a pragului absolut al srrrciei. Biroul Național de Statistică al Republicii Moldova. Aprobată prin Ordinul Biroului Național de Statistică nr. 56 din 24 august 2018. Completată prin Ordinul Biroului Național de Statistică nr. 15 din 02 iulie 2020. URL: [https://statistica.gov.md/public/files/Metadate/alte/Metodologie\\_saracie.pdf](https://statistica.gov.md/public/files/Metadate/alte/Metodologie_saracie.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> Poverty Reduction and Shared Prosperity in Moldova: Progress and prospects. World Bank Group. *Report*. No. 105722-MD. May 2016. URL: <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/168451467995808859/pdf/105722-WP-P151472-PUBLIC-Moldova-Poverty-Assessment-2016.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> The Republic of Moldova Violence Against Children and Youth Survey 2019, Chișinău, Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Moldova. IOM, 2020. URL: [https://moldova.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdll1626/files/documents/OIM\\_MoldovaVACS2019\\_EN\\_interactive3.pdf](https://moldova.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdll1626/files/documents/OIM_MoldovaVACS2019_EN_interactive3.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> Global Childhood Report 2021. The Toughest Places to be Child. Save the Children Federation. USA, 2021. 16 p. URL: <https://www.childhealthtaskforce.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/2021-global-childhood-report.pdf>



As mentioned, being employed in the labour market is one of the main reasons for abandonment of school for pupils in Republic of Moldova and, especially, for boys (Table 1) — 18.3% of pupils abandon school to be employed, the share is higher for boys (19.9%) than for girls (16.2%). However, there are also other reasons related to work for pupils' abandonment of school — working daily together with parents (4.6% for boys, 1.5% for girls), working independently from parents (8.6% for boys, 0.3% for girls), working together with parents in the family household (2.6% for boys and 1.9% for girls).

### FOCUSED SURVEY TOWARDS CHILD LABOUR

The authors' research included 4 groups of specialists from all the development regions of the Republic of Moldova and from different related fields: agricultural entrepreneurship, local public administration, education and healthcare targeting aspects of child labour in agriculture, who are familiar with the problem of child labour in agriculture and the main causes and consequences of it.

Experts in *agricultural entrepreneurship* acknowledge their awareness of child labour in agriculture, including its causes and consequences. They differen-

Table 1. Reasons for school abandonment (year of study 2013/14), persons

Reasons of school abandonment	Boys	Girls	Total
The pupil was employed in labour field	69	43	112
Health problems	8	10	18
Poverty reasons	17	14	31
Parents don't let child to learn	10	9	19
The pupil works together with parents in the family household	9	5	14
Pupil daily together works with parents	16	4	20
Pupil daily works independently from parents	30	1	31
Pupil has given birth	—	8	8
Pupil has married	2	28	30
Other reason	91	85	176
Reason is unknown	14	7	21
The pupil has emigrated together with parents without submission of an application for expulsion	81	52	133
T o t a l	347	266	613

Source: compiled by the authors according to: Barbăroșie, A., Gremalschi, A., Jigău et al. (2009). Educația de bază în Republica Moldova din perspectiva școlii prietenoase copilului. Studiu; Inst. de Politici Publice. — Ch.: S. n., Combinatul Poligr. 128 p. URL: [https://web.archive.org/web/20231031235719/https://ipp.md/old/public/files/publication/Studiu\\_Educatia\\_de\\_Baza\\_Publicat\\_Rom.pdf](https://web.archive.org/web/20231031235719/https://ipp.md/old/public/files/publication/Studiu_Educatia_de_Baza_Publicat_Rom.pdf); Bezu, A. Raport cu privire la studiul analitic Elaborarea unui mecanism de calculare a efectivului de elevi în instituțiile de învățământ primar și secundar general pentru anul de planificare/ prognozare, în contextul analizei abandonului școlar. Ministerul Educației, Culturii și Cercetării al Republicii Moldova. URL: [https://www.mec.gov.md/sites/default/files/damep\\_raport\\_rezultat\\_studiu\\_0.pdf](https://www.mec.gov.md/sites/default/files/damep_raport_rezultat_studiu_0.pdf)

tiate between child labour issues and the educational value of certain types of work in agricultural settings. According to them, children are more likely to work in households and on farms. The work includes sowing, harvesting, weeding, digging, gathering crops, feeding domestic animals, and land tilling. 67% of the experts observed children working more than 20 hours per week, while 33% noted it as less than 7 hours. Instances of physical exhaustion or injury due to excessive housework were noted, with three cases involving disadvantaged families. The average age of working children is 14.8 years, with equal numbers of boys and girls. Children from ethnic minorities, particularly due to cultural or religious practices, are more involved in agricultural work. Children's participation is often after school or during holidays, considered necessary for their education in rural contexts. Approximately 1-2% of children work in the agricultural sector, with age distribution as follows: under 13 years (7.5%), under 15 years (30%), under 18 years (67.5%). Experts ranked the causes of child labour in agriculture from most to least important in the following way: Family poverty/economic difficulties; Labour shortage during peak agricultural seasons; Traditional labour education in rural areas; Lack of access to quality education and protection; Weak legislation on child labour prevention; Hazardous work conditions. Efforts are concentrated on local administrative participation, education access, financial assistance for vulnerable groups, technological progress, knowledge on hazardous work safety, and agricultural programs. There's a consensus that child labour in agriculture in Moldova receives inadequate attention from various sectors, including the government, private sector, and international organizations. As strategic recommendations are given the following: developing new economic sectors, digitizing rural areas, creating non-seasonal high-paying jobs, and educating children in specialized fields like beekeeping from a safe age. There's a call for more active local administration roles, educational adjustments, financial support for low-income families, and technological advancements to alleviate child labour.

From *local public administration* 40% of experts noted instances where children missed more than a week of school to assist with farm work, particularly during peak agricultural seasons (spring and autumn), with an average weekly absence rate of 5%. The average absence duration was less than a month during the school year. As types of agricultural work performed by children were mentioned general work categories: household chores, farm assistance, and various agricultural tasks. As specific tasks were considered: feeding ducklings, watering birds, weeding, potato picking, corn harvesting, vineyard pruning, fruit gathering, sowing, and harvesting apples, grapes, and vegetables. All experts agreed that children engage in agricultural work during school holidays. The average age of working children is 15.3 years according to them. 7-14 hours of children's work per week were deemed acceptable without affecting studies and health as permissible work hours. 67% of experts observed a decrease in academic performance due to organized agricultural work, whereas only 33% saw a decline from work in parents' households. 83.3% of experts view the participation in agricultural work

as a vital part of children's work education. 40% experts noted differences, particularly among the Romani community, where children are often forced to work instead of attending school, sometimes under abusive conditions. Main reasons of child labour in agriculture include labour shortages, inadequate salaries, additional parental support, low parental living standards, lack of non-physical jobs, unmechanized agricultural practices requiring children's labour as supplementary. Social workers are seen as key figures in addressing child labour, engaging in educational programs, and liaising with rural families. As recommendations for preventing and reducing child labour the following were noted balancing rights and obligations by advocating for limited work hours to teach responsibility and the value of education over physical labour, parental requests — recognizing the positive aspects of children helping out, if requested by parents and without overburdening them; social projects and employment opportunities — implementing social initiatives for peasant households and creating non-agricultural job opportunities (e.g., factories, sewing workshops) to reduce the necessity of child labour in agriculture.

From the teachers 33% observed schoolchildren missing more than a week of school, particularly in autumn, with absences attributed to farm work. 50% noted absences of less than 1 month, 25% observed it for 1-3 months, and 25% were unsure. 16.7% reported work after school, 33.3% — during school hours, and 16.7% indicated no work, the rest were unsure. 60% believed organized agricultural work reduces schoolchildren's performance, while 50% observed a decline from work in parents' households. 80% viewed agricultural work as a necessary part of children's education. As types of child labour 67% mentioned household chores, 16.7% — farm assistance, and 16.7% — agricultural work. Tasks included gathering potatoes, picking apples, childcare, and assisting with harvests. 83.3% recommended no more than 7 hours of work per week for 15-18-year-olds. For younger children, work was generally discouraged, but if necessary, it should not exceed 7 hours. As school subjects addressing child labour issues were found the following: Civic education, Work Protection and Safety, Education for Society, The Class Hour, and Personal Development — curriculum modules where these topics can be discussed. The teachers found reasons for child labour in: educational purposes, personality development, civic engagement, assistance to grandparents (especially when parents are abroad), financial difficulties, and labour shortages in rural areas. As recommendations for prevention and reduction as strategies were found the following: increasing college access for underprivileged children, providing motivating salaries for parents, creating long-term job opportunities, implementation of modern agricultural technologies, offering state aid for low-income families. As an additional solution was given the mechanization: emphasizing the potential for replacing child labour with productive machinery to alleviate the need for hard labour by children.

From the observations of *healthcare experts* it was found that 50% of them observed signs of overwork-related physical exhaustion, fatigue, or injury in children over the last three years. One expert noted instances of children sho-

wing signs of overwork approximately once a month or more, while others reported countless cases in villages. The experts described the labour tasks of children as the following: engaging in various agricultural and labour-intensive tasks such as sifting, reaping, gathering potatoes, cleaning territories around educational institutions, carrying heavy garbage, day labouring, and garden digging. Some experts highlighted that children have to perform work at levels comparable to adults, including weeding, fruit picking, and vegetable gathering, often under harsh conditions like high temperatures reaching 35 degrees Celsius or higher, with payment rates equivalent to those for adults. The estimated average age of children working in agriculture is 12.7 years according to healthcare experts. Experts believe children can work up to 7 hours per week in agriculture without their studies and health being compromised, applicable across the age range of 5 to 17 years. Healthcare experts did not observe differences in the use of child labour among national, ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities.

Summing up the findings it can be said that experts across various fields — agricultural entrepreneurship, local public administration, teaching, and healthcare — highlight the complex issue of child labour in agriculture. They acknowledge its causes and consequences, distinguishing between necessary educational work and exploitation. Observations include children working in conditions sometimes equivalent to adults' leading to physical exhaustion and impacting education negatively. The work ranges from household chores to intensive agricultural tasks, with an average age of children involved being around 12.7 to 15.3 years. Despite recognizing the educational value in some agricultural work, experts call for action against child labour's negative aspects. Recommendations focus on reducing child labour through enhancing education, improving family incomes, creating non-agricultural employment opportunities, and leveraging technology for safer agricultural practices. Health care experts note health impacts from overwork, emphasizing the need for regulated work hours to prevent compromising children's health and studies, without significant differences observed across demographic groups.

## **POLICY AND LEGISLATION ON CHILD LABOUR IN AGRICULTURE**

The Republic of Moldova maintains a regulatory framework addressing child labour, outlining clear definitions for child labour, the minimum employment age, and the absolute worst forms of child labour, along with any work potentially detrimental to a child's physical, social, or psychological well-being. The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection holds the central authority responsible for formulating, advocating, and overseeing the execution of state policies safeguarding children, including those employed in the agricultural sector. There is no available information indicating the involvement of the Ministry of Agriculture in addressing child labour issues within agriculture. As per the Labour Code of the Republic of Moldova (art. 46), the minimum employment age

stands at 16 years. However, an exception allows 15-year-olds to enter a work agreement provided that the work poses no threat to the minor's health or hampers their education, growth, or professional development. Written consent from a parent or legal guardian is mandatory for this exception. Furthermore, the legal protections based on minimum age don't encompass children who are self-employed or engaged in work outside formal employment arrangements.

Basic legislative acts on Child Labour in the Republic of Moldova (in force):  
The international Conventions<sup>19, 20</sup>:

- Convention of the United Nations on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC). Adoption date is 26 January 1993. Article 32 outlines the commitment of State Parties to safeguard children from economic exploitation and any labour that could endanger their health, interfere with their education, or negatively impact their physical, mental, spiritual, moral, or social growth. To fulfill this obligation, State Parties are required to adopt a range of legislative, administrative, social, and educational measures. Specifically, these measures include establishing minimum employment age(s), regulating work hours and conditions, and imposing penalties or sanctions to guarantee the enforcement of these protections, taking into account the guidance of other international frameworks;

- Minimum Age Convention of the International Labour Organization (No. 138), 1976. Adoption date is 21 September 1999. The minimum age for employment was established at 15 years (with an exception for light work, where the age is 13 years); For hazardous jobs, the Convention determined that the entry age should be 18 years, although under specific circumstances, it could be lowered to 16 years;

- Collective Convention of the International Labour Organization on Worst Forms of Child Labour (No. 182), 1999. Adoption date is 14 June 2002. According to the convention members commit to immediate actions to ban and eradicate the most harmful types of child labour urgently. Worst forms of child labour are identified as all forms of slavery or similar practices (including trafficking, debt bondage, and forced labour), the use of children in prostitution or pornography, involvement in illicit activities like drug trafficking, and any work harmful to health, safety, or morals. Members are required to develop and execute programs aimed at eliminating the worst forms of child labour, involving relevant stakeholders in the process. Efforts will focus on preventing child labour, assisting affected children, ensuring access to education, and addressing the needs of girls specifically. Members will assist each other in implementing the Convention through enhanced cooperation and support for development and education programs;

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<sup>19</sup> The people's advocate Ombudsman. Evaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of intersectoral cooperation mechanisms in the field of child rights protection. Thematic Report, 2020. 43 p. URL: <https://www.unicef.org/moldova/media/5211/file/Intersectorial%20Report.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> State register of legal acts of the Republic of Moldova (accessible with Moldovan or Romanian IP-address through VPN). URL: <https://www.legis.md/> (accessed on: 08.02.2024).



- Labour Inspection (Agriculture) Convention of the International Labour Organization (No. 129), 1969. Adoption date is 09 December 1997. The role of the agricultural labour inspection system includes ensuring compliance with legal standards for working conditions and worker protection, including regulations on hours, wages, rest periods, safety, health, and the employment of minors, to the extent these are within the purview of labour inspectors. Additionally, national laws may authorize agricultural labour inspectors to offer advice or enforce rules concerning the living conditions of workers and their families.

The national normative and legislative acts (based on State register of legal acts of the RM<sup>21</sup>):

- Constitution of the Republic of Moldova (rom.: Constituția Republicii Moldova). Publication in the Official Monitor of Republic of Moldova (rom.: Monitorul Oficial al RM) no. 1, 18.08.1994. Article 35 upholds parents' primary right to choose their children's educational path, while Article 44 bans forced labour;

- Labour Code of the Republic of Moldova (rom.: Codul muncii al Republicii Moldova). Parliament code No. 154-XV from 28.03.2003. Publication in the Official Monitor of RM no. 159-162, 29.07.2003. Article 7 bans forced labour, defining it as work or service coerced under threat or without the individual's consent. Article 46 states that individuals gain the right to work at 16 but can work from age 15 with parental or guardian consent if it doesn't harm their health or education. It prohibits employing those under 15 and those legally barred from certain jobs or activities. Article 255 bans employing individuals under 18 in hazardous, harmful, or morally compromising jobs, including underground work and handling alcohol, tobacco, drugs, or heavy lifting beyond set limits. The government, after consulting with employers and unions, will specify these jobs and weight restrictions. Article 256 prohibits sending employees under 18 on business trips, except for those working in audiovisual, theater, circus, film, theater, concert organizations, or as professional athletes. Article 257 states that dismissing employees under 18, unless due to the employer's liquidation, requires written consent from the territorial employment agency, adhering to this code's general dismissal conditions. Article 103 prohibits night work for employees under 18. Article 105 restricts overtime for employees under 18;

- Criminal Code of the Republic of Moldova (rom.: Codul Penal al Republicii Moldova). Parliament code No. 985 from 18.04.2002. Publication in the Official Monitor of RM no. 72-74, 14.04.2009. Article 168 establishes penalties for forced labour, including imprisonment for 2 to 6 years for coercing work from someone against their will, without it constituting child trafficking. Penalties increase to 6 to 10 years for cases involving children, or if committed by public officials or groups, with additional fines and possible bans on holding certain positions or operating a legal entity. Article 208 penalizes involving minors in criminal activities or immoral acts (like begging, gambling, debauchery)

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

ry) with fines, community service, or up to 5 years in prison, with stricter penalties for parents, guardians, or educators who commit such acts. Actions involving violence, threats, or recruitment into criminal groups or for terrorist acts face 3 to 7 years of imprisonment;

- Education Code of the Republic of Moldova (rom.: Codul Educației al Republicii Moldova). Parliament code No. 152 from 17.07.2014. Publication in the Official Monitor of RM no. 319-324, 24.10.2014. Article 13 mandates compulsory education starting from preschool preparatory groups through to high school or secondary and post-secondary technical vocational education. This obligation continues until the age of 18. Parents, legal representatives, and local public administration authorities are responsible for ensuring children up to 16 years old attend compulsory education;

- Law on child rights (rom.: Lege privind drepturile copilului). Law of Republic of Moldova no.388 from 15.12.1994. Publication in the Official Monitor of RM no.13, 02.03.1995. Right to work (art. 11). Article 11 outlines the right of children to work under conditions suitable to their age, health, and professional training, with wages governed by labour laws. From the age of 14, children can work with parental consent, as long as it is balanced with education, and the state is responsible for creating employment opportunities for them. It also protects children from economic exploitation and work that could harm their health, hinder their education, or negatively affect their development. For children with disabilities, the state is tasked with providing appropriate work opportunities. Any forced labour or training in work is subject to legal consequences.

The UN System of National Accounts (SNA) defines economic activity parameters. Essentially, activities geared towards the market, self-produced goods for personal use, and specific services conducted for household members (like significant home repairs, collecting water, or gathering firewood for household purposes) are regarded as economic activities, categorizing individuals engaged in these tasks as employed.

The national definition of child labour in Moldova aligns with the principles outlined in ILO Convention No. 138 on Minimum Age (1973) and ILO Convention No. 182 on the Elimination of Worst Forms of Child Labour: “Child labour in Moldova is defined as children who are engaged in work unsuitable for their capacities as children or in work that may jeopardize their health, education or moral development”. According to Moldovan regulations, the minimum employment age is 16 years old, although children aged 15 can work with parental consent. However, irrespective of age, children are prohibited from engaging in hazardous work. This prohibition encompasses the most severe forms of child labour, such as child prostitution, pornography, slavery, work under conditions resembling slavery, involvement in armed conflict, and participation in illegal activities. Additionally, any labour that might endanger a child’s physical, social, or psychological development, as detailed by the Moldovan government in 1993, is considered unacceptable. Children in employment (aged 5-17) are identified as those who worked for a minimum of one hour within a specific period or had

a job or business but were temporarily away, as stated by NBS RM<sup>22, 23, 24</sup>. Child labour includes the following:

- «Children employed in hazardous industries, including mining and quarrying and construction;
- Children employed in hazardous occupations, including, but not limited to, extraction and building trades; metal, machinery and related trades; precision handicrafts, printing and related trades; machine operators and assemblers; and drivers and mobile-plant operators;
- Children working under hazardous conditions that involve carrying heavy loads, operating any machinery/heavy equipment, exposure to adverse conditions such as dust/fumes, fire / gas / flames, or loud noise, etc. as well as children who are verbally or physically abused;
- Children aged 5-11 who are employed (even if only for 1 hour per week);
- Children aged 12-14 who work between 14 and 42 hours per week;
- Children aged 15-16 who work between 25 and 42 hours per week;
- Children aged 17 who work between 36 and 42 hours per week; and
- Children performing unpaid household services for more than 27 hours per week.»<sup>25</sup>.

Not all working children are regarded as child labourers, but some children engaged in hazardous unpaid household services are. As ILO Convention No. 182 recognizes, the latter group of children, although engaged in activities outside the scope of the System of National Accounts, can also be at risk, in difficulty, and must therefore be counted as child labourers if they carry out these activities for excessively long hours or if they use unsafe equipment, carry heavy loads, work in dangerous locations, etc.<sup>26, 27</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Tranziția de la școală la muncă. Chișinău, Biroul Național de Statistică. 2015. 30 p. URL: [https://statistica.gov.md/public/files/publicatii\\_electronice/Cercetarea\\_TSM/Sinteza\\_TSM\\_2015.pdf](https://statistica.gov.md/public/files/publicatii_electronice/Cercetarea_TSM/Sinteza_TSM_2015.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> Working Children in the Republic of Moldova: The Results of the 2009 Children's Activities Survey. International Labour Organization; ILO International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour; National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) of the Republic of Moldova — Chisinau: ILO, 2010. URL: [https://statistica.gov.md/public/files/publicatii\\_electronice/piata\\_forței\\_de\\_munca/Munca\\_copiilor\\_raport\\_eng.zip](https://statistica.gov.md/public/files/publicatii_electronice/piata_forței_de_munca/Munca_copiilor_raport_eng.zip) (accessed on: 08.02.2024).

<sup>24</sup> Working Children in the Republic of Moldova: The Results of the 2009 Children's Activities Survey. Overview. ILO, NBS RM. Chisinau, "Nova Imprim" SRL, 2010. 56 p. URL: [https://statistica.gov.md/public/files/publicatii\\_electronice/piata\\_forței\\_de\\_munca/Munca\\_copiilor\\_sinteza\\_eng\\_2009.pdf](https://statistica.gov.md/public/files/publicatii_electronice/piata_forței_de_munca/Munca_copiilor_sinteza_eng_2009.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> State register of legal acts of the Republic of Moldova (accessible with Moldovan or Romanian IP-address through VPN). URL: <https://www.legis.md/> (accessed on: 08.02.2024).

<sup>26</sup> Notă informativă cu privire la activitățile realizate de către Consiliile Raionale pentru Protecția Drepturilor Copilului pe parcursul anului 2018. Consiliul Național pentru Protecția Drepturilor Copilului. Chisinau, 2019. 6 p. URL: [https://cnpdc.gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/nota\\_activitatea\\_crpdc2018\\_final.pdf](https://cnpdc.gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/nota_activitatea_crpdc2018_final.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> Planul de activitate al Consiliului Național pentru Protecția Drepturilor Copilului pentru anii 2018-2019. Consiliul Național pentru Protecția Drepturilor Copilului. URL: [https://cnpdc.gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/plan\\_20182019\\_vfinal\\_semnat\\_0.pdf](https://cnpdc.gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/plan_20182019_vfinal_semnat_0.pdf)

The Government of Republic of Moldova has established policies related to reduce and prevent child labour, including in agriculture<sup>28</sup>:

- The Strategy for Child Protection for 2014-2020 and its Action Plan for 2016-2020 — Encompasses objectives aimed at preventing and fighting against violence, negligence, and the exploitation of children. The 2014-2020 Child Protection Strategy, along with its 2016-2020 Action Plan, acknowledges the necessity for a robust protection system that ensures the safety and well-being of children, shielding them from violence, neglect, exploitation, and institutionalization. Responsibilities outlined in the Action Plan are allocated across various institutions involved in its implementation;
- Moldova Strategy Country Note Program Priorities (2018-2022) — Centers on achieving the full spectrum of rights for every child, emphasizing access to education and healthcare, particularly for children belonging to ethnic minorities, those from economically disadvantaged households, children with disabilities, and those facing challenges such as being left behind due to migration;
- National Action Plan for the Prevention and Elimination of the Most Severe Forms of Child Labour (2011-2015) — The government endorsed this document aimed at preventing and addressing the exploitation of children;
- Moldova-EU Association Agenda (2017-2019) — Ensures and advocates for the rights of children;
- Law on the special protection of children at risk and children separated from their parents no.140 from 14.06.2013. (Legea nr. 140 din 14.06.2013 privind protecția specială a copiilor aflați în situație de risc și a copiilor separați de părinți);
- Government Decision no. 270 of 08.04.2014 on the approval of the Instructions on the intersectoral cooperation mechanism for the identification, assessment, referral, assistance and monitoring of child victims and potential victims of violence, neglect, exploitation and trafficking;
- Government Decision no. 143 of 12.02.2018 for the approval of the Instruction on the intersectoral cooperation mechanism for the primary prevention of child welfare risks.

Agencies Responsible for Child Labour Law Enforcement<sup>29</sup>:

- The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection is responsible for developing, advancing, and overseeing the implementation of state policies regarding child protection. As of June 2019, the Family and Child Protection Department had five employees. The establishment of the Children's Advisory Council in 2014 as a consultative body to the ministry didn't convene any meetings in 2018. Challenges like frequent staff turnover, political instability, and limited institutional resources hinder the ministry's effectiveness;
- The State Labour Inspectorate, under the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, enforces child labour laws by inspecting labour relations across va-

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<sup>28</sup> State register of legal acts of the Republic of Moldova (accessible with Moldovan or Romanian IP-address through VPN). URL: <https://www.legis.md/> (accessed on: 08.02.2024).

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

rious enterprises, irrespective of their type or legal structure. In 2017, Moldova underwent a significant reform in its state control system aimed at facilitating a more favorable business environment. This restructuring led to a fragmentation of occupational safety and health inspection functions, reducing the efficiency of labour inspection. As a result, unannounced inspections, critical in preventing child labour, particularly in high-risk sectors like agriculture, were severely limited unless immediate threats to life, health, or property were evident;

- Sector-specific regulatory bodies enforce occupational health and safety laws, including those pertaining to hazardous child labour, in sectors mandated by law. These agencies conduct inspections within their designated sectors;

- The National Council for the Protection of the Rights of the Child, positioned under the prime minister's office since 2015, is the primary entity responsible for shaping and executing children's rights policies, fostering coordination across national and local levels. While the Council has a consultative role in policymaking, its annual plans, the latest drafted for 2018-2019 after a three-year hiatus, lack representation from local authorities. Children participate indirectly through NGOs;

- The Human Rights Ombudsman monitors and issues annual reports on human rights adherence, including children's rights. Through the Office of the Ombudsman for Children's Rights, complaints regarding children's rights violations, including child labour, are received and addressed. In 2021, the office handled 125 complaints, two of which concerned child labour;

- The Alliance of Non-Governmental Organizations Active in the Field of Social Protection of Children and their Family comprises around 90 civil society organizations dedicated to children's welfare. These organizations primarily focus on providing services rather than engaging extensively in advocacy or high-level policy discussions.

There are different international and national programs to mitigate and thwart child labour in agriculture, for instance in the country is implementing the Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) for 2021-2024 adopted by the Government of the Republic of Moldova, the National Confederation of Employers of the Republic of Moldova (CNPM), the National Confederation of Trade Unions of Moldova and the International Labour Organization (ILO). Also, in the country exist some programmes can have indirect impacts on child labour even if not designed to combat child labour in agriculture, one of which is agricultural subsidies.

In the vast majority of cases, the problem of child employment in the country is dealt with by the relevant ministry — the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, as well as international organizations, different NGOs (ex.: NGO Alliance active in the field of Child and Family Protection, Independent Think-Tank Expert-Grup, National Child Abuse Prevention Centre (NCCAP), etc.) and scientific organizations<sup>30</sup>.

<sup>30</sup> Raportul generalizat privind cazurile de abuz asupra copiilor, semestrul II, anul de studii 2020-2021. Ministerul Educației și Cercetării. URL: [https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/raport\\_mecc\\_vnet\\_sem\\_ii\\_2020\\_2021.pdf](https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/raport_mecc_vnet_sem_ii_2020_2021.pdf)



International and national programmes are implemented to reduce child labour in agriculture, including:

- Decent Work Country Program (2021-2024) — An initiative by the ILO designed to collect data on child labour occurrences, enhance the capabilities of labour inspectors, and combat labour exploitation within the construction and agriculture industries. On 7 October, 2021 the Memorandum of Agreement for the implementation of the new Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP)<sup>31</sup> for 2021-2024 was signed by the Government of the Republic of Moldova, the National Confederation of Employers of the Republic of Moldova (CNPM), the National Confederation of Trade Unions of Moldova and the International Labour Organization (ILO);
- Social Aid Program and Social Support for Families with Children — Offers financial aid to households. The Social Aid Program, administered by local social assistance and family protection departments, this initiative has been offering support to impoverished families since 2008. The program, specifically dedicated to aiding families with children, has been active since 2013.

## CONCLUSIONS

The comprehensive study on child labour in agriculture in the Republic of Moldova has illuminated several key aspects and ongoing challenges in addressing this critical issue. Despite the global recognition of child labour's detrimental effects on children's health, safety, and ethical growth, the agricultural sector remains a significant area where child labour persists, particularly in Moldova. This study aimed to unravel the participation level of children in agriculture within the country and assess the impact of such labour on their well-being and educational pursuits. Key findings from the study underscore the complexity of child labour in agriculture, revealing that children are engaged in various tasks that range from household chores to more intensive agricultural activities. These tasks often place children in conditions that could be equivalent to those faced by adults, leading to instances of physical exhaustion and negatively impacting their education. The data suggests that the age of children involved in agriculture work is on average from 12.7 to 15.3 years, with a notable portion working more than 20 hours per week. Such extensive involvement raises concerns about the balance between work and education, as well as the physical well-being of these children.

The research highlights the importance of distinguishing between harmful child labour and activities that could provide educational value. However, the

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<sup>31</sup> Ministerul Muncii și Protecției Sociale, Guvernul Republicii Moldova, Vectorii de dezvoltare durabilă și muncă decentă în Republica Moldova, reflecții într-un nou Program de țară privind Munca Decentă pentru anii 2021-2024, URL:<https://social.gov.md/comunicare/comunicate/vectorii-de-dezvoltare-durabila-si-munca-decenta-in-republica-moldova-reflectati-intr-un-nou-program-de-tara-privind-munca-decenta-pentru-anii-2021-2024/> (accessed on: 08.02.2024).

consensus among experts across fields emphasizes the need for intervention to mitigate the adverse aspects of child labour. Recommendations proposed to address the issue include enhancing educational opportunities, improving family incomes, creating employment opportunities outside agriculture, and leveraging technology to ensure safer agricultural practices. Healthcare experts also pointed out the health impacts of overwork, advocating for regulated work hours to safeguard children's health and educational opportunities. The legislative framework in Moldova establishes a clear stance against child labour, setting the minimum employment age and delineating the worst forms of child labour. Despite these regulations, the enforcement and implementation of policies present challenges, highlighting the need for a more cohesive and robust approach to tackle child labour in agriculture effectively.

In conclusion, while efforts to address child labour in Moldova have seen some progress, significant challenges remain. The study calls for a multi-faceted approach involving policy refinement, enhanced enforcement of existing legislation, and the implementation of targeted programs to reduce child labour in agriculture. Collaborative efforts between the government, international organizations, NGOs, and the community are crucial in creating a conducive environment that prioritizes the well-being and development of children, ensuring they are protected from exploitation and provided with opportunities to thrive. The comprehensive analysis of child labour in agriculture in the Republic of Moldova highlights the need for a multifaceted approach to address this complex issue. Based on the findings and identified gaps, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the effectiveness of measures against child labour in agriculture:

- Improvement of official statistics on child labour in agriculture through establishment of a specialized statistical framework by development and implementation of a comprehensive statistical framework dedicated to monitoring child labour in agriculture and through conducting regular surveys and research studies focused on child labour in agriculture to update and refine existing data. This framework should facilitate the collection, analysis, and dissemination of data specific to child labour in both formal and informal agricultural sectors. These studies should aim to cover both registered and unregistered agricultural activities;
- Methodology for assessing child labour in agriculture to incorporate agricultural specifics by development of a methodology that takes into account the unique characteristics of agricultural work, including seasonal variations, family-based work, and informal labour practices. Also, should be employed a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative data from surveys with qualitative insights from interviews and case studies. This approach should involve direct engagement with affected children, families, and communities;
- Legal intervention in formal and informal sectors through reviewing and strengthening legislation by conducting a thorough review of existing legislation related to child labour in agriculture. This will strengthen legal frameworks

to ensure comprehensive coverage of both formal and informal sectors, with clear definitions and prohibitions of harmful practices. Also, necessary are the enhanced enforcement mechanisms by equipping labour inspectors with the necessary resources and authority to conduct inspections in all agricultural settings, including informal sectors and to increase the frequency of inspections during peak agricultural seasons;

- Creation of a classification of economic activities related to child labour in agriculture, distinguishing between those related and not related to child labour. This system should identify activities that are permissible for children under certain conditions and those that are strictly prohibited. For activities deemed permissible it is needed to establish clear guidelines to ensure the safety and well-being of children. These guidelines should include limits on working hours, necessary safety measures, and provisions for balancing work with education;

- Development and implementation of policies and programs specifically designed to address child labour in agriculture. These should include educational initiatives, social protection measures for families, and support for transitioning children out of harmful labour practices. Also, it is necessary to foster collaboration between government agencies, agricultural businesses, NGOs, and community organizations to develop and implement strategies that reduce the reliance on child labour in agriculture;

- Launch awareness and advocacy campaigns to educate the public, especially in rural areas, about the dangers of child labour in agriculture and the importance of education for children's development. Also, it is necessary to advocate for children's rights and the elimination of child labour at all levels of government and society. This includes promoting the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices that reduce the need for child labour;

- International cooperation through engagement with international organizations and partners to gain support for initiatives aimed at combating child labour in agriculture. This includes technical assistance, funding, and sharing of best practices.

Implementing these recommendations requires a concerted effort from all stakeholders involved in agriculture and child welfare in the Republic of Moldova. By focusing on improving data collection, refining methodologies, strengthening legal frameworks, and developing targeted interventions, Moldova can make significant progress in addressing child labour in agriculture and ensuring a better future for its children.

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ДИТЯЧА ПРАЦЯ В СІЛЬСЬКОМУ  
ГОСПОДАРСТВІ В РЕСПУБЛІЦІ МОЛДОВА:  
ОСОБЛИВОСТІ Й СУЧАСНІ ВИКЛИКИ

У Республіці Молдова проблема дитячої праці в сільському господарстві стоїть дуже серйозно. Це дослідження має на меті оцінити участь молдавських дітей у сільськогосподарських роботах та її вплив на їхній добробут, безпеку і освіту. Незважаючи на брак оновлених даних і досліджень у Молдові, особливо в сільськогосподарському секторі, у статті використано детальну методологію, що охоплює національну статистику, експертні опитування і огляди міжнародних конвенцій.

Отримані дані свідчать про залучення дітей до виконання різноманітних сільськогосподарських робіт, у тому числі небезпечних, що впливають на їхню освіту і здоров'я. Виявлено, що діти від 12,7 до 15,3 років працюють у середньому понад 20 год. на тиждень. Розрізняється шкідлива дитяча праця і корисна робота, наголошується на необхідності комплексної стратегії покращення можливостей освіти, сімейних доходів і альтернативних варіантів працевлаштування. Підкреслюється важливість ефективної політики і законодавства для захисту дітей від експлуатації їхньої праці як у офіційному, так і в неофіційному секторах. Незважаючи на певний прогрес у боротьбі з дитячою працею в Молдові, значні перешкоди залишаються. Запропоновано комплексну стратегію, яка включає вдосконалення політики, посилення виконання чинних законів і реалізацію конкретних ініціатив, спрямованих на зменшення дитячої праці в сільськогосподарському секторі. Акцентовано на необхідності спільних зусиль уряду, міжнародних організацій, неурядових організацій і громад для захисту і сприяння добробуту дітей з метою їхньої інтеграції у безпечне середовище і створення для них кращих перспектив у майбутньому.

**Ключові слова:** *дитяча праця; діти в скрутному становищі; сільське господарство; освіта; відвідування школи; Республіка Молдова.*