

## ***Hard work, long hours and little pay***

Participatory research with children working on tobacco farms in Malawi



***"I think at the work that they should be giving us enough food, they should be paying us enough, and they should be giving us work very much for our age." (Boy, 17, Lilongwe district)***

Glynis Clacherty

For Plan Malawi

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Clacherty & Associates  
Education and Social Development (Pty) Ltd  
Address: PO Box 613,  
Auckland Park,  
2006, South Africa  
Telephone: +27 (0) 11 482 4083  
E-mail: [glynis@clacherty.co.za](mailto:glynis@clacherty.co.za)

## **Executive summary**

Malawi has the highest incidence of child labour in southern Africa. 88.9% of the children in the age group 5-14 work in the agricultural sector, where tobacco estates are highly represented. The number of children working on tobacco farms in Malawi has been estimated at 78,000 although the actual number is thought to be much higher.

Previous research gives some information on the different activities children are engaged in on tobacco farms, some information about the hazards children face and some understanding of why children are involved in this work. But very little work has been done with children themselves to find out how they experience and understand the work they do or to find out what children see as the best form of intervention.

For this reason Plan Malawi decided to undertake this participatory study. The research will be used to inform the work Plan and its partners in Malawi are doing to raise awareness of child labour on tobacco farms, to advocate for changed conditions and to develop interventions for the affected children.

The research approach was a participatory one in which 44 children (aged 12-18) from three districts across Malawi (Lilongwe, Kasungu and Mzimba) took part in a series of workshops. All of the children had worked full-time on tobacco farms during the 2007/2008 season. 16 were working full-time on tobacco farms at the time of the research and 18 part-time. The children worked on a range of different farms from large estates to small family farms. All worked outside their own families. Parents and para-civic educators were also consulted.

The workshops, which were carefully constructed to take into account ethical issues, included drawing, mapping, storytelling and discussion. All of the discussion was recorded and transcribed and this formed the data which was analysed using thematic analysis. The findings are presented under the set of themes that emerged from the analysis.

### ***Hard work, long hours and little pay***

The children did the full range of tasks on the farms; there was no differentiation between work done by children and adults. Most of the children worked for 12 hours a day though some worked for much longer. Apart from the break for lunch (usually the only meal of the day) there were few breaks. The unrelenting nature of the work was one of the issues raised by the children. Children reported that the work was often too hard for their size and that they often had pay deducted if they did not finish the work given for that day.

The average daily wage earned by the children in the study was MK26 (USD0.18), reportedly less than that of adults. The children reported often being paid according to the work they did and some had worked with parents to help parents finish their quota of work.

One of the issues that concerned children was that they were often paid less than the amount they were promised at the beginning of the season. Most reported that the money they earned was not enough to meet the needs at home that had motivated them to seek work in the first place.

### ***Why we are working***

The main reason children gave for working was poverty at home. Lack of food, clothes and the need to mend their houses as well as the need for fertiliser and seed

for their family farms were common needs at home. School fees (for secondary school) and school needs were also common reasons given for working.

It was clear that it was the children themselves who chose to work because of the situation at home. In fact many of them expressed a strong sense of responsibility toward their families, particularly those living with aging grandparents, or ill or disabled parents.

One significant finding is that though the criteria for selecting the children did not include vulnerability (para-civic educators were told to find 'children who were working on tobacco farms') it emerged that a large majority of the children came from elderly-headed households or orphan households. 22 of the children in the sample were double orphans and 12 were single orphans. This suggests that children from vulnerable families are more likely to be involved in child labour.

### ***Abuse from supervisors***

Children reported physical abuse in the form of beating (with a stick and hand) and kicking from supervisors. Supervisors also withheld food and used verbal abuse, often related to their orphan status.

Sexual abuse was also widely reported. Supervisors used their power to force girls to have sex in exchange for more money, food and late arrival at work. Girls reported that if they lived at the farm they slept apart from their parents and owners or supervisors came to rape them at night. This issue was raised by boys who felt angry at their powerlessness to do anything, and by girls who were clearly afraid, often thinking about what was in store for them on the way to work. Girls also reported that very few girls talked about this issue.

### ***Impact of work on children***

Apart from aching muscles caused by work that was too hard for them and the beatings they experienced the children reported a number of troubling physical symptoms. Health problems that are related to lack of access to soap and water and time to bath were commonly reported.

Symptoms of Green Tobacco Sickness were widely reported though none of the children linked these symptoms to the tobacco they handled. In addition, children reported coughing and breathlessness caused by tobacco dust during sorting and grading. Coughing of blood was another widely reported physical condition especially after hard work such as carrying heavy loads. This is likely to be related to TB but further tests would need to be conducted to confirm this.

Significant psychosocial impacts were also reported. Many of these can be linked to emotional stress caused by the trauma of the working conditions and to unprocessed grief at the loss of parents. The most significant of these were sleeping problems and nightmares, continual sadness and a feeling of powerlessness or lack of locus of control.

### ***Discrimination within the community***

Children reported experiencing discrimination from adults and peers in their communities. This discrimination was related to their working status and most often stigmatised them as unwashed and 'stupid' because they were not at school. But children were also discriminated against because they were orphans and poor.

### ***Ideas for interventions/solutions***

Children had many ideas for ways in which their lives could be improved. Some of

them said that child labour should be banned, but more pragmatically, most discussed ways in which they could combine work with school. The need for education and the wish to go to school was of absolute importance to all of them. They talked about how they wanted better working conditions, work that was suited to their size, regular rest times, sufficient food and fair payment for work done.

Other suggestions included a help-line for children to report abuse, support in the form of school materials and help with resources for their farms so they could grow enough food and not need to work on the tobacco farms.

### **Recommendations**

A set of recommendations around advocacy, public education and direct intervention for working children is included in the report. These include the need to use the information in the report to inform advocacy around poverty alleviation, particularly in relation to vulnerable households. The report provides powerful stories that can be used to lobby for stronger punishment for those who break labour laws and employ children and to lobby for more effective implementation of the labour laws that do exist.

The report also provides evidence for use in advocacy programmes around access to schooling generally and the need for programmes to help working children who wish to return to school. The need for research into school models that cater for working children is another recommendation raised in the report.

A set of recommendations is made in relation to the health status of working children. These include access to health services, particularly testing for TB and HIV.

A number of recommendations are also made around public education. These include the need to educate the general public about vulnerable children and the need to care for them rather than to discriminate against them. Education around child rights for children and for adults should also be a priority. Para-civic educators are a potential resource for education campaigns at local level. This public education needs specifically to include programmes for children who are not working about children who are working.

Mechanisms that allow children to report abuses at work and programmes that offer psychosocial support for working children should be a priority.

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# 1. Background

## 1.1 Child labour on tobacco farms

Malawi has the highest incidence of child labour in southern Africa (Otañez, Muggli, Hurt, & Glantz, 2006) and it exists in several sectors, including commercial farms, domestic work and the informal sector. Most children work in the informal sector with 88.9% of the children in the age group 5-14 working in the agricultural sector, where tobacco estates are highly represented. Many children are employed as unpaid family workers, helping their parents during high seasons but these children combine work with school. A significant number of children (4.7%), however, work without attending school. This is more common in boys than girls, and among children in rural areas (ILO-IPEC, 2006).

Malawi is one of the world's biggest tobacco producers and relies on tobacco as its main export product, representing 70% of the nation's export income and the second largest source of total income following foreign aid (Davies, 2003). Most of the tobacco in Malawi is cultivated by farmers on smallholdings, by tobacco tenants and by casual farm workers. Using the tenant population of 39,000, the number of children working on tobacco farms in Malawi has been estimated at 78,000 although the actual number is thought to be much higher because of problems of estimation (Otañez, et al, 2006).

Existing research (Tsoka and Konyani, 2003; Otañez et al, 2006) provides some information on the different activities children are engaged in on the farms and to some extent the hazards children face. It also gives some understanding of why children are involved in this work.

Apart from one consultation conducted by Save the Children (2006) it seems that very little research has been done with children themselves to find out how they experience and understand the work they do. It also seems that there has been little or no work done on finding out what children see as the best form of intervention.

For this reason Plan Malawi decided to undertake this study to find out how children experience work on the tobacco farms and their understanding of why they are involved in this work. The impact of the work on their physical and psychosocial well-being was also of concern as were their ideas about ways to make sure they are protected and can access their rights.

The research will be used to inform the work Plan and its partners in Malawi are doing to raise awareness of child labour on tobacco farms, to advocate for changed conditions and to develop interventions for the affected children.

## 1.2 Aims of the research

The aims of this research study are to find out:

- how children experience work on the tobacco farms
- their understanding of why they are involved in this work
- the impact of the work on their physical and psychosocial well-being

- their ideas about what is the best way to make sure they are protected and have access to the rights due to them as children.
- to understand how children who have been withdrawn from labour experience and perceive this process and how they explain its impact on them.

**The legislative frame work**

*Extract from Desk Review, Child labour in Malawi, Anna Liwander, July 2008. Plan International Malawi.*

Malawi is a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which was adopted by the United Nations in 1989. The Convention includes a section on the need to protect children from work that is dangerous, or might harm their health or their education. Malawi has also ratified the Minimum Age Convention (ILO Convention No. 138) and the Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (ILO Convention No. 182). The Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (ILO Convention No. 182, 1999) adopts 15 as the minimum age of employment.

In addition, Malawi has its own legislative framework that includes the Constitution, which bars employment of children below the age of 16 years while the Malawi Employment Act of 2000 raises the bar by condemning the employment of children below the age of 14 years (Otañez et al, 2006).

The Constitution of Malawi Section 23 accords children the right of protection from any work that is of a hazardous nature or any work that may prejudice their attendance at school or inflict any harm on their health and development. Frameworks for the fight against child labour also include a National Code of Conduct developed by the Ministry of Women and Child Development together with UNICEF (Tsoka & Konyani, 2003). However, there is no written labour policy in Malawi, let alone child labour policy. Perhaps more importantly, there is no meaningful enforcement of any of the existing provisions (Otañez et al, 2006). According to the child labour baseline survey conducted by the Centre for Social Research (Tsoka & Konyani, 2003), many of the district labour offices, which are responsible for administering most of the labour legislation and regulations, are scarcely funded. There also seems to be a lack of writing materials for recording complaints, and labour inspections are rarely conducted.



## 2. Research approach

### 2.1 Participatory research

The use of a participatory research approach (O'Kane, 2000) was considered essential as one of the aims of the study was to understand the issue from the children themselves. The research processes we used had to facilitate a process where children reflected on and recounted their life experiences; they needed to be participatory.

Participation by children is particularly important because, as Ivan-Smith and Johnson (1998) point out, children's participation in research such as this gives us access to essential information that we could get from no other source.

*Developing better methods of working with children and enabling their participation is beneficial not only to children ... If we are unaware of the problems and issues that concern children and young people we cannot hope to devise strategies or solutions that will address their concerns, and will constantly be struggling to make sense of the world without some of the vital information we need. (p. 299)*

Yet as Boyden and Ennew (1997) point out, if children's and adults' participation is to be more than token the following issues need to be taken into account:

- *New considerations about ethical issues in research, that are particularly important in research with powerless groups;*
- *The capacities of children at different ages and stages of development. (p. 33)*

Particular care was taken in this research to make sure that the work was done ethically and that the activities were appropriate to the age and stages of development of the children and to their particular context. The provisions made for ethical issues and the type of activities that were used are described below.

### 2.2 Ethical issues

The issue of ethics was very important particularly as the children we were working with were likely to be emotionally and physically vulnerable because of their working situation. Additionally we had to be very careful to not place the children at risk by involving them in the research process.

*The duty to protect the physical, social and psychological well-being of those you study and work with is central to the researcher's role. It is essential to assess the risks to individuals and groups which might be entailed in participating in your research, and to weigh these up against the benefits you hope to achieve. (Save the Children, 2004, p30)*

The concern that children would be victimised or lose their jobs because they had participated in the research was taken seriously. Para-civic educators who lived in the local community and understood the context were asked to find the working children. Their knowledge of the local context allowed them to access children with the least risk to the children. They also selected the venues for the workshops that were apart from the children's workplaces to further reduce risk. The decision was taken, with the advice of these local contacts, to reimburse children for the two days' work that they would miss because of attending the workshops.

The issue of protecting the children psychologically was also taken seriously. Research activities were set up carefully so that any discussions of difficult issues were done once we had got to know the children. Care was also taken to make sure there was time to contain any emotions that arose from the discussions and to lift everyone's spirits before we said goodbye at the end of the day. The researcher did not probe difficult issues such as sexual abuse or the death of parents but allowed the children to choose how much they wanted to say about these issues. Activities were also structured in such a way as to allow for emotional distance, for example, children could talk about a hypothetical child similar to them rather than about themselves directly.

Provision was made for the referral of children in particularly difficult circumstances.

#### **Referral**

During the research workshops we came across 3 cases where referral was needed.

- One boy had been injured at work and was referred to the local community health worker during the workshops.
- Three girls asked for HIV testing and counselling and were referred to a partner organisation.
- A 14 year-old boy who had come from a distant town to the area to work on a tobacco farm during the 2007 season had not been paid enough to return home at the end of the season. He was now working again in the new season but wanted desperately to go home. He was referred to the district child labour officer. He was removed from the farm for his protection and the owner was fined for employing an under-age child. The owner was also charged for the child's journey home. A labour employee then accompanied the boy back home.

In addition, a set of general ethical principles based on a number of guidelines (Schenk & Williamson, 2005, Boyden & Ennew, 1997, Clacherty & Donald, 2007) was applied. These included the following:

#### *Attempting to capture the authentic voices of the children through*

- reducing the power imbalance between adult researcher and child
- using developmentally appropriate research activities
- the use of non-verbal reflection activities

#### *Informed consent was gained through*

- giving a child-friendly explanation of the purpose of the research
- applying the principle of ongoing consent by creating an environment in which children could withdraw or choose not to talk about a particular issues

*Confidentiality was kept through*

- having a 'no name' rule – no one was to mention the name of a person they were talking about, for example a supervisor who beat them
- not using names and other identifiers in the report
- safeguarding of raw data sources

*Minimising harm through*

- not probing around difficult issues such as sexual abuse
- using silhouette figures (hypothetical children) when discussing difficult issues so children could talk with some emotional distance and keep confidentiality
- looking out for children with particular problems who may need referral
- structuring activities so they were not emotionally difficult

*Benefit to participants through*

- making sure that the research was necessary and would be used in the implementation of a programme that would benefit all children in the area
- dealing with the issue of expectations by explaining what the researchers could and could not do

*Feedback to participants through*

- Plan staff in the field giving children a summary of these report findings for their comment and discussion.

### **2.3 Sample**

The children were accessed from three different geographical areas. The decision to work in these three areas was intended to give us a range of the different types of tobacco farms on which children would be working:

- Large estates in the Plan impact areas in **Lilongwe** district
- Large and small farms in the Plan impact areas in **Mzimba** district
- Large and small family-owned farms in the Plan impact areas in **Kasungu** district

The children were randomly selected within a stratified sample. Para-civic educators who accessed the children were asked to find children who were working on tobacco farms in the local area or who had worked on tobacco farms in the 2007/2008 season. The research was well timed because it took place at the beginning of the season when children were already working on the farms preparing the fields and watering the plants in the nursery but before the planting or harvesting when farm workers are very busy.

The following table gives the numbers, ages and sexes of the children who participated.

Lilongwe district		Kasungu district		Mzimba district	
Age	Sex	Age	Sex	Age	Sex
12	M	16	M	18	M
15	M	15	M	18	M
17	M	16	M	18	M
15	M	16	M	17	M
17	M	17	M	14	M
17	M	15	M	13	M
17	M	13	M	15	M
16	M	16	M	18	F
15	M	17	M	13	F
15	F	18	M	12	F
14	F	14	M	13	F
14	F	12	M	15	F
Total 12		18	M	Total 12	
		17	M		
		15	F		
		15	F		
		15	F		
		18	F		
		17	F		
		13	F		
		Total 20			

*Total number of children 44*

*14 girls, 30 boys*

*23 below the age of 16*

The following table gives an outline of the children's working status.

Worked full-time in 2007/2008 season	Working full-time in 2008/2009 season i.e. at present	Working part-time on a tobacco farm at present	Working part-time elsewhere at present
41	16	18	10

In addition to the sample of children, focus group discussions were held with parents and Para-civic educators in each sample area. Para-civic educators are volunteers trained by Plan to provide child rights protection and education at village level.

The table below outlines the numbers of parents and para-civic educators. (The discussion outline for these groups is reproduced in Appendix 1)

Parents	Para-civic educators
14 women and 22 men	35 men and 16 women

*Total adults 87*

## 2.4 Participatory workshops

A participatory approach is one in which children take part in a set of activities to “construct a representation of their social world” (Woodhead,1998, p 22). The researcher then asks about the topic of interest within the context of this representation.



In this research study children participated in a number of different activities over two days. These activities all involved discussion. The two-day period allowed the children to gain trust in the researchers and confidence in talking about their lives and concerns.



Children worked on drawings of the activities they do in a day (including their work on the farm), the problems they face and their ideas for interventions to help them.



One of the most effective activities was a large body map that allowed the children to talk about the physical impact of the work they do. This body map was also used to help the children articulate the psychological impact (as they understood it) of the work. This activity allowed us to quantify particular physical symptoms and injuries as children used stickers to indicate if they had experienced that particular problem.

Another useful tool was a set of cards that illustrated particular feelings that facilitated discussion about feelings. Use was also made of a set of silhouette figures that allowed us to discuss difficult issues like sexual abuse and harassment in the third person.

#### **Not leading**

An important principle in any research is to avoid 'experimenter error'. In qualitative research this implies using techniques and tools that allow respondents to describe their own experiences in as unedited a way as possible.

One of the important principles applied in this research was to make sure that the researcher did not lead the children in any way – to avoid putting words into their mouths. Care was taken to give non-directive instructions when introducing activities. The activities themselves were designed to be open-ended so that they did not pre-empt the children's responses. Questioning during the discussions was kept to initial open-ended questions and then to questions of clarity. In this way we made sure that what we were collecting was the children's authentic experience. The example below illustrates the use of non-leading questions of clarity.

***Is there anything else that this body is feeling?***

*It's been beaten.*

***Beaten, where?***

*Sometimes on the legs.*

***With what?***

*With the stick.*

***Ok, draw the stick for me.***

*A big stick.*

***Anyone else?***

*I wasn't beaten.*

***Ok so you don't draw then.***

*We were beaten.*

**How?**

*When you sit you are beaten like this (she puts her legs out straight in front of her) on your feet with a stick. (girls and boys, K)*

## **2.5 Recording and analysing the data**

The workshops were all conducted in the children's home language with the researcher working through an interpreter. All the discussion in the workshops was recorded and then translated and transcribed into English. These transcripts formed the data and were subjected to thematic analysis.

*Thematic analysis is a process for encoding qualitative information. The encoding requires a specific 'code'. This may be a list of themes ... A theme is a pattern found in the information that at the minimum describes and organizes possible observations ... Themes may initially be generated inductively from the raw information or generated deductively from theory and prior research. (Boyatzis, 1998, p vii)*

In this research the data were encoded into themes. These themes were generated inductively from the raw material i.e. they were allowed to emerge through reading and re-reading the transcripts. Once themes had emerged all quotes from the data related to a particular theme were clustered under this theme.

The concept of triangulation was influential in analysis of the data.

Triangulation is a means of checking the validity of the inferences one draws from the data. The idea behind triangulation is to study a single phenomenon from more than one vantage point. The information from the children was triangulated by comparing what children from different areas had to say and then by comparing information from parents and para-civic educators with the information from the children. In this way information can be corroborated.

#

## **2.6 Limitations of the study**

The study has a number of limitations. Many of the children who had been formally withdrawn from farm labour through the local labour office process had been returned to their home areas. For this reason their experience is not fully represented in this report.

A second limitation is that this research was structured as a participatory and qualitative study. It is not a national survey. For this reason, the national extent of the issues described in this report have not been established.

Our understanding of the scale of the issues raised here would be greatly enhanced by a more quantitative study working at a national level.

### 3. Findings

**Notes about use of research data as quotations:**

i) researcher comments and questions begin with R:

ii) a new child speaking is shown through the use of a new line

iii) quotes are identified in the following way

(boy, 16, K) = (gender, age, place)

K = Kasungu

M = Mzimba

L = Lilongwe

iv) the children used the words, 'supervisor', 'boss' and 'capitao' or 'captain' to describe the person supervising their work in the field. In some cases this person was the owner of the farm if it was a small farm – in this case they usually used the word 'farmer' or 'owner' to describe the person.

v) the children talk about payments etc in Malawi Kwacha (MK). In this report the exchange rate used is MK10 to USD0.07.

The findings are presented under the following emergent themes:

- Hard work, long hours and little pay
- Why we are working
- Abuse from supervisors
- Impact of work on children
- Discrimination within the community
- Withdrawal from labour
- Ideas for interventions/solutions

#### **3.1 Theme 1: Hard work, long hours and little pay**

This theme is presented under the following sub-themes:

- Types of farms where the children work
- Tasks children do on the farms
- Long hours
- One meal a day
- Hard work
- Money earned

##### Types of farms where the children work

The children in this research work on a range of farm types. In the Lilongwe area most of the children work on big estates. They all live in neighbouring villages; none live on the estate. In the Mzimba area a large number of the children had worked on large estates during the 2007/2008 season where they lived on the estate for the entire season. The rest of the children in Mzimba and in Kasungu work on smaller farms, some with as few as 4 labourers others with as many as 25. These children mostly stay at home and travel to the farm every day though a few said that they stay at the farms in makeshift sheds, especially after the harvesting season begins when there is a lot of work to do.

A few of the children in the sample also cultivate tobacco on their family plots but they distinguish between work that they do for their own families and for other people.



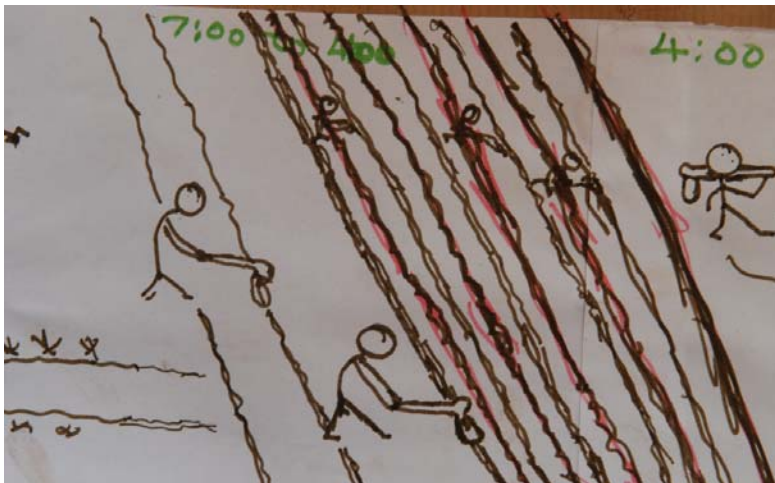
*I was cultivating tobacco fields and I would assist my grandfather in his fields. I helped him to make bundles for drying tobacco. I also helped him to water his small vegetable garden. I did not get paid. When you work on your family farm there is no problem with time. On another farm you start at 4.00 am and knock off at 5.00 pm. At home you are working with parents whereas at the farm you work with people you do not know and they can treat you badly. You also get enough food if you work at home but on the farm the food is limited. (boy, 18, M)*

The discussions with children represented here are all about the work they do on farms outside of their own family.

### Tasks children do on the farms

It was clear that the children who participated in this study carry out all the different tasks on the tobacco farms throughout the season. The following is a list of tasks that almost all of the children reported that they do.

- Clearing fields
- Digging the field before planting
- Making nursery beds
- Watering plants in the nursery
- Transplanting
- Cutting trees to make posts for drying sheds
- Weeding
- Applying fertiliser
- Irrigating the fields
- Applying pesticides
- Picking and tying the leaves together for drying
- Bundling the tobacco
- Sorting and grading
- Carrying bales



Preparing fields



Watering in the nursery



Irrigation



Harvesting and bundling tobacco



Sorting and grading tobacco

The activities mentioned by the children in this study are consistent with those listed as done by children on tobacco farms in Malawi in previous research (Otañez et al, 2006; Baris et al, 2000; Save the Children, 2006).

Para-civic educators and parents also mentioned that children do all of these tasks. Children and adults we talked to were very clear that there is no differentiation between work done by adults and work done by children. Children do all the tasks even the heavy or dangerous ones.

*The children are involved in all of these tasks - the girls and boys, even the little ones, the 10 year olds. They do the same work as the adults – no difference. (para-civic educators, K)*

*Adults and children do the same jobs. They even use the pesticides. They also prune the tobacco with their hands, bare hands. They carry the tobacco too. Between an adult and a child they all do equally the same. They start at six in the morning and leave at six like the adults. Mostly from fourteen or fifteen (years old) but if the child is twelve or thirteen and physically fit they are employed but mostly here it is thirteen, fourteen, fifteen (year olds). (para-civic educators, L)*

*Of course there is no specific age but as long as somebody at least is intelligent and maybe he knows how to do some other things they take you. But digging, it's hard work, so digging depends, maybe the normal age for digging is maybe 20 to 25 years. But for me I was 13 (when I started work on the farms) and I am an orphan so instead of staying at home with nothing I try to do something to bring something to my home, so even I am digging, though it is very hard work for my size. (boy, 14, L)*

From what the children said it was also clear that men and women, girls and boys all do the same work.

*We carry these loads (pipes for irrigation) for long distances. We carry them from the stores to the garden and we carry them back when we are knocking off.  
Yes and our shoulders get bruised.*

R: Who is working with you?  
Men and children together.  
R: Do they treat the boys the same as the big men?  
As long as they pick you to do it you go.  
R: And the girls?  
No, we also carry equally.  
Yes, we work the same. (girls and boys, L)

However, some girls in Kasungu did report that they have to do extra work for the farmer's wife.

*One problem we were facing was that when the boss was gone out, his wife would take advantage of the time and let us do her work. Sometimes we were given a bag of maize to pound, 3 bags even and if we didn't finish we won't eat for that day. (girl, 15, K)*

Many of the children talked about how much of the work they do is too difficult for them at their age and size.

*The problem I have drawn is that the work I do is beyond my size. It is painful for me. (boy, 12, L)*

*We are given a heavy job that is beyond our level and when we don't finish the job the trouble goes over to our parents because they will be told that their children are failing to do the job. (girl, 15, K)*

### Long hours

One consistent and strong theme that emerged from all the children who participated was that they work for long hours. The following account, which is typical, comes from a girl of 13 living in the Mzimba area. She had worked during the 2007/2008 season when she was 12 years old.

*I went to work on the tobacco farm when the season had already started. It was the picking up time. We worked all day picking up the tobacco and then after 6 pm we would eat the supper and then start the bundling process again until 8 pm. After the bundling we would carry the tobacco to the pressing machine. When I did not manage 10 bundles per hour I would not be paid. I would just get food. (girl, 13, M)*

The average time worked by the 44 children in the study was 12 hours a day, but some children work for much longer. Two boys in Mzimba described how they work into the night. This was related to the fact that they work on contract and the only way to finish the contract is to work into the night.

*Around 6 or 6.30 after dinner I go back to the fields to dig until maybe 11 pm or so.  
R: At night?  
We are working in the moonlight like when the moon is very shiny that is why we go on working. Because you take a contract of 3 hectares so you will have to work even at night. (boy, 18, M)*

Most of the children described the work they do as unrelenting. The two quotes below illustrate this point well – they are given one task after another with no break in between.

*My story is about going to the maize field to weed, from there I am then told to go to fetch water using a very big can and from there they said the water is not enough so I could continue fetching more water. So the problem that we're facing is that whenever I'm done with fetching water, I must go back to weeding in the maize field. From there they tell me to cut the trees after that I'll go to pick the tobacco and whenever I am feeling tired, they hit me so I must still do all the things they instructed me to do. Sometimes I am instructed to go to pound the maize and when I fail to do that as I have to be quick I have to stop so that I can go to the field again. Sometimes when they fight with me about the work I need to do I just run away. (girl, 15, K)*

*I get up at 4.00 am then go to the farm. I water the plants until 9.00 am. From 9.00 I go to the forest to cut trees for making the shed. I get lunch on the farm. After lunch at 1.00 pm I water the plants again and then go back to cut trees. I return from the forest at about 5.00 pm then go home. I sweep the yard at my home and go to bed at 7.00 pm. (boy, 13, M)*

Many of the children mentioned that after working on the farm they go home and need to do household chores or work on the family farm. So their working day is, in fact, longer than 12 hours.

*I wake up in the dark, early in the morning. I walk one hour to get to work. It is about 10 kilometres. I go to work on the farm. And after lunch I work again up until 4.00. From 4.00 I go home and do some other housework, or maybe doing some other jobs like going to our vegetable garden. Only if that work is done do I get a chance to play with my friends. (boy, 16, L)*

Apart from 5 children who reported that they have some time to rest in between working, most of the children have only one break and that is at lunch time.

*We were only given rice. We were given the rice in the afternoon when we were in the garden. We had no time to rest, we were only sitting when we eat and go back to work. (boy, 16, L)*

*I was picking tobacco from 6.00 am until 7.00 pm in the evening. We were only sitting for lunch.*

*R: Was that last year?*

*Yes.*

*R: How old were you?*

*12. (boy, 13, K)*

Even when eating their one meal at lunch time they are often rushed by

supervisors.

*Even if you are sitting eating he is saying 'get back to work! You are lazy!' (boy, 14, M)*

Children also talked about how there is no time to collect water or to wash, even if they do have soap. This is a big problem for many of the children as it results in health problems such as sores and lice (see Theme 4 below). It was clear that it also makes them feel bad about themselves.

*We are getting lice because we do not have soap, we do not have time to wash, to look after ourselves. (boy, 18, M)*

*We are busy working and we don't have time to go for bathing so we develop those sores that come when a person does not bath. (girl, 15, K)*

#

#### **You can tell a working child**

During the discussion with para-civic educators in Lilongwe they mentioned that they could tell a child who was working just by looking at him or her. One thing they said is that "working children look older than they are."

*The child (who is working) mostly looks very old as compared to their age because of the harsh conditions they go through.*

*R: So if you go into a village and the children are lined up in front of you, can you say this one, this one, this one, they worked on the estates?*

*Yes.*

*R: You can. What would you see?*

*It is not only that they work hard or do not get enough food but something to do with the psychology. They have a lot of thought psychologically.*

I was very sceptical. I questioned them quite forcefully to give me evidence and they insisted that it was true.

But I understood what they were saying on the second day of our first children's workshop in Lilongwe (which ran for 3 days). When we had asked children how old they were they said 13 or 15 or 16, but it seemed to me that they looked older than what they had said.

On the third day I was astonished at the change in the children – they did indeed look younger. They were cleaner, as they had had time to wash and used the money we gave them to buy soap.

*We had time to wash because we only started here at 9.00 am and also you gave us money (to compensate for the loss of income by attending the workshop) so we could buy soap and lotion so we could come looking nice to work with you!*

But it wasn't only that they were cleaner. Their faces had lightened, they smiled, and their bodies even seemed lighter and less heavy. I understood what the para-civic educators meant.

Some of this had to do with the fact that by the second day we had won their trust and they were more open and friendly but it also had to do with the fact that they had been listened to.

*It was my first time to talk about these things. We liked to talk with you about ourselves and our problems. #*

When asked if they ever get time to play with their friends, most of the

children just shook their heads and said they sometimes see friends after work but most do not get time to play or talk with them.

*Maybe sometimes we have a chance to play but many times we are coming from the gardens and we have some housework.  
Or we get so tired we just stay at home.  
Too tired. (boys, 16 and 15, L)*

Most of the children got Sundays off. They reported being happy on this day as they could see friends and go to church.

*On Sunday we are all very happy... we chat, we see our friends. (girl, 15 K)*

A few of the children said they work on their days off to earn extra money.

*I do piece work on a Sunday. I go to the farm and get paid for that extra day.  
I do piece work on another small farm on a Sunday for extra money.  
(boys, 15 and 15 L)*

#### One meal a day

Most of the children ate only once a day.

*I would wake up at 4.00 am and start working on an empty stomach until lunch where we would eat and then go back to work and knock off at 5.00 pm. At night we would struggle for food. (girl, 13, M)*

A few, who live on the farms where they work reported getting the one meal of the day at night.

*I was only given food at 6 pm – no breakfast and no lunch only dinner  
(boy, 14, K)*

Children frequently commented on the inadequacy of the one meal they receive.

*Sometimes we are taking some rest and have some food for lunch.  
R: What food?  
Very small.  
Only at lunch time, no food in the morning.  
It was only one meal.  
And you did not get satisfied. (girls and boys, K)*

#### Hard work

The children described how the work they are given is very hard work.

*I was once beaten because I wanted to rest and they didn't want us to rest. When we were coming from the field we had to go to fetch water and fill in the big drums. After that we were told to go and cut the trees*

*and it was a big and very heavy tree. When we finished digging from the field, we were instructed to carry the wood for making fire. Whenever you said you were tired they would beat you, using something like a hose-pipe. The work was too hard so we could not do it, (girl 15, K)*

When describing this work the issue they raised was that much of the work was beyond them in terms of their strength and size.

*I have drawn the very heavy loads. We carry these pipes for watering and they are too heavy for us. They are very long and very heavy. (boy, 16, L)*

They also described the fact that they are often given tasks that are impossible for them to finish because of their size and if they do not finish they do not get paid for that day.

*I dig 17 ridges in a big, big space. If I don't finish the ridges then they put that day off (do not count it for pay). The ridges are very long, like say 20 metres. And you work until you are finished, usually until 6 o'clock. If you are a small boy it is hard to do 17 ditches but they do not say you can do 10. So you do not finish and then no pay. (boys, 17 and 12, L)*

#

Money earned

Generally the children are paid very little money, in most cases not enough to make any kind of significant contribution to the needs of their households.

Most of the children reported that they are paid at the end of the tobacco season when the work is over. The table below outlines what the children from Kasungu and Lilongwe were paid for the 2007/2008 season (9 months). The children in the Mzimba group have not been included as many of them were paid with their parents or they worked on a contract basis (see below) and it was difficult for them to estimate what they had earned.

<b>Total amount paid for 2007/2008 season – all amounts in MK</b>	<b>Number of children</b>
0	2
0 paid with maize	1
700	1
2000	3
3000	2
4000	5
5000	9
9000	1
14000	1
16000	1
13500	4

*Total number of children in this sample: 30*

Working from the above table and assuming that the children work for 24 days



in a month and that the season is 9 months long, the average monthly wage is MK632 (USD4.49) and the average daily wage is MK26 (USD0.18) amongst this sample of children.

Save the Children (2006) reports that adults earn around MK1000 per month, significantly more than the MK632 monthly average earnings of children in this study. This discrepancy is confirmed by the 2003 child labour baseline study (Tsoka and Konyani, 2003) where it is reported that children earn about half of what adults earn. The adults who were consulted in the present study also confirm this fact.

*They might be doing the same kind of work but when it comes to payment they are given less money than the adults. Sometimes the children are given food every month and the agreement is that the food will be deducted from the final pay. At the end of the season the estate owner would just tell them that their money is finished. Sometimes at the end of the season they do not give them food so they just leave and go home and then they do not need to pay them. (para-civic educators, K)*

In addition, Tsoka and Konyani (2003) found that children are reported to earn around MK25 per day in the Mangochi area, and adults around MK37 (or MK888 per month).

Given that the figures above from multiple sources show consistency we can accept that the MK26 per day earned by children in this study is accurate.

In the Mzimba group many of the children said that their parents had earned the money and they had worked to help them to meet their daily quota.

*I was there to help my father to make bundles. My father was getting paid. He was paid according to the amount of work done. That is why I had to go and help him. (boy, 14, M)*

*My mother was the one paid. She would share some with me. I would need to fill one pail during grading, one pail for MK25. (girl, 13, M)*

Some of the children in this group are also paid according to the amount of work they do.

*After two months the tobacco is dry and we would make bundles. For 10 bundles he would pay me after having deducted for food so I would go home with MK20. I had to count how many bundles I had made before he would pay me. (boy, 14, M)*

The biggest money-related problem reported by most of the children was not that they do not earn enough but that they do not earn what they were promised. This makes them very sad and angry (see Theme 4 below).

*I was only paid MK2000.*

*R: So you also got less than you were promised like the other boys?  
Yes?*

*R: I can see from your faces that it is hard to talk about this. How does it  
make you feel talking about it?*

*It's painful.*

*We only went there because we are poor.*

*We didn't go to school because of that, shortage of clothes for school so  
we had to work. (boys, K)*

#

*I've drawn here a problem. This boy is working to dig this big field but the  
boss here is paying him little money – less money.*

*R: Less money?*

*When they employ him they promise him a good pay but when paying  
you they say no, you haven't done a good job and they will give you less.  
(boy, 16, L)*

#

Children reported that they are told they earn less than promised because  
they had not worked hard enough.

*They promised MK10 000 but I was not paid everything. They said I was  
not working hard. (girl, 12, K)*

It is important to note that the children do not mind working and are prepared  
to work hard but what upsets them is when they are treated unjustly. They  
were told they would earn a certain amount and were then not paid that or the  
terms of their contracts were changed.

*I am happy when I do digging because that is what we agreed – we did  
not agree that I would cut heavy trees. (boy, 15, K)*

*I get happy when I get paid what we agreed. (boy, 18, M)*

One reason they are paid less than promised is because money is deducted  
for food they had eaten or for soap.

*The supervisor is the one if you don't have soap you report to him so  
that you may be given. At the end of the season they will deduct the cost  
of those necessities and give you MK500. You feel very sad. (boy, 18,  
M)*

*The farmer would subtract a payment for the food we were eating. He  
would give us groceries such as maize and flour during the season and  
write that down and deduct it and give us the remainder. So sometimes  
you got very little at the end. (girl, 18, M)*

We discussed with children what they do with the money they earn. Those  
that work full-time use the money for household needs. They give the money  
to their parents at home (see also Theme 2 below).

*When food is not available at home I buy food sometimes. The money*

*does not belong to me, I support my family, like buying nsima (maize meal). (boy, 17, L)*

*I buy food and bring it back to my family, (girl, 14, L)*

Some use the money to buy clothes for themselves.

*Sometimes you use it for the things that are important to you, like clothes, because your clothes are very old and broken. (boy, 14 L)*

*I kept the money when I was paid and when I went back to my grandmother I used the money to buy clothes for myself and with the remaining I would buy things like soap for the others. (girl, 13, M)*

Children also said they use the money for school fees or uniforms. This was particularly the case for those who work on the tobacco farms part-time.

*I get paid MK95 a day and I use that money for school fees. I am working now as we have stopped classes. When I am attending school I work from morning until 2.00 pm and then go to school in the afternoon and then back to work after school. (boy, 18, M)*

Many of the children in this sample work because there is no money at home (see Theme 2 below). These children identified as one of their biggest problems the fact that the money they earn is never enough to cover the needs at home.

*R: What other problem did you draw S?*

*I'm drawing this boy, the home has nothing. He goes to work, but still when he gets back home the money is too little for a lot of problems. So he still stays at home on an empty belly, hungry. (boy 16, L)*

*I am not making enough to support our needs. I use the money from the farm for food at home. So I had to borrow money from another friend to pay school fees. I still have the debt with the friend. It is ok for primary school because primary school is free but for secondary school... (boy, 18, M)*

This issue of the money they earn not being enough means that some of the children try to supplement what they earn on the tobacco farm with other work but this, in turn, causes more problems for them.

*This problem is about deductions. Sometimes they dismiss you and say no, go home, we don't want you to work. But we feel still like working because we have nothing to eat at home and we want to get something that we can use.*

*R: Why do they chase you sometimes?*

*Sometimes you are absent for two days, hunting for food, because at work you only get money at the end of the month and the food is run out so you are absent from work for two days. (boys, 17 and 16 L)*

**Richmond\***

Richmond is only 13 years old but he looks much older. When he first entered the workshop room his body was bent over and he had a sad look on his face.

I noticed that he drew his picture of his house and the people who live in it with great care, finishing long after the other children. His home was in a small village close to the lake shore.

He lives with his grandmother and grandfather as his parents have died. He and his older brother had left home in 2007 to come to work on the tobacco farms in the Kasungu area.

*I left school in 2005 because my parents passed away both of them and there was no money for school clothes. Also no food at home, our grandparents are old and cannot work and the farm is too small.*

Richmond described the work he did on the farm.

*We were going to the garden from 6 – 11am in the morning then after that we would rest a bit and take our axes to cut the trees and then go to the nursery and we would be given our lunch and go back to the garden until 7 pm. We got only lunch.*

Richmond and his brother had intended to go home after the one season but they were paid so little by their employer that there was money for only one of them to return.

*Here I was picking tobacco leaves, watering and cutting trees on the farm. I am still at work here. I don't receive all my payment. Sometimes I get MK200, sometimes MK500 and I haven't received the total balance of MK2000 that I am owed. Now I began another season. My home is close to N. I came here with my brother but my brother went back and I didn't have the transport fee to go back that's why I'm still here.*

When we talked about the things that made us feel very angry Richmond said,

*I get angry when we are not paid what we have been promised.*

But it was his sadness and longing to go home that struck us.

*At my home is my brother and my grandmother and grandfather. It is better there than here. I want to go to school in order to get a better job for a better life.*

During the second day of the workshop he approached the Plan staff member who was interpreting and asked her if she could help him to go home. We decided that we needed to report his case to the local labour officer who would make sure he was taken home.

At the very end of our second day we played a fun game that involved all of us catching a big truck that was going on a journey. Each child had a chance to drive the truck and say where we were going. The children chose to travel to Blantyre, Harare, Dar es Salaam and even Johannesburg but when it came to be Richmond's turn to choose where the truck would go he chose to take us all back with him to his small home village.

Two weeks after our workshop the local labour office accompanied Richmond back home to his family.

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\* Names throughout this report have been changed

### **3.2 Theme 2: Why we are working**

One of the significant themes that emerged from the discussions with the children centred on why the children are working. This theme is presented under the following sub-headings:

- Poverty
- Who decides children should work
- Vulnerable families

#### Poverty

The main reason given by the children for working was poverty at home. Many of the children talked about how they started to work because of the situation at home.

*This picture (of why children are working) shows that this child doesn't have clothes and he is working because of no clothes. This is a picture of money. It shows that child doesn't have any other money and would want at least to get some little monies. (boy, 16, L)*



Lack of food in the home was the most common problem that children drew when asked to draw 'the problems they have in their day'.

*I drew a picture of a problem - that is we sleep empty, on an empty stomach - without food. (boy, 17, L)*

*We don't have time to go to school, we have to go and work to avoid starving. (boy, 17, M)*

A lack of food was also the most common reason (along with the need for clothes) children gave for why they are working.

*Here in this picture the children are working because they have no food. They are more or less fending for themselves. (boy, 16, L)*

It was clear that some of the children chose to work for the one meal a day they receive on the farm.

*I drew why I am working here. Lack of clothes, lack of food, we also go to employment because some employers provide food, so I would get some food right there where I am working. (boy, 17, K)*

Another item that the children said they need money for is to mend their houses. This is related to necessity as well as to their status in the village (see Theme 5 below).

*This is my parent's house. These houses have problems. There is no thatching materials, no doors or windows. (boy, 17 L)*



*The house is not well roofed. It leaks when it rains, (girl, 14, L)*

*I helped my mother to thatch the roof so I had to go and get money for that. (boy, 13, M)*

*One of the reasons I wanted to work is the fact that I looked at the situation at home, for example the condition of the roof and the floor. So I had to work. (boy, 13, M)*

*The house at my home, looks like the one you see in this picture. It's round, its shape.*

*I want a four-corner house.*

*R: Why do you want a four-corner house?*

*This one is not a dignified house, people will laugh.*

*R: And why do they laugh?*

*These round houses, don't have rooms, but the whole family goes in there, they say, it's not a house but a kraal. (boy, 15, L)*

They also said they need money to get fertiliser and seed for their own farms so they could eat next season.

*This picture (of why I am working) shows a lack of fertiliser. This family can't grow as much as they want because they can't afford fertiliser. (girl, 14, L)*

*We do have a piece of land to cultivate, but because of lack of input, it ends up no harvest. No money for seed or fertiliser. (boy, 16, K)*

In relation to farming, the children raised the issue that working means that they do not have time to cultivate their own farms so they would not be able to get a good harvest and would then have to work again the following season.

*There is no time to farm our land because we are always working. Sometimes we try and get up before going to work to dig in our garden but it is difficult. It is dark when we get home from the farm too. (boy, 17, M)*

Many children also raised the issue of land ownership. They said they do not have land as they are orphans or the land had been taken from grandparents or they do not have enough land to grow enough food for the whole family.

The problem of grandparents having no land is an issue highlighted in other research with children living with grandparents, (Clacherty, 2008; Wangila and Akukwe, 2006)

*This picture of why I am working shows the problem of poverty. We have a big family, but we have only a small garden, which has to sustain us. There is no food, no place to cultivate, a small piece of land. (boy, 15, L)*

*I have drawn the problem of no land. I am living with my brother and my parents are dead. I have drawn the garden which represents food but the garden is not there, we don't have a garden.*

*R: Why is there no garden?*

*No land. (boy, 17, L)*

School fees and uniforms are another need that drives children to work especially for those that are still in school and working part-time.

*Another reason I am working is to get money to go to school. (boy, 18, M)*

*I was not working this year (2008). I was going to school but I had an issue with the school uniform so I couldn't continue. So now I am going to work. (girl, 15, K)*

There was much discussion in the groups about the fact that secondary school is not free and that this means they need to work to get money for secondary school. They also talked about the fact that exam fees are very expensive.

*I am not going to school now because I did not have money to pay for examination fees. When you miss examinations you miss the whole year. (boy, 18, M)*

It is important to note that school is very important to all of the children. At one point we talked about where the children thought they would be in five years' time and all of them wanted to be in school – even those who had stopped attending school some years before. However, the quote below shows that they knew that they could not reach this goal themselves through the money they earned from working. All of them refer to a sponsor or to help in getting fees.

*If everything goes well I will by then finish school and will do some course to help my family.*

*if I maybe find school fees, in 2009 I will continue school and then maybe I can be in college in 2010 and 2011.*

*If I would find someone to sponsor me with school fees I will continue and will complete my education.*

*If God's willing, if everything goes well, maybe I will get a sponsor and will finish school then start a course. (girls and boys, M)*

#### Who decides children should work

We discussed who made the decision whether children should work. It was clear that the decision is most often the children's. As the quotes above about poverty show, for most of the children the decision is driven by a strong sense of the reality of their family situation and a sense of responsibility to their caregivers.

*My mother is a disabled woman and she is really helpless so that's why I have to work. (boy, 15, L)*

*At home there was a desperate situation so I was forced to find work and help the family, (boy, 13, M)*

*I am a child and I thought by myself alone that there is a lot of poverty in this home and so I made a decision to look for work. (boy, 17, L)*

Most of the children described how they had thought about their options and



decided that they really had to work even though they knew they would have to work hard with no rest and even be shouted at by the boss. They recognised that they have little choice.

*We have a lack of resources at home. We even have to fry some maize for breakfast (because there is no other food). Sometimes I just sit at home thinking about doing anything. Being shouted with the boss is worse but we'll choose to go to work because we have nothing to eat. (boy, 17, L)*

*While hungry you know you cannot just live without doing anything. So even hungry you still go and hunt for a job. (boy, 16, L)*

*I long to have time to play (with friends) but the problem is that when there is no money I am going to suffer.*

*All of us work for our families. If we don't work our families would go hungry.*

*Yes we are willing to play but there is no time because we have to work for our families. (boys and girls, M)*

Parents and para-civic educators confirmed that it was usually the children who decide they would work.

*R: Okay. So if there's all these problems, why do families send their children to the estate, why do they go?*

*There are a number of issues. One is that the family is poor. The parents cannot support their children and the children themselves find that it's easier if they went to be employed. Secondly it is that some children come from a vulnerable family like physical challenged parents so they have no choice - they go. (para-civic educator L)*

*R: This girl, maybe she's very good at school and she doesn't want to go to work on the estate, can she say something to her parents? No. Because the child is convinced there is a problem. (para-civic educator, L)*

*Mostly it is because they are orphans and some of them feel like there's nothing to support them so they just go to the estate. (para-civic educator, K)*

However, para-civic educators also pointed out that there was sometimes pressure on children from parents because the family was poor, though even in this situation children saw that there was little choice.

### Vulnerable families

One pattern that emerged from the research is that the children in the sample came from vulnerable families. In this regard it is important to note that the para-civic educators based in the community who identified the children were asked to find 'children who are working on tobacco farms' for the research. They were not asked to find vulnerable children but children who are working,

yet of this sample the majority of children come from vulnerable families.

22 of the children in the sample are double orphans and 12 are single orphans. Another interesting trend is that 15 of the children in the sample of 44 are the eldest child in the house or the only child at home. The table below outlines other data about the children's home situations.

<b>Children living with grand-mother</b>	<b>Children living with single mother</b>	<b>Child living with foster mother</b>	<b>Children living with aunt or uncle</b>	<b>Child-headed household</b>	<b>Children living with both parents</b>
15#	12 (10 of these the father had died) #	1 (orphan) #	5 (all orphans) #	1 (older brother of 19 was head of household)	10 (2 of these are step mothers) #

Some of the children also live with additional vulnerabilities. For example, one of the boys in the Lilongwe group described how his mother is disabled (see quote above).

It is clear from the table that this sample of working children is made up of those who are the most vulnerable. This suggests that it is children from the vulnerable families in a community who are most at risk of getting involved in child labour on the tobacco farms.

This is congruent with other research which shows that children living with grandparents are more likely to be working to earn money and less likely to be at school than children who live with their parents (Wangila and Akukwe, 2006).

The children in this research confirmed this. When asked why they are working many of the children identified the fact that they live with a grandparent as the reason why they are poor and have to work.

*Because we are living with our grandmother who is so weak we have to work, (girl, 13, M)*

*Because my grandmother is old we struggle to get a meal and so I am forced to go and work. My sister and brother look after my granny. We take turns in working and looking after granny (boy, 14, M)*

In addition, many of them linked their starting to work to the death of their parents.

*My parents passed away, both of them, so I came here with my brother (to the tobacco farms). (boy, 16, K)*

*R: What did you draw to show why you are working?*

*The problem of no parents so lack of food, a poor house, no money for*

*school fees. I am living with my brother. (boy, 15, L)*

*I made the decision (to work) because my mother has already passed away. (girl, 13, M)*

*I had problems at home that is why I was working. My mother is a stepmother and she is not caring. So I have to work. (girl, 14, L)*

Children who are living with grandparents are doubly vulnerable, though, because, not only are they more likely to be working, as the children in our sample were, but they also have more work at home than children living with parents. They have to care for their home fields, do many of the hard chores such as collecting wood, and also look after their aging grandparents' personal needs (Clacherty, 2007).

Again, the children in this study confirm this situation. Children who live with grandparents described how they work a long day on the tobacco farm and then have to come home to do household chores that their grannies cannot not do.

*I come home to cook for my granny, she is too old, I need to get water and wood and also cook for her.*

*R: When do you this?*

*After I come home from working. (girl, 13, M)*

It was also clear that there are other vulnerable children in the study sample, for example, children living with step-parents and children living with aunts and uncles.

*I had problems at home that is why I was working. My mother is a stepmother and she is not caring. So I have to work. (girl, 14, L)*

*I am living with my uncle. My aunt is not giving food so I have to work for my own needs. (girl, 14, M)*

Another aspect of vulnerability raised by the children is the lack of land for cultivating their own food (see above). The children link lack of land to the fact that they are orphans and their family land had been taken from them or they live with grandparents who have no land.

*The problem I have is no parents. I live with my bigger brother. I have drawn our house with no garden, the garden represents food but the garden is not there, we don't have a garden. (boy, 17, L)*

*The granny is old; they have repossessed the piece of land that she used to own, so the little children are supporting her by cooking and helping with the chores but there's no land for the granny. (boy, 13 K)*

**Rafiq**

Rafiq arrived late. He had been working. His trousers were torn and his legs dusty. He was a tall and strong boy who looked much older than 18. At first he was very shy and would not catch our eye. But when it came time to talk about the first drawing he offered to speak first. It soon became apparent that he was intelligent and had a lively sense of humour. His eyes twinkled as he made a joke with the facilitator or interpreter.

It was obvious that he still missed his late father very much. He told us how he often could not sleep for thinking too much about them. When he did sleep he often dreamed of his parents.

*I have a nightmare. I am chatting with my late father. Then my father jumped up and I tried to jump up too but I could not make it and then I woke up. When I woke up my heart was very painful. I also dream about my late mother. (M)*

He lived with his very old grandmother and two younger brothers and had to work to get money for food and other family needs. He had reached Form 2 so also needed money for school fees. He had worked since he was 14 and came to live with his grandmother. He worked on his uncle's farm after school every day and now that school had closed, he was working full-time. He told us how he put in many extra hours so he could earn enough for school and for the daily needs of his small family. He described his working day to us.

*I start at 4.00 am. I wake up and go to the river with watering cans to water the tobacco nurseries. When we get to the farm at around 10.30 am after walking there from the river for an hour. We go to the bushes to cut the branches for making tobacco shed. Getting back from the bush it also takes about an hour. After coming back from the bush, we start constructing the shed which it takes us about 2 hours. Then we take a small break for lunch. After lunch we get back to the field doing the digging. After the digging, at 4.00 pm we get back to the nursery to water the seedlings and that journey will take us about an hour. We would knock off at the nursery at 6.00 pm and walk back to the farm for an hour. We would eat around 7.00 pm. After that we would start digging again until 10.00 pm. We would sleep and wake up again at 04h00. I am staying with my grandmother; her house is closer to the farm. When I am attending school, I work from morning up to 2.00 pm and after school get back to work.*

But even with this long day he does not earn enough for his school fees.

*I am not making enough to support our needs. I use the money from the farm for food at home. So I had to borrow money from another friend to pay school fees. I still have the debt with the friend. I have to support myself through all these things.*

Yet in spite of these difficulties he was enthusiastic and full of a sense of fun throughout the workshop. There was a clear sense that he had every intention of not completing school – he had great strength and resilience.

### **3.3 Theme 3: Abuse from supervisors**

A strong theme that emerged from all the groups was the abuse that children receive while they are working. It is important to note that the information provided by children about abuse was not specifically elicited – it emerged spontaneously from the two different activities bulleted below. The words in quotes are the exact words used by the researcher. No other questions apart from those of clarification were asked:

- children were asked to ‘draw pictures of the problems that you have during your day’
- the body map where children were asked ‘show me on this map some of the problems that children who are working have in their bodies.’

The table below outlines the types of physical abuse reported by children in all groups.

#

<b>Forms of abuse</b>	<b>No of children</b>
Hit on face with hand by supervisor	30
Kicked by supervisor	17
Hit with a stick by supervisor	27
Injury from being hit – wound	16
Rape by supervisor/owner	3

#

#### **Beatings**

In the activity that asked children to draw the problems they face in their day, beatings from the supervisor was the second most common problem children drew (after poverty).

*If you rest then someone tries to beat you. That is the problem I drew. I was tired and tried to rest and the owner accused me that I was the one stalling the work of the farm. (boy, 17, M)*

*The supervisor whips you from behind while you are working. (girl, 13, M)*

This is how the children in the one group in Kasungu described the beatings.

*When you're working and you feel like resting. They (supervisors) come to you and shout at you.*

*Sometimes when you are digging and you want to stretch so you stand up straight he comes to you to say, 'don't stretch, come on keep on working!' something like that. Or you just want to go and drink water and they send you back. They shout.*

*They also beat.*

*R: Oh really where?*

*At the back, anywhere, as long as you're close by they hit you.*

*You go to drink water, the minute the boss sees you he says, 'Don't go, go back to your work!' and because you are thirsty you want the water, when you insist he beats you.*

*R: With what?*

*A wire.*

*Sticks.*

*Sometimes they use kicks.*

*R: Who gets beaten?*

*Girls and boys – all of us.*

*R: Who here has been beaten?*

*(They all put up their hands).*

*R: OK, everyone.*

*There are some bosses who do not beat. We enjoy, when we're working with the good immediate boss.*

*Yes, it makes a difference. (girls and boys, K)*

#



Being hit on the head with a hand is the most common form of beating but being hit with a stick closely follows this. The children drew these sticks. The sticks range from switches cut from a tree, to tree branches to clubs with a head in the Kasungu and Mzimba areas.

*R: Is there anything else that this body is feeling?*

*It's been beaten.*

*R: Beaten, where?*

*Sometimes on the legs.*

*R: With what?*

*With the stick.*

*R: Ok, draw the stick for me.*

*A big stick.*

*R: Anyone else?*

*I wasn't beaten.*

*R: Ok so you don't draw then.*

*We were beaten.*

*R: How?*

*When you sit you are beaten like this (she puts her legs out straight in front of her) on your feet with a stick. (girls and boys, K)*

Children also reported being kicked by the supervisor.



One boy of 13 in the Kasungu group described how he was made to walk on his knees across a field because he had not worked hard enough.

*I am doing piece-work (part-time work) on the farm now. But I did not go this week.*

*R: Why not H?*

*I'm not going because I have some wounds.*

*R: Where do the wounds come from?*

*We were told to kneel down. The boss told us to kneel down and walk on our knees.*

*R: Why did he do that?*

*Because he said we did not work properly. We were lazy. (boy, 13, K)*

The boy had deep wounds on his knees from the stones he had 'walked across' when he attended the workshop and we had to refer him to the local health worker for treatment.

This same boy also talked about being hit on the face.

*When we are beaten some blisters come out.*

*R: Blisters?*

*The face swells because of being beaten on the face. (boy, 13, K)*

#### **Harold for president!**

At one point we played a game that involved children catching an imaginary train. During the game we stopped at the stations and asked different questions. One of the questions we asked children was where they thought they would be in five years time.

*When I'm 18 I'll be learning so that I will get employment*

*I am going to be a driver.*

*I want to go to school in order to get a better job for better life.*

*I am also going to be a driver.*

*A teacher.*

*I'll be a driver with a car!*

*I want to be a doctor.*

*Driver.*

In the one group the smallest boy who was 13 had touched us all. He had been abused badly by his employer and had spent the workshop with deep wounds on his knees from the abuse. Yet he had been able to articulate very clearly his understanding of child rights throughout the workshop and was not afraid to speak out. When we played the game Harold stunned us all with his answer to the question and the group broke into spontaneous applause as we all

thought he would be good at the job he had chosen.

*Harold?*

*I want to be a minister.*

*A minister? Ah! For church or for the government?*

*For the government.*

*(The whole group applauds and laughs together).*

*Yay!!! Harold for president! (Harold beams).*

### Withholding food

Supervisors also withheld food as punishment.

*The son of the owner was the supervisor. He would wait until it is time to rest and eat and then tell us we cannot eat before we finish the job.*

*Sometimes he would not let us eat at all until we had finished (the work) and then tell us to go home, then we go home with an empty stomach.*

*(boy, M 18)*

### Verbal abuse

Children also described how supervisors and the wives of the farm owners and their children often verbally abuse them.

*They said we would stay for 3 days without food and work on an empty stomach because we did not work well. Sometimes the boss's wife would call us to sort of counsel us but in a way that was insulting to us.*

*R: What sort of things did she say?*

*She used to talk about us as orphans saying that the reason why our parents left us (died) is because of our laziness. She used to say we are not hard workers and we will remain in this poverty we're in for the rest of our lives. (girl, 15, K)*

#

### Sexual harassment

Boys and girls also mentioned sexual harassment of girls in all the groups.

*Sometimes the supervisor they ask you to be in a relationship with them. When you say no, they send you back home. (girl, 14, L)*

#

*I feel bad because sometimes the girls are late and when the girl is late the supervisor, goes aside and says, 'now you go to work but let's sleep together first.'*

*R: Okay so you boys notice that.*

*Because they are bad things we feel hurt.*

*Yes, you feel bad.*

*Sometimes the supervisor says to the girl, you can stay at home but I'll still pay you a little more. (boys, L)*

*Sometimes you do not get paid because the boss has not registered you.*

*R: Why not?*

*Because he wants to sleep with you and then you say no. Then there is a lot of problems. They just call your name but they don't record it and at the end of the month you get less pay because they did not record*



*your name every day. They punish you like this. It happened to me.*

*The boss asked me. I said no and he doesn't register my name.*

*R: Did you tell anyone?*

*No I just kept it to myself.*

*R: Why?*

*I am shy to tell anyone.*

*Even when they are giving out the maize (being paid with maize at the end of the week) sometimes your name is not on the list and when you ask you are told that it is not for you, you were not there when the registration was done but you were and they took your name but he did not write it (because you refused to sleep with him). (girl, 14 L) #*

#

*Some girls are forward and they ask the boss. He follows them back to their houses.*

*Say if you are late you bribe the boss. You give him some money. If you don't have the money he will follow you at home and ask if you have the money. But mostly this does not happen usually they force themselves on the girl.*

*Every time I am walking to school with these fears, fears of the boss proposing and of not having food at the end of the month. (girls, 14 and 15, L)*

#

*You may find the boss or supervisor may make a girl pregnant more especially the teenage girls, the young ones.*

*Because of the difficulties at home girls can agree to sleep with the supervisor to get some money.*

*Sometimes the supervisor proposes to the girl at the job and the girls agree then their work is less but they get the same money. (girls and boys, M)*

*R: Tell me about some of the problems that the girls have and the boys don't.*

*Sometimes we experience sexual exploitation – we are being raped as we are forced to sleep with them and sometimes they force us to fall in love with them and if we don't they hit us.*

*R: Ok, so who's 'them' who's forcing you?*

*Sometimes it's the boss himself so as the parents sleep in their room and children are given another shelter, then what happens is the boss would go during the night and knock on their room and tell them don't report. Although it's painful they don't talk about it. (girl, 15, K)*

Through a confidential voting system using the body map three girls admitted to being raped by the boss in this manner. These girls talked about their fear of HIV. They were referred for testing and counselling after the research workshop was over. It is likely that many of the other girls had also experienced some kind of sexual abuse but as the quotes above show it is very difficult for them to talk about it.

This issue of sexual harassment is confirmed by previous research (Oxfam, in Liwander, 2008; Save the Children, 2006) and by the adult groups that were run as part of this research.

#

*R: Are there different problems for girls and boys?*

*Yes, there is a difference. Girls face additional problems like they become pregnant, they suffer from venereal disease because their employers take advantage of their poverty. They sleep with them.*

*R: Ok so how does that work?*

*The boss uses his authority. He proposes to the small child, the girl child and she says yes because he is her boss. The boss says I will not employ you. I will cancel your name from the list.*

*Sometimes if the girl is absent he will look aside and continue with favouring the girl. (para-civic educators, L)*

Para-civic educators also confirmed that the issue was a hidden one and that there was no space for discussion about it.

*There is no real avenue for discussion on these issues. Actually what happens, these things are discovered when the girl becomes pregnant and it's when the parents discover there was this, but if they don't discover, the issues remain silent. (L)*

#

#### **Maya's Story**

We took Maya and her friend home on the first day as their village was on our way and we had seen them walking as we drove past. They both lived close to a large tobacco estate. Maya was 14 but she worked full-time on the estate. She had left school in 2007 to work. She was very shy and found it difficult to talk but we slowly came to know her story.

*I started working in 2005 when my mother got very sick. I was supporting the family by getting maize from the estate instead of my whole pay. I got only a small amount of money the rest I got in maize. I wanted to make sure my mother got food.*

She did not say much but we realised what a strain it had been for her to look after her ill mother when she told us about her headaches.

*As of now I am well but the past three months I was feeling bad, I was ill I had problems - very bad headaches. It was because of the problems. I had problems at home.*

But not only did Maya have to worry about her ill mother she also had to cope with sexual harassment at work.

*The supervisor is forcing himself on girls. He says he needs sex if you are late. Every time I am walking to school with these fears, fears of the boss proposing and of not having food at the end of the month.*

Maya now lives with her uncle and continues to work on the estate.

*My mother died last month and I came to live with my uncle. My uncle also works at the estate so we agreed each month that I will get maize and he will get flour.*

She longs, however to go back to school. She only has Grade 4 but would like to become a teacher one day. #

### **3.4 Theme 4: Impact of work on the children**

This theme explores the impact of the work the children do on their physical and psychosocial well-being.

#### **Impact on physical well-being**

The impact of work was explored through a body mapping activity where children drew the physical and emotional problems they have on a life-size drawing of a body.

The table below summarises the main physical symptoms reported by the children.

<b>Physical symptoms</b>	<b>Number of children</b>
Pains in the body – shoulders, knees, back	44
Blisters on hands	44
Pain in chest	33
Headaches	42
Dizziness	14
Abdominal cramps	32
Difficulty breathing	34
Coughing	30
Coughing blood	14
Bleeding nose	6
General body weakness	37
Nausea and vomiting	24

*Total number of children in sample: 44*

One physical impact described by all the children is pains in their body. The children related these to the heavy work they do.

*When you bend too much you get a back pain. It is a big pain.  
Yes there is pain from carrying heavy things.  
Tired muscles. In the knees, there is sickness in the muscles because of overworking. (M)*

*The neck gets painful because the load is too heavy.  
You get very weak on the neck (K)*

*Backache because of bending for a long time, so you have muscle pain.  
The knees also give pain like nails being hammered into you. (L)*

*Even when you go home the aching carries on. It is hard to sleep. Sometimes even when we wake the pain is still there. (M)*

*Pains in the shoulders from lifting.  
Also pains in the chest. A lot of energy comes from the chest when you are lifting. (L)*

In addition to aching muscles children commonly talked about general weakness.

*The body is weak. It feels very tired. There is a lack of energy. K*

*Feeling very weak in the hands. (L)*

*Feeling very weak like you will fall over. (M)*

The children also described strong pains in the chest. The children often related the pain in their chest to carrying heavy loads. Some reported bleeding from the mouth in relation to this pain.

*We feel some pain in the heart and in the chest. (M)*

*The pain in the chest is linked to heavy work it is like the bones here separate on the chest because the load is so heavy. (L)*

*A pain in the chest that is so bad that you are bleeding.  
R: Bleeding from where?  
From the mouth - the pain is so bad and then the bleeding.  
R: Is it just bleeding or are you coughing?  
Coughing. (K)*

*Carrying heavy loads you feel a pain here (points to the chest).  
It feels like you cannot breathe it is so heavy.  
Sometimes we bleed from the mouth.  
R: From the mouth?  
Because of the pain in the chest.  
R: When?  
When we are carrying heavy loads.  
Sometimes the bleeding occurs because we've been doing that (carrying heavy loads) for so many times sometimes we spit out a lot of blood and cough because we've been doing that for so long and the blood has been congested in one place. Sometimes we request to go to the hospital because we have been spitting blood and they say that they can't send us to hospital as we are not their relatives. (K)*

Difficulty in breathing and frequent coughing was also described in relation to the tobacco dust when sorting or grading tobacco. They also reported that they cough blood.

*Coughing during the sorting of tobacco. There is a lot of dust.*

*Yes, my chest feels very hot.  
It feels like you can't breathe because the dust gets in the mouth and nose.  
This is the kind of dust that is difficult to remove and it makes it hard to breath. (M)*

*Coughing because of the dust.  
Sneezing.  
There is a pain inside the eyes too.  
There are even sores in the nose because of the smell of the tobacco.  
(K)*

*There is a pain in the throat and coughing.  
R: Is it at any particular time the coughing?  
When we grade the tobacco.  
We even carry on coughing at home.  
It starts as a little cough but it goes on for a long time.  
Sometimes it feels like you don't have enough breath, you don't have enough oxygen.  
Yes, you reach a point where you cannot breathe in because of the pain in your chest.  
Then the blood comes when you vomit, you vomit blood. At the end most of this dies and then you remain with a headache. (L)*

*I have coughed a lot and even had bleeding. (L)*

#### **Tuberculosis?**

Coughing up blood is one of the signs of a severe respiratory tract infection. The commonest one in Malawi is Tuberculosis (Nyirenda, 2006). Usually TB infection causes other symptoms like a cough that lasts 2 weeks or longer without response to antibiotic treatment, night sweats, fevers, weight loss and in some cases enlarged glands in the neck. The children did not refer to any of these other symptoms so the only way of checking if the coughing they refer to is TB would be to do a clinical examination, sputum microscopy and chest radiography. This is the only way clinicians have been able to isolate bloody coughs caused by TB from others caused by agents that result in chronic damage to the lungs (like asbestos that has affected miners in the same manner).

Based on personal communication with Dr T Nyirenda, European and Developing Countries TB Clinical Trials Partnership, Medical Research Council, South Africa.

Nose bleeds were also mentioned.

*Sometimes because of the sand we get nose bleeding. (K)*

Abdominal pains are also very common.

*Pain in the stomach that can even cause diarrhoea. The pain is like heat in your stomach. (M)*

*It feels hot in the stomach. There is a pain. Because the food is hot and you are eating in a hurry.  
But also when you are not eating. (L)*

*Pains in the stomach. It feels like bubbling. (K)*

Dizziness, nausea and vomiting were also reported.

*On and off sickness.*

*R: What does it feel like?*

*Sickness (nausea) and vomiting. Sometimes body pains. The whole body becomes painful. (K)*

*I get dizzy when we are picking tobacco. It is the very hot sun. (girl, M)*

Headaches were also commonly described.

*Like your head is being split in the middle*

*R: How long does the headache last?*

*When you wake up and go to sleep - all the time. (L)*

*I get a headache when we are sorting the tobacco. M*

*There are two kinds of headaches. The one is on top of the head and then there is one that goes down to the eyes. It is a very much strong smell when you are working in the shed. It causes headaches. (K)*



Many of the above physical ailments are symptoms of Green Tobacco Sickness (see box below). The children would have been exposed to nicotine while picking and sorting. None of them wore protective clothing of any sort. They described picking tobacco with bare hands, carrying large bundles of picked leaves, sorting, sewing and carrying the large bales. They also describe how during the picking season their hands are sticky with juice from the tobacco. They do not have access to water and soap so this residue stayed on their hands even when they eat.

*When we are picking tobacco some oily substance that traps the tobacco dust sticks to our palms and it is difficult to remove. (M)*

*When you want to eat some food the taste becomes very terrible.*

*R: Oh why?*

*When picking the tobacco the tobacco produces a juice so it's difficult to clean it out of the hands.*

*R: Can you wash it?*

*Yes it comes off only when you use soap but now the challenge is we don't have soap. (K)*

#### **Green tobacco sickness (GTS)**

GTS is one of the most notable hazards of working on tobacco farms, occurs when workers absorb nicotine through the skin as they come into contact with leaves of the tobacco plant (McBride et al, 1998; Quandt, et al, 2000; McKnight & Spiller, 2005).

Wet tobacco leaves are of particular concern since moisture on tobacco leaves may contain as much as 9 mg of dissolved nicotine per 100 ml of dew, equivalent to the nicotine content of six average cigarettes. On a rainy day, the average fieldworker may be exposed to as much as 600 ml of dew (McKnight & Spiller, 2005).

Children are especially vulnerable to GTS due to their small body size in relation to the dose of nicotine they absorb. Children also lack tolerance to the effects of nicotine and knowledge about the risks.

The symptoms of GTS may include nausea, vomiting, weakness, headache, dizziness, abdominal cramps, diarrhoea and difficulty in breathing, as well as fluctuations in blood pressure and heart rates. (McKnight & Spiller, 2005; Southeast Center Studies, 1996)

Extract from Desk Review, Child labour in Malawi, Anna Liwander, July 2008. Plan International Malawi

None of the children had any knowledge of GTS. This is obvious from the way they ascribe many of the symptoms of GTS to the heavy loads or to the food they eat and in their obvious unawareness of the danger of the 'juice' on their hands.

Evidence emerged of the children using pesticides without protection, so some of the symptoms they reported could also be ascribed to pesticide poisoning.

*They give us a jerry can, a five litre jerry can containing chemicals with a small cup the size of a jerry can lid and we use that for sprinkling onto the tobacco field. But we are worried because we use bare hands and no protection. (girl, 13, L)*

*They sometimes use sprays but mostly they use cups, small cups and they sprinkle on the top of the plant with no protection. (para-civic educator, Kasungu)*

Another health impact described by children were those symptoms related to the lack of hygiene.

*You get lice because you do not wash. We do not have soap. There is no time to look after yourself. (M)*

*Sores because you cannot wash. (K)*

*We are busy working and we don't have time to go for bathing so we develop those sores that come when a person doesn't bath. (K)*

Parents and para-civic educators also talked about the physical impact of work on children. They mentioned that it is possible to identify the children who had been working from a young age just by looking at them because they are often undersized. They also said that they are not clean and neat.

*They also don't have enough time to take a bath ... they are not so clean. By just looking at them you can see that they are not given enough food and that affects their growth. (para-civic educators, K)*

#### Impact on psychosocial well-being

In addition to using the body mapping exercise to explore physical impacts, this activity was also used to explore psychosocial well-being with the children.

A common psychosocial impact reported by the children was sleep problems. This is commonly recognised as a sign of emotional stress (Lewis, 1999).

24 children reported having sleep problems. These ranged from sleeplessness to nightmares.

*At night before we sleep is that time when we are free and are thinking of all the things that happened during the day. I am thinking about why all these things happen to me. I also think about the food we eat as it is not enough for us to grow up well. (K)*

*Sometimes I dream about the violence that took place during the day and...*

*I dream about my parents.*

*I also dream about my parents – the great times we used to have together.*

*Are other people dreaming?*

*It's about witchcraft, sometimes there are people who pick them (children) while they don't know and when they wake up in the morning they are tired and they don't have energy to work in the farm because they were working during the night.*

*When I wake up in the middle of the night I become afraid of the dark. (L)*

*I dream the leopards are chasing me.*

*I also dream about a leopard chasing. (L)*

*One problem I have is I meet a lot of nightmares. Dreams.*

*R: What about?*

*Like this (he refers to a drawing of a leopard).*



*R: Why do you think you are getting nightmares?  
I don't know.  
A wizard. (L)*



The children in Mzimba talked about how they dream often about their late parents.

*I have a nightmare. I am chatting with my late father. Then my father jumped up and I tried to jump up too but I could not make it and then I woke up.  
I dreamed of working on the tobacco farm. In the dream the boss gave us our money but I realised he would not give me any even though he trusts me.  
I was dreaming I was sitting with my father and mother. I have already told that they are both late. When I woke up my heart was very painful.  
I also dreamed about my late mother. (M)*

Children also talked about what they called 'thinking too much'. This referred to withdrawing from contact with others and being sad or depressed. Children who are grieving describe similar feelings (Kübler-Ross, 1997)

*I am thinking too much.  
R: Tell me this thinking too much when does it happen?  
When I am sleeping.  
Yes! (some others agree)  
I am not sleeping just thinking. (M)*

*I am thinking too much.  
R: About what?  
Thinking about the problems I face, I try to think about the future like how I am going to move ahead in life. (K)*



Thinking too much about my problems

Children also talked about feeling anger. The main thing that causes anger is the unjust way in which they are treated. Not being paid what they were promised is something that particularly makes children angry. Verbal abuse is another thing that makes children feel angry.

*R: When are you feeling like this (angry)?*

*When there is a lot of work to do.*

*Sometimes when being beaten*

*When they don't give you food.*

*When they are insulting you.*

*R: What do they say?*

*They say you have a big head just like your father especially when you are an orphan.*

*He (supervisor) would say you eat too much and he sometimes uses bad language.*

*If you are not given soap too.*

*Sometimes when they accuse you of stealing when you didn't. (K)*

*They promise to give us money and at the end of the job they just tell us to go without giving us anything and that makes me cross.*

*Yes! (others agree). (K)*

*I get angry more when I've been insulted by the landowner, the children or the wife. (K)*

*I feel sad if the owner of the farm is very wealthy and he tells me I am very poor. (M)*

*When you come back from the field and the boss's wife calls you and gives you another job, a big job, a difficult job like pounding. (M)*

*Sometimes we are angry because of the way the boss has spoken and sometimes we end up fighting with each other right there in the field. Sometimes the boss is biased he gives some children more than others.*

*Sometimes it is because they are his relatives.  
Others are in love with the boss. (K)*

Children talked about how neglect when they are ill or injured also made them angry.

*Sometimes when I have wounds on my body and then am sent into the garden rather than being taken to the hospital. They don't even care. Yes, they don't care, they say you must go to your parents 'not to me'.  
(L)*

Being hungry also made children angry.

*We get angry when we are hungry.  
R: Who else feels this way?  
Yes (a few answer) (K)*

Not being able to go to school like other children also made them angry.

*You also become angry when your friends are going to school and you want to go to school but you haven't got something to help you go to school. (L)*

Sadness was another emotion children described. This was most often related to the loss of parents but also to the hopelessness of their situation.

*When are you feeling like this (sad)?  
Sometimes you are thinking too much.  
Sometimes you don't have time to have a bath.  
When you are remembering your late parents.  
And when they are insulting you and even reminding you of your late parents. (M)*

*When I'm thinking if I had my parents I wouldn't be going through this situation but because I don't have any so I don't have any choice. It's like a regret for not having parents. (K)*

*I feel sad in my heart. When the boss shouts at me and I recall my late parents and I feel sad.  
Maybe you just recall the life you had with your parents.  
Maybe you had bad food and you remember that when they were still alive you had better food. (M)*

Not being paid what they are due also makes children sad.

*When they have sold the tobacco and the owner don't give you your due. (M)*

Unfair treatment also made them sad.

*When we are treated differently from others you feel very sad in your heart. (K)*

Girls referred to sexual abuse.

*When you are being raped you are thinking of ways of overcoming that so you can move on with your life. (K)*

*I get sad when thinking that when the boss wants to sleep with the girl child and sometimes it's the boss's children (who want to sleep with the girl) and when you say no they force you to get out of their farm and they don't pay you anything. What I am afraid of is the HIV and AIDS as sometimes they just want to spread. (K)*

A sense of loss of locus of control was also apparent. This is the feeling that one is powerless, that there is nothing you can do about your situation. This is also a sign of emotional stress (ref). Some of the quotes above reveal this.

*You become angry when you feel you cannot challenge the problem. (M)*

Para-civic educators also mentioned that children working are more stressed than they should be.

*Those who are working in the tobacco estate are seen from the kind of clothes they wear and through their miserable faces. They don't change, they can't even develop and their mind is full of work so they are always thinking of work and work. They are not even thinking of any development to take place in their lives and that's why even psychologically they look like they are mentally disturbed. It doesn't take long for the girls to get married. (para-civic educators, K)*

#### **Making eye contact**

All of the children came into the first day of the workshops quiet and withdrawn. It took some time of playing games and talking together before they relaxed and began to trust us. But by the beginning of the second day most of the children would smile at you when you caught their eyes, some even began to make jokes and to tease us. Most chatted to each other during the breaks. But in each group there were a few children who were so withdrawn that they would not make eye contact at all. They participated when asked directly, but often in whispers. This kind of withdrawn behaviour is a cause of concern as it is a common sign of emotional stress and depression (Lewis. 1999).

We explored what made children proud. In the Lilongwe group most of the children said that nothing made them feel proud.

*No I never felt like that.*

*R: Others?*

*When I take a bath and put on clean clothes because I had money to buy. That time I felt like everybody else, any other friend of mine, so I felt like this.*

*R: Does anyone else ever feel like P?*

*No we are always thinking about our problems.*

*I think it is P only who feels like that because like today when you leave*

*us here, what shall we do next.*

*R: Don't you feel proud when you take money home to your families?*

*No we don't feel like that because the money has got a lot of items to buy we have a big budget and small money so we don't feel like that.*

When we asked what made them feel happy again it was only one boy who could give an example.

*There are times sometimes when you are happy...like yesterday I was happy, I got some money and I went straight to buy maize.*

*R: So the others when are you happy?*

*Like yesterday.*

*R: Okay, what made you happy yesterday?*

*I went to buy maize with the money that you gave us.*

*R: And before yesterday ... other days when you are happy?*

*Yesterday was probably the happiest day because we were able to buy a half bag of maize, we bought soap, some of us bought some salt for the home. (L)*

In the Kasungu group children said they feel happy when they have eaten and when they have a day off.

*We feel like this when we've eaten and everything is ok*

*On Sunday we are all very happy, it is the day we have to share the word of God we are being encouraged, we chat, we meet friends, our loved ones, we smile.*

*I feel encouraged when I'm listening to the word of God*

*R: Other people?*

*When we go to church the word of God encourages us and we are free and we forget about violence and have forgiven the person but when we go back home (to the farm) all those things come back. (K)*

In the Mzimba group children said they feel proud when they are paid the correct amount and buy something with it or bring it home to the family.

*When we are given the same money that we agreed on when they started the season. Sometimes when we are given money and buy clothes we feel proud.*

*The happiness and joy that is shown by the whole family when I bring money home makes me proud. (M)*

*If I receive money that was agreed upon it makes me proud because I know I am going to be able to pay my school fees. (M)*



*Sometimes the boss does things like you are his own son, such as buying you clothes and giving you some good things. (M)*

In the discussion around psychosocial impact the children described responses that are indicative of emotional stress. They described withdrawing, isolating themselves, feeling angry and sad, many of them also have a low sense of locus of control and agency over their lives. These responses are well-documented in the trauma and grief literature (Lewis, 1999; Osofsky, 1997).

It is likely that this stress is caused by the violence they experience in their work lives, by the trauma of losing a parent, by the ongoing trauma of living in a home where there is no food and by the uncertainty of their working situation (Boyden, Ling and Myers, 1998; Killian, 2005).

### **3.5 Theme 5: Discrimination within the community**

One of the biggest issues for the children was the discrimination they experience in the community. They talked about how their peers and adults say bad things about them. These are usually related to the fact that they are poor and therefore have no money to buy soap and clothes.

*We receive a lot of sayings from friends, they say we smell of wood smoke and we do not bath.*

*We don't have time to bath and that is why we smell.*

*R: Does anyone else have that problem of friends saying bad things? I do. (all of the group)*

*R: For all of you is the problem this big, this big or this big? (Researcher uses hands further and further apart to indicate the scale of the problem for the children. All of them respond by showing their arms wide apart – indicating that it is very big)*

*You appear well when you put on good clothes.*

*When you put on ragged clothes, your friends laugh at you and sometimes you are ... you stay in the home only, you don't want to go anywhere because you feel bad.*

*R: And girls?*

*There's also discrimination amongst children, when you put on bad clothes. Your friends don't feel like chatting with you. (girls and boys, L)*



Clothes are important to the children because if they dress neatly and are clean they are not discriminated against.

*I feel proud when I have clothes and soap to wash. Then I can be like the others and no one will laugh at me. (girl, 12, M)*

The children are also mocked because they do not go to school

*The children who go to school laugh at us. They say we're not intelligent. Unlearned ...*

*They say that, because they're coming from well-to-do families, and they go to school, that's why they say that.*

*Yes, they laugh at us. They say, 'you are fools, how ... how do you go to work, and your friends are going to school?'*

*We feel hurt.*

*Yes, we sympathise with ourselves and our hearts start pumping fast and we get angry and fight. because of that we respond, and the fight starts. (girls and boys, L)*

*Mostly the children who go to school they exchange words and say 'why don't you go to school?' so that is when we start to fight.*

*R: What do you do?*

*I just walk away. I feel pain and am hurt. (girl, 14, L)*

The children are also mocked because they are orphans.

*Sometimes you get very angry when your friends talk about us as orphans about the loss of our parents, it's when you become angry and you end up breaking God's laws. (girl, 18, M)*

*I get angry when somebody talks about my father like you don't have parents and you are poor. You can't say anything, you are so angry. It is because you come from a poor family and you don't have relatives, you don't have brothers and you cannot be proud. (boy, 18, M)*

The state of their houses was another issue people in the community teased them about (see Theme 2).

It was also clear that the owners of farms and supervisors also used their status as orphans and the fact that they are poor to abuse them.

For ethical reasons we did not explore this with the children but it is likely that some of the discrimination they experience is related to the stigma of HIV/AIDS. Previous research (Clacherty, 2003; Deacon, 2007) on discrimination against children in similar rural areas shows that children of parents who have died are stigmatised in the community as people assume the deaths are AIDS-related. The literature of stigma and discrimination also shows that children affected by HIV/AIDS experience double stigmatisation as they are also discriminated against because they are poor, because they have old clothes, broken hoses and no soap, (Clacherty, 2001; Madoerin 2008; Clacherty and Donald 2005; Deacon 2007).

There is also evidence (Madoerin 2008; Deacon 2004) that this kind of discrimination causes children to withdraw from interaction with other children and the rest of the community, which impacts on their psychological well-being and healthy development.



### **3.6 Theme 6: Withdrawal from labour**

One of the aims of the research was 'to understand how children who have been withdrawn from labour experience and perceive this process and how they explain its impact on them'. However, once we began to work, it soon became evident that those children who had been selected as 'withdrawn' (from farm labour) are, in fact, still working part-time and some had even returned to working full-time in the holidays. This applied to approximately 28 of the 44 children we worked with. It also seemed likely that as the need for labour during the picking season increases, so even more will begin to work full-time.

While the concept of withdrawal is supported and is a necessary one, the children, parents and para-civic educators all question its effectiveness in the long-term. The children, for example, feel that withdrawal is an impossibility because of their home situation. The following discussion in the one Kasungu group illustrates this.

*R: Is there anything else we should tell people about children working on tobacco farms?*

*There must be no more child labour, don't employ.*

*R: Do you agree with him?*

*Yes.*

*No.*

*I would go back to school.*

*I started working because I don't have anyone to help me, my granny is very old. There were no school fees. The work would also help with food. So I think just saying 'no child labour' is a problem. It means the government must think about it so that the poverty that the children are facing is reduced and children go back to school. (boys and girls, M)*

Para-civic educators and parents talked a lot about withdrawal of children from labour. They pointed out that they would like to withdraw many children but unless they had something else to offer families as an alternative to the money earned from work, they could not propose this strategy.

*Okay, we can go to that level of saying stop child labour, withdraw all the children but we have a limitation, we don't have resources in our community. If we had something that when we remove the children we can give the children to follow we would have removed all the children from the estates but as now we don't have something that we can give. Even the parents cannot accept. Even the children cannot accept for us to say stop working. The parents may come to say what will they eat? Who will feed the children when you remove them from the estate? (para-civic educator, L)*

*I think that you cannot withdraw a child without support for that particular child. (parent, M)*

*We are agreeing that the children should not be employed for child labour and we are saying the children should go back to school. But in many*

*families there is a problem, there is poverty. How are we going to support those children if we take them out of work? (parent, K)*

There was an interesting discussion amongst parents in Kasungu who discussed the fact that the money children earn is not enough to make any real difference in their homes, but the work takes them away from school so they cannot get a better job later. Also the work means they cannot work on their own farms and slowly help their family situation. So this group felt that the presence of the farms in their community keep poor people poor and even splits families because children often go away to work.

*It would be better for our area if there was not earning work available for children. (parents, K)*

### **3.7 Theme 7: Ideas for interventions/solutions**

The children were asked to think about what could be done to help children who are working. Their ideas ranged from making sure that children do not have to work at all to how they could combine work and school. They also suggested long-term poverty alleviation strategies like how to improve their farms. Though their ideas seem simple at first glance, they point to a set of important principles that should underlie any intervention to help them.

Some of the girls said that they do not want to work because they would rather be able to fulfil their duties at home. They want to have time to look after their grandparents and sisters and brothers properly. Note again the strong sense of responsibility behind this idea – the girls are not saying they don't want to work, they are saying that they feel their responsibility lies at home, particularly if their family members are old or young.

*My picture shows I am getting the support I need to be able to go to school and to be able to pass. If I can go to school (rather than work) I will be able to have time to support my parent at home. In the afternoon I'll be able to support the family.*

*R: How would you support your family?*

*When I get back from school, I'll be able to go and fetch water and do some household chores.*

*R: OK, G who are you living with?*

*My grandmother, brothers and sisters. (girl, 13, M)*



School featured strongly in children's ideas about what would help children who are working.

*If I can stop picking up the tobacco and go to school (because this drawing is showing 'stop picking the tobacco – go to school') and also 'stop watering the nursery' that will help me to do well and I'll be happy and also be free to play and be given enough chance to play. (boy, 13, K)*

*I drew a picture of a child who is going to school. The children should be going to school. This is the teacher, teaching this child. The teacher must make sure that the children are learning. Sometimes they are being blocked by their employers that they must not go to school but they would be wishing to go to school. (boy, 13, K)*

Many of the children thought that it would be a good idea to go to school and work in the afternoons. This was the most common solution suggested by children.

*This time I want to go to school, and support the family in the farm. I would love so much to be given a chance to go to school and do work for a living.*

*R: How can you do both?*

*I can be able to work in the afternoon after school and I'll be still going to school and learn. The idea is about continuing to work to get food. I will be able to work in the tobacco farm but I'll be able to get time to play and go to school. (girl, 15, K)*

*I must be given time to go to school and take a break on the farm. It means I can cultivate at 6.00 am and break at 1.30 pm to go to school. Also this picture is talking about combining work and then finding space to go and eat at home. This picture is talking about brick-making and finding time to go to school*

*R: Alright that is work and school.*

*I am saying that at the same time I must have a life of going to draw water, go to pray and be able to go to school (girl, 17, M)*

*The schedule for watering the nurseries of tobacco must be changed so that it can be done after school. I am happy to do it after school. (boy, 15, M)*

Many children mentioned that they would also need help with school needs such as uniforms and stationery. Another set of ideas centred around how children would be happy to work if the conditions at work are better. Children also had ideas about how conditions at work could be better for children.

*They should also think for our working time. They should think of reducing the working hours so that we go in good time and come back home in time. (boy, 15, L)*

*I think at the work that they should be giving us enough food, they should be paying us enough, and they should be giving us work very much for our age. (boy, 17, L)*

Children said they would not mind working if they were treated well by the bosses, so one solution was for bosses to treat them well.

*I am asking that the bosses, should stop doing harsh punishment of children. (boy, 12, L)*

One child thought that one way of making sure that the bosses behaved well was to send them to church! This may seem like a humorous, childish suggestion but the principle underlying the idea is the need for an internal change in values, people who are employers need to change their attitudes to children.

*My boss must have a spiritual life so that we can work better and go to church on Sunday with him carrying a bible. This is what I drew here. (boy, 13, K)*

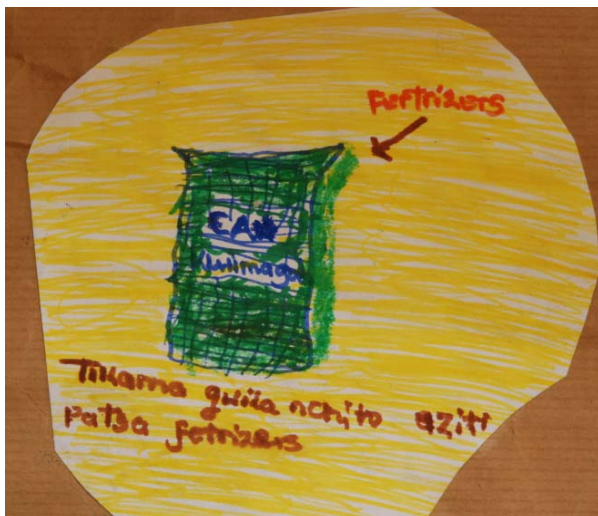
They also thought that parents should do their part in making sure children are protected.

*They (bosses) should be treating us well and they should not give us a lot of work which is hard. They should be giving us work appropriate to our age. Our parents should not be part of the hardship, parents should be giving us enough food. They should protect us from work. (boy, 16, L)*

Another idea was for children to have reporting mechanisms to be able to report abuse.

*My second drawing shows that if the boss is overworking I should be able to go and report to the village leader, so that the village head can go and talk with the farm owner. (girl, 13, M)*

Another idea was that they needed to be given help to farm their own farms so they could make these sustaining for their families.



*This picture shows that we are given fertiliser and seed for our own farm, then we would not have to work, (boy, 16, L)*

We also discussed ideas for intervention with para-civic educators and parents. They had some valuable ideas too, many of which are related to the work they already do around child labour.

Much of the work they currently do around child labour involves educating employers, parents and children about child rights and raising awareness of the impact of child labour.

*It's encouragement that we do. Our important role is to encourage the family to do anything they can to send children to school. (L)*

*We have been approaching the estate owners and farmers talking to them. At first it was a bit difficult because the estate owners were not even aware that they are violating children's rights by employing young children. But later on during the process some estate owners began to understand that it's really not good to employ children. (K)*

They talked about the difficulties they had with this strategy. There are difficulties in working with farmers.

*But they can be aggressive. They say it is the children who choose to work and they are right. They do, and even parents can say to us these are our children, you don't have any right over them, we can let them go and work wherever they want to. And then there are parents who have no choice... (K)*

*Sometimes we say we will go to the estate and talk to the employers. Unfortunately we are turned down because we don't appear to be powerful. We don't have identity. Sometimes they think of us as the people who have come to advise the estate thieves because they expect us to have some letters and authority maybe from the police or from the government. As of now they look at us as somebody who has just being sent by the village head only to destabilise their estate.*

*R: So what would give you more authority?*

*Uniform and identity cards okay. And we need some more education. We need additional training.*

*R: Training in what?*

*We need this training so that when we go there we use facts other than our voices and our noise. (L)*

There are also difficulties associated with encouraging parents to withdraw their children from work.

*But you need to offer an alternative. If we had resources we would go to that level where we would say start a small business so that parents can support their children. But as of now we have nothing we can give. It's only encouragement and education.*

*Sometimes it makes you feel very bad because you make parents feel bad but you cannot offer an answer. (L)*

**Ministry of Labour, Kasungu District Office**

The Ministry of Labour, together with ILO and Eye of the Child, started a two-year project on child labour in 2002, focusing primarily on tobacco. The project included three components; withdrawal, prevention and rehabilitation. Focusing on “withdrawal with intervention”, children ages 16-17 were offered vocational skills training such as tin-smithing and carpentry, whilst younger children were sent back to school.

The Ministry of Labour in Kasungu enforces the Employment Act and reports cases to the police if an arrest is needed. The case then goes to court and violators gets fined KW 20,000 or 5 years in prison. There have been several cases in Kasungu where farmers have been fined but no one has been sent to prison. In cases where children are older than 14 and working in non-hazardous conditions for less than 4 hours a day, the Ministry of Labour will not withdraw the child.

Currently, the Ministry of Labour focuses most of their work on labour inspections. Labour officers are mandated by the Act to go into the estates and other workplaces to withdraw children. The Ministry is also working with the police at the road blocks – asking them to look for suspected cases of trafficking and check children’s letters of transfer.

Extract from Desk Review, Child labour in Malawi, Anna Liwander, July 2008. Plan International Malawi

Para-civic educators talked about the need to focus on the conditions of children on the estates rather than on just the withdrawal of children from labour.

*If we are allowed to talk to the bosses to allow us to see what jobs are done by the children and how many hours the children are working and in the end we would recommend what is good for the children in terms of hours of work, how much pay and protection in terms of their handling chemicals. We will also go ahead to say this size of children cannot be employed. (L)*

An interesting discussion took place in the Kasungu group about the need to help children who have been withdrawn to catch up with their schooling or to provide them with vocational skills.

*The main problem is like these children used to have that ‘estate life’ and then now are withdrawn and are with their families even if they have gone to school it’s not easy to concentrate. To give an example; there is a community whereby children were taken to school, some stopped saying they can’t continue with school, they prefer to work on the estate. They were too old for the classes and felt bad with young children so some people are saying it’s better for them to have their own classes and their special teacher. That’s the idea.*

*We are also talking about the situation whereby a child would have worked in the Estate for about 6 to 7 years and it’s difficult for that child to start in standard 5 with little kids. Maybe according to the age but it’s better to also have something like vocational skills to help them in their lives. (K)*

**Mama Elizabeth**

As we arrived at the workshop venue we saw a group of children sitting under a tree talking to a woman. They sat close together and were talking and laughing in a companionable way. I noticed that the children were very relaxed and easy with her. Later I asked them who she was.

*Mama Elizabeth knows us all. She is our mother. She talks to us and helps us with our problems.*

Mama Elizabeth was the local para-civic educator but she had also become a support person for the children who were working. In an informal way she gave emotional support and helped connect the children to any resources she felt might help them. It was clear that she played an important role in the children's lives as many of them were orphans without any parents to give advice. The children also seemed to have formed a peer support group around her and were supporting each other informally. This informal caring from a compassionate woman points to a potential intervention strategy – support groups for children who are working.

It is clear that the para-civic educators are playing a role in raising awareness within the community and to some extent with employers. They represent an important resource and any discussion about intervention for the children needs to keep this resource in mind.



## 4. Recommendations

The following is a set of recommendations that are informed by the issues highlighted by children in this report. These recommendations would need to be further informed by the extensive literature on how best to meet the needs of working children and also by the many programmes that exist to support working children before they are adopted or applied.

The recommendations have been divided into a number of different categories:

- 5 Advocacy
- 6 Public education
- 7 Education for the farming sector
- 8 Programmes for working children

### 4.1 Advocacy

This section looks at recommendations for advocacy arising out of what children have said in this research.

*The research provides powerful evidence of the negative impact of working on a tobacco farm.*

- Evidence from the report can be used to inform the international campaign against tobacco farming.

*It is clear from what the children say that the main reason they are working is poverty. This **poverty** is related to their **vulnerability** as orphans and children of single-woman-headed households. It is also related to a **lack of land** and the means to cultivate land effectively.*

- Potential exists to use the information here to supplement existing advocacy campaigns around general poverty alleviation. In particular, the information can be used to show the link between poverty and exploitative and harmful child work and also between land ownership and child work. It can also be used to illustrate the importance of livelihoods programmes that assist families to farm effectively. #

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- There is adequate evidence emerging from the report to underline the need for intensification of livelihoods programmes that integrate rights based approaches to development at community level. These approaches would assist vulnerable children in these communities.
- The information from the children can also be used to advocate around the needs of vulnerable children such as orphans. The research shows very clearly the link between orphanhood and harmful child work and therefore it can be used to enhance advocacy campaigns around the need to make specific provision for the needs of orphans and other vulnerable children so they are kept out of harmful work.
- Children raised the significance of lack of land especially for those

children living with grandparents. This points to the need to review inheritance legislation in Malawi and also to lobby for the effective implementation and enforcement of law that does exist (the Wills and Inheritance Act)

*This research shows that existing labour legislation is not being implemented. Children under 16 are working. It also shows that employers are exploiting and abusing children.*

- The research provides powerful stories that can be used to lobby for stronger punishment for those who break labour laws and employ children.
- It also provides evidence that can be used to lobby for more effective implementation of the labour laws that do exist.
- Liwander (2008) reports that the unregulated tenancy system in Malawi tends to promote child labour. In this regard a draft tenancy bill was prepared in Malawi in 2005 to regulate labour issues in the tobacco sector but this failed to attract political will and get the approval of cabinet. Efforts to revive this process could form part of advocacy work in this sector.

*Many children refer to barriers that prevent them from entering and staying in school. The need for uniforms was mentioned as one thing that kept children out of school. Many schools in Malawi do not enforce the uniform rule as they understand the context of poverty in which they operate, but it is clear that some still do insist on uniforms. In addition, this report shows that fees for Secondary School are a significant barrier for many children.*

- The information in this report can be used in advocacy programmes around access to schooling.
- The report also provides information on the need for programmes to help working children who wish to return to school – the need for bridging or ‘catch-up’ strategies and for vocational skills training.
- The children’s suggestion that they would be happy to work part-time and also go to school needs to be taken seriously. Research needs to be done into school models that cater for working children and some of these principles then need to form part of advocacy and programming with education authorities and NGOs. Patterns of work hours that allow children to take school time off and have time for play and self-care also need to be researched.

*The research raises many concerns about the health status of working children.*

- There should be advocacy with government and NGOs around the need to provide working children with easy access to health care and

education.

### ***Children as their own advocates***

This research shows that children can articulate their problems very clearly and make practical and well thought through suggestions for ways to solve these problems. Thought should be given to involving the working children who participated in this research and other working children in advocacy around this issue. With careful preparation, consideration of ethical issues and planning of activities to ensure that the children's authentic voice is heard, children can be excellent advocates. There are many good examples of children's participation in advocacy and policy debate that can inform such a process (for example, the process of children's participation used in the recent RIATT Conference in Dar es Salaam).

## **4.2 Public education**

This section looks at public education possibilities that arise out of what children have said in this report.

*The stories the children tell show that discrimination against orphan children, poor children and working children is obviously rife in their communities.*

- There is a need for public education programmes around the need to support vulnerable children rather than discriminate against them. Research (Deacon, 2007) seems to suggest that this education needs to continue to include messages around HIV/AIDS and how it is and is not transmitted.
- Underlying the kind of abuse of children describe here is a negative view of the child. It is this that public education campaigns need to address.
- Education around child rights for children and for adults should also be a priority.
- Para-civic educators are a potential resource for education campaigns at local level.

This public education needs specifically to include programmes for children who might become involved in work, for children who are not working about those who are, and for children who are working.

### ***Informing the development of messages***

Any public education programme needs to be carefully planned and researched. Using the Soul City model (Goldstein, 2004), which is recognised internationally, any public education programme needs to begin with research to identify messages and authentic stories. This report provides some of what would be needed to develop messages and stories.

### **4.3 Education for the farming sector**

This section looks at possibilities for education targeted specifically at the farming sector that arise out of what children have said in this report.

*The research gives much information on the need for changed attitudes and practices amongst farm owners and supervisors.*

- The information in this report should be used in education campaigns within the farming sector. This education needs to include information on the health impacts of farming and labour practices (particularly the causes and impacts of Green Tobacco Sickness). It also needs to include information on child rights and find creative ways of confronting farm owners and supervisors with the values that underlie their abuse of children.
- The need to educate farm workers, adults and children about the health hazards associated with tobacco farming is imperative. Making sure adults know the facts will mean that the information is passed on to children but there is also a need for education programmes targeting children specifically. These should use creative communication strategies such as comics and new media such as cell phone technology.
- Para-civic educators are already involved in some education of farmers. They need further training and help to gain access to farms in order to continue this work more effectively.

### ***NASFAM***

The National Smallholder Farmers' Association of Malawi (NASFAM) is one organisation that can be targeted in this regard. The accompanying desk review (Liwander 2008) highlights a number of opportunities for informing the education campaigns of this organisation. Thought should be given to using working children themselves in contact and advocacy with organisations such as NASFAM.

### **4.4 Programmes for working children**

This section looks at possibilities for programmes for working children that arise out of what children have said in this report.

*The research highlights a number of negative impacts on children of working on tobacco farms. These are related to physical and psychological health.*

- Further research needs to be done into the health status of working children. This needs to focus, in particular, on what appear to be serious respiratory illnesses as well as incidences of GTS described by children in this research.
- There is a need for health services directed specifically at working children. These should focus on educating and treating GTS and what appear to be serious respiratory diseases amongst many of the

children.

- Mechanisms that allow children to report abuses at work need to be provided. These must be confidential to protect the children. The community child telephone helpline that already exists in the Kasungu district is a good model and the possibility of extending this service to other areas should be considered.
- Programmes that offer psychosocial support for working children should be a priority. Previous work with working children (for example, Concerned for Working Children, [www.workingchild.org](http://www.workingchild.org) and Liebel, Overwein and Recknagel, 2001) suggests that forming a child-centred organisation run by the children themselves is an effective strategy. The Humuliza Orphan's Organisation in rural Tanzania is an excellent model (Clacherty and Donald, 2005; Madoerin, 2008) that operates in very similar circumstances to those that exist in Malawi and it would be very easily transferable to the context of working children. This model includes psychosocial support for children as well as an income generation, cash transfer and farming programme.
- Para-civic educators are a committed existing resource. They need to be mobilised in the creation of any support programme for working children.

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## 6. Appendix: Research instruments

### Participatory research: Children working on tobacco farms Outline of research instruments

The aims of the participatory research with children in this project will be to find out:

- how children experience work on the tobacco farms
- their understanding of why they are involved in this work
- how they experience the impact of the work on their physical and psychosocial well-being
- their ideas about what is the best way to make sure they are protected and have access to the rights due to them as children.

and

- to understand how children who have been withdrawn from labour experience and perceive this process and how they explain its impact on them.

#### **1. Workshops with working children**

The workshops will begin with games to build trust and help the children relax. Games will also be used throughout the research process. There will also be regular breaks and refreshments.

Once we have played a few games we will explain the following:

- Purpose behind the research
- Confidentiality
- Consent to participate
- Ongoing consent i.e. if something makes you sad then you do not have to talk about it – you choose what you talk about – we will practice saying ‘I don’t feel like talking about that.’
- No name rule – to protect the children we will tell them that here we can talk but we never name names of anyone e.g. a foreman who bet them – this protects them from other children reporting on them – we will practice this
- Recording – we will show them the voice recorder and play a game using it so they feel relaxed with it
- How the recordings will be used
- About the report and how that will be used for advocacy and programming

Activity	Procedure	Aims
<p><b>The initial activities will all be brought together on a large drawing that will be built up over the first day. Explain to the group that they are each going to build up a big picture showing how it is for children to work on tobacco farms.</b></p> <p><b>Day One</b></p>		
<p><b>Activity 1: When I worked on the tobacco farm</b></p>	<p>i) Remind them that the research is about children working on tobacco farms. Discuss the fact that they all used to do that. Ask them to say when they worked, what they do when they work and where they work – very briefly.</p> <p>ii) Draw a quick picture of yourself at that age on a piece of A5 paper. This picture will be pasted in the centre of a large piece of paper. They can write their age and what work they do on the picture (no names of farms or children – so we can use the drawings in the report)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To place the work we will be doing in the workshop firmly into the time when they were working</li> </ul>
<p><b>Activity 2: My day*</b></p>	<p>i) So we are thinking of what you do at that time when you are working. Give each child a long piece of paper and ask them to think about what they do on a typical day when they are working. Then they must draw that day on the long paper starting from waking up in the morning to going to bed at night.</p> <p>ii) Stick this piece of paper above the drawing of themselves on the large paper.</p> <p>iii) Talk about what they have drawn. Probe details about work: What is their main job? What other work do they do? What about gender and age differences? Explore if this day is typical. Where do they work? Who for? How many days a week do they work? Do they work on weekends? Is the work seasonal? Do tasks change at different times of year? (we may need to draw up a calendar here of different tasks at different times</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To find out what work children are doing on tobacco farms – we will look at gender differences and age differences</li> <li>• To find out about conditions for children who are working</li> <li>• To find out how much time they have for rest and recreation</li> <li>• To look at the impact of work on schooling</li> <li>• To find out how much money they earn and how this money is used</li> </ul>

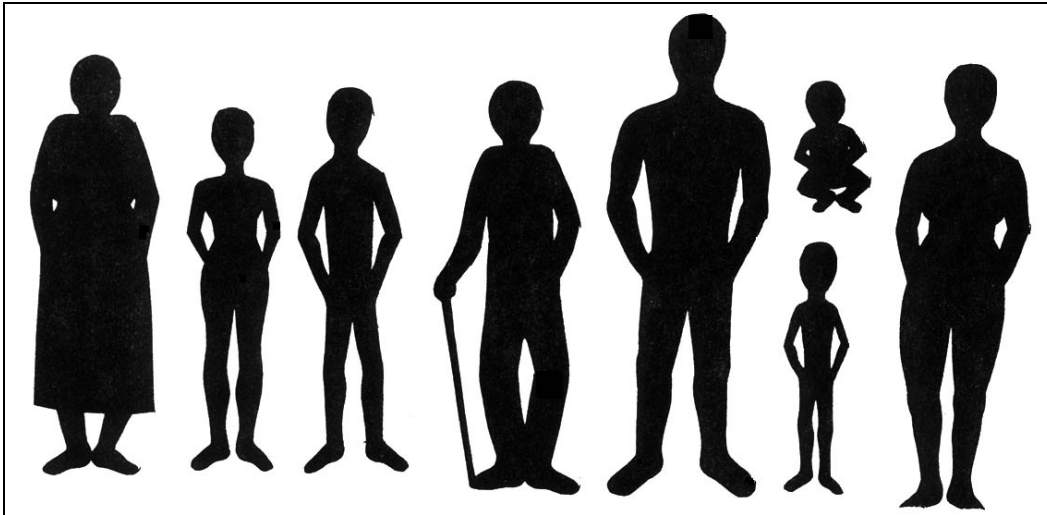
	<p>of the year – this can be drawn on the large paper)          What skills are involved? How do they learn them?          How much money do they make in one day of work? Is this different from adults? Why?          What happens to the money they make?</p>	
<p><b>Activity 3:          Problems in my          day</b></p>	<p>i) Give each child small torn pieces of paper and ask them to draw a picture of problems they have during their day when they are working. They then stick the problems in the correct place on their day drawing.          ii) Talk about them. Discuss the problems with boys and girls separately. Boys can go and play outside while girls talk. Discussion draws out a list of all the problems children experience. Probe the factors that cause or increase real or potential harm e.g. long hours, night work, excessive responsibility, attitude of adults in the workplace. Also look at sexual harassment, meeting of basic needs such as enough food, a place to sleep and time to play and talk to friends.          iii) As you work draw out a list of problems on a flip chart.          Note: if children struggle to talk about difficult things I will use silhouette figures of girls and boys (see example below) and say ‘these children are working on a farm – what problems do they have?’</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore the problems children associate with work</li> <li>• To understand what children see as hazardous or risky about the work they do</li> </ul>
<p><b>Activity 4: Most          common problems          and children’s          solutions</b></p>	<p>i) A list of the <b>problems</b> based on the previous discussion will be written up.          ii) Children will then vote with small stickers to show if they personally experience this as a problem. For example, "the foreman was always shouting and it made me feel very bad" all children in the group who experience this problem put a sticker next to it on the list.</p> <p>Can any of these problems be solved i.e. can children still work and be happy? What would need to happen so that children could work and also be happy and grow up well?          Take the cards that illustrate child rights and ask them how they could work and still have these rights – make it possible that the right cannot be accessed if they work i.e. children should never work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To understand how common particular problems are for children</li> <li>• To understand their ideas for solutions – note the solutions are placed within the context of work – it is worth exploring their ideas about what could make work OK.</li> <li>• To explore if children think they can access their rights and work at the same time</li> </ul>

	<p>Rights to explore:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Right to education and to develop talents</li> <li>• Right to a safe and healthy environment</li> <li>• Right to be free from exploitation and abuse</li> <li>• Right to basic needs such as food and shelter</li> <li>• Right to express our thoughts and have our opinions heard</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Activity 5: Why I was working</b></p>	<p>Give each child small pieces of paper and tell them that now we are going to think about why you are working. Draw pictures that show me why you are working. Stick these on the large paper.          Whose idea was it that they should work?          Do they think it was a good idea?          Do they have any choice?          If you could be doing something else what would it be?          What would happen if you refused to work?</p> <p>We may want to do a family drawing here – just to get a sense of family structure.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To understand why children are working</li> <li>• To see how much they participate in the decision to work</li> </ul>
<p><b>Activity 6: Body map of physical and emotional impacts</b></p>	<p>i) Draw a single body map by drawing around a child. Tell the children that this is a girl/boy who is working on the tobacco farms. What are some of the physical problems he/she has – illnesses, injuries, sleeping badly – any physical problems. As they identify them get them to draw them on to the body in any way they choose.</p> <p>ii) Then give each child a number of small stickers and they should stick a sticker next to any one of the physical problems they have experienced.</p> <p>iii) Now talk about the fact that we also experience emotions in our bodies – for example, when we feel angry we sometimes get a tight chest or our heart beats faster. Go through the following emotions and get them to draw the physical manifestations of these:          anger, fear, proud, happy, sad, depressed, withdrawn, relaxed, given up</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To identify the physical and emotional impacts of working</li> <li>• Explore children's own self concept/ self esteem in relation to work</li> </ul>

	<p>completely (I have small cards showing an animal showing these emotions I may also use these)</p> <p>Then take each emotion in turn, get them to close their eyes and think back to when they were working and to say what made them feel this way. Record it on the body map.</p> <p>iv) Thinking about what makes me feel good about myself. When you are working is there any time when you feel proud of you?</p>	
<p><b>Activity 7: Good things about work</b></p>	<p>i) Ask children to draw the good things about work on small pieces of paper. Talk about these. Stick them on to the large drawing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To find out what they see as good about work – the positive aspects</li> </ul>

## **2. Focus group discussion with parents and para-civic educators**

I will use a silhouette family initially to help people talk about why their children are working without feeling ashamed or censoring what they say.



**The older boy and girl in this family are working on the tobacco farms.**

What work are children doing on the farms?

What are some of the problems for these working children?

Why do some children go to work on the farms?

Are the children happy to work? If yes – why? If no - why not?

Can children tell their parents about what they want?

**After some time I will try and personalise the discussion (this may happen naturally as people realise we are not being judgemental).**

Have your children ever worked? Why?

Are they working now? Why not?  
What are some of the problems they face?  
How do you help them cope with them?  
What could be done to make it easier for children at work?

Bring the family back again.

The two older children in this family have been withdrawn from labour by a local NGO.  
Is this a good thing? Why?  
What are some of the problems with this practice?  
What do you think could improve the programme?

What do you think should be done about children who are working?