

Child Labour in Livestock production in Malawi

Paper for the National Conference in
Eliminating Child Labour

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1.0 Introduction

Child labour is a great concern in many parts of the world and it is estimated that there are 215 million child labourers globally (FAO-ILO, 2011). While exact data on child labour in livestock production in Malawi is non-existent, field observations suggests that the numbers could be alarming. Children across Malawi are engaged in a wide variety of livestock activities either through employment or by virtue of being family members. These livestock activities include the actual rearing of different livestock species, marketing of livestock and livestock products. They are also involved in other livestock related industries like livestock feed manufacturing and sourcing materials for livestock housing. Child labour appears to be widespread in both the informal small and medium-scale livestock sectors as well as the large commercial sector. There seems to be a direct link between child labour to overall poverty and social injustices across the country.

Although there is an international policy and legal framework for addressing child labour, many instruments still need to be translated into national legislation and to be implemented in practice (FAO-ILO, 2011). Laws are only effective if they are implemented and enforced, and incentives are required to ensure compliance. This requires the involvement of governments, development partners, civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), employers' and workers' associations and other socio-professional organizations, and communities. By applying holistic, participatory, integrated and practical approaches, a better life for Malawian children can be created.

This paper is probably the first of its kind to address issues of child labour in livestock development in Malawi and is meant to act as a catalyst to generate more information on children's work and child labour in an attempt to raise awareness at all levels. It is important to note that a critical first step towards eliminating child labour is to understand the difference between hazardous work and child work. Child labour has been defined by the ILO as work that impairs children's well-being or hinders their education, development and future livelihoods. Work on the other hand is defined by the National Commission of the Protection of Child rights of India in 2001 as 'participation in any economically productive activity with or without compensation,

wages or profit.' Such participation could be physical and/or mental in nature. This work includes supervisory work as well as direct participation in the work which includes part-time help or unpaid work on the farm, family enterprise or in any other economic activity such as cultivation and milk production for domestic consumption

Table 1.0: Children in Malawi

Total Population 2004 (Million)	12.6
Total Children between 0-15 years (Million).	5.9
Literacy rate (% of people 15 and above)	64.1

Source: 2004 Population census.

2.0 Background of the livestock production industry in Malawi.

The Livestock industry in Malawi contributes about 8% to the total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and about 36% the value of total agricultural products. Livestock provides food, income, manure, animal traction and social security. Livestock contribute up to more than 11% of the GDP. There are about 1.2 million farm families who own one or more of various livestock types (DAHLD 2006). The department has a vision to see Malawi becoming a nation that is self-sufficient in safe locally produced livestock and livestock products. The mission is to create a sustainable livestock development to improve economic and nutritional well-being of Malawians and rural livelihood while guaranteeing the safety of the general public from consumption and utilization of livestock, livestock products and by-products. The department anticipates achieving this through demand driven livestock services delivery, pluralism of service delivery privatisation of some livestock service for cost recovery, cost sharing, participatory approach and community empowerment. The livestock farming community in Malawi has over the years been building herds and flocks of various livestock categories as presented in Figure 1 and Annex 1 below.

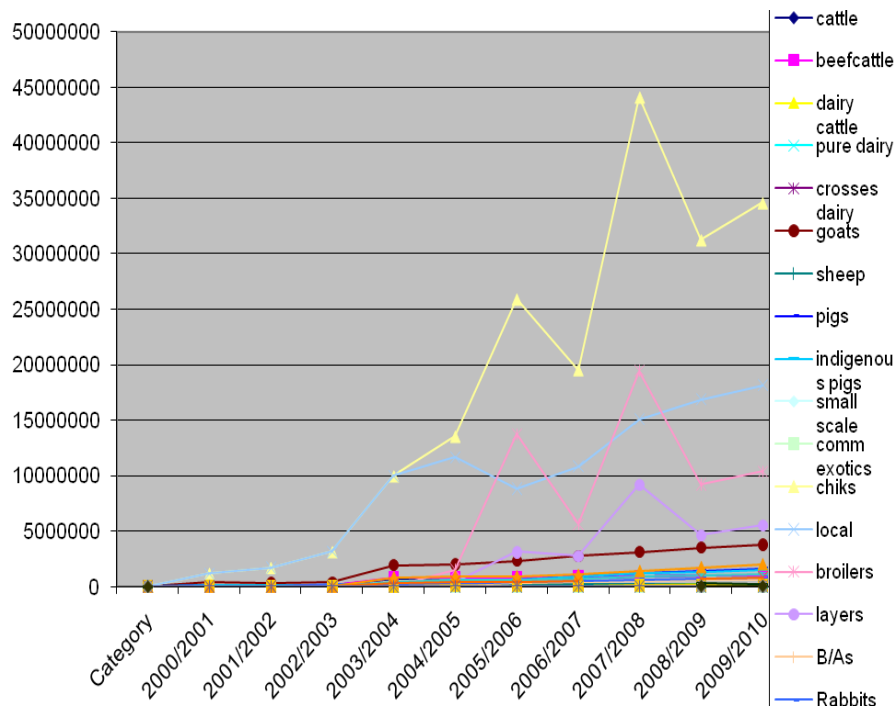


Figure 1: Livestock populations in Malawi from 2001 to 2010

Source: Department of Animal Health Annual census (2001-2010).

3.0 Child labour in Malawi

Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest rate of child labourers due to high levels of poverty where children involved in economic activity was estimated at 26.4 percent in 2004, followed by Asia and Pacific at 18.8 percent. Latin America and Caribbean and other regions have the lowest rates at 5.1 and 5.2 percent, respectively (Walakira, 2010). In Malawi, the actual data on child labour is scanty but in those countries where such data is available, there are clear indications that child labour cuts across sectors. Mostly children are involved in agricultural activities comprising subsistence farming, sugar plantations, tea and tobacco estates, livestock production, fishing and fish farming, where they are exposed to heavy physical labour. Furthermore, in domestic service, child workers are often extremely young and prone to physical, sexual and psycho-social abuse. In urban informal sector activities, children suffer degrading and dangerous conditions. Children are also employed in the tourism and service sectors where they are at risk of commercial sex exploitation.

Results from the Malawi National Child Labour Survey done in 2004 indicated that 23.3 per cent (0.73 million) of all children ages 5-14 work; 25.4 per cent (0.39 million) of these are boys and 21.3 per cent (0.34 million) of these are girls in that age group. Approximately 4.7 per cent (0.15 million) of children participate in the labour force and do not attend school. The percentage is higher for boys (5.1 per cent) than for girls (4.3 per cent). It is also reported that children in rural areas are more likely than those in urban areas to work without attending school (5.3 vs. 1.6 per cent), reporting a higher percentage of boys than girls doing so (boys 5.9 vs. girls 4.8 per cent). In urban areas the trend is inverted with girls more likely than boys to work and not attend school (boys 1.1 vs. girls 2.0 per cent) (Malawi Child Labour Data Country Brief, 2006). This is probably attributed to the fact that girls are mainly employed as housemaids.

4.0 Magnitude of Child labour in the livestock production sector in Malawi

The agricultural sector worldwide is by far the largest share of child labourers pegged at nearly 60 percent. Over 129 million girls and boys aged 5 to 17 years old work in crop and livestock production. Children help to supply some of the food and drink we consume in addition to the raw materials we use to make other products. This figure includes child labourers in fisheries and forestry. Almost 70 percent of child labourers are unpaid family workers (Global Report 2010). Apart from the labour demands, agriculture is again one of the most dangerous sectors in terms of work-related fatalities, non-fatal accidents and occupational diseases. About 59 percent (or 70 million) of all children in hazardous work aged 5–17 are in agriculture (Global Report, 2010). Regarding handling livestock, children can be kicked, trampled upon by large stocks like cattle and also be exposed to zoonotic diseases.

In Malawi where it is reported that 23.3% of children less than 14 years of age are involved in child labour. The livestock industry significantly employs these children as shepherds, marketing livestock and livestock products, fetching feed and water for the livestock and general husbandry of the animals. However data to quantify the extent of child labour along these is not available. For example, under the village modified grazing system, goats are tethered in the morning and then herded by young boys after school. The trend continues throughout the year and this is mainly practiced in the northern and central regions of Malawi where there is considerable grazing space but most adults do not tend the goats (Banda et al 1993).

5.0 Challenges

5.1 National Legislation does not cover Child labour in livestock production.

The existing legislative framework covers ratified conventions relating to children for example:

- The Minimum Age Convention (No. 138), minimum age specified: 14 years (19-11-1999).
- The Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No. 182) (19-11-1999)
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (02-01-1991)

a) Relevant National Legislation towards Child labour includes:

- The Constitution of the Republic of Malawi, 1999.
- Employment Act, No. 6 of 2000.

b) Regulations of work for persons below 18 years are also available covering

- Regulation of work for persons below 18 years Age Legislation
- General minimum age for admission to employment or work 14 years Section 21 (1) of the Employment Act
- Admission to light work activities No minimum age for light work specified
- Admission to hazardous work 18 years Section 21 (1) of the Employment Act. The list of the types of hazardous work has been gazetted

It is clear from this existing legal frame work that the issues of child labour concerns are not specific to the livestock sector.

5.2 Livestock production policies do not directly consider Child labour concerns

The current policy addresses some external factors and cross-cutting and emerging issues which can impact negatively on livestock development. Such factors and issues include: unpredictable weather, poor credit and macro-economic status, insecurity, the HIV/AIDs pandemic, gender and environmental issues, no child labour issues are addressed.

5.3 Differentiating between child work and child labour

Child labour has been defined by the ILO as work that impairs children's well-being or hinders their education, development and future livelihoods. Work on the other hand is defined by the National Commission of the Protection of Child rights of India in 2001 as 'participation in any economically productive activity with or without compensation, wages or profit.'

5.4 Cultural demands

Some consider child labour as normal child upbringing into the adult world. The problem is when children are forced to work long hours in the fields, their ability to concentrate on school work or skills training is limited. This prevents them from gaining education that could help lift them out of poverty in the future. Girls are particularly disadvantaged as they often undertake household chores following work in the fields. Children who do not complete their primary education are likely to remain illiterate and never acquire the skills needed to obtain decent employment and contribute to the development of a modern economy and agriculture. Child labour strongly undermines the efforts to promote decent youth employment, which is deemed a key element in revitalizing agriculture in Malawi.

5.5 Rampant poverty

Poverty has been singled out as the major reason why children work. This is supported by evidence as the absolute poor range from 30 to 50 percent for most countries in East Africa. In Uganda for example, 35 percent of the population live in absolute poverty and of the absolute poor, 62 percent are children below 18 years (Walakira, 2010). The high level of child poverty forces children into child labour to help support their families. A related view is that poverty not only causes child labour, but that child labour also causes poverty and hampers development by driving wages down (Walakira, 2010).

5.6 Increased number of orphans as a result of HIV AIDS

HIV/AIDS has exacerbated the situation by creating a generation of orphans. It is reported that the East African region has over 9 million orphans. In Uganda, more than one million people are reported to have died in Uganda since the advent of HIV/AIDS in early 1980s (UNDP, 2002). Nearly 2 million children have been orphaned to HIV/AIDS

and related diseases (Hunter 2000). Increasing child labour has been linked to the growing incidence of orphan hood owing to the fact that children are forced to work to support themselves when their parents are sick or die (UNICEF, 2001).

5.7 Urbanization

This is mainly linked to marketing of livestock and their products where most children are fetched out from villages to work for people in towns who want to improve their income. Both boys and girls are employed selling eggs, Kanyenya (fried meat pieces) plucking and dressing of broilers, selling chicken, rabbits, pigeons and various species of small stock.

6.0 Mitigation measures

a) National Legislation does not cover Child labour in livestock production.

The current legislation should be reviewed and develop recommendations to incorporate child labour issues for the livestock industry.

b) Livestock production policies do not directly consider Child labour concerns.

The policy should be reviewed to incorporate child labour concerns and design programs to mainstream child labour issues. The department must lobby for resources to facilitate endorsement of child labour issues in its policy review.

c) Differentiating between child work and child labour.

Create awareness of child labour concerns through platforms like workshops, child Labour Day commemoration, media, and public address forums. Develop newsletter on Participatory Approaches and Child Labour in livestock production and Integration of child labour concerns in farmer field schools

d) Cultural demands

Create awareness of child labour concerns through platforms like workshops, child Labour Day commemoration, media and public address forums.

e) Rampant poverty

Promote gender and rural community empowerment into profitable livestock production programs. There is need to create alternative sources of incomes by government and its development partners to empower the vulnerable people.

f) Increased number of orphans as a result of HIV AIDS

It is important to mainstream HIV /AIDS in all livestock production programs. Empower guardians to access income generating activities to earn sustainable income and avoid dependency on orphans for income. The orphans must be encouraged to go to school. Voluntary counseling and testing for people in child bearing age should be promoted.

g) Urbanization

Compulsory education, create awareness of child labour concerns to urban citizens and enforce child labour laws.

6.0 Way forward

The Malawi Government is committed to the elimination of child labour across all sectors through various policy documents, national legislations, and ratifications of international conventions as clarified in this paper. Despite these measures, child labour is seemingly persistent in the livestock production sector because the interventions so far discussed are not specific to livestock.

A detailed survey to quantify the extent of child labour in the livestock production sector is therefore strongly recommended. Awareness creation on the dangers and consequences of child labour in the livestock production sector through different platforms should be implemented with urgency. This should be backed up by legislation and policy reviews to incorporate child labour concerns in livestock production and mainstreaming child labour concerns in the livestock sector including the farmers training programs. A deliberate attempt is also proposed for the ministry of agriculture to facilitate the withdrawal, rehabilitation and resettlement of rehabilitated children from the livestock sector through creation of alternative sources of income to overcome the poverty. This should be done in close collaboration with other ministries like Ministry of Education and developmental partners like ILO, UNICEF and FAO.

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Annex 1) Livestock census figures in Malawi from 2001 to 2010.

Category	2000/2001	2001/2002	2002/2003	2003/2004	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010
Cattle	640930	654040	672090	764061	791962	799017	870622	947500	981378	1026651
Beef Cattle	640930	654040	672090	764061	777846	778769	844879	917226	945794	986157
Dairy	0	0	0	0	14116	20248	25743	30274	35584	40494
Pure	0	0	0	0	0	2723	4408	5295	6594	8559
Crosses	0	0	0		14116	17525	21335	24979	28990	31935
Goats	348590	301773	346545	1922264	1961080	2301349	2720126	3106271	3480449	3754320
Sheep	6070	7113	6789	227363	156809	175394	188609	188520	199647	209153
Pigs	80916	55924	56493	227363	556203	658522	928952	1229468	1440954	1640591
Indigenous Pigs	80916	55924	56493	227363	555372	636991	887592	1162829	1329355	1495376
Small scale exotic pigs	0	0	0	0	0	4697	35708	65156	103793	135889
Commercial exotic pigs	0	0	0	0	831	16834	5652	1483	7806	9326
Chickens	1170265	1691575	3120000	9947615	13528815	25891568	19524671	44098691	31234558	3.5E+07
Local	1170265	1691575	3120000	9947615	11622836	8800960	10802810	15044516	16843069	1.8E+07
Broilers	0	0	0	0	1507924	13726703	5621325	19403264	9196310	1E+07
Layers	0	0	0	0	349624	3121448	2757196	9187522	4645507	5544794
B/Australorp	0	0	0	0	48431	242457	343340	463389	549672	569019

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Rabbits	0	0	0	182718	260380	416120	513467	609319	776794	839966
G/Fowls	0	0	48688	427337	562115	609302	726108	899911	1037351	1101885
Turkey	0	0	5025	30486	42756	40180	48311	73465	238512	113756
Guinea Pigs	0	0	0	0	80037	53157	56758	96363	127543	127847
Pigeons	0	0	0	855188	958421	951668	1070681	1429169	1776837	2031609
Ducks	0	0	0	278313	411653	383345	487160		748235	822759
Ostriches	0	0	0	0	5	5		4	5	0
Camels									17	3
Horses									30	0
Donkeys									707	150
Dogs									288852	231102
Cats									59412	54161

Source: Department of Animal Health Annual census (2001-2010).