



## **Promoting decent work in cotton:**

GOOD PRACTICE AND GUIDANCE FOR  
BCI IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

# Foreword

The sustainability of global cotton production involves addressing not only environmental but also associated social considerations. The social sustainability of cotton cultivation includes issues such as the arduous working conditions of farm workers, health and safety, child labour, bonded/forced labour and the treatment of women/girl workers.

An initiative that focuses on making sustainable cotton production the mainstream standard is the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI). The mission of this initiative is to make global cotton production better for the people who produce it, better for the environment it grows in, and better for the sector's future. International brands and retailers – such as IKEA, H&M, M&S, adidas, and Levi Strauss & Co amongst others – have joined the BCI and are supported by IDH, The Sustainable Trade Initiative.

For BCI, Better Cotton is 'Better' only to the extent that it entails improvements for farming communities and farm workers, as well as the environment. Decent work is integral to Better Cotton. However, achieving decent work standards for all farmers and workers in cotton is a long journey. And reaching the most marginalised groups is a critical challenge: underpaid women workers and bonded or migrant labourers remain hidden, whilst they are the groups most impacted by lack of decent work standards.

During the course of 2012, BCI and IDH collaborated to assess and improve the understanding and scope of interventions on the theme of decent work in the cotton sector. Ergon Associates, a UK-based consultancy, was contracted to conduct an independent assessment of the situation on the ground and document an inventory of the best practices that already exist in the various cotton countries where the BCI program operates.

The study found that while the Better Cotton programme is in its early days, there are encouraging signs of favourable impact on decent work in relation to incomes, health and safety, and child labor. BCI field implementation partners are engaging in an impressive array of activities to promote decent work. The total range of activities is diverse, but includes the following:

- BCI processes (formal policies on child labour for farmer Learning Groups and Producers Units);
- Training on decent work (training for Implementing Partners and producers);
- Awareness raising (wall posters in villages, children's rallies);
- Partnerships (alliances with international or local organisations);
- Social mobilisation (supporting community groups to realise decent work objectives);
- Policy and research (participating in studies on child labour);
- Remediation and rehabilitation (linking communities with vocational training opportunities);
- Access to credit (linking producers with microfinance institutions);
- Provision of personal protective equipment.

BCI and IDH concluded that this programme review also provides an excellent opportunity to capture learnings, document best practices and create a manual so that others may benefit from the insights and progress that has been made. The intention is to publish this manual of best practices in 2014 in French, Portuguese, Turkish, and Chinese. We invite you to share your own experiences for future exchange and revisions of the document.

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## What is the purpose of this document?

This document aims to **create a practical resource** for BCI Implementing Partners (IPs) on promoting decent work. It will try to provide practical answers to some of the questions that are commonly asked by IPs:

- What does it mean to 'promote decent work'?
- What is the best way to get started?
- What have other IPs done? What works best?
- How can we make best use of limited resources?
- How do we go beyond awareness raising?

It draws on the practical experiences of IPs in India, Mali and Pakistan and explains the different practical approaches that IPs have adopted to promote decent work.

One of the objectives of this document is to **provide inspiration** for IPs who are looking for new ideas for activities or approaches to promote decent work. However, whilst some of the activities referred to in this document may be directly transferrable between different country contexts, BCI recognises that the approach to promoting decent work will differ by country (and sometimes even by region). In this sense, it is not the intention to provide a 'how-to' manual: IP experience to date suggests that the most successful activities are those that are closely plugged into local contexts and tailored to local needs.

### Decent work in BCI Production Principles and Minimum Criteria

Decent work is part of BCI's production principles: 'Better Cotton is produced by farmers who promote decent work'.

Minimum production criteria on decent work relate to:

- Freedom of association (6.1)
- Child labour (6.3-6.4)
- Forced labour (6.5)
- Non-discrimination (6.6)

There are also health and safety requirements (1.4-1.9) for pesticide preparation, application and handling that are relevant to decent work.

For small holder employers and large employers, there are additional criteria relating to:

- Freedom of association and collective bargaining
- Health and safety
- Employment conditions, including wages and contracts
- Basic treatment and disciplinary practices

## What are the challenges?

### Many of the challenges are common

In many countries, BCI IPs face a number of challenges. These include:

- **Status of women:** In many Better Cotton-growing countries, women play an important role in cultivation; however, women often face serious challenges, and have access to fewer opportunities. For instance, women tend to be under-represented in learning groups, yet over-represented in field labour, including picking. In some countries, women workers earn less than men for the same work, or are employed in different, lower-paying tasks.
- **Child labour:** Children can play a positive role in family agriculture. 'Child labour' in family farming arises when children are doing work which is not appropriate for their age, which impedes their schooling and development, and which damages their health and wellbeing. In many countries, one of the most pressing challenges is to reduce children's exposure to hazardous working conditions, including pesticide application and use of sharp tools.
- **Wages and incomes:** Work in cotton production tends to be characterised by low income and economic insecurity. Waged workers often receive wages below legal minima. Low productivity is a major barrier to improving incomes.
- **Health and safety:** One of the major health and safety risks in cotton production is exposure to hazardous chemicals. This may be a result of the lack of use of personal protective equipment (PPE) when applying pesticides; even where available, PPE is often not adapted to hot and humid climates. Exposure to chemicals has particularly serious health implications for women of child-bearing age and children.
- **Forced or bonded labour:** Forced or bonded labour is present in cotton production in a number of countries, although its prevalence is difficult to pinpoint with any accuracy because, by its nature, it is mostly a hidden phenomenon. In some cases, traditional ways of farmers securing labour for the season by making advance payments to labour providers may in fact give rise to forms of debt bondage. In others, children and young workers are particularly vulnerable to false promises which can see them working, away from their homes and against their will.

## How can IPs have an impact on deep-seated social problems?

Many of the decent work problems in cotton growing communities reflect much broader societal trends and structures. This is particularly the case in smallholder cotton producer communities, where decent work challenges may be greatest. Child labour is a good example: there is often a complex array of factors that lead to children's presence in cotton fields, including widespread poverty, lack of schools and teacher absenteeism, as well as traditional views about appropriate activities for children. IPs cannot be expected to fix all of these issues on their own. However, experiences from India, Pakistan and Mali suggest that IPs can make an important difference to the lives of cotton-growing communities.

## How do we get started?

### What resources do we need?

IPs already have a lot of work to do and have limited resources. As such, a number of IPs have found that it is helpful to:

- Make the most of what you have
- Make the most of existing resources and services in the community
- Encourage participation by others

Activities are most cost-effective where they do not require ongoing direct involvement from IPs or partners beyond the initial planning. For instance, field staff may raise the idea of a competition or after-school club for children as a means of stimulating children's interest in education (many schools otherwise rely on rote-learning techniques); if presented persuasively, schools often see this as an attractive way to maintain school attendance and take up responsibility for implementation themselves. There are no requirements for extra funding, because "everyone's goals are aligned". In some instances, additional government funding may be available for schools.



Community awareness-raising wall posters, India.  
PHOTO COURTESY OF ARVIND MILLS

## Planning

When planning decent work activities, it can help to have discussions with the target audience and/or intended beneficiaries. For instance, some IPs have carried out 'participatory rural appraisals', which involves talking to local community groups, asking them what their problems are and how they might be addressed. The idea is to listen to communities, rather than impose viewpoints on them, and given them an opportunity to propose solutions to their own problems.

**Participatory Rural Appraisals in Pakistan and India:** In Pakistan, some communities undertook Participatory Rural Appraisals (PRAs) with the assistance of WWF-Pakistan field staff in 2011-12. Amongst other things, PRAs identified instances of child labour and discussed the causes of the problem. After the PRAs were conducted, Community Action Plans were filled out, articulating activities to be performed and time lines for action. Similarly, in India, AFPRO and Arvind Mills have conducted **participatory gap assessments** in order to better understand the local context for cotton producers, identify the most pressing decent work issues and prioritise their activities. As part of the process, field facilitators prepare a 'resolution' for each LG that sets out issues to be addressed in its training and remediation plan.



Participatory Rural Appraisal in India. PHOTO COURTESY OF ARVIND MILLS

## Strengthening BCI processes

A number of IPs have been working hard to strengthen the decent work component of their own processes and to put in place stronger systems to assure compliance at the Producer Unit (PU) and Learning Group (LG) levels.

### > Developing formal policies and procedures

Regular contact between field staff and producers is an important opportunity to reinforce messages about decent work. As such, IPs reported that they used **FFS, LG meetings and training sessions as an opportunity to discuss decent work issues**, particularly health and safety.

**Using LG meetings to discuss decent work in India:** A number of Indian IPs (including ACF, WWF-India, Cotton Connect and Solidaridad) report that field staff make an effort to raise health and safety matters with farmers at

LG meetings, including pesticide application and hazards for pregnant women.



Talking with producers in Pakistan.  
PHOTO COURTESY OF MOHAMMAD TAYYAB

Some IPs have encouraged LGs and PUs to reflect on and develop their own **active strategies to promote decent work**, accompanied by express goals and a target number of activities.

**Decent work plans in Pakistan:** LGs and PUs are strongly encouraged to develop their own strategies to promote decent work. In particular, each LG and PU is required to have its own decent work plan and schedule seven awareness raising events – often organised through DWCs – during the cotton growing season.

In a number of cases, PUs and/or LGs have developed their own **formal policies and procedures on decent work themes**.

**Documented procedures on health and safety in India:** Cotton Connect, MYKAPS and WWF-India report that all LGs have documented procedures on health and safety.

**Formal policies on child labour and bonded labour in Pakistan:** In Rahim Yar Khan, nearly all large farms have written child labour policies in Rahim Yar Khan, while in Toba Tek Singh a number have developed policies on bonded labour.



Discussions with a women-only LG in Andhra Pradesh.  
PHOTO COURTESY OF RITUPARNA MAJUMDAR

A number of IPs have supported farmers to use **procedures to keep records of workers' ages**.

**Record keeping through ffbs and meetings in India:** ACF and Arvind Mills have encouraged farmers to use Farmer Field Books (FFBs) to keep a record of the ages of workers and family members who engage in spraying and picking tasks. MYKAPS verifies the ages of working children during LG meetings and documented the results in meeting minutes.

**Record keeping in Pakistan:** Each LG has its own record keeping procedures for age verification. LGs keep records of the age of all those involved in the handling and application of pesticides. Ages are verified by checking workers' Computerised National Identity Card (CNIC) and school-leaving certificate or, where workers do not have CNICs, by consulting prominent local community figures.

IPs also use **spot checks and informal verification**:

**Unannounced field visits in India:** Arvind Mills verify worker ages by carrying out unannounced visits during peak season. Similarly, Cotton Connect verified the ages of workers through informal interviews and discussions with producers and conducts unannounced visits to fields during peak season to assess levels of child labour.



Visit to cotton fields, India. PHOTO COURTESY OF ARVIND MILLS

Some IPs have tried to **engage producer families and other members of the community in LG meetings** as a means to strengthen their connection to the Better Cotton programme and raise awareness of decent work objectives.

**Involving producer families in India:** At the end of the season, Arvind Mills conducts farm family meetings in which all family members of LG farmers are invited to discuss a range of issues, including crop management, decent work, women's empowerment, gender equality and other farm activities.

**> Strengthening women's participation in Better Cotton**

Women cotton producers face a number of challenges in terms of access to land, agricultural equipment, financial resources and training. Where there are sufficient numbers of women farmers, IPs have supported the formation of **women-only Learning Groups (LGs)**.

**Women-only LGs in India:** MARI and ASA have set up women-only LGs in villages in Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh respectively.

Some IPs have carried out activities that aim to empower local women and encourage their participation in decision-making processes.

**Leadership training for women in Mali:** In order to address women's low participation in BCI activities – approximately one tenth of men's participation rates – IPs conducted a series of workshops for female leaders of women's organisations between March and April 2013. Some 300 women received leadership training over three days, delivered by a local women's NGO. The workshops sought to teach participants about BCI criteria and enhance their leadership skills. The training used participatory techniques such as role plays and working group exercises to help build women's confidence and improve their meeting steering skills.



Women's leadership training in Mali.  
PHOTO COURTESY OF ASSOCIATION POUR LE DÉVELOPPEMENT INTÉGRÉ DES FEMMES

**Women's empowerment training in India:** Solidaridad has run sessions to help women understand the dynamics of farm culture so that they can gain the confidence to contribute more actively to cotton farming.

**> Strengthening literacy**

All IPs struggle with the difficulties associated with low literacy in producer communities.

In Mali, prior to 2003, the CMDT took an active role in improving literacy levels in producer communities but was forced to abandon these activities due to a lack of resources after its restructuring. This coincided with a sharp decrease in cotton production which prevented

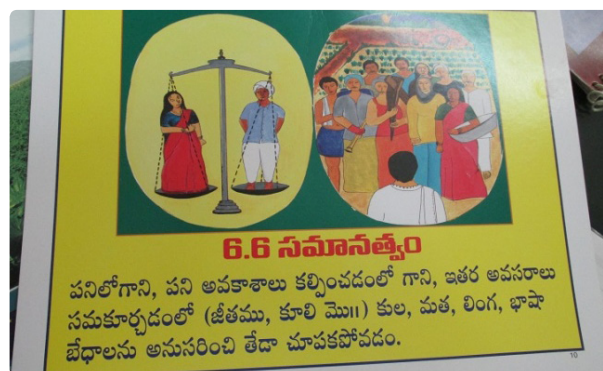
producer organisations from continuing to finance literacy programmes. Having identified this gap, BCI began **delivering literacy training to producers** through the Union Régionale des Sociétés Coopératives des Producteurs de Coton et Vivriers (UR-SCPCV), thereby **ensuring continuity with previous activities led by the CMDT**.

BCI's objective was to train two literacy teachers per producer organisation in a total of 120 producer cooperatives who would then train one producer in each Better Cotton farm. The training, which included modules on literacy (in Bambara) and numeracy, has taken place between March and May (i.e. before planting) each year for the past three years. A total of 480 people were trained to deliver literacy courses in 107 literacy centres financed by producer cooperatives in seven different regions. Overall, BCI's capacity building activities enabled 774 farmers to become literate, including 34 women.

**> Providing access to PPE**

Whilst all IPs have made important progress on raising producer awareness of health and safety awareness, many producers cite the cost of personal protective equipment (PPE) as a barrier to its wider take-up. Some IPs have introduced programmes to make PPE more affordable and accessible for small farmers.

**Subsidised PPE in India and Mali:** In India, ACF has a programme to provide PPE to farmers at a subsidised rate. In 2010-11, ACF provided a "safety kit" to around 600 farmers, including apron, hand gloves, goggles and mask. In Mali, a small number of producers were provided with PPE on a pilot basis.



BCI printed materials with decent work images, India.  
PHOTO COURTESY OF RITUPARNA MAJUMDAR

**Talking to farmers about decent work: what is in it for them?**

**> Making a 'business case' to farmers**

The business case for BCI is straightforward. Better farm management and farming practices optimise input use and enhance quality and yield; cost savings and improved crop out-turn drive profitability and deliver a product

that meets market demand. But IPs sometimes fear that emphasising decent work may threaten or undermine the business case for farmers in the short-term, as it may be seen as a requirement to increase labour costs. Labour costs are often viewed by farmers in non-mechanised farming systems as a constraint on profitability.



Talking with producers in Koutiala-San, Mali.  
PHOTO COURTESY OF TALL MOULAYE HASSANE

It is important to listen carefully to these concerns. Often they may be accompanied by concerns that good workers are not available, or that fibre quality is compromised by pickers. This is one area where IPs can begin the conversation about decent work and business benefits for farmers. For example, improvements in fibre quality are an important determinant of farm-gate prices for seed-cotton. Quality itself depends largely on picking and storage practices, which in part reflect the commitment and skill of the picking workforce. Equally, in many regions, labour availability is a problem for farmers. Labourers are unwilling to work in cotton if other sectors (for example, artisanal gold-mining in Mali) offer greater rewards.

Farm labour can be best incentivised – and encouraged to return from one season to the next – through employment practices which are perceived to be fair by all parties, farmers and labourers. Indeed, many IPs report that improved profitability and improved **labour practices can be mutually reinforcing**. Every year, BCI is collecting more and more information about improved farm profitability in the Better Cotton System. This needs to be communicated, to serve to strengthen the case for developing a more equitable business model, and give confidence to producers to invest in their workforce.

#### > **Painting a picture of community development**

IP experience suggests that making real links between how farm work is done and how the community fares as a whole is an effective way to talk with farmers about decent work issues. This starts by identifying common interests – children reaching their potential and empowering the next generation, women’s decent employment being a missing link to driving the development of the whole community – and links these to achievable and tangible

changes to current practices, discussed and agreed with farmers and their communities.

## What are the first steps?

The starting point is to ensure that producers and their communities have good knowledge of the standards they are expected to follow and the reason why BCI attaches importance to them: **training and awareness-raising are the vital building blocks of the BCI approach.**

### Training

Most IPs have developed an active programme of training activities on decent work that targets their own staff, producers, communities and – in some cases – other actors that have contact with cotton-growing communities.

#### > **Training for IPs and field staff**

Building capacity within IPs is vital to ensuring that IPs have sufficient institutional knowledge to put together their own strategies on decent work and field staff have the knowledge and tools that they need to send the right messages to producers.



IP training on BCI criteria, including decent work, in India, 2010.  
PHOTO COURTESY OF BCI

**Training for IPs in India and Pakistan:** International Resources for Fairer Trade (IRFT) provides training for IPs in India and Pakistan on an annual basis. The training is comprehensive and carefully tailored to BCI requirements: it takes place over four to five days and covers both agronomic and decent work themes. It combines the theoretical with the practical, as half of the training takes place in the classroom and half takes place in the field. The knowledge gained during these sessions is then cascaded down to field staff and then to producers. For instance, Indian IP Arvind Mills carries out train-the-trainer training for field officers, who then conduct training sessions with farmers and workers on decent work issues, including child labour and correct use of PPE.

**Training agricultural extension officers in Mali:** BCI outreach in Mali is carried out by the extensive network of agents employed by the Compagnie Malienne pour le Développement des Textiles (CMDT). IP training activities have been strategically focused on increasing CMDT agents’ knowledge of decent work concepts and build-



ing their capacity to raise producers' awareness. Forty to fifty CMDT agents have participated in two day training programmes on decent work each year since the Better Cotton programme began in Mali. To date, 110 CMDT agents have been trained on decent work, including freedom of association, occupational health and safety, child labour, women's empowerment, forced labour, non-discrimination and gender equality. The overarching goal of the training programme was to promote the effective integration of decent work in farmer support activities for field schools and BCI learning groups.



Training for producers in India. PHOTO COURTESY OF RITUPARNA MAJUMDAR

**Specialist training on child labour in India:** To strengthen its partners' capacity on children's rights and community outreach, Solidaridad arranged for focused training from MV Foundation, an NGO with many years of experience on working with rural communities to address child labour. This training included field visits to villages so that participants could meet with producers, members of gran panchayats, self-help groups, members of child rights protection forums and others.

#### > Training for producers

All IPs carry out **regular training sessions for producers**, which usually includes some material on decent work, particularly with respect to health and safety.

**Decent work training in India:** WWF-India and Cotton Connect reported that they carried out training sessions for producers on health and safety that included practical demonstrations on the safe use of pesticides, including how to use PPE, as well as accompanying communications material. Training sessions may cover other areas of decent work; for instance, Arvind Mills conducts periodic training for farmers in order to share information on a range of issues, including child labour and hazardous work. MYKAPS, Super Spinning Mills, A CF and Pratibha Syntex also reported training activities for LGs on decent work.

**Health and safety training in Pakistan:** WWF-Pakistan has carried out training sessions on safety in the workplace for 2700 people and on pesticide application for 1600 people.



Training for IPs in India. PHOTO COURTESY OF RITUPARNA MAJUMDAR

**Targeted training on bonded labour:** Cotton Connect carried out some training for producers specifically on forced labour.

Some IPs have developed **formal training materials** to support training for partners and producers.

**Training manual for project partners in India:** Solidaridad developed a "Facilitator's Manual for Better Cotton", which includes a module on decent work, although the content is primarily devoted to agronomic principles. WWF-India has also included decent work issues in its training manuals on Better Management Practices. These are illustrated to make the material accessible to illiterate and semi-literate farmers.

**Separate training modules on decent work in Mali:** Producer training tends to be organised through LGs on demonstration farms and delivered as part of broader training for producers on BCI criteria. During the 2012-2013 season, a large number of producers (17,827) received a separate training module on decent work.

**Video sketch to support training in Mali:** IPs commissioned a video sketch on decent work, which is used to support training on decent work. Initially, the plan was to air the sketch on television; however, IPs were unable to secure airtime on national television.

#### > Training for workers

A small number of IPs have carried out **training sessions for workers**. To date this has focused primarily on pesticide application and health and safety.

**Health and safety training for workers in India and Pakistan:** In India, Super Spinning Mills has conducted training for sprayers. WWF-Pakistan has carried out training sessions on health and safety in cotton-picking for 1242 women workers.

#### > Building the capacity of other actors

In some cases, IPs have provided training for other organisations who interact with cotton-growing communities on a regular basis.

**Training for community health visitors in Pakistan:** WWF-Pakistan has provided training sessions for female community health workers (“Lady Health Visitors”) to raise their awareness of the hazards faced by women cotton pickers and children working on cotton farms.

**Building the capacity of district government officials in Pakistan:** WWF-Pakistan has held a training session for staff from the district level Social Welfare Department, the government agency responsible for the implementation of child labour laws.

### Awareness raising

Awareness raising is an important first step in promoting decent work. IPs have come up with a diverse range of strategies for spreading the message about decent work amongst producers and their communities. A number of the examples in this section focus on interventions to address child labour, but IPs have also used these techniques to promote women’s empowerment and encourage producers to talk about bonded labour.

#### > Raising awareness with teachers and schools

A number of IPs have sought to develop **regular and ongoing contact with local schools** to raise awareness of the problem of child labour in cotton-growing communities. Some IPs have developed outreach activities to encourage and increase **contact between teachers and parents**, which can help to improve everyone’s focus on the importance of children’s education.

**Meeting with local school teachers in India:** Field staff from Trident and AFPRO have visited schools and engaged with local school teachers to encourage them to raise awareness amongst their pupils about child labour, in the hope that children will then pass the information on to their parents. Arvind Mills has also invited school teachers to make presentations on child labour at LG meetings.



School visit in India. PHOTO COURTESY OF ARVIND MILLS

**Training for school teachers in Pakistan:** WWF-Pakistan has been involved in training on child labour for more than 1000 school teachers in Sukkur and Sahiwal, provided by district governments with the assistance of the ILO. This is part of a broader partnership on child labour (see below).

**Encouraging more contact between teachers and parents in India:** Solidaridad and AFPRO have encouraged both parents and teachers to interact with each other more in order to increase interest and involvement in children’s education.

**Visiting schools in India:** Arvind Mills and Cotton Connect have also organised school visits and campaigns to raise awareness of child labour, sometimes screening short films. MYKAPS has provided training on decent work for over 900 children in cotton-growing villages.



School activities in India, supported by MYKAPS. PHOTO COURTESY OF MYKAPS

#### > Raising awareness amongst parents

In some instances, IPs have found that personal and direct follow-up with parents of child labourers can make a difference:

**Personal contact with parents in India:** When Super Spinning Mills finds children on cotton farms aged 5 years or older who have not been enrolled at school, field staff try to make personal contact and follow-up with parents. In some LGs, AFPRO field staff carry out one-on-one discussions with parents, as well as home visits and family counselling with smallholders to raise awareness of the negative consequences of child labour.

#### > Raising awareness amongst children

A number of IPs have targeted children in their awareness-raising activities in order to increase their awareness of their rights and to stimulate their interest in their own education. As noted by one IP, “We are trying to get children to educate their own parents. It makes a big difference to the situation if kids are enjoying school and telling their parents, ‘I really want to go to school.’” In a number of cases, these activities are relatively low-cost, as the local school may see these activities as worthwhile and dedicate their own staff’s time.



Children's rally, India. PHOTO COURTESY OF MYKAPS

**Getting children to spread the message in villages in India and Pakistan:** IPs have been instrumental in organising children's walks and street rallies during school holidays and festival celebrations, particularly seeking to identify and involve children who have dropped out of school (to try to get them back to school). Children walk through village and chant or call out slogans about education, school and child labour. Street theatre is another way of spreading the message: MYKAPS provided five days of training to 20 children during school holidays so that they could perform street plays in project villages.



School prizes for children in India. PHOTO COURTESY OF MYKAPS

**School competitions in India and Pakistan:** IPs have arranged school competitions with prizes. For instance, in India, Arvind Mills has organised competitions for school children in Rangoli, debating and essay-writing. In Pakistan, WWF-Pakistan has encouraged schools to carry out spellathons and create school clubs for children.

**Children's camps in India:** Some IPs organised children's camps. MYKAPS ran a two day camp, which was attended by 276 children in total. Children were provided with information about their rights, as well as the agricultural cycle and the different stages of cotton cultivation. Participatory methods such as role plays and games were used. Similarly, Arvind Mills organised a one day camp for children aged 6 to 16 years in BCI villages with the dual objective of raising children's awareness of their

rights and identifying children who had dropped out of school. Cotton Connect has conducted both children's camps and life skills development programmes for children.

**Training on child labour for children and parents in India.** MYKAPS has carried out training for some 900 children in schools covered in its project area, while MARI has provided training to children and their families on child labour, decent work and education. Super Spinning Mills has provided training on child labour to students in sixth, seventh and eighth form classes, with the involvement of some parents, in two separate villages.

**> Raising awareness in communities**

To maximise the target audience, some IPs have developed radio and TV programmes with messages on decent work.

**Radio broadcasts about decent work in Mali:** Solidaridad and AProCA have produced radio programmes on decent work that are broadcast on three community radio stations once a week for three months at the beginning of the cotton season. The programmes include messages about child labour, health and safety and the need to pay equal wages to men and women for equal work. In addition, the programmes also encourage male producers to discuss revenues from cotton crops with their wives at home. This is an important step towards women's empowerment in the Malian context, where men tend to have complete control over household finances and women are often unaware of the value of cotton harvests. In the future, IPs are thinking about making the programmes available for download onto farmers' mobile phones.



Village wall paintings in India. PHOTO COURTESY OF RITUPARNA MAJUMDAR

IPs have developed a range of publicity materials that they post in public places to communicate with producers and their wider communities. These help to supplement Farmer Field Schools by providing producers with a continuous visual reminder about messages on decent work delivered during training sessions and meetings with field facilitators.

**Posters, murals and wall paintings in India:** IPs have affixed posters and colourful wall paintings in public places.

A number of IPs have developed and distributed **printed educational or promotional materials** to support their activities on decent work. Often these brochures include a mix of written material and illustrations, so that lack of literacy is not an impediment to understanding the messages.

**Printed materials in Pakistan:** WWF-Pakistan has developed printed materials on decent work for dissemination amongst farmers (see below). These include illustrated brochures on key decent work themes including decent work for field workers child labour, safety measures during pesticide application, employment conditions non-discrimination and bonded labour.


**Printed materials in India:** WWF-India, Arvind Mills, MYKAPS, Pratibha Syntex have distributed information, guidance materials and hand-outs in local languages on child labour and other decent work issues to producers and their communities. WWF-India has also produced a BCI calendar for distribution amongst local families.

Some IPs have used awareness raising activities as a starting point for tackling difficult and sensitive issues like **bonded labour**.


**Encouraging dialogue on bonded labour in India:** Cotton Connect has engaged in some awareness raising activities on bonded labour in the state of Gujarat, through trainings, counselling meetings with LGs, street plays and awareness programmes as well as some basic mediation by the local partners in some cases.



Handbooks and pamphlets for producers, India  
PHOTO COURTESY OF RITUPARNA MAJUMDAR



# مہذبانہ کام



بہتر کپاس پیدا کرنے کیلئے مہذبانہ اصول اپنانا  
آپ کے اپنے زرعی پیداواری عمل میں اسلامی اصول اور ملکی قانون کی پاسداری کرتے ہوئے بحیثیت مزدوروں کے ساتھ مہذبانہ یا نسولک اختیار کر کے اپنی زرعی پیداوار کو مہذبانہ یا اچھی پیداوار کو بنوائیں

**کپاس کی کاشت**

مہذبانہ طور پر کپاس کی کاشت کرنے سے پیداوار بڑھتی ہے اور کاشتکاروں کو کم محنت سے زیادہ فائدہ ہوتا ہے۔

**کپاس کی کٹائی**

کپاس کٹانے کے وقت کپاس کٹانے والوں کو محفوظ اور محفوظ طریقے سے کپاس کٹانی چاہئے۔

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Printed materials on decent work for farmers in Pakistan. PHOTO COURTESY OF WWF-PAKISTAN

## How do we go beyond training and awareness raising?

There are some great examples of interventions from IPs that go beyond training and awareness raising activities on decent work and working to maximise decent work outcomes in cotton-growing communities.

### Partnerships

The clear message from IPs is that **partnerships and alliances are a critical tool for maximising the impact of IP interventions to promote decent work**. It is beyond the scope of IP's organisational expertise and financial resources to initiate wide-ranging interventions on decent work; however, some IPs have shown that it is possible to develop effective links to wider programmes through strategic partnerships.

#### > Partnership on child labour in Pakistan

A number of the activities that WWF-Pakistan has carried out to promote decent work have been linked to **successful partnerships** under the auspices of a project run by the International Labour Organization project with funds from the EU. The *Combating Abuse Child Labour II* ('CACL-II') project, which works closely with government, employers and NGO actors, has been in place since 2008 and concludes in mid-2013. The project aims to eliminate child labour, with a particular focus on hazardous forms of child labour, with activities focused on two pilot districts: Sukkur in Sindh and Sahiwal in Punjab. Cotton is only one of the sectors that the broader project covers, with activities spanning a number of other sectors where children may be exposed to hazardous work (e.g. domestic work, stone crushing and car repairs).

WWF-Pakistan was not involved in the ILO project from the outset. Indeed, prior to engagement with WWF-Pakistan, the project focused primarily on children's work in urban areas and did not cover child labour in cotton production. A couple of years after the project had commenced, a local WWF-Pakistan employee found out about the ILO's activities in Sukkur and set up a meeting with the ILO's programme officer to learn more. This meeting with the ILO ultimately led to discussions about broader collaboration and, on 7 May 2012, WWF-Pakistan signing a **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the ILO's implementing partners** on CACL-II.

The MOU provides a formal framework for cooperation between the parties on working to create 'model villages' that are free of the worst forms of child labour, starting with the village of Abad in Sukkur District. In addition to WWF-Pakistan, parties to the MOU are:

- The District Government of Sukkur;

- The Centre for Improvement of Working Conditions and Environment (CIWCE) (part of the Punjab Labour Department, whose activities include technical advisory and training on OHS);
- The Employers' Federation of Pakistan (EFP); and
- The National Rural Support Programme (NRSP).

The MOU commits the parties to share information and take joint responsibilities for the development of the village. Under the MOU, WWF-Pakistan commits to carry out 'all social mobilisation work related to all interventions' and 'ensure that all measures that have been introduced under this collaboration are followed or adhered to by the community in the long run to the extent possible'. WWF-Pakistan also monitors LGs in the model village to ensure that they are not using child labour. Field research indicated that cooperation amongst the MOU partners has ultimately been much broader than the activities foreseen by the MOU in relation to the model village. It has permitted WWF-Pakistan to have some involvement in a diverse range of activities, from the establishment of non-formal education centres to the provision of training to government officials and collection of data for government surveys. As well as providing the basis for these activities, the partnership fostered by the MOU has also been an important catalyst for invaluable information exchange and dialogue on child labour.

#### > Approaches to partnership in India

Some IPs in India have also a strong emphasis on partnerships. For instance, Solidaridad encourages its local partners to develop alliances with other organisations working on similar issues in the same geographic areas, on the grounds that BCI project partners will have more impact if they work with other organisations and existing resources and services.

**Information exchange with local NGOs to improve knowledge of local issues:** In Madhya Pradesh, ASA has developed an informal relationship with specialised social workers from a local NGO whose knowledge of local issues has helped ASA to engage more constructively with local schools. For instance, social workers drew ASA's attention to the fact that adolescent girls were dropping out of local schools because of the absence of separate toilet facilities for boys and girls. ASA was then able to take up this issue in discussions with school principals and raise their awareness of the problem.

#### > Linking producers, workers and communities with other services and programmes

The experience of IPs in promoting decent work so far indicates that, in addition to partnerships, one of the most important mechanisms for creating broader reach and impact is to **make the best possible use of existing resources and services**. This is complementary to – but not dependent on – partnership formation: partnerships are an important way of learning about existing resources

and services generated or provided by NGOs, government agencies or other actors.

> **Links to microfinance, banking services and alternative sources of income in rural areas**

Lack of access to banking services, credit and alternative sources of income is an issue that IPs strongly link with decent work challenges, including child labour. However, this is an area where IPs can clearly not ‘go it alone’. Instead, IPs can play a valuable role by publicising services and programmes and/or putting producers and their communities in touch with relevant organisations.

**Links to microfinance in India:** In Maharashtra, Arvind Mills has arranged linkages between LGs and the local bank (HDFC). Similarly, Solidaridad and its project partners have facilitated access to microfinance institutions for women in cotton communities in Andhra Pradesh (MARI) and Madhya Pradesh (ASA). These institutions provide services to encourage savings as well as to provide credit. (See also ‘Self-Help Groups’ below).

**Vocational training for women in Pakistan:** As a result of its partnership with several organisations on child labour (see ‘Partnerships’ above), WWF-Pakistan has been able to work with two PUs in Sukkur to arrange vocational training sessions for women through the National Rural Support Programme. Training sessions were held over two months to teach sewing, embroidery, arch work and beautician skills. NRSP has linked some of these women with micro-finance institutions that provide small business start-up loans.

**Links to remediation programmes for child labourers in Pakistan:** With its partners, WWF-Pakistan has been involved in the establishment of 13 non-formal education centres for children in cotton-growing areas. These centres help children who have dropped out of school to catch up with their peers who have stayed in school. As part of this project, NRSP and the Provincial Rural Support Programme (PRSP) have implemented a range of interventions to support children’s withdrawal from the worst forms of child labour in Sukkur and Sahiwal, including literacy and vocational skills training and family’s socio-economic empowerment. In addition, families have benefited from micro-credit facilities to reduce their reliance on the income earned by their children.

**Children’s help line in India:** In India, MARI is a participant in the national ChildLine 1098 programme, a 24 hour toll-free helpline that provides a first port of call for children in need, providing advice and referrals to services. It works with a network of NGOs and government agencies across different states. MARI’s work on this programme is not directly linked to its role as WWF-India’s local delivery partner, but nevertheless complements its work on child labour for the Better Cotton programme.



Public notice advertising ChildLine, India  
PHOTO COURTESY OF RITUPARNA MAJUMDAR

**Working with community groups**

> **“Decent Work committees” in Pakistan**

According to WWF-Pakistan, one of its most important activities on decent work has been the **establishment and facilitation of Decent Work Committees (DWCs)**. These committees are established at the village level. Whilst local producers form an important part of the membership of DWCs, typically other prominent local figures also participate, including numberdar (elected village-level representatives of the government), religious leaders, teachers and Lady Health Visitors (LHVs). As of June 2013, there were **1,100 DWCs in Pakistan**.

These committees are based on a community-driven model for rural development that has been particularly successful and influential in Pakistan, commonly referred to as **social mobilisation**. This approach, which is the bedrock of Pakistan’s large network of government-sponsored Rural Support Programmes, seeks to strengthen and harness the capacity of communities to act collectively. This means that **rather than being treated as ‘beneficiaries’, producers and their communities become active participants in the promotion of decent work**.

**“Decent Work Committee formation has been our most successful activity: these are grass root institutions working to promote all decent work activities.”**

ARIF MAKHDUM, WWF-PAKISTAN

According to WWF-Pakistan, each DWC meets seven times during the cotton-growing season at regularly spaced intervals to discuss matters related to decent work and to organise local activities. For the most part, these meetings are convened by WWF-Pakistan field officers, who are generally also responsible for keeping

records and coordinating activities. DWCs require little additional financial outlay by WWF-Pakistan; the cost is the time spent by the local Field Facilitator in setting up meetings, documenting outcomes and coordinating related activities.

WWF-Pakistan reports that DWCs also engage actively in **advocacy and outreach to families and communities**, often in conjunction with WWF-Pakistan field staff. For instance, in almost all producer units in Bahawalpur, Field Facilitators and producer units have worked together to identify children who are out of school so that this can be followed up by DWC members, who have arranged meetings with the children's families to encourage re-enrolment. In Bahawalpur, this was done in conjunction with the local education department.

In some villages, DWCs have formed **Child Protection Committees** (CPCs) to address child labour concerns more specifically. These are generally a sub-committee of the DWC and tend to include local community figures with an interest in child protection and education, such as school teachers. CPC members, with the assistance of WWF-Pakistan's field officers, identify children who have dropped out of school and then try to arrange meetings with the parents to consider alternative solutions. In some areas, DWCs have also helped to inject new life into school committees established by the district government and have organised evening schools supported by local teachers.

Members of DWCs have also engaged in **individual advocacy sessions with LFEs** to raise awareness of decent work issues. In some instances, this related to difficult issues regarding bonded labour: in 2011-12, DWCs in Toba Tek Singh engaged with workers and producers on **bonded labour issues in 85% of LFEs**. These activities included discussions with farm workers to encourage them to budget their personal finances effectively and discussions with employers to make sure that wages were at least equivalent to the national minimum wage or regional norms.

#### > Women's Self-Help Groups in India

In India, IPs in some states have worked to encourage or facilitate the formation of **Self-Help Groups** (SHGs) in cotton-growing areas. SHGs are generally linked to national and state government schemes, which aim to reduce poverty and **promote women's empowerment by providing groups of women with access to microfinance**. Typically, each SHG is comprised of 10 to 20 women, who come together and begin by pooling savings and lending to their members from these savings. In addition to their savings, groups may also receive matching funding or training through government grants. In particular, the National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development (NABARD) has been running a Bank Linkage programme to provide microfinance for SHGs since 1992.

Whilst the primary emphasis of the groups is on microfinance, the social mobilisation aspect of SHGs means that there is also **a strong emphasis on disseminating information, raising awareness and providing training**. IPs have played an important role as catalyst in women's participation in SHGs, but do not assume any ongoing role in the running of these groups, as government programmes engage their own community coordinators and community resource officers. For instance, in Anantharam village in Andhra Pradesh, some women were initially reluctant to form or join SHGs, but responded to encouragement by MARI, WWF-India's delivery partner. However, where these groups exist, IPs can use them as an important additional channel of communication between IPs and local communities, facilitating information dissemination and training. For instance, MYKAPS has carried out training for members of SHGs on child labour.

#### > Farmer cooperatives in India

In some instances, IPs have helped to start **farmer cooperatives**. In India, MARI facilitated the formation of the Navchetanya Society in Anantharam village in Andhra Pradesh. At present, there are 400 farmers and 300 shareholders. Farmers deposit 1000 Rp (€12.37) each and savings are used to buy fertilisers and subsidise seed purchases. The Society also helps to resolve grievances and disputes amongst farmers.

#### > Working with local governance structures in India

In India, IPs have sought to engage with **local governance structures**. WWF-India has conducted meetings of Gram Sabha (all adult citizen voters) in some 30 villages, while AFPRO has attended *Gram Panchayat* (local self-government structures) meetings in some villages to raise awareness of child labour. MARI has sought to collaborate with existing village-level Child Protection Committees.

### Building the knowledge base on decent work in cotton cultivation

#### > Policy and research

While IPs have limited resources to engage in policy and research activities in any systematic way, some IPs have made important contributions to building the knowledge base on decent work in cotton production, by participating in studies or policy dialogue.

#### Code of conduct for cotton farmers in Pakistan:

WWF-Pakistan has collaborated with the ILO, District Government of Sukkur and the Employers' Federation of Pakistan to develop a Code of Conduct for Employers in the Cotton Farming Sector. The Code describes the main hazards associated with cotton farms, indicates which tasks should not be carried out by under-18s and set out a checklist designed to guide employers on compliance with child labour laws. This is an important tool for

WWF-Pakistan, who is drawing on the document in its training activities for producers, but it also bridges an important gap in policy dialogue and awareness for a broader range of stakeholders. Prior to the Code's development, there was no list to define hazardous activities in agriculture (in legislation or elsewhere), let alone a list that was specifically tailored to cotton production.

#### Building official statistics on child labour in Pakistan:

Flowing from the cooperation established under its partnership MOU (see above), WWF-Pakistan has worked with district governments in Sukkur and Sahiwal to help conduct a baseline survey on child labour. With the technical support of the ILO, the survey covers 46 Union Councils (UCs) in Pakistan: WWF-Pakistan has gathered survey data in 11 UCs and NRSP in 35 UCs.

**Study on young people's health and safety in cotton farming:** WWF-Pakistan supported research by the Centre for Improvement of Working Conditions & Environment (CIWCE) on a study on health and safety in cotton cultivation. Researchers interviewed a total of 183 respondent children (aged 7 to 18 years) who were engaged in various activities related to cotton growing and picking in 13 villages in Sahiwal and Sukkur districts, as well as a control group of 232 non-working children in the same area.

**BCI study on decent work in Mali:** In 2010, IPs in Mali participated in a BCI-commissioned study on decent work with the aim of assessing working conditions on BCI farms, gaining a better understanding of the conditions of workers employed during the cotton harvest and gathering information on the status of women and their working conditions. The study covered 175 producers (including 47 women) and included focus group discussions with nine learning groups, interviews with industry stakeholders and a review of secondary literature on decent work in Mali.

**National workshop on child labour in Mali:** IPs participated in a workshop, held in December 2011, that was organised by the Ministry of Agriculture in partnership with the Ministry of Labour, the FAO and the ILO, within the framework of the Malian National Action Plan to Eliminate Child Labour. The workshop aimed to bring together organisations working on child labour in agriculture, with the aim of sharing knowledge on child labour and identifying opportunities for increased collaboration. BCI took part in a round table discussion on the conditions for implementing alternatives to child labour in agriculture.

**Monitoring educational outcomes in India:** MYKAPS is monitoring gender-disaggregated attendance rates of students at local schools throughout the year to keep track of ongoing trends in the local area, particularly during harvest season.



Mural. PHOTO COURTESY OF MYKAPS

#### > IP written case studies

A number of IPs have written up their experiences on promoting decent work. Collectively, these documents provide an important record of BCI's collective experience on decent work and a vital record for other IPs who want to learn more from others.

In India, a number of IPs and their partners have **developed reports or short case studies** to document successful activities and experiences on decent work. These documents provide an important record for BCI to understand IP activities and help IPs to share information and experiences amongst themselves. Examples include:

- **Solidaridad, Synergy:** The BCI/SCSN Journey So Far, which describes the activities of different partners, including those that relate to decent work, as well as a range of case studies;
- **ASA, Better Cotton, Improved Environment, Dignified Lives: Farmers Speak,** which documents changes experienced by farmers, including women producers, since joining the Better Cotton programme;
- **Arvind Mills,** "Decent work research", including a description of major challenges and a description of activities on decent work; and
- **MYKAPS,** short case study reports ("Activities taken up by MYKAPS - BCI Project to promote decent work by involving children").

Solidaridad also noted that it is currently **considering the development of a toolkit for its local partners** on decent work. This would provide ideas for possible activities and partners, discuss strategies for overcoming challenges and provide examples of successful initiatives by its project partners on decent work.



## Contact

Better Cotton Initiative:  
[www.bettercotton.org](http://www.bettercotton.org)

