

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION

Terms of Reference

Third party monitoring of child and forced labour during the cotton harvest in Uzbekistan (CATI Survey)

Organization	ILO
Technical Cooperation Programme:	FPRW
Position (Title):	
Type of contract:	
Duration:	November 15 – December 15, 2021

1. Background

The government of Uzbekistan has continued to lower the cotton planting area of seed cotton to increase vegetable and fruit production in the areas where seed cotton yields are low. Since 2015, a total of 235,000 hectares have been taken out of cotton production. The Government also decided to stop cotton exports starting from 2020. The country is implementing a new concept of fully integrated “clusters” for cotton and textile production to vertically integrate the sector and increase foreign investment in textiles. Privately-run clusters are expected to bring new technologies to cotton production. Accordingly, the number of clusters is estimated to have increased to 93 in 2020 and gradually to take control of all land under cotton. The land that so far has not come under the use of clusters is being worked by farmers and farmers’ cooperatives.¹

Cotton has brought revenues to Uzbekistan, but also triggered significant violations of human and labour rights. The systematic use of forced labour and child labour in cotton harvest in the past lead to a pledge against Uzbek cotton, signed in 2012 by 300 international brands and retailers.

The issues of labour rights violations, including child and forced labour in the cotton harvest of Uzbekistan have been under ILO scrutiny for many years. The first ILO monitoring of the cotton harvest in Uzbekistan was undertaken in 2013 and focussed on child labour. In parallel, the Uzbek Government and social partners engaged in discussions with the ILO and requested support for the implementation of the ILO Convention No. 105 on Abolition of Forced Labour. The following year, in 2014, the Government and social partners conducted the national monitoring of child labour. The discussions on further cooperation with the ILO on forced labour continued.

In the same year, the World Bank and the ILO signed a Memorandum of Understanding regarding cooperation in Uzbekistan with respect to child and forced labour in the cotton production. This MoU envisaged implementation of a project which included Third-Party

¹ US Department of Agriculture, 2019 “Cotton and Products Update in Uzbekistan”

Monitoring (TPM) of World Bank funded projects, establishing a feedback mechanism where information and/or complaints on child and forced labour can be addressed, and undertaking capacity building and awareness raising on child and forced labour. The funding for the project was offered by the European Union Delegation and the Governments of the US and Switzerland. Later, in 2019, GIZ also joined as a donor and partner of the project.

As part of the above project, the ILO conducted several rounds of monitoring of the cotton harvest in 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020. The report on the latest monitoring exercise is available at https://www.ilo.org/washington/WCMS_767756/lang--en/index.htm

The report shows that one in eight people of working age in Uzbekistan participated in the cotton harvest of 2020. Sixty-five percent of pickers were women, and the vast majority were from rural areas. Systematic child labour has been eradicated and is no longer a major concern. The share of cotton pickers that experienced coercion was 33 percent lower than in 2019. However, there were still cases at the local level of people being or feeling threatened with loss of privileges or rights if they declined an invitation to pick cotton. Their share amounted to 4% of all pickers. The systematic recruitment of students, teachers, doctors and nurses has completely stopped. The main motivation for Uzbeks to pick cotton was the opportunity to earn money. On average, each picker participated in the harvest for twenty-one days and earned 1.54 million soums (equivalent to US\$150).

The assessment also proves that the country is making significant progress on fundamental labour rights in the cotton fields. The Uzbek government has significantly increased wages since 2017 and introduced a differentiated pay scale so that pickers are paid more per kilogramme of cotton towards the end of the harvest, when conditions are less favourable and there is less cotton to pick. This has led to a significant drop in the prevalence of forced labour.²

Every year since 2015, the ILO monitoring used the same principles and approaches, with adjustments of the methodology according to lessons learned from previous years and changes in the political and economic environment. In 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018 the TPM was fully done by international experts hired by the ILO. Starting with 2019, the ILO started involving the local activists in the monitoring process. In 2020, the local activists participated in the design of monitoring methodology, collected the qualitative data, and cooperated with the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations in identification and investigation of labour rights violations. They also contributed to the analysis of data and formulation of key findings and recommendations.

In 2021, the ILO strategy is to fully transition the TPM to national actors, such as the civil society activists, labour inspectors, prosecutors, trade unionists, and others. This process will entail adjustment of the methodology, extensive capacity building on monitoring tools for human rights defenders, labour inspectors, prosecutors, and other actors as needed, support for analysing the data. The ILO will continue to facilitate dialogue and cooperation between the social partners and civil society activists to ensure sustainable progress on the elimination of child and forced labour in Uzbekistan.

² https://www.ilo.org/washington/news/WCMS_767753/lang--en/index.htm

As in 2020, the monitoring effort in 2021 will include quantitative and qualitative data collection means, such as interviews with workers and farmers. Given the COVID-19 measures, the face-to-face interviews and other activities will be replaced with online and/or telephone activities. At the end of the monitoring, an analytical report on the 2021 TPM will be developed with findings and recommendations.

The monitoring effort will include the following components:

- Monitoring of cotton fields during the harvest;
- Monitoring of the media for cases of violations of labour rights during the cotton harvest;
- Engagement with feedback mechanism of the Labour Inspection.

All data collection will take place from September to December, including the harvest itself. This will enable assessment of the recruitment process. It will also help understand the protective measures that are being put into practice on the ground and whether they have been “felt” by cotton pickers.

As in previous years, the monitoring will be done in accordance with high ethical standards of data collection and taken into account the COVID-19 protective measures. An Independent Review Board (IRB) will review the 2021 TPM methodology. Particular attention will be devoted to (i) the training of data collectors on methodology, child and forced labour and other fundamental principal and rights at work, ethical requirements derived from COVID-19 safety rules; (ii) ensuring informed consent, confidentiality and privacy of respondents.

This particular assignment refers to quantitative data collection through a telephone survey on recruitment practices and working conditions during the cotton picking season.

2. Objectives and deliverables

The selected organization will be responsible for conducting a nationwide phone-based survey in Uzbekistan. The sampling and questionnaires will be developed by the ILO TPM project team and finalized with the selected firm. Programming of questionnaire for use in CATI will be done by ILO TPM team. In particular, the assignment will include the following components:

1. Finalization of questionnaire versions in Uzbek, Russian, and English languages in Word format;
2. Conducting 150 pilot phone interviews;
3. Conducting 10,000 phone interviews in Uzbek and Russian, including ~1300 interviews with cotton pickers (this is the minimum amount and can be higher). Two types of questionnaires will be used a/for people who participated in cotton picking in 2021 (~1300 interviews, one interview will take 8 minutes) and b/for people who did not participate in cotton picking 2021 (~8700 interviews, the interview will take 2-3 minutes);
4. Cleaning the database in SPSS and STATA formats;

Key deliverables:

- Finalized questionnaire versions in Uzbek, Russian, and English languages in Word format;
- Cleaned databases in SPSS and STATA for the pilot and main survey and cleaning explanation;
- Technical report.

The selected firm should strictly follow the guidelines/protocol on the good ethics of social research developed and provided by the ILO team.

3. Time frame

The data collection will be conducted between November 15 and December 15, 2021. All research activities should be implemented within 30 calendar days. The clean database and technical report should be provided to the ILO team no later than December 15, 2021.

The study agenda will include the following activities and time requirements:

- Preparation stage: finalization and piloting of questionnaires (3 calendar days);
- CATI survey of 10,000 respondents (up to 15 calendar days);
- Data base cleaning and provision of the technical report (5 days).

Full payment will be made upon successful completion of tasks, in one tranche.

Annex 1. Preliminary sampling

The target population for the survey is working age citizens of Uzbekistan (18–50 years old). The data collection method is a CATI survey. The sampling method is a random systematic stratified sample (RDD) of mobile phone users in the country.

The study will be focused on the recruitment and working conditions of cotton pickers. It is important to ensure a sufficient response rate from people involved in the cotton harvest in 2021. According to the study in 2020, about 12,9% of the working age population of Uzbekistan were involved in the cotton harvest. Therefore, based on the requirements for accuracy and reliability of the results, it is proposed to interview 10000 respondents during the survey. This will allow to receive about 1300 responses in the target group of cotton pickers.

The sampling frame is mobile phone numbers in Uzbekistan. The sampling design is based on a random systematic sampling of mobile telephone numbers, which enables an equal probability of selecting each mobile phone number. This method of selection can be called Random Digit Dial (RDD).

The 95% confidence interval for the sample of 10000 respondents will be 1.0 p.p. And for the cotton pickers (~1300 respondents) it will be ~2.8 p.p. Due to formula for simple random sample:

$$\Delta = t_d \sqrt{1-f} \sqrt{\frac{p(1-p)}{n-1}}$$
, where p – percentage of attribute in sample (we used 50% for maximum variance), n – sample size, Δ - confidence interval, t_d – constant depending on the level of confidence (1,96 for 95%), f – percentage of sample in population (n/N) and assessing the effect of weighting factors on sampling error.

The regions of Uzbekistan vary quite significantly in terms of several socio-economic indicators, which suggests there may be a different level of mobile phone usage among the populations in different regions. Therefore, regions should be treated as strata in the construction of the sample, otherwise there may be a risk the sample could shift (be biased) toward regions with a higher coverage/usage of mobile phones. The number of respondents in each region should be proportional to the percentage of the working age population of the region among all working age citizens of Uzbekistan.

To fix potential gender imbalances, gender distribution as a target strata will be added in the sampling. In each region, a quota per respondent's gender will be calculated based on statistical data.