

SaveSmallHands:

The Tobacco Industry Reaps Double Benefits from Children

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The tobacco industry in Indonesia is inseparable from controversies and problems related to children's rights. To date, the tobacco industry has not accepted its responsibility for the high number of child workers in tobacco plantations in its supply chain. Child workers in tobacco plantations work by directly handling tobacco plants, applying pesticides to crops, and performing hazardous physical work in extreme heat. Hazardous working conditions pose both short-term and long-term health risks for children. One of the dangers that haunt child workers in tobacco plantations is Green Tobacco Sickness (GTS), which is a variety of health disorders caused by exposure to nicotine in tobacco leaves both during the harvesting and processing of tobacco.

In a cruel twist, the tobacco industry also takes advantage of cigarette sales through advertising, promotions, and sponsorships targeting children as their consumers. Children are often exposed to various aggressive marketing tactics of the tobacco industry even around their school environment, luring them to smoke cigarettes from an early age. Indonesian Basic Health Research in 2018 showed that **3.3 million children** between 10-18 years in Indonesia **are active smokers**. This situation earned Indonesia a bad reputation of being referred to as '*Smoking Baby Country*' and a paradise for the tobacco industry to target children. Children's wellbeing in Indonesia will be threatened if there are no effective regulations and control measures on the business activities of the tobacco industry that targets children.

This study reveals how the tobacco industry reaps double benefits from children. Our findings in this policy brief show that the current condition of child labor in tobacco plantations is not significantly different from the condition of child labor in tobacco plantations five years ago as documented in the Human Rights Watch (HRW) Indonesia study in 2-16. Economic and localized factors are the main causes of the involvement of child labor in tobacco plantations. Children and their parents are also not aware of the occupational health and safety risks to children, including GTS. In addition, a comparison of the types of work, wages, working hours, and health risks of child labor in 2016 and 2021 shows no significant change.

In addition, approximately **77% of children are exposed to tobacco advertisements**. Children smoke cigarette brands owned by companies that gain profit from cheap tobacco leaves produced using child workers. On cigarette marketing, the findings regarding child smokers show a link between children's preferred cigarette brands and recall of cigarette advertisements. Exposure to cigarette advertising by the tobacco industry and easy access to cigarettes, especially the sale of single cigarette sticks, are shown to encourage children to become smokers.

Given that the track record and business motivation of the tobacco industry are in contradiction with public health principles, this industry is not a credible partner to solve the issue. Maneuvering to gain public support through funding and membership in non-governmental organizations, such as the Eliminating Child Labor in Tobacco Growing (ECLT) Foundation which claims to prevent child labor in tobacco plantations, is a form of CSR-washing. The ECLT Foundation's activities in Indonesia that support the Partnership for Action Against Child Labor in Agriculture (PAACLA), which is an avenue to enforce business principles and human rights, eventually normalize the exploitative practices of the industry towards children from upstream to downstream that provide double benefits for the tobacco industry.

Considering these points, a synergy with the government, non-governmental organizations, communities, and the international community is necessary to stop and prohibit the exploitation and manipulation of the tobacco industry targeting children, such as through tobacco advertising, promotions, and sponsorships, including CSR and institutions funded by tobacco companies. Some of the main steps that can be taken are by rejecting cooperation with tobacco companies, increasing the government's commitment as a duty bearer to ensure the accountability of the tobacco industry in its business activities that are hazardous for children, and increasing collaboration between the government and civil society in enforcing business principles and human rights.

Recommendation

1. Government
 - a. Implement law enforcement to control tobacco industry activities to effectively eliminate child labor in tobacco production and prevent children from becoming smokers. All forms of tobacco advertising, promotions, and sponsorships, including CSR by tobacco companies, must be banned.
 - b. Government agencies, such as BAPPENAS, must terminate their collaboration with entities funded by the tobacco industry.
 - c. To disincentivize the tobacco industry from benefiting directly from child labor and sales to children, impose a surcharge of 1% on tobacco tax to fund meaningful programs to end child labor.
 - d. The central government and local governments must collaborate for the implementation of child labor protection in the tobacco plantation sector.
 - e. The central government and local governments must ensure decent income, job security, welfare, and protection for tobacco farmers.
2. Non-Governmental Institutions
 - a. Not to affiliate and cooperate with the tobacco industry.
 - b. Monitor the tobacco industry to prevent child exploitation in any form.
 - c. Collaborate to create a safe space for children and carry out information dissemination and advocacy to prevent child exploitation.
4. Society
 - a. The community needs to build a strong commitment and strive to overcome child labor exploitation by any party.
 - b. The community needs to initiate a change in attitude to support the fulfillment of children's rights and prevent child labor and child smokers.
 - c. Advocacy groups can form social partnerships and civil society in advocating and raising awareness on the issue of child labor in the tobacco plantation sector.
 - d. Journalists should use the news media to improve coverage of child labor and tobacco farming issues from the public health and child rights perspective.
5. International
 - a. The United Nations Global Compact must act consistently and deregister the membership of ECLT from its list.
 - b. Inter-governmental agencies such as UNICEF and the ILO must play a more proactive role towards eliminating child labor in tobacco growing by 2025.