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Use by the tobacco industry (IT) of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategies in promoting the fight against child labor

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Corporate Social Responsibility strategies used by the tobacco industry to fight against child labor

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Context

Children are individuals with unique growth needs who need differentiated, particular, and comprehensive protection. Society's conceptions of childhood are universalized by international organizations' incisive action, such as the United Nations (UN) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) – a Tripartite UN agency that brings together governments, workers, and employers (MARÍN; MARÍN, 2008). They recommend that each community quickly and relentlessly pursue the goal of eliminating jobs that deprive children of their youth, potential, and dignity.

In 1998, ILO Convention No. 182 considered that any activity that could harm children and teenagers' health, safety, and morale is among the worst forms of child labor (INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION, 1999). It estimates that the benefit of eliminating child labor (about \$5 trillion) and keeping children away from work activities and attending school can generate a return of up to seven times the costs (\$760 billion) in developing countries (INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION, 2003).

According to this convention, child labor in tobacco growing corresponds to one of the worst forms of child labor. It exposes children to health risks, such as exposure to pesticides and repetitive work, and harms their school performance due to interruptions in school activities during the harvest period (RAMOS, 2018). In addition, children expose themselves to this range of risks by working in the production of a product that does not generate benefit for society: tobacco, a product that kills one in two consumers. This aggravating factor makes children's participation in the tobacco production chain even more unsustainable.

To name some data showing how large a problem this is, 160 million children (1 in 10 children) were estimated to be in child labor globally – 79 million in hazardous work. One hundred twelve million children were estimated to be in labor work in agriculture, with 1.3 million children working in tobacco growing worldwide (STOP, 2021b).

As detailed in the body of this document, the tobacco industry (TI) started with international and national agreements and now establishes its own corporate social responsibility (CSR) projects or funds projects from foundations, associations, or institutes acting as front groups. It adapts to the new legal order on using child labor in the production phase of the tobacco supply chain (UNIVERSITY OF BATH, 2021a).

The industry's effort to address the issue and follow ILO's decisions is part of the global initiatives focusing on certain tobacco countries. The Eliminating Child Labour in Tobacco Growing Foundation (ECLT, 2000) and the International Tobacco Growers Association (ITGA, 1984) are two examples of international groups which defend TI's interests and have presented proposals to stop child labor in tobacco growing (UNIVERSITY OF BATH, 2021b). ECLT describes itself as "independent" and as "a global leader in the elimination of child labor" (ECLT, 2022)

despite having been founded and run by the TI and, so far, has demonstrated no measurable impact on the elimination of child labor in countries where its projects have been implemented. Between 2002 and 2018, the ECLT foundation developed a partnership with ILO, which received around US\$5.3 million. It also had a public-private partnership with UNICEF between 2003 and 2005. Studies show that its primary objective was not the elimination of child labor (OTAÑEZ et al., 2006; VAN DER EIJK; BIALOUS; GLANTZ, 2018). Despite promoting actions against child labor in tobacco growing, TI's CSR strategies aim to promote its corporate image by joining the United Nations as partners committed to the cause of child labor and so mitigate tobacco control initiatives (VAN DER EIJK; BIALOUS; GLANTZ, 2018). Similarly, ITGA, an ECLT member, was ILO's partner until 2018, claiming to be focused on issues related to child labor in tobacco growing (ITGA, 1984). However, internal industry documents show that ITGA's goal was to undermine WHO FCTC efforts to promote tobacco control policies (ASH, [s.d.]).

Brazil is the world's largest exporter and the second-largest producer of tobacco leaves (OBSERVATORY OF ECONOMIC COMPLEXITY, 2022) and has about 650 tobacco-growing municipalities where child labor can often be found (FASSA et al., 2021). This occurs despite the Brazilian labor legislation, which complies with ILO Convention No. 182 and includes tobacco-growing-related activities in the list of worst forms of child labor, prohibiting the work of children under 18 years of age in the tobacco production process since 2008 (PRESIDENCIA DA REPUBLICA, 2008).

This document aims to address the CSR strategies used by the tobacco industry in Brazil related to child labor, especially in its tobacco-growing regions. It also addresses the industry's CSR strategies aimed at children and teenagers in urban environments, which include projects focused on youth entrepreneurship and others about inserting young adults in the job market.

Child labor in tobacco growing

It is estimated that 1.3 million children are in child labor in tobacco growing globally (International Labor Organization, 2017).

A study developed by Araújo in 2022 analyzed data from the Continuous National Household Sample Survey from 2016 to 2019 and showed that the number of children and teenagers aged 10 to 17 years working in tobacco farms showed a slight fall over the years (SILVA ARAÚJO, 2022). The study estimated that in 2019, 9,200 children and adolescents aged 10 to 17 worked specifically in tobacco growing in Brazil, compared to 10,821 and 11,728 in 2016 and 2017, respectively. Data from 2018 show a sharp drop in child labor, with numbers around 4,203 children, probably associated with data collection problems (SILVA ARAÚJO, 2022). The same study identified a higher incidence of child labor in tobacco farms concentrated in Southern Brazil. Between 2016 and 2019, the state of Rio Grande do Sul gathered 50% of the total number of children and teenagers identified in the survey, followed by the states of Santa Catarina, Paraná, Minas Gerais, and Alagoas. The research also showed that about 2/3 of the children and adolescents in child labor in tobacco farms were boys. Most of them were 16-to-17-year-old boys, followed by the 14-to-15-year-old ones. They predominantly were non-black and lived in rural areas in the south of Brazil. Between 70 and 80% of the studied children and adolescents were part of households with per capita income of up to 1/2 minimum wage and had parents or guardians without education or incomplete elementary education (SILVA ARAÚJO, 2022).

Observations on the farmers' view about child labor in Southern Brazil tobacco-growing regions

Before taking aim at the tobacco industry's CSR actions on child labor, it is essential to contextualize the farming families' different conceptions, especially in Southern Brazil, the largest tobacco leaf-producing region in the country. These conceptions modulate these families' perception, attitude, and relationship with child labor. On the one hand, legal provisions in force in Brazil and other countries address the child labor issue and prohibit it in agriculture, especially in tobacco growing. On the other hand, parents usually insert their children into the family's daily domestic and agricultural tasks based on the traditions of bringing up the new generations and fulfilling their duty of raising their children (MARIN et al., 2012). Thus, despite the undeniable arguments against child labor, especially in tobacco growing, among a good part of the family farmers who work in tobacco production, there is a feeling of discontent about the prohibition of their children's participation at the different stages in tobacco production.

Several studies related to family farming in Brazil and worldwide highlight the importance of socialization and work in the transmission of traditionally accumulated heritage, practices, knowledge, and skills for the formation of heirs and future farmers (MARIN; VENDRUSCOLO, 2010; SANTOS, 1978; WOORTMANN; WOORTMANN, 1997.) In this perspective, children's work also assumes a fundamental role in the cycle of farmers' intergenerational formation.

Social studies that discuss family production units associate family, land, and work as the tripod that sustains social reproduction in the countryside. These values are built under the logic of family work, where children play a fundamental role, as they directly influence economic rationality, being an integral part of the consuming and working groups (CHAYANOV, 1974).

Schneider (2005) analyzes an ILO report that addresses the importance of children in family farming activities (KASSOUF, 2004) from different angles and considers that the work of children in the space of family production units must be understood by its pedagogical and formative character, which is why it can carry the meaning of helping to the family. In addition, the author distinguishes activities of greater risk or performed more frequently from others that children can perform in the domestic environment and family farming, concluding that child labor in rural activities can be understood as a form of social inclusion. This last aspect, underlined by Schneider (2005), deserves a closer look. It should be pointed out that children's participation in tobacco farming is associated with the extensive use of family labor. In addition, other elements influence these activities' cultural aspects, which are distorted by the social degradation caused by the tobacco growers' indebtedness and impoverishment and aspects related to children's health.

The low Human Development Index (HDI) in most tobacco-producing municipalities reflects the situation above, questioning the argument that tobacco production promotes local development. HDI indicators (life expectancy, literacy rate, school attendance rate, and per capita income) show that the main tobacco-growing areas have lower average rates than areas with other types of production in southern Brazilian states (Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina, and Paraná). School attendance and income in municipalities where tobacco is predominant are lower than in municipalities where tobacco is not produced (BONATO, 2007).

Marín's study results (2012) concluded that the tobacco industry stands as children's protector but puts many tasks on families at all stages of the tobacco production process. It signs non-purchase contracts with farms where children and adolescents work in production, transferring responsibility to families. These non-purchase contracts are hardly ever respected. Ultimately, children have to help at different stages of tobacco production because the industry pressures families to deliver the goods within the contract period and do not pay enough to hire adult workers.

Thus, although child labor in family production units can have a pedagogical and training character, working in tobacco growing should be addressed as an exception since it involves great dangers and losses for children and adolescents. Thus, children's socialization through helping in family productive units remains necessary, but it should not be with the worst forms of child labor, such as the ones in tobacco growing. Work remains a central point to families' needs and the social reproduction of family farming. Therefore, children's socialization must take place in some sphere of family and work life that does not endanger their health and education.

Why child labor in tobacco growing is a big problem

Child labor in tobacco production legitimately falls into the worst forms of child labor due to its hazardous nature. When children handle tobacco leaves, they absorb the nicotine contained therein and expose themselves to toxic agents such as pesticides and growth inhibitors used in tobacco farming. They also get high levels of sun exposure, increasing the risk of developing skin cancer in adulthood. It is important to remember that working in tobacco farming impacts growers' health and children's development. Children's future can be affected due to school loss, the high risk of diseases such as cancer, tuberculosis, infertility, psychological imbalance, and immune system dysfunction. They can also get neurological damage from pesticide exposure; malnutrition and infectious diseases due to poor nutrition and hygiene; and long-term musculoskeletal damage due to repetitive strain injuries (STOP, 2021b).

It is worth noting that children working in tobacco farming can potentially perform any activity in the production cycle. The activities will depend on the production contracted and the families' size. Therefore, there will be harmful consequences, to a greater or lesser extent, for their children's health and safety. Depending on the property, one or more activities listed below may be performed by children (Chart 2).

Chart 2 – Tobacco farming activities that can be carried out by children.

1.	preparing trays for seedling production
2.	monitoring of water levels monitoring in the "pools" with tobacco seedling trays
3.	planting seedling
4.	pruning seedlings
5.	applying fertilizers before planting tobacco (basic fertilization)
6.	transplanting (planting) tobacco seedlings
7.	applying fertilizers after planting tobacco
8.	removing tobacco flowers and applying anti-sprouting products

9. harvesting tobacco leaves by hand (detaching in the case of tobacco greenhouse) or harvesting the whole plant (in the case of tobacco shed production)
10. In the case of tobacco shed production (dark tobacco cured in sheds), rolling leaves - or whole plants - on wooden sticks at different heights in the curing shed
11. In the case of tobacco greenhouse (light leaf tobacco cured in greenhouses), tying or piercing leaves to prepare them for curing at different heights in greenhouses
12. keeping the ovens lit and stocked with firewood to dry tobacco in sheds or ovens (tobacco greenhouse)
13. untying dried tobacco leaves from bamboo sticks or emptying drying ovens
14. sorting and classifying dried tobacco leaves (activity generally performed inside closed sheds)
15. baling sorted and classified tobacco leaves

Note: Adapted from (STOP, 2021b), (WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION, 2004) and (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, 2016) .

Brazilian legislation on the subject and contracts with school attendance clauses for children in tobacco-growing families

Brazilian legislation contains explicit provisions for the prohibition of child labor and the protection of children's rights. Article 227 of the 1988 Federal Constitution states that children's rights are an absolute priority to the Government, family, and society:

It is the duty of the family, society, and the Government to assure children, adolescents, and youths, with absolute priority, the rights to life, health, nourishment, education, leisure, professional training, culture, dignity, respect, liberty, and family and community coexistence, safeguarding them against all forms of neglect, discrimination, exploitation, violence, cruelty, and oppression. (PRESIDENCIA DA REPUBLICA, 2010)

Other Brazilian legal instruments that regulate and protect children's rights are the Child and Adolescent Statute (*ECA*, in Portuguese) and the Consolidation of Labor Laws (*CLT*, in Portuguese). The Brazilian Constitution and *CLT* prohibit the work of children under 16, except those aged 14 and over, working as an apprentice. Article 7, Item XXXIII of the Constitution provides that the urban and rural workers' rights are:

XXXIII - prohibition of night, dangerous, or unhealthy work for minors under eighteen years of age and of any work for minors under sixteen years of age, except as an apprentice, for minors above fourteen years of age (PRESIDENCIA DA REPUBLICA, 1998).

ILO Convention No. 182 (ILO, 1999) was ratified by Brazil in 2000 (PRESIDENCIA DA REPUBLICA, 2000) and is regulated by Decree 6,481/2008 (PRESIDENCIA DA REPUBLICA, 2008), which also prohibits any form of child labor and lists hazardous work, the probable occupational risks and health repercussions (Table 1).

Despite this prohibition, Decree 6,481 maintains the exception implemented by the Apprentice Law (PRESIDENCIA DA REPUBLICA, 2000), allowing children aged 14 and over to work as apprentices, which involves professional technical training (PRESIDENCIA DA REPUBLICA, 2000). All laws relating to the treaties signed by Brazil under ILO were subsequently consolidated by Decree 10,088 (PRESIDENCIA DA REPUBLICA, 2019). The Public Ministry of Labor supervises companies' compliance with these standards.

Table 1: List of the worst forms of child labor, probable occupational risks, and probable health repercussions (PRESIDENCIA DA REPUBLICA, 2008).

Job description	Probable occupational risks	Likely health repercussions
Tobacco, cotton, sisal, sugarcane and pineapple farming	Physical exertion and vicious postures; exposure to organic dust and its contaminants, such as fungi and pesticides; contact with toxic substances from the plant; accidents with venomous animals; exposure, without adequate protection, to solar radiation, heat, humidity, rain and cold; accidents with sharp instruments	Musculoskeletal disorders (bursitis, tendinitis, back pain, synovites, tenosynovites); pneumoconiosis; exogenous intoxications; cancers; byssinosis; hantavirus; hives; poisoning; heat stroke; skin burn; premature ageing; skin cancer; dehydration; respiratory diseases; actinic keratoses; injuries and mutilations; fingerprint loss
Tobacco, sisal, cashew nuts and sugarcane processing	Physical exertion, lifting and carrying weight; exposure to organic dust, acids and toxic substances	Physical fatigue; musculoskeletal disorders (bursitis, tendinitis, back pain, synovites, tenosynovites); acute and chronic intoxications; rinitis; bronchitis; vomiting; occupational dermatitis; fingerprint loss
Tobacco industrialization	Nicotine exposure	Exogenous intoxications; dizziness and vomiting*

Note: *described in Brazil in 2010 and 2012 as Green Tobacco Leaf Disease (OLIVEIRA et al., 2010) (BARTHOLOMAY et al., 2012)

It was only in the second decade of this century that the Interstate Tobacco Industry Union (*Sinditabaco*) signed a term of commitment with the Labor Prosecutor's Office in Brasília to prevent child labor in the tobacco production chain and raise awareness about the importance of school attendance in Santa Catarina and Paraná (MPT 12A. RA, 2011). This agreement defines obligations for industries operating in tobacco trading in Santa Catarina and Paraná, extending them to Rio Grande do Sul and replacing the term of commitment signed with the Labor DA's Office in 2008 (MINISTERIO DO TRABALHO, 2008).

Based on these agreements, TI includes a clause in the contract with tobacco growers to make them comply with the legislation on the non-use of child labor (MARIN et al., 2012), including monitoring children and adolescents' school adherence. However, using child labor as

“a help” is often the only option for small and low-income families (DA SILVA, 2011; MARIN et al., 2012).

Definitions

Child labor: this document adopts the Brazilian legislation definition of child labor as economic activities and survival activities, with or without profit, paid or not, performed by children or teenagers under the age of 16 regardless of their occupational condition, except for teenagers aged 14 and over, working as apprentices (BRASIL, 2018 – 3rd National Prevention Plan).

Startups and projects aiming at youth labor insertion in urban environments: this document defines startups and projects aiming at youth labor insertion in urban environments as social initiatives supporting sustainable development and the reduction of social inequality.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR): According to Bower, 1957, CSR is attitudes, postures, decisions, and values adopted by companies to value their image before society. This document classifies TI’s CSR strategies to fight against child labor into three different categories: promotion of informative and learning activities and projects, promotion of rural exodus prevention programs, and promotion of the tobacco industry in the urban environment. These categories will be presented and discussed throughout the document.

Methodology

This document analyses publications on child labor and TI’s CSR strategies available for academic research (abstract, report, record, scientific article, review, monograph), in traditional media (radio, television, newspapers, pamphlets), and digital media (social media, blogs, YouTube channels, e-mail) between 2012 and 2022. The following descriptors were used: (((((child labor [MeSH Terms])) OR (child labour[MeSH Terms])) AND (tobacco industry[MeSH Terms])) OR (tobacco industries[MeSH Terms])) AND (Brazil).

Preliminary results

In response to the growing international concern to eliminate child labor, especially in its worst forms, the tobacco industry has addressed the issue in major strategic axes. They were organized in this study into three areas: 1. **information and education programs** focusing specifically on the elimination of child labor; 2. programs for **the prevention of rural exodus among young people**, vital for TI’s continuity in rural areas; 3. **promotion programs for young people in the urban environment**, establishing bridges between TI and the new generations. These approaches are probably because child labor might lead to its reputational wear, is not socially acceptable, and its elimination has been the target of national laws and international agreements, creating legal obligations for TI. Moreover, they try to improve the tobacco industry’s image among young people in urban regions.

1. Information and education programs

Facing the pressure to address child labor, tobacco companies have devised strategies to respond to the Brazilian legal requirements over the last few years, through booklets, newsletters and lectures to make tobacco growers aware of the importance of eliminating child labor (SINDITABACO; AFUBRA; GROW COOL, 2017).

***Sinditabaco* information and education activities and projects**

An example of the industry's focus on the theme was the creation of *Instituto Crescer Legal* by *Sinditabaco* and its associated companies. It deals with growers' families related to the institute's associated tobacco companies. Its objective is to work directly with schools to control children and adolescents' enrollment and frequency in tobacco-growing regions (VENDRUSCOLO, 2017). It is an offshoot of the program *O Futuro é Agora!* launched in 1998 with the signing of a tobacco companies' pact for eliminating child labor (AFUBRA et al., 1998). *Instituto Crescer Legal* also reports promoting initiatives to prevent rural exodus, encouraging young people to stay in tobacco farms.

Based on Apprentice Law, *Instituto Crescer Legal* developed the Rural Professional Learning Program in 2016. It offered a rural management and entrepreneurship course for teenagers with an average duration of one year. These program participants are hired as apprentices by companies associated with *Sinditabaco*. As work in tobacco growing is not allowed at this age, they do not act directly in the companies. Instead, they carry out practical community activities (INSTITUTO CRESCER LEGAL, 2022a). Thus, tobacco companies comply with the Apprentice's Law while establishing a closer relationship with these young people (SINDITABACO; AFUBRA; GROW COOL, 2017). According to the Institute, it had certified 596 rural youth in Rio Grande do Sul by 2021, and each year the program has the participation of 140 young people in seven municipalities (INSTITUTO CRESCER LEGAL, 2022b).

Phillip Morris Brasil's activities and informative and education projects

Philip Morris Brasil (PMB) has developed several activities in partnership with other institutions in this area. It was a partner in *Instituto Qualidade no Ensino (IQE)*, a civil association supported by private companies and partnership with governments (INSTITUTO QUALIDADE NO ENSINO, [s.d.]) in the *Qualiescola* project. *IQE* reports promoting the project to improve teaching and learning quality with public school teachers' continuing education (INSTITUTO QUALIDADE NO ENSINO, [s.d.]). In 2003, the program was implemented in Santa Cruz do Sul and Venâncio Aires (RS), sponsored by Philip Morris Brasil and Universal Leaf Tabacos and the support of the Tobacco Growers' Association of Brazil (*Afubra*) and the Tobacco Industry Union in Rio Grande do Sul (*SindiFumo*). The target audience was elementary school students. According to *IQE*, the companies believed that improving the quality of education would increase the farmers' children's class frequency and reduce school dropout in agricultural areas. They supported the program implementation as a broad corporate approach to eliminating child labor (INSTITUTO QUALIDADE NO ENSINO, 2006a). The program finished in both cities in 2005 and involved 32 schools, 245 teachers, and 3,552 students (INSTITUTO QUALIDADE NO ENSINO, 2006c). The

Qualiescola SMEC Santa Cruz do Sul Award was announced the following year. It was a partnership between the public sector, represented by the Santa Cruz do Sul Municipal Department of Education and Culture; the private sector, represented by Philip Morris Brasil and Universal Leaf Tabacos; and the third sector, represented by *IQE* (INSTITUTO QUALIDADE NO ENSINO, 2006b, [s.d.]). The study authors contacted *IQE*, which informed them that the Qualiescola program still exists and develops activities throughout the country in partnership with The Departments of Education and private actors. Philip Morris Brasil, however, no longer acts as a partner. The Qualiescola Award, in turn, no longer exists.

In 2002, Philip Morris Brasil implemented the project *Nosso Futuro* in a municipal school in partnership with Santa Cruz do Sul City Hall (SANTA CRUZ DO SUL, 2002). The goal was to create extra-class activities in computer science, sports, leisure, agriculture, and the arts. Three years later, a partnership between Philip Morris Brasil and Alliance One led the Our Future Project to Santa Cruz do Sul (RS), Candelaria (RS), Irati (PR), and Morro Grande (SC). The project aimed to expand the school day, reaching more than 800 children by 2007 (FERNANDES, 2007).

Other actions pointed out by PMB to eliminate child labor in Brazil are: the sponsorship of Santa Cruz do Sul and Vale do Sol Agricultural Family Schools; the Rural Professional Apprenticeship Program, promoted by the Instituto Crescer Legal, already mentioned above; and the Rural School Project (PHILIP MORRIS INTERNACIONAL, 2021).

The Rural School Project, sponsored exclusively by PMB, was an initiative of the non-governmental organization Committee for the Democratization of Informatics (*CPDI*). It assisted Paraná, Santa Catarina, and Rio Grande do Sul states. Its objective was to inform young people and rural producers' children about new technologies so that they could benefit and improve the tasks in their properties, have an entrepreneurial view of the rural environment, and realize that they do not need to leave the countryside to have access to information and quality training (*CPDI*, [s.d.]).

The company also went into partnership with Rio Grande do Sul government in the program *Escola Melhor, Sociedade Melhor* to modernize the public educational facilities (GOVERNO DO ESTADO DO RIO GRANDE DO SUL, 2018; OLÁ JORNAL, 2019; SECRETARIA DE EDUCAÇÃO DO ESTADO DO RIO GRANDE DO SUL, 2021). Philip Morris International described in its latest social contributions report (PHILIP MORRIS INTERNACIONAL, 2021) that its financial contributions to educational activities in Brazil in 2020 were: 1) *Associação Gaúcha Pró-Escolas Famílias Agrícolas* - an educational program for tobacco growers' children: US\$29,416; 2) *Instituto Crescer Legal* - educational activities for teenagers in tobacco-growing regions: US\$ 27,317 and 3) *Centro de Educação Digital* – computer science for students: US\$ 77,513

Japan Tobacco International's information and education activities and projects in Brazil

Like Philip Morris, Japan Tobacco International (JTI) and its subsidiary, JTI in Brazil also shows concern about the theme and its workers' situation. The company's official website highlights the following message: "Call for demonstrations and complaints related to child labor, working conditions, and human rights violations in the tobacco production chain" (JTI, 2022).

Achieving Reduction of Child Labor in Support of Education (ARISE) is JTI's most famous program. It was a joint initiative with ILO and Winrock International, developed with the

involvement of governments, social partners, and tobacco-growing communities to prevent and eliminate child labor in the communities involved with JTI (ARISE, 2022a). According to JTI, this partnership began in 2011, a year dedicated to building relationships with partners and developing the program structure. The project was launched in Malawi and Brazil in early 2012 and in Zambia later the same year (ARISE, 2022b).

ARISE activities include children's access to high-quality education, awareness of the importance of eliminating child labor as a social necessity, and economic empowerment for the communities with which they work (ARISE, 2022a). It is important to note that JTI founded ARISE, but the three partners share responsibility for the program's strategy, implementation, and decision-making. ILO would focus on policy-related activities and support for child labor monitoring systems in communities; Winrock International, community and state-level actions; JTI, its business, and support for ILO and Winrock in the day-to-day implementation of the program (ARISE, 2022b).

Among the best-known programs supported by ARISE is the *Programa de Erradicação do Trabalho Infantil (PETI)*, which operates in ten municipalities in Rio Grande do Sul. Its goal is to intensify public actions to eliminate child labor in small tobacco-growing properties (AFUBRA, 2019). JTI in Brazil states that ARISE has already benefited more than 4,000 children and teenagers in different initiatives: workshops and courses in partner schools, support for child protection networks, local implementation and monitoring of the *Programa de Erradicação do Trabalho Infantil*, capacity building for mothers, agro-industry organization for leading female farmers, rural education programs (SEGS, 2021).

To celebrate World Day Against Child Labor (06/12) in 2022, the Ethos Institute brought to the debate the tobacco companies' responsibility towards this agenda. Flavio Goulart, Director of Corporate Affairs and Communication at JTI in Brazil, disclosed the company's practices of fighting against child labor and its education program during an interview (INSTITUTO ETHOS, 2019).

These JTI practices in Brazil constitute a social investment cycle created to boost the return on investment at eliminating child labor, and consist of three complementary stages (INSTITUTO ETHOS, 2019):

- the first stage, called Agricultural Labour Practices (ALP), is a program to monitor the practices carried out in crops by its contracted growers and by companies from which JTI in Brazil acquires tobacco. The goal is to strengthen concepts and identify human rights risks, including child labor, throughout the value chain, reinforcing JTI's commitment to sustainable tobacco growing through a cycle of continuous improvement in Brazil.
- the second stage is the ARISE program, the result of a global partnership between JTI, Winrock International (a non-profit development organization), and ILO (a specialized UN agency).
- the third is the Growers Support Programs (GSP), created by JTI in Brazil to replicate the best practices identified in the previous stages, based on the ALP findings and ARISE experiences, in order to ensure a multiplier effect and enhanced social impact through social investments and implementation of lasting actions.

Recent complaints of child labor by Souza Paiol and Continental Tobaccos Alliance (CTA)

Souza Paiol, which produces straw cigarettes (GRUPO SOUZA PAIOL, 1998), has been the subject of reports on child labor. According to its founder, straw cigarette factories generate about 150,000 jobs in Minas Gerais, ranging from corn harvesting (which must be manual so as not to spoil the straw used in producing handmade cigarettes) to growing and harvesting tobacco, and cigarette rollers (CAMARGOS, 2020).

After complaints of child labor, exhaustive work, reduced payment, and production outsourcing, the company became a target of the Prosecution Office. With thousands of families in the Midwest region of Minas Gerais working on its production, Souza Paiol has its straw cigarette rollers working in informality and without any labor rights. The third-party companies who hire the families' services do not provide PPE, such as masks, or essential items, such as appropriate chairs for the activity (CAMARGOS, 2020).

When asked about the accusations, Souza Paiol founder, José Haroldo de Vasconcelos, is considered the pioneer and largest straw cigarette producer in the country. After being questioned about the accusations, he replied: "If they use minors, the problem is theirs." Vasconcelos understands that the manufacturer cannot be held responsible if a father or mother signs the service contract and does not comply with child labor laws, the manufacturer cannot be held responsible (CAMARGOS, 2020). Souza Paiol was the target of the Prosecution Office in Minas Gerais and Goiás (MRT ESQUERDA DIARIO, 2021), which were not included in the agreements signed between DA Offices and tobacco companies.

Continental Tobaccos Alliance (CTA) is another tobacco company recently involved with child labor. In early 2021, two families were rescued in slave-like conditions from a tobacco farm in Venâncio Aires, Vale do Rio Pardo (G1, 2021). Five children and two teenagers aged 9 to 17 were part of these families, doing irregular work and living in inappropriate places (G1, 2021). According to the 10-month inspection, they worked in the rural producer's house, sorting and tying tobacco leaves. One of the families worked growing 50,000 tobacco plants and had an average monthly income that did not reach R\$ 300.00 after deducing the wage advances (G1, 2021).

Despite the company's speaking out against slavery and child labor practices, being linked to *Sinditabaco's* programs to eliminate child labor, and cooperating with government agencies, the Labor Prosecutor's Office found that the company was aware of the presence of children and teenagers working on the plantation and did not communicate it (G1, 2021). This company was part of the agreements signed with the Labor Prosecutor's Office in 2008 (MINISTERIO DO TRABALHO, 2008) and 2011 (MPT 12A. RA, 2011).

Months later, Continental Tobaccos Alliance signed a new term of commitment with the Labor Prosecutor's Office, taking on the obligation to run media campaigns on the harm of child labor to raise awareness among customers, employees, the community, and all contracted tobacco producers every June. The document also stipulated a fine of fifty thousand reais for each unfulfilled clause and defined that the company must give out six hundred thousand reais to public bodies, non-profit entities, or funds indicated by the Labor Prosecutor's Office (GAZ, 2021).

2. Promotion of programs to prevent rural exodus among young people

The tobacco industry has also been working on rural exodus prevention programs. The companies offer programs that enable future generations to remain in the countryside as they are an essential workforce for tobacco farming and survival of the sector.

1. Japan Tobacco International's programs to prevent rural exodus in Brazil

The Agronomist Development and Extension Training (ADET) center is responsible for researching and testing new technologies for JTI's contracted growers in Brazil. Launched in 2011, it conducts studies to improve the economic and environmental efficiency of tobacco farming. Installed in an area of 320 hectares, it has buildings, curing units, experimental crops, lodgings, offices, cafeterias, changing rooms, and a native forest area. ADET has conducted hundreds of training for farmers in Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina, and Paraná and developed technologies to optimize work on properties (EDITORA GAZETA, 2021).

The company was responsible for bringing continuous process curing ovens to Brazil, participating in developing the necessary adaptations for their use in tobacco production. It has recently announced the development of a solar energy system for curing tobacco. JTI in Brazil also invests in wood pellets for curing tobacco leaves, a technology that reduces labor costs and polluting emissions and improves tobacco quality (EDITORA GAZETA, 2021).

According to the company, these innovations are a bet for reducing rural exodus since investment in research and innovation is made to ease the lives of the more than ten thousand JTI's contracted growers in Brazil. According to the company, the continuity of family farming and tobacco growing depends on creating new technologies that guarantee the quality of life and productivity. Only by improving these two aspects is it possible to reduce rural exodus (EDITORA GAZETA, 2021).

Another JTI program in Brazil was *Força Feminina em Campo*. It discussed women's role in family farming and aging in the countryside (FOLHA DO MATE, 2019). The program's objective was to listen to and debate challenges, opportunities, opinions, and experiences, addressing and regarding women's importance in agriculture and the family (FOLHA DO MATE, 2019).

In addition to technological development, JTI in Brazil claims to be concerned about children's development, which has been changing the rural workers' reality (PÁGINA RURAL, 2020). The company also mentions changes in families' practices, enabling a new generation of farmers to study more and be better prepared to manage their properties. JTI in Brazil is betting it will keep growers in the countryside: "Rural exodus is a serious problem when we talk about agriculture. People leave rural areas in search of better opportunities and gains. However, adequate technical training can increase their incomes and have a higher quality of life in the countryside (PÁGINA RURAL, 2020)."

JTI in Brazil states that it is its farmers' partner and aims to grow together: "Our commitment is to help them reach their maximum productive potential, ensuring family farming and their property sustainability." The company also says that valuing growers is one of the organization's focuses. "On Tobacco Growers' Day, we need to strengthen our commitment to valuing farmers through long-term partnerships, constant development, and fair pay for their work. If the tobacco grower thrives, JTI in Brazil thrives (PÁGINA RURAL, 2020)."

2. Phillip Morris Brazil's programs to prevent the rural exodus

Similarly to JTI, Philip Morris Brasil reports the goal of eliminating child labor in the supply chain by 2025 (FERNANDES, 2019). In 2012, she implemented the Agricultural Labour Practices program in Brazil, requiring that its suppliers offer safe and dignified working conditions and not use children under 18 in tobacco farming (OLÁ JORNAL, 2019; PMI BRAZIL, 2021). According to the company, 20 occurrences of teenagers between 15 and 18 years old were registered in Brazil working in tobacco growing in 2020 (PMI BRASIL, 2021) – a small number, considering thousands of families work in tobacco farms in the country and adolescents' performance is regulated in the growing regions. In association with Alliance One, PMB's project *Nosso Futuro* also aims to reduce school dropout and reverse rural exodus (PÁGINA RURAL, 2006).

3. British American Tobacco's programs to prevent rural exodus in Brazil

BAT Brasil is another large company in the smoking sector imbued with fighting the rural exodus. The company's first initiative was to value family farming. In 1918, the company created the Integrated Tobacco Production System, which has been improved over the years, following a model of technical-commercial partnership to guarantee contracted growers seeds, technical training, and the sale of their entire crops (BAT BRASIL, 2022).

Over the years, BAT Brasil has worked on several fronts to make the activity even more attractive to tobacco-growing families. It has encouraged actions to increase property and business sustainability, such as natural resources optimization and productive diversification (BAT BRASIL, 2022). BAT Brasil also has a close relationship between contracted growers and agricultural advisors. According to them, as company representatives, advisors must act as genuine growers' partners, going beyond their role to empower and instruct (BAT BRASIL, 2022).

Another BAT Brasil's concern is about the future of production. As tobacco growing has historically been linked to family activity on small farms, passed down for generations, the young people's exodus puts this tradition at risk. So, BAT Brasil reaffirms the solid opportunities tobacco growing offers as a business to young people. The company develops education programs to strengthen rural youths' identity (BAT BRASIL, 2022).

3. Tobacco industry's programs in the urban environment

The tobacco industry also operates in the urban environment implementing programs to approach young people and through front groups or institutions associated with governments that develop projects aimed at young people. The examples below show that this is a strategy used by several tobacco companies in the Brazilian market.

1. Japan Tobacco International's programs in the urban environment in Brazil

JTI in Brazil has a series of programs to call attention and pass on the image that it is a company committed to young people's future in Brazil. Among these programs is Make it Bright, aimed at young students who like to be challenged and dream of an international career

(EDUCATECH, 2021). In this program, young people need to create a project responding to a business challenge and stand out among students worldwide. The winners are allowed to hold a six-month paid internship at any of the 400 JTI offices. In addition, they earn a grant and Apple products (EDUCATECH, 2021.)

2. BAT Brazil's programs in the urban environment

BAT Brasil also has programs developed in the urban environment and aimed at promotion. The main one is the *Decola Jovem* program. It has been run for 19 years and has invested in entrepreneurship as a tool for rural and urban youth's autonomy and income generation (INSTITUTO BAT BRASIL, 2022). The program has supported over 2,500 young people and reached more than 3,500 people directly and indirectly through the *Novos Rurais* program. There has been an operation scope expansion recently, bringing an entrepreneurial training experience to the urban environment. According to BAT Brasil, the program reduces social inequality in the countryside and city (BAT BRASIL INSTITUTE, 2022).

The program currently has two classes: one in Duque de Caxias, Rio de Janeiro, and another in Rio Pardo, Rio Grande do Sul. It aims at urban youth over 18 years old who have a business idea to put forward. It was initially conceived as a low-investment in-person five-day course, but due to the pandemic, it was also carried out online (DECOLA JOVEM, 2022).

Vamos Rio is another BAT Brasil Institute's well-known program in partnership with the Ekloos Institute. It is an acceleration program for NGOs and social startups in Rio de Janeiro. The initiative invests more than half a million reais in cultural project development in the state of Rio de Janeiro. In addition to financial support, the company also proposes to conduct mentoring and online training sessions for proposals that might transform society through culture. *Vamos Rio* has the support of the Rio de Janeiro State Secretariat of Culture and Creative Economy through the Incentive to Culture State Law (EKLOOS INSTITUTE, 2022).

BAT Brazil Institute was formerly known as Souza Cruz Institute. Its president, Délcio Sandi, says the following about the *Vamos Rio* program and the institute relationship: *Vamos Rio* program reflects the Institute's DNA, which has fostered young entrepreneurship for over twenty years. It also strengthens our mission, which is to reduce social inequalities by fostering the acceleration of cultural businesses that will contribute to income generation and socioeconomic recovery in Rio de Janeiro state (ARRUDA, 2021)".

3. PMI Brasil's programs in the urban environment

Philip Morris has a global internship program called INKOMPASS, offered to university students fluent in English. It is a two-year program divided into two cycles. The first covers a job rotation scheme through which the intern can acquire skills in different areas and departments in the company. The second stage provides the intern's deepening in a specific area (INKOMPASS, 2022). Clara Bonetto, the company's organizational development manager, says the company offers meaningful experiences while analyzing students' skills. According to her, the idea is to prepare them to build a solid career. Interns might receive a job offer by graduation (INÁCIO, 2016). The company also says the internship is an opportunity to build an international network

through an application exclusive to the participants. The tool allows interaction with interns from other countries, coaches, and leaders (INÁCIO, 2016).

Discussion on child labor in tobacco farming

In Brazil, TI's CSR programs focused on child labor seem to disguise children's actual situation and sell the image of commitment to eliminating child labor, like in other countries (UNIVERSITY OF BATH, 2021a). Despite responding to demands from the Brazilian legislation, the actions coordinated by tobacco growers against child labor are used by the companies and front groups' marketing as opportunities for qualifying the tobacco produced in Brazil:

Tobacco companies transform legal criticism and requirements into an opportunity to improve their public image and justify the need for farming adequacy based on the Brazilian legislation's requirements, transforming threats into opportunities (VENDRUSCOLO, 2017).

Thus, on its website, *Sinditabaco* states that

the tobacco sector is a pioneer in the fight against child labor in rural areas, being the only one that requires proof of children's school enrollment and the attendance certificate for the renewal of the existing commercial contract between companies and growers within the Integrated Tobacco Production System (SINDITABACO, [s.d.]

The Crescer Legal Institute has received awards for its performance, the most relevant of which is the *Brasil Amigo da Criança* award, promoted by the Ministry of Women, Family, and Human Rights through the National Secretariat for the Rights of Children and Adolescents. In 2021, the project Professional Apprenticeship as an Alternative to Eliminate Child Labor in Rural Areas ranked first in the category Promotion of Children and Teenagers' Rights (INSTITUTO CRESCER LEGAL, 2021b). However, Institute's institutional reports do not bring any data that attests to or quantifies its impact on child labor reduction in tobacco farming (INSTITUTO CRESCER LEGAL, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021a).

Vendruscolo (2017) points out that *Sinditabaco's* strategies, including *Instituto Crescer Legal's* ones, are aimed at growers inserted in the integrated production system. As determined by the agreements between the Prosecutor's Office and the tobacco companies that operate in Brazil, there are guidelines about not using child and adolescent labor and not exposing them to pesticides, and also the requirement that growers present proof of their children's school enrollment and at least 70% of school attendance after each school year. However, the author noted in her fieldwork that

many companies buy tobacco from non-contracted growers, directly or through intermediaries called "picaretas," when an unforeseen need for raw materials to meet the competitive market happens. At those times, child labor issues and other programs as responses to criticism are not considered. Thus, children and

teenagers' school attendance and the supervision of the use of child labor in tobacco farms are not observed. Then, it is understood that the transformations in the use of tobacco requalification devices occur when rituals are necessary to prevent criticism and reaffirm tobacco production". (VENDRUSCOLO, 2017).

Referring specifically to Philip Morris Brazil, Fernandes notes that

in these programs with an educational focus, a shortage in most Brazilian municipalities (...) the company can get closer to local governments, growers' families, the academic environment (essential because it is characterized as powerful influencers), strengthen partnerships with unions, such as Afubra, and influence public opinion. We must not forget that it is a strategy to stand out in the regional media. (FERNANDES, 2007).

The author notes that although this type of program helps the company to promote a positive image in the communities where it operates, there is no significant social change since child labor in tobacco farms will only be eliminated through better growers' remuneration, allowing them to hire an adequate workforce.

Although Philip Morris is currently developing a campaign to eliminate child labor, which it explores as a social responsibility project, it is co-responsible for the exploitation model that the industry has created for rural producers. It creates the problem, tries to mitigate it, and then has the recognition as a citizen company for promoting measures to eliminate child labor in tobacco growing (FERNANDES, 2007).

Conclusion

This study shows that the so-called tobacco companies' CSR initiatives to approach child labor in Brazil divert attention from the actual children and adolescents' involvement in hazardous tasks in tobacco growing. It also shows that they work outside the largest tobacco-growing regions in the south and northeast of Brazil, as in the case of tobacco rollers in Minas Gerais. In addition to child labor in tobacco growing, which is among the worst forms of child labor, a more perverse theme is targeted by press news: children's involvement in slave labor.

It brings as a point of reflection that some families believe that taking their children to the field develops a sense of responsibility and collaboration with the family. Although they are not taken as employees, this creates an opportunity for the industry to use child labor in flagrant opposition to what they intend to show with their CSR strategies.

The complaints found on the internet show that the current legislation is not fully complied with by the tobacco companies. Besides, the agreements between them and labor governmental bodies to remedy the situation do not seem to have national reach and are not met by companies that are re-offenders in the states where they were signed.

In addition, front groups set up by the tobacco industry can prevent the proper participation of stakeholders in this discussion and may stifle growers' and workers' voices about actions to eliminate child labor (STOP, 2021b). Voluntary tobacco industry programs to eliminate child labor, whether directly promoted or by front groups, seem to touch the problem

superficially, as they do not address child labor origins and causes that range from growers' cultural issues to the relationship between the tobacco industry, growers, and governments.

Tobacco companies' practices seem to be responsible for maintaining child labor. Among them, we can mention the influence of low salaries paid by suppliers or contractors, low tobacco prices, and high interest rates for loans for agricultural supplies, the provision of incentives (loans, for example) that keep them dependent, the denial of organization rights, and the refusal to accept intermediation by unions as part of negotiations between the growers and companies. The tobacco industry also seeks to drown out stakeholders' genuine voices by using front groups to counter government action in the area of alternatives to tobacco growing. This way, TI keeps living and working conditions precarious among many tobacco growers. In addition, it avoids having direct responsibility for the grower's well-being, not regularly applying contract clauses and protocols that address child labor (STOP, 2021a).

The tobacco industry undermines efforts to eliminate child labor when it focuses on programs to avoid rural exodus, lobbies for financial incentives granted to tobacco growers, and hinder diversification strategies by preventing alternatives to tobacco growing from being implemented in accordance with FCTC Article 17&18 and their guidelines, keeping farmers dependent on tobacco growing. As a result, children are stuck working in tobacco-growing regions.

The industry acknowledges Brazilian laws and shows society that it is committed to eliminating child labor through contract clauses that are disregarded when the market demands it. It also develops educational programs that do not demonstrate their actual impact. All TI's programs are inserted in a scenario that keeps tobacco growing as vital activity, promoting child labor. Tobacco companies, always ready to improve their images, advance with vocational programs for young people in urban environments and, in summary, exempt from the responsibility for child labor, uses programs to combat rural exodus to keep tobacco growing alive and focus on the young, its future consumer market.

In short, the tobacco industry does not seem to take responsibility for issues involving children and young people in the countryside. In addition, there is no policy in the tobacco growing cycle pointing to the compensation for the damage caused to children by tobacco companies, as they buy products produced with child labor, or the continuity of policies to alternatives to tobacco growing. Finally, the sponsorship of cultural projects through the tobacco industry's front groups goes against Brazilian laws, which prohibit the advertising, promotion, and sponsorship of cultural and sports activities by the tobacco industry.

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