



STOPPING TOBACCO
ORGANIZATIONS & PRODUCTS

Industry Brief

Global

Eliminating Child Labour in Tobacco-Growing (ECLT) Foundation

The Eliminating Child Labour in Tobacco-Growing (ECLT) Foundation is a Swiss-based non-profit organization that describes itself as “independent” and a “global leader in eliminating child labor.”

Funded and Governed by Tobacco Companies

In reality, the ECLT Foundation is both funded and governed by tobacco companies. In 2001, it reported income from members, the bulk of its income source, as CHF247,000 (approximately USD \$247,000). In 2018, it reported income from donor contributions of USD \$5,778,606. Members in 2019 include British American Tobacco (BAT), Imperial Tobacco, Japan Tobacco International (JTI), Philip Morris International and Swedish Match as well as other national tobacco companies and tobacco growers.

ECLT states that its “sole purpose and mandate is to prevent and protect children from child labour wherever tobacco is grown.” It promotes itself and public-private partnerships with the United Nations as “part of the solution” to tackling child labor in low and middle-income countries.

Partnerships with the U.N.’s International Labour Organization and Global Compact

From 2002 until 2018, the ECLT Foundation had a public-private partnership agreement with the International Labour Organization (ILO). It was an adviser to the Foundation’s board alongside Save the Children Switzerland. Following sustained pressure from the World Health Organization and more than 100 global groups, the ILO finally announced in November 2018 that it would stop accepting tobacco industry funding for its projects and would also not renew ECLT’s contract, which had expired in June.

The ECLT Foundation remains a member of the Child Labour Platform of the voluntary United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) Human Rights and Labour Working Group, for which the ILO provides the secretariat.

The ECLT Foundation was set up in Geneva in September 2000 as part of a wider strategy by the major tobacco companies, particularly British American Tobacco (BAT), to protect their corporate reputations and position themselves as "socially responsible."

Leadership

Karima Jambulatova, Executive Director (from May 2019). Has worked with ECLT since 2013.

David Hammond, Executive Director (November 2017-April 2019). Barrister and founder of a marine human rights organization.

Sonia C. Velázquez, Executive Director (2012-2017). Previously worked with Plan International, America Humane and Save the Children, among others. Was instrumental in gaining ECLT its ECOSOC consultative status and UN Global Compact membership from 2015.

Marilyn Blaeser (2008-2011), joined ECLT after working for ILO as Chief Technical Advisor (Child Labour) in Tanzania. CV includes six years with UNICEF and UNHCR.

Mark Hofstetter, (2000-2005). Was Head of Delegation at the International Committee of the Red Cross for 13 years before becoming ECLT's first director.

This is despite the UNGC's decision in 2017 to permanently sever ties with tobacco companies, following the adoption of a breakthrough U.N. resolution (E/2017/L.21) that encouraged UN agencies to develop policies to prevent tobacco industry interference.

History

The ECLT Foundation was set up in Geneva in September 2000 as part of a wider strategy by the major tobacco companies, particularly British American Tobacco (BAT), to protect their corporate reputations and position themselves as "socially responsible." Its establishment followed high-profile exposés of child labor on tobacco farms in the late 1990s, notably in Malawi, and the adoption of ILO Convention No. 182 in June 1999 outlawing the "worst forms of child labour".

The ECLT grew out of a joint agreement in 2000 between BAT and its front group the International Tobacco Growers' Association (ITGA) with The International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF) to develop a program of research and education aimed at eradicating child labor.

Other early ECLT members included Philip Morris, Imperial Tobacco, Japan Tobacco International, Gallaher and Scandinavian Tobacco.

British American Tobacco (BAT): "A Good Opportunity to Move to the Moral High Ground"

A peer-reviewed 2006 academic study on the ECLT Foundation's pilot project in Malawi concluded, after analyzing relevant BAT internal documents from 1998-2002, that the tobacco giant was using child labor projects as a reputational tool. It argued that:

"rather than actively and responsibly working to solve the problem of child labour in growing tobacco, the company acted to co-opt the issue to present themselves over as a 'socially responsible corporation' by releasing a policy statement claiming the company's commitment to end harmful child labour practices, holding a global child labour conference with trade unions and other key stakeholders, and contributing nominal sums of money for development projects largely unrelated to efforts to end child labour."

The study, by Otonez et al, revealed how the The International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF), ILO and International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) had commissioned a film that showed children as young as five working on tobacco farms in Malawi during the spring harvest in 1999. The idea was to put pressure on the companies and the Confederation of European Community Cigarette Manufacturers (CECCM) over its denials that child labor was occurring

Project Partners Past and Present

- Winrock International—U.S.-based implementing partner for ECLT “PROSPER” project working with the Government of Tanzania; Tabora Development Fund Trust (TDFT) and the Tanzania Association of Women Leaders in Agriculture and the Environment (TAWLAE). Winrock also works with ECLT member Japan Tobacco International on its child labour programme ARISE.
- Defense for Children International (DCI)—implementing partner in Guatemala
- UWESO—implementing partner in Uganda
- Save the Children Switzerland—appointed as an honorary adviser to the board in 2013; an implementing partner for projects in Malawi and Mozambique
- Creative Centre for Community Mobilization (CRECCOM)—Malawi 2016-2019
- Youth Net and Counselling (YONECO)—Malawi 2016-2019
- iDE and FAA—Mozambique project partners 2019

there. Internal BAT documents released to the public through a litigation settlement in America and now online at the Truth Tobacco Industry Documents database show that IUF General Secretary Ron Oswald had promised however, that the film would not be anti-tobacco and “would be consigned to the archives” if the CECCM and companies cooperated and acknowledged the child labor problem in Malawi.

The IUF signed a joint declaration on child labor in June 1999 with the International Tobacco Growers Association (ITGA), witnessed by ILO Executive Director Kari Tapiola. Correspondence between BAT and its U.K. public relations agency Hallmark that year shows a series of revised draft statements between IUF and International Tobacco Growers Association (ITGA). The final published version on the conference website - drafted by Hallmark and British American Tobacco – notably dropped the IUF’s proposed inclusion of “respect for workers’ rights to freedom of association (as defined in ILO Convention 97)”.

In October 2000, BAT co-organized a conference in Nairobi, Kenya, with the IUF and ITGA, titled “Eliminate Child Labour: Establishing Best Practices in Tobacco Farming.” According to the event brochure, the ILO’s Kari Tapiola was keynote speaker, alongside two BAT staff, the ITGA’s president and the IUF’s Ron Oswald. A BAT executive later deemed the conference “a huge success” in countering rising international concern among the U.N., OECD, ILO and EU over human rights and labour standards - an agenda BAT described as being pushed by NGOs and other stakeholders “who seemed to be winning.” BAT’s international development affairs manager Shabanji Opukah wrote on Nov. 9, 2000:

“Clearly, the successful launch of the [ECLT] has given us an excellent and rare opportunity to engage with our stakeholders on major platforms around what are today amongst some of the high profile and contentious global issues affecting reputation of international business.”

adding that:

“Our partnership with the IUF and ITGA gives us a good opportunity to move to the moral high ground on this particular issue and we would like to make use of it in line with the BAT CORA [Consumer and Regulatory Affairs] strategy for recognition as a responsible tobacco company. This strategy identifies corporate conduct and accountability as one of the six reputation management initiatives. Stakeholder engagement and communication is in this platform.”

According to the minutes of an October 2001 Tobacco Workers Trade Group meeting at which ECLT’s executive director, Marc Hofstetter, and project manager Alain Berthoud introduced themselves, the IUF was to hold the rotating presidency of the ECLT Foundation for the first two years. Ron Oswald was its first President.

The IUF is no longer a board member of the ECLT Foundation. An ILO document on its tobacco industry partnerships in 2017 states that, “the IUF served as ECLT’s President until 2013, when it withdrew, citing the viability and success of the Foundation as reasons for its decision to direct its capacity devoted to eliminating child labour elsewhere”.

Board Members

ECLT's board is mostly made up of industry executives from cigarette manufacturers and tobacco leaf growers.

Antonio Abrunhosa, President and Mercedes Vazquez from the International Tobacco Growers Association

Kirsty Green-Mann, Vice-President (until April 2018); succeeded by Surinder Sond, Imperial Brands

Mike Ligon, ECLT Vice-President (from April), Universal Leaf Tobacco Corporate Affairs. A regular speaker at the Global Tobacco and Nicotine Forum

Marcus McKay, Treasurer (until April 2018); succeeded by Matthew Wilde, Contraf-Nicotex-Tobacco GMBH

Simon Green, Treasurer (from April) Alliance One International Inc. An attendee at the Global Tobacco and Nicotine Forum in 2016

Miguel Coleta and Mauro Gonzalez, Philip Morris International

Jennie Galbraith, British American Tobacco An attendee at the Global Tobacco and Nicotine Forum in 2013 when she was group head of sustainability at BAT

Kazim Gürel, SUNEL Ticaret Turk A.S. One of Turkey's oldest leaf tobacco dealers and manufactures chewing and smoking tobacco. Its largest customer is PMI.

Emmett Harrison, Swedish Match

Elaine McKay, Japan Tobacco International and Japan Tobacco Inc, CSR Manager

Linda McMurtry, Hail & Cotton Inc, a tobacco leaf dealer, with purchasing and process capabilities to provide Flue Cured, Burley, Dark Fired, Oriental and other tobacco manufacturers.

Glyn Morgan, Premium Tobacco

Mette Valentin, Scandinavian Tobacco Group

Funding Agreements with the International Labour Organization (ILO)

In March 2017, the ILO disclosed that it had received more than USD \$5.3 million from ECLT since 2002, but did not provide details on how this funding was spent. Its relationship with ECLT involved acting as an observer to ECLT's board, and the following agreements:

- The first agreement between ILO and ECLT covered the period 2002 to 2010 and aimed to fund research on child labor practices in Indonesia, the Dominican Republic, East Africa, and specifically, eliminate child labor in Tanzania.
- The second agreement, covering the period between 2011 and 2015, focused on child labor in Malawi.
- The third agreement from 2015 until June 2018 was aimed at reducing child labor practices in Malawi, Uganda and Tanzania, promoting dialogue among tobacco-growers' organizations, and developing advice on hazardous tobacco farming work.

Relationship with UNICEF

From 2003 to 2005, the ECLT Foundation funded a program to prevent child labor in tobacco growing in the Philippines, in which UNICEF acted as an adviser.

In a study published in the journal Paediatrics on the tobacco industry and children's rights, the authors describe ECLT as one of several front groups used by the industry to successfully engage with UNICEF.

"After UNICEF's corporate engagement guidelines were loosened in 2003, tobacco companies successfully engaged with UNICEF directly and via front groups, including the Eliminating Child Labour in Tobacco Growing Foundation. This was part of an overall tobacco industry strategy to improve its corporate image, infiltrate the United Nations, and weaken global tobacco-control efforts."

Questionable Impact on Child Labor Practices

After almost two decades of work by the ECLT, child labor remains entrenched in many tobacco-growing regions and in 2017 was reported to be on the increase. The ECLT points to its success in removing over 182,000 children from tobacco farms since 2011 in Kyrgyzstan, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Uganda, and sending 27,000 to school and vocational training. Critics of the Foundation and its tobacco industry governors meanwhile argue that it has done little to redress or target the structural issues afflicting these regions, instead publicising the positive, and often individually-focused, stories.

Meanwhile an investigation by The Guardian in April 2018 found "rampant" child labor in Malawi, Indonesia and Mexico. The ILO similarly noted in 2017 that "surveys indicate that child labour is rampant in impoverished tobacco-growing communities".

Anthropologist Professor Marty Otanez from the University of Colorado, lead author of the previously mentioned 2006 study on BAT and ECLT in Malawi, is a long-standing observer of tobacco farming in that country. Otanez told The

After almost two decades of work by the ECLT, child labor remains entrenched in many tobacco-growing regions and in 2017 was reported to be on the increase.

ECLT Team

From its inception, the ECLT Foundation has typically employed highly experienced human rights and development professionals, many of them with solid track records of working within the U.N. system either as staff or consultants. This strategy appears to have been critical to tobacco companies' insistence of the organization's "independence" and for its dealings with the ILO and other UN agencies such as UNICEF.

Internal BAT documents, now online at the Truth Tobacco Industry Documents archive, show that BAT, when setting up ECLT in 2000, was "looking for an executive with experience in the U.N. and NGO sectors and ability to raise funds on a global scale. The individual will also need to have high diplomatic campaigning and lobbying skills and a good span of experience in these areas. Knowledge of French and other U.N. languages is also desired..."

In one case, ECLT's new executive director in 2008 came directly from working with the ILO in Tanzania.

Guardian that welfare projects were "pushing out goodwill on behalf of tobacco companies to address some of the problems but avoid the harder issues of leaf prices and living and earnings." Tenant farmers on tobacco estates in Malawi, for example, earn just USD \$224 a year.

In September 2017, the Malawi tobacco farmers' union TOAWUM wrote: "on behalf of hundreds of thousands of Malawi farmers" to the ILO's Governing Body, asking it to ban public-private partnerships with the tobacco industry at its upcoming 331st meeting. In its letter, TOAWUM stated that initiatives such as the ECLT Foundation:

"insufficiently address root causes of tobacco-related child labour, which is endemic poverty among tobacco farmers. That poverty is exacerbated by contracting schemes developed by the very companies funding some projects for ECLT."

TOAWUM's criticism echoes that of the South East Asia Tobacco Control Alliance (SEATCA), which wrote to ILO Director Clarence Thomas in 2013 following its own research into child labor and ECLT's projects in the ASEAN region. It highlighted the hypocrisy of an industry whose business model perpetuates child labor in its supply chain:

"Unlike other industries that have a zero tolerance for child labour, the tobacco industry has set no such policies or target date for complete eradication of child labour. The tobacco industry, while publicly condemning child labour, continues to purchase and use leaves that are produced by child labour and profits from them."

"The tobacco industry's miniscule contributions through so-called corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities including the ECLT are a whitewash of the problem. The more serious issue is that these CSR activities provide a convenient platform for tobacco companies to gain access to policy makers who are responsible to approve and implement tobacco control measures. The endorsement from IPEC [International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour] and ILO of ECLT only serves to strengthen and protect the tobacco industry."

Legal Threats Against International Tobacco Control Groups

In July 2018, amid a concerted campaign by WHO and 100 global NGOs to get the ILO to terminate all of its tobacco-related partnerships, the ECLT Foundation instructed a Swiss law firm to issue a "formal notice before legal proceedings" against the U.S.-based NGO Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids (CTFK).

The legal notice from Capt & Wyss, solicitors for the ECLT, emphasized the organization's "independence" as a registered non-profit Swiss organization, and

demanded that CTFK “immediately” delete from a press release posted on its website the “defamatory,” “untrue,” and “misleading” references to ECLT as a:

- “tobacco-industry-dominated group”;
- “front group for tobacco industry interests under the guise of a corporate social responsibility initiative” and;
- that it “represents an alliance of tobacco companies and growers—led exclusively by the tobacco industry”.

In addition, the legal notice stated that ECLT “seeks a public and online apology, respectively rectification, relating to this unlawful publication.”

In his response, CTFK’s President Matthew L. Myers noted that his organization’s descriptions of ECLT were “well-documented based on the best publicly available information” and “factually accurate” and were also already in the public domain. CTFK received no subsequent response to its reply from either the lawyers or ECLT.

The ECLT had previously issued a press release on its website in May 2018 rejecting “front group assertions” made against it in an

April 2018 article published in the American Academy of Pediatrics as “baseless” and “false.” The article on “The Tobacco Industry and Children’s Rights” examines the tobacco industry’s engagement with UNICEF, including ECLT.

ECLT had also published an online rebuttal to an October 2017 press release by the global NGO Framework Convention Alliance on Tobacco Control (FCA) in which it rejected FCA’s “false” assertions that “Reports have repeatedly claimed that ECLT’s work aims to keep farmers dependent on aid from the tobacco industry to avoid them abandoning the sector.(sic)” and that “ECLT allows the tobacco industry to promote a positive public image while continuing the practices that cause labour exploitation in the first place”. The rebuttal was reprinted in “Tobacco Reporter”.

Following emails from ECLT’s executive director that same month, the FCA later received a “cease and desist” notice from Capt & Wyss in January 2018 specifically noting the first point above and the FCA’s public “Letter to the UN Secretary General on Cooperation between the Tobacco Industry and the ILO,” signed by over 180 organizations in October 2017. Although the FCA did take down both documents as a precautionary response, no further action was taken and these remain in the public domain.

Tobacco Tactics

Our rigorously-sourced profiles of the key players, organisations, allies and techniques of the tobacco industry make Tobacco Tactics a vital resource. Learn more at www.exposetobacco.org/tobaccotactics

STOP’s Rapid Engaged Action Team (REACT)

REACT provides tobacco industry monitoring, research, expertise in industry arguments and strategic communication, customized to the local context. Learn more at www.exposetobacco.org/react



Acknowledgements and Authorship

Stopping Tobacco Organizations and Products (STOP) is a global tobacco industry watchdog whose mission is to expose the tobacco industry strategies and tactics that undermine public health. STOP is funded by Bloomberg Philanthropies (www.bloomberg.org) and is a partnership between The Global Center for Good Governance in Tobacco Control, The Tobacco Control Research Group at the University of Bath, International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease and Vital Strategies. This brief was prepared for STOP by The Tobacco Control Research Group at the University of Bath.

