



**CHILDREN AND STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN
TAJIKISTAN'S COTTON HARVEST**
Annual Assessment 2012



The interpretations of the cotton monitoring campaign's results and broader economic and social trends in Tajikistan, as well as the included conclusions and recommendations, exclusively reflect those of the Assessment's author, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the International Organization for Migration or the United States State Department's Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs.

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This Annual Assessment of the Exploitation of Children and Students in Tajikistan's 2012 Cotton Harvest was developed by the International Organization for Migration's Dushanbe's Counter-Trafficking Unit in coordination with its local NGO partners and with funding from the United States State Department's Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs.

Author: Scarborough, Isaac
Editor: Marquez, Eurídice
Cover Design: Shirak, Patrik


International Organization for Migration, Tajikistan Mission
#22A, Azizbekov St., Vtoroy Proezd
734013 Dushanbe, Tajikistan
Tel: +992 (37) 221-03-02 | Fax: +992 (37) 251-00-62
<http://www.iom.tj> | dushanbeinfo@iom.int

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Combating human trafficking remains a key concern for the International Organization for Migration (IOM). International research conducted by IOM has demonstrated that more than half of all human trafficking victims have been the target of labour exploitation, and forced and trafficked labour is a central part of worldwide human trafficking. In this framework, the use of coerced or forced child labour in cotton harvest falls squarely within the scope of IOM's work to undermine human trafficking. In Tajikistan, IOM was worked extensively over the past few years to assist the Government of Tajikistan with the implementation of its National Action Plan on Combating Human Trafficking in the Republic of Tajikistan for 2011–2013, especially in regards to monitoring and eliminating child labour in the country's cotton harvest.

For the past three years, IOM has worked closely with both local NGO partners and government labour inspectors to develop and implement an effective and sustainable campaign to monitor the use of child labour in the cotton harvest. Over the course of the 2010 and 2011 harvests, IOM developed a successful referral mechanism for observed cases of child labour exploitation, which has been subsequently applied during the 2012 harvest as well. Together with awareness raising campaigns conducted amongst district education department figures, teachers, and parents, IOM and its partners have seen significant results over the past three harvests, and a gradual shift away from forced or coerced child labour. The successes achieved over the past few years would hardly have been possible without the efforts of IOM's local NGO partners, nor those of the Tajik government agencies with which the organization has worked. IOM is especially grateful to the Inter-Ministerial Commission for Combating Trafficking in Persons (IMCCTIP), the Ministries of Labour and Social Protection of the Population and Education, and the General Prosecutor's Office for their cooperation throughout the project's implementation. It goes without saying that this monitoring project would not have been possible without the financial support from the Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs at the United States Department of State.

IOM strongly believes that the success of the Monitoring of Children and Students in the Cotton Fields in Tajikistan project points not only to progress made against the use of child labour in the cotton harvest, but also demonstrates the ongoing value of cooperation between government agencies, civil society, and international organizations. Together, it is hoped, such cases of labour exploitation and trafficking can be altogether more effectively eliminated and prevented.

Tajma Kurt
Chief of Mission, IOM Tajikistan
March 2013



A product of the ongoing ‘Monitoring of Children and Students in the Cotton Fields in Tajikistan’ project conducted by International Organization for Migration (IOM) and sponsored by the United States Department of State’s Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), this report represents the third annual assessment of the project’s monitoring, analytic, and preventative measures. As in previous years, the project’s objective remains the provision of assistance to the Government of Tajikistan (GOT) in the latter’s implementation of its National Action Plan on Combating Human Trafficking, 2011–2013. IOM’s efforts, as outlined in this report, have been focused within the scope of this Action Plan on monitoring and preventing the use of child labour in cotton harvesting – in addition to furthering efforts to move the Tajik labour market away from the broader use of child labour as per the Government of Tajikistan’s ‘State Strategy on Labour Market Development until 2020.’ As in previous years, the 2012 Cotton Monitoring Campaign’s immediate objectives remained an assessment of the overall progress made in Tajikistan to prevent the use of child labour in the cotton harvest, as well the heightening of coordination between NGOs and GOT agencies and general social awareness about the exploitation of child labour.

With these objectives in mind, and building upon previous years’ efforts and successes, IOM made sure during the 2012 Tajik cotton harvest monitoring (October–December 2012) to strengthen relationships with individual government officials, the Tajik Government’s Inter-Ministerial Commission for Combating Trafficking in Persons (IMCCTIP), and others along the effective cotton monitoring referral mechanism developed in 2011. In addition, cotton-picking monitoring was conducted in coordination with both government officials and independent NGOs. The results of this year’s monitoring campaign were then compared against statistics from previous monitoring efforts, and placed in the context of broader trends occurring in Tajikistan in relation to the production of cotton and the use of child labour.

Employing the monitoring model developed in 2011, IOM focused the efforts of its NGO partners and its own monitors on face-to-face interviews with farm owners, managers, and workers. Throughout, IOM and its institutional partners worked to determine the legality of cotton-picking practices in the regions targeted for monitoring (the age of cotton pickers, the services provided to them, the number of hours worked) as well as the degree to which student and child workers were engaged in the picking of cotton in

ways that did not negatively affect their health, schooling, or personal development (frequently, in cases without coercion or pressure on the part of parents, school directors, employers, or others). Over the course of the 2012 cotton picking season, IOM and its partners visited 628 farms and were able to conduct 945 interviews with cotton farm owners and workers and distribute 2,664 brochures.

By and large, monitoring conducted by IOM and its partners in 2012 confirmed earlier trends pointing to the decreased but persistent use of child labour in cotton harvesting in Tajikistan. Altogether, cases of labour violation that were observed by both IOM’s partners and government agencies proved far more limited than in years past. Although children and students were observed to be involved in the cotton harvest in nearly every district monitored by IOM and its partners during 2012, the vast majority were determined to be working for a limited period after school hours, or in other words participating in the harvest in a way that did not negatively affect their health, schooling, or personal development, and in many cases largely in compliance with the Tajik law regulating the use of student and child labour.

Today, as little as 7 per cent of the cotton in Tajikistan is likely picked by children.

According to reports collected by IOM and its regional partners, fewer students than in previous years were reported to be missing school as a result of their cotton picking, and even fewer were determined to have been forcibly ‘mobilized’ into participating in the harvest (‘mobilized’ is a term frequently used in Tajikistan to refer to cases of coerced labour). As an overall percentage of active cotton pickers, moreover, children have decreased rapidly in the past few years. While research previously conducted in Tajikistan has frequently placed the total amount of cotton picked by children in Tajikistan in the range of 20–50 per cent (IOM, 2004; EJF, 2007), data collected by its NGO partners indicates that children now make up approximately 7 per cent of the cotton picking workforce, and pick an equivalent amount of the total harvest.

At the same time, however, cases of labour violations persisted and were reported by both IOM’s NGO partners and during the course of the organization’s own monitoring visits in coordination with Tajik labour inspectors. In multiple districts, schoolchildren were found to have missed class in order to pick cotton, in at least one case having been coerced into doing so by their teacher. In two districts, moreover, larger groups of schoolchildren were determined to have been ‘mobilized’ to the harvest by their schools, as a result of which fines were levied against the farms on which they were working and the schools at which they ought to have been studying. In total, four cases were referred through IOM’s established reporting mechanism to the Tajik Government’s Inter-Ministerial Commission for Combating Trafficking in Persons for further investigation – a slight decrease on the previous two years’ totals.

Cases of Child Labour Reported to the IMCCTIP, 2010–2012			
	2010	2011	2012
Khatlon Oblast	1	1	1
Sughd Oblast	3	4	3
Regions of RS	1	0	0
Total:	5	5	4

In addition to these four organized cases of coerced or forced child labour, cases of individual children – including those under the age of 14, who are prohibited to work according to Tajik law – working longer than regulated hours on their own or their parents’ behalf remained persistent across the whole of Tajikistan. In fact, the 2012 Cotton Monitoring Campaign found that parental encouragement continues to promote labour violations involving child labour in the cotton harvest. While school directors, teachers, and educational department officials have grown increasingly less willing to organize their students to assist with the cotton harvest, parents in many cases remain convinced of the economic necessity of their children’s participation, and it is here that additional effort may need to be focused in future monitoring efforts.

Finally, it is worth noting that while cases of coerced or forced child labour have been reduced notably in the past few years, IOM’s NGO partners continue to find further and persistent labour violations in their interviews with farm workers and owners. Those adults picking cotton are frequently left without pay, or paid only with left-over *guzpoya* cotton stalks; contracts are rarely, if ever, signed between cotton pickers and their employees; the conditions of labour on cotton farms are frequently in violation of Tajikistan’s Labour Code. While beyond the immediate scope of the 2012 Cotton Monitoring Assessment, these concerns may also come to the forefront in future monitoring efforts.

In comparison to previous years, coordination with the IMCCTIP and other government agencies was particularly high during the 2012 Cotton Monitoring Campaign. In general, the Tajik government has increased its efforts in the past few years to limit and prevent the use of child labour in the cotton harvest, and the IMCCTIP’s efforts during this last cotton campaign were indicative of this trend. Following the start of the 2012 monitoring campaign, the IMCCTIP actively not only involved itself in IOM’s own monitoring efforts, but reached out to citizens around the country with a request for information about observed cases of labour violation. In addition, in September 2012, Tajikistan’s Ministry of Education sent all of the country’s regional educational administrations a letter that in no uncertain terms made it clear that the use of child lab or in the cotton harvest would be punishable under Tajik law.

This annual assessment aims to provide a general overview of the monitoring conducted by IOM and its partners during the 2012 cotton harvest in Tajikistan, as well as to place the results of this monitoring in the historical and socio-political context necessary to clarifying ongoing trends in the use of child and student labour in the country’s cotton harvesting. While it cannot pretend nor claims to provide data on the whole of Tajikistan’s cotton sector, nor each of the country’s farms, it does contain an important broad overview covering the majority of cotton-producing regions and a wide cross-section of the many individuals involved in the harvest of cotton. In the Introduction to the 2012 Monitoring Results, the Tajik cotton sector is reviewed in general terms, with current production and export levels compared to earlier periods as well as the Soviet Union. In addition, this section provides a brief summary of the legal standards and mechanisms available in Tajikistan in relation to the use of child labour in agriculture work. Following the 2012 Monitoring Results themselves, this assessment additionally places the broader trends and



individual cases of child labour in comparison to previous studies on the subject, as well as in the wider context of the Tajik legal, media, and social environments. Finally, relying upon the results of the 2012 Monitoring and analysis of broader trends, this assessment offers a series of general and legal recommendations for consideration by competent bodies in the Government of Tajikistan and its institutional partners.



COTTON PRODUCTION IN TAJIKISTAN

Cotton remains one of Tajikistan's most important exports, and a central piece of its national economy. While overall cotton production has fallen by 30 per cent over the past years, together with a decrease in total acreage seeded by cotton of nearly half (GOT, 2011), the sector remains significant for both the nation's agricultural sector and its gross exports. Approximately 20 per cent of all sown acreage in Tajikistan is seeded with cotton, and it makes up 16 per cent of the nation's exports. The third largest producer and exporter of cotton in Central Asia, following Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, Tajikistan continues to build upon the cotton agricultural industry developed during the Soviet period. Although Tajik cotton production remains far below its late 1980s peak of 800,000 to 950,000 metric tons per year, the government has reported significant increases in per-acre productivity in recent years, and significant efforts and funds are continued to be spent for the ongoing development of the sector. Initial figures published in early 2013 by the Tajik Government Statistics Committee place the country's total 2012 cotton production at 417,977 metric tons, a slight increase over the previous year's result (GOT, 2013b).

Tajik cotton production reached 417,977 metric tons in 2012.

Each year, cotton is harvested over an extended period of time, generally from September through the end of November. The length of the harvest is explained in part by the need to reap the same fields four to five times: after harvesting one field, workers either rest or move on to another field while the first field is left to sit for another two weeks and further cotton bolls open. Harvests can be cut short by inclement weather – snow and particularly cold weather ruin cotton – or start earlier depending on the time of planting in the spring or the quality of the expected harvest. Although the spread of *dekhkan*, or private, farms has made the exact dates of the harvest harder to predict, the vast majority of private farmers also adhere to the three month harvest period with two week field rotations interspersed throughout the period.

Privatization of Tajikistan's cotton farms – previously state-run *kolkhozes*, *sovkozhes*, and other collective organizations – began following the fall of the USSR in 1991, although particular emphasis on the reorganization of collective farms was started only in 1996. Over the next eight years, the vast majority of previously state-run farms were privatized, and the right to use the land divided amongst previous collective farm members. In 2004, the government of Tajikistan declared that the majority of collective farms had now been privatized in one form or another, with individuals, families, or business collectives

taking over all but a handful of previously government run farms. At the same time, however, the land itself was not privatized, since Tajik law does not allow the purchase or sale of land itself, only the right to its use for a particular period of time. Having been provided with the rights to one or another piece of a former collective farm, many newly minted “*dekhkan*” farmers were also given the debts accrued by their piece of land as part of the former collective farm. As a result, *dekhkan* farmers were left to make ongoing debt payments to the collective farms’ creditors – in many cases the same cotton holding companies that are licensed by the state to purchase cotton from the *dekhkans*, sell their production on the international market, and provide supplies and seeds to the *dekhkan* farmers themselves. Thus notwithstanding the privatization of collective farms and steps taken in 2009 to liberalize farmer’s right to choose the crops sown on their land, the majority of cotton-farming *dekhkans* remain locked in a cycle of increasing production and debt: each year, they are obligated to produce a certain amount of cotton, against which loans are made and agricultural inputs such as seeds and fertilizer are provided. Given the links between the holding companies and government structures and banks, moreover, local and provincial government officials remain able to dictate production quotas even without the previously official right to do so.

Cotton is grown throughout Tajikistan, with the exception of the Gorno-Badakshan Autonomous Oblast. The majority of cotton harvested comes from Khatlon Oblast, with additional production in Sughd Oblast and the Regions of Republican Subordination around the capital, Dushanbe. In each particular region – and regional subdivision – one or another cotton holding company holds a virtual monopoly, and competition is basically non-existent amongst the companies servicing cotton *dekhkan* farmers. Cotton farmers, heavily indebted and largely unable to change their crops, are heavily incentivized to increase production however they can, a fact only furthered by recent increases in payments made to *dekhkans* for each ton of cotton produced.



CHILD LABOUR IN THE COTTON HARVEST

In recent years, the government of Tajikistan has increased its efforts to prohibit the use of child labour in the harvest of cotton. In April 2009, President Emomali Rahmon gave a speech to the Tajik parliament, the Majlisi Oli on the topic, and categorically stated that “executive bodies of the state authority in oblasts, cities, and districts are mandated to categorically refrain from involving students and children in field work, especially in the cotton harvest.” This followed on the heels of the US Department of Labour’s increased concern over the conditions of Tajik cotton’s production and comments made by the US Embassy in Dushanbe on the subject. Later in 2009, the US Department of Labour included Tajik cotton in its ‘Executive Order 13126: Prohibition of Acquisition of Products Produced by Forced or Indentured Child Labour’ as a good that ‘might have been produced’ with the use of forced or child labour, and international attention has been ongoing in the years since (DOL, 2009).

Notwithstanding international and local government pressure, however, child labour remains in use across Tajikistan’s cotton fields, supported in part by a host of historical and economic factors. While *dekhan* farmers have a strong incentive to increase their individual production of cotton from year to year, mechanization or other technologically based methods of increasing productivity remain beyond their economic means. Given a broad lack of agricultural machinery, moreover, cotton remains a crop picked nearly entirely by hand in Tajikistan, thereby increasing the demand for seasonal labour during the cotton harvesting months of September – November. Tajikistan’s population is remarkably young, with figures from UNICEF placing more than 40 per cent of the population under the age of 18 and nearly 35 per cent under the age of 14 (UNICEF, 2011); given the large number of adult men who have left the country to seek employment as labour migrants in Russia or other neighbouring countries, any increased demand for seasonal labour is likely to fall on the shoulders of students and schoolchildren. Given that the majority of cotton workers frequently come from the country’s poorest districts and received average monthly wages significantly lower than those employed in industry or other agricultural endeavours, moreover, even the minimal payment provided to children picking cotton – reported in 2012 at approximately 40–50 diram per kilogram – can be an important addition to family budgets. The fact that many families have also cited the importance of collecting the *guzpoya*, or left-over cotton stalks, that remains after a harvest

and are used through the winter to feed livestock and provide heating fuel only serves to further underline the economic status of those participating in the cotton harvest.



In addition to more structural economic factors, practices of organized coercion and pressure remain employed by some local government figures, school directors, and university officials. During the Soviet Union, the use of child labour in the cotton harvest was taken as a given and treated quite sanguinely, with open reference made to student and schoolchildren’s participation in the fields throughout the fall. In recent years – and especially following President Emomali Rahmon’s speech in 2009 – the mobilization of students and schoolchildren to cotton fields in the fall has been markedly reduced, but it does remain noted from time to time. In previous years’ cotton monitoring programs, IOM and its institutional partners have identified significant cases of student coercion and school-based pressure of children’s participation in the harvest. Cases that were later referred to the competent organs of the Tajik Ministry for Labour and Social Protection of the Population and the Inter-Ministerial Commission for Combating Trafficking in Persons have included pressure placed by school directors on children and their parents, the organized mobilization of college students, as well as incidents of teachers strongly suggesting that participating in the harvest would assist children in receiving good grades.

By and large, however, the use of child labour and the forced mobilization of students to the cotton harvest has decreased notably in the past few years, thanks in part both to the efforts of the Tajik government and the monitoring conducted by IOM and its institutional partners. This has resulted in the US Department of State removing Tajikistan from its “Watch List” of countries employing forced labour included in its annual Trafficking in Persons Report, and the US Department of Labour allowing for a reconsideration of Tajik cotton as a commodity produced with the use of forced or child labour, a status it has held since 2009 (as per the U.S. Department of Labor’s 2012 List of Goods Produced by Child Labour or Forced Labour, DOL, 2012).

There has also been a marked uptick in the number of *dekhkan* farmers, cotton pickers, and others in the industry demonstrating an awareness of the legal rights and restrictions overseeing cotton picking and the use of child labour in the agricultural sector, thereby underlining the importance of the monitoring and informative programs conducted by IOM and its partners in Tajikistan.

Awareness of child labour laws is on the rise in Tajikistan

GENERAL LEGAL ENVIRONMENT

The legal and regulatory environment covering the use of child labour in agriculture has remained consistent in Tajikistan over the past few years. A signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Tajikistan has since its ratification of this convention in 1993 worked to bring its own laws and regulations into line with the CRC and other international standards. Today, Tajik law allows for employment of minors between the ages of 14 and 18 for restricted periods of time between 2.5 and 7

hours per day, while at the same time officially banning children under the age of 14 from any paid employment.

In previous years, IOM and its partners have provided extensive legal analysis of Tajikistan's regulatory environment and laws overseeing the use of child and forced labour in cotton harvesting. For a detailed summary of the international conventions relevant to the use of child labour to which Tajikistan is party, as well a comparative analysis of the particular legislation in force in Tajikistan, the reader is referred to IOM's 2011 Assessment of the Exploitation of Children and Students during the Cotton Harvest in Tajikistan (IOM, 2011b, pp. 14-21).

2012 COTTON MONITORING CAMPAIGN



Building on the work done during the 2010 and 2011 cotton harvests, the 2012 ‘Monitoring of Children and Students in the Cotton Fields in Tajikistan’ project has aimed to clarify the degree to which children and students remain a part of the cotton harvest in Tajikistan, and to assist in their gradual removal from cotton fields. The project goal has remained providing targeted and case-specific assistance to the Government of Tajikistan in the latter’s implementation of its National Action Plan on Combating Human Trafficking, 2011–2013. IOM and its NGO partners have, through the implementation of an ongoing cotton monitoring campaign, worked to prevent and clarify the use of child and forced labour in the cotton harvest, as well as to oversee the implementation of Tajikistan’s National Action Plan as regards the use of child labour in agriculture on the regional level. Through ongoing and local-level monitoring, IOM and its NGO partners have been able to determine to what degree local *hukumats* and other regional government representatives have complied with national legislation, as well as the influence the Government of Tajikistan has exerted to ensure this compliance.

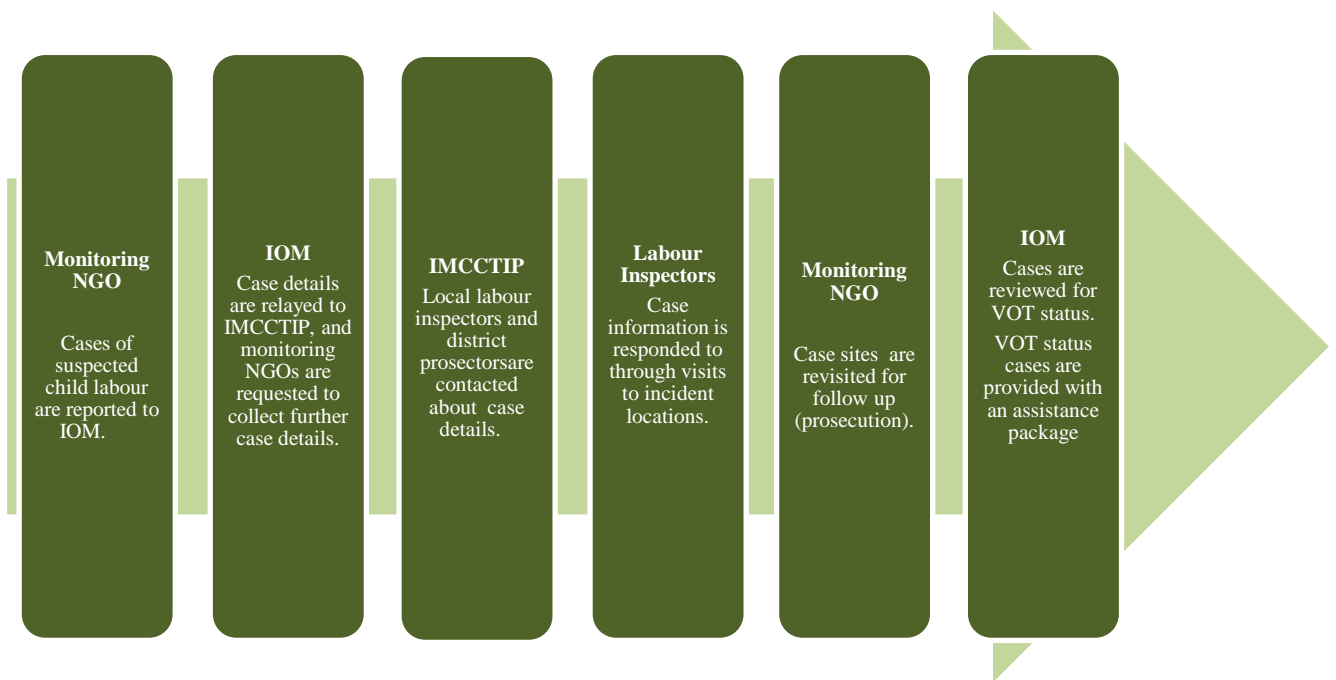
In order to effectively fulfil the stated project goal during the 2012 cotton harvest, IOM took the following steps. First, it reviewed and reaffirmed the reporting mechanism developed during the 2011 monitoring campaign and used successfully over the past few years to report cases of forced and child labour in Tajikistan. Second, it established, organized, and conducted a monitoring campaign together with its institutional NGO partners in cotton producing districts across Tajikistan. The 2012 campaign included visits to *dekhkan* farms, interviews with workers, and seminars conducted in cotton-producing districts following the end of the harvest. In addition, further attention was paid during the 2012 cotton season to the activities of journalists, and trainings were additionally held to incentivize and explain to journalists the process of cotton monitoring and oversight. Finally, the 2012 project analysed the results of the monitoring campaign for general and ongoing trends, the final result of which is the current 2012 Assessment.

REPORTING MECHANISM

Given its success during the 2011 Cotton Monitoring Campaign, IOM decided to reapply the previously developed Reporting Mechanism to the 2012 campaign. As in the previous year, this mechanism was intended to streamline the reporting of cases of child and forced labour and to ease the process by which

IOM or its NGO partners could contact and inform the competent government bodies about any and all violations.

In cases of labour violations, IOM’s NGO partners – those conducting the cotton monitoring – were requested to inform IOM immediately. Having been informed of the use of child labour or another possible labour violation, IOM’s Counter-Trafficking Unit provided any and all relevant information to the IMCCTIP, who then was asked by IOM to dispatch local labour inspectors to the site for further investigation. In addition, IOM also alerted a second NGO, under contract for the region of the violation, in order that this NGO also investigate the case. Information collected by the IMCCTIP and IOM’s NGO partners was collected and coordinated with the IMCCTIP’s labour inspector. Later, in ongoing coordination with the locally contracted NGO, IOM continued to work with the IMCCTIP to make sure that the case was brought to its proper completion and that any proven labour violations were properly responded to. This reporting mechanism – and the possibility for citizens to actively participate by informing IOM or the IMCCTIP’s labour inspectors about observed cases of labour violation – was later published by the IMCCTIP in their own annual report for 2012.



Labour Violation Reporting Mechanism



COTTON MONITORING METHODOLOGY

During the 2012 cotton harvest, monitoring was conducted from October through December.

In order to include as wide as possible a spectrum of different cotton producing regions and local *dekhkan* farms in the monitoring, 25 districts in Khatlon and Sughd Oblasts, as well as the Regions of Republican Subordination, were chosen for monitoring. While individual farms monitored during the 2012 cotton harvest may have differed from previous years, the 25 districts remained the same from the preceding 2010 and 2011 monitoring campaigns. This allowed IOM and its 12 contracted NGO partners to more accurately compare the levels of child labour employed during the 2012 harvest to those in previous years. Replacing some districts with alternative monitoring sites would have complicated the campaigns comparative aspect, and the 25 districts were considered a reasonable national sample with which to track child labour over the course of the past three years.

Khatlon Oblast	Sughd Oblast	RRS
Bokhtar	B. Gafurov	Hissar
Farkhor	J. Rasulov	Rudaki
Hamadoni	Mastchoh	Tursunzoda
Rumi	Spitamen	
Jilikul	Zafarobod	
Jomi		
Kabodiyon		
Khuroson		
Kulyab		
N. Khusrav		
Panj		
Khumsangir		
Shahrituz		
Vakhsh		
Vose		
Yovon		

25 Districts were targeted during the 2012 Cotton Monitoring Campaign.

As during the 2011 campaign, the 2012 monitoring project was intended to provide a general overview of the use of child and forced labour in the cotton harvest, and to collect situational data on observed cases of labour violations or exploitation.

In addition, the 2012 campaign was aimed at the prevention of labour exploitation and, when appropriate, the reference of such cases to competent government bodies. As a result, the 2012 monitoring campaign was focused around face-to-face interviews conducted by IOM and its NGO partners with *dekhkan* owners, managers, workers, and children involved in the cotton harvest. In addition, both IOM's NGO partners and the organization itself, during joint monitoring visits conducted with government officials, worked to incorporate children's parents, teachers, and school officials, whether during one-on-one interviews or broader educational seminars conducted in the 25 targeted districts following the completion of the 2012 monitoring campaign.

Interview questionnaires were developed by IOM and distributed to its NGO partners to ensure consistent data collection across the whole of districts targeted for monitoring. Farm managers, owners, and workers were asked about the *dekhkan* farms on which they worked, the number of employees, the condition of their labour and their pay. Cotton workers identified as children or possible students were to be asked a separate series of questions more focused on their reasons for participating in the cotton harvest and their own age and schooling. Following the completion of monitoring visits in one or another local district, moreover, each NGO partner conducted a short seminar at a local school in order to give parents, teachers, and others a broader spectrum of information about the legislation in force in Tajikistan regulating the use of child labour and the possible consequences of its violation. The results of these seminars, and comments from the NGOs involved, have also been included in this Annual Assessment, and can be found below, in Section V.b, Increasing Enforcement and Awareness. Following each seminar, moreover, as well as during interviews conducted in the cotton fields, IOM's NGO partners distributed more than 2500 informational brochures about child labour and related Tajik legislation.

At the end of each month, finally, each NGO involved in the 2012 cotton monitoring project was asked to provide IOM with a monthly project report providing both qualitative analysis of the interviews conducted over the course of the month, as well as quantitative figures representing the number of interviews conducted and the total number of children and students accounted for throughout the period of monitoring.

The following monitoring results represent a summarized analysis of the material collected and collated by IOM's NGO partners, as well as the interviews conducted by IOM representatives themselves in coordination with competent government bodies. As noted, these results are not meant to provide a full and comprehensive statistical analysis of the 2012 cotton harvest, nor of the use of child or forced labour across Tajikistan. Instead, they should be understood as a representative picture of the general trends in the use of student and child labour in the country during this year's harvest, as well as in comparison to previous years during which monitoring was conducted.

COTTON MONITORING RESULTS

The 2012 Cotton Monitoring Campaign and the data collected by IOM and its NGO partners over the course of three months' worth of monitoring visits demonstrate that children remain persistently involved in the cotton harvest across the whole of Tajikistan. Children were observed in the cotton fields in all of the 25 districts in which monitoring was conducted. Statistically speaking, however, the children observed represented only a small minority of the total workforce in the fields at any one time, and likely made up no more than 7 per cent across the whole of monitored districts. (This figure was calculated on the basis of information provided by IOM's NGO partners and its own observations during the 2012

harvest. The total number of workers in the fields during monitoring visits was compared to the total number of children observed, with the assumption that the proportion of child workers would have remained consistent across the whole the harvest.) In addition, both IOM and its partners found that the majority of children picking cotton were over the age of 14, and participating in the harvest in a way that was not negatively influencing their schooling, health, or development, since they were picking cotton after school, for short periods of time, and in accordance with Tajik legislation. In short, cases of forced or coerced labour, as well as more notable labour exploitations, proved to be a rarity.

Broadly speaking, the fewest cases of child labour or labour exploitation were to be found in the monitored districts in the Regions of Republican Subordination. In both Khatlon and Sughd Oblasts more notable examples of coerced child labour were noted and reported to the competent authorities from Tajikistan's Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population as well as the IMCCTIP.

IOM referred 4 cases of cotton-related labour exploitation to the IMCCTIP in 2012.

In the Regions of Republication Subordination no cases were referred to the IMCCTIP, whereas one case were sent for further investigation from Khatlon Oblast and three from Sughd Oblast. Amongst all of the districts monitored, moreover, Spitamen, Zafarabod, and J. Raslov Districts in Sughd Oblast stood out for the significant number of schoolchildren coerced into the fields and the level of cooperation in place between *dekhkan* farms and local education officials.

This level of close interaction, however, appears to have been an exception to the rule. In general, *dekhkan* farms in all three regions monitored reported that in recent years local district education departments and *hukumat* administrations have not only refused to pressure schoolchildren or students to participate in the harvest, but have admonished those who requested such labour. This has led to led, judging by the results of the 2012 Cotton Monitoring Campaign, to a much less organized use of child labour in the cotton harvest, whereby parents and children themselves are now the strongest factor leading to coerced child labour. The most frequent reasons provided by parents for their inclusion of children into the harvest is the need to boost the family's yearly budget, as well as the common complaint made by mothers of having nowhere to leave their children while they themselves pick. Children point to the need to purchase school supplies, clothes for the winter, and the desire to earn additional pocket money for their own purposes – as well as also noting their obligation to help their families' financial position.

Over the course of the monitoring visits conducted by IOM's 12 NGO partners, as well as those conducted by organization representatives and government labour inspectors, a total of 628 *dekhkan* farms were visited. During these visits interviews were conducted with 491 farm owners, managers, and brigade leaders, as well as additional 454 interviews with those working the cotton fields. This included 41 farms visited by IOM and labour inspections representatives during extended monitoring trips in October, and 587 covered by contracted NGO partners. During the visits, 855 children were observed participating in the cotton harvest, many of whom were also interviewed and whose perspective provided an important view on the motivations behind their cotton picking and the broader trends at play influencing the cotton harvest as a whole.

The following pages include short summaries of the monitoring visits conducted in each district in the three noted regions over the course of October –December 2012, along with remarks on the use of child labour in each district and any particular labour violations observed and reported upon.

KHATLON OBLAST

Bokhtar District

IOM's NGO partner in Bokhtar District conducted monitoring visits to 40 farms from 15 October to 30 December. During these visits the NGO held interviews with 34 managers and *dekhkan* owners, as well as with 11 workers. Throughout the period of monitoring the NGO observed a total of 40 children at work in the cotton harvest. According to the NGO, however, all of the children observed were not coerced into the fields, but had instead come to the fields after school to assist their families and add to the general family budget. In addition, the NGO reported, local education department officials in the district have made distinct efforts in recent years to track student attendance during the cotton harvest and actively undermine children's participation in the yearly picking.

By and large, joint inspections by IOM and labour inspectors found only adults working the cotton fields during October 2012. Where children were noted, they were picking cotton in the company of their parents and in a fashion that did not negatively affect their health, schooling, or personal development. Although IOM and the government labour inspectors reminded farm managers and parents of the official ban on the use of the children under the age of fourteen in agricultural labour, no fines or administrative violations were issued.

Farkhor and Hamadoni Districts

Over the course of monitoring visits conducted from 15 October to through the end of December 2012, IOM's NGO partner in Hamadoni and Farkhor Districts visited a total of 49 *dekhkan* farms and interviewed 49 farm owners and managers. In addition, they spoke with 86 farm workers and observed 26 children at work in the fields, nearly all of whom turned out to be in the tenth and eleventh grades. These children reported that they came to the cotton fields after their classes in order to earn additional income, which they are paid daily after working for 2 to 3 hours. No cases of labour exploitation or forced child labour were observed during the NGO's monitoring visits, although the NGO did note that at the time of their visits the harvest had already been nearly completed, leaving open the possibility of earlier cases of child labour having gone unobserved.

During joint inspection visits conducted by IOM and government representatives to Hamadoni District in Khatlon, only a few children were observed in the cotton fields. These children had come to pick cotton after school with their families, and although their parents were reminded by IOM representatives of the legal restrictions in place on the use of child labour, no official violations were issued.

At one dekhkan farm, however, a group of six schoolchildren from the 7th-9th grades were observed picking cotton without parental supervision. When interviewed by IOM and government labour inspectors, the children stated that they had taken a day off from school to pick cotton. IOM and labour inspectors subsequently visited the children's school to discuss the situation with the school's director. The latter stated that he had frequently told children not to miss school for the cotton harvest, but that some parents chose to encourage their children to pick cotton instead of attending class. Labour inspectors reiterated to the school director the need to aggressively limit

Children were observed skipping school to pick cotton in Hamadoni District.

children's participation in the cotton harvest and referred the case to the local prosecutor's office for further investigation.

No children were observed during inspection visits to *dekhkan* farms in Farkhor District. Adult cotton pickers on a variety of farms, moreover, told IOM and government labour inspectors that children had been largely removed from the fields this year, given better organization of *dekhkan* members and an earlier start to the cotton harvest. Labour inspectors from the government informed farm managers of the requirement to keep the amount of child labour limited, but no violations were observed or cited.



Rumi District

The NGO partner conducting monitoring in Rumi District on behalf of IOM visited 21 *dekhkan* farms in the district between 19 October and 20 December. During these visits, the NGO partner interviewed 19 farm owners and managers, as well as 36 adult workers and 33 children who were working in the fields. For the most part, the children observed were picking cotton outside of school hours and in the company of their parents – that is, in a manner that did not negatively affect their health, schooling, or personal development. There was one notable exception, however, where 25 schoolchildren from one school were seen picking cotton during school hours. The children reported that they had left school in order to work in the fields for the day, and motivated their decision by their need to earn money for the upcoming holiday of Kurban Bayram.

IOM's NGO partner later visited the school from which the schoolchildren had come and verified that these children were missing classes, although there was no indication that the school was either aware, or approved, of the children's action. The case was referred to IOM for further investigation.

During joint inspection visits paid by IOM and government labour inspectors to *dekhkan* farms in Rumi District, no extensive labour violations were uncovered and no fines issued. While children were noted in the fields of one farm, the farm owner explained to IOM's representatives that he was aware of the legal restrictions on the use of child labour, and had frequently encouraged his managers not to let children participate in the harvest.

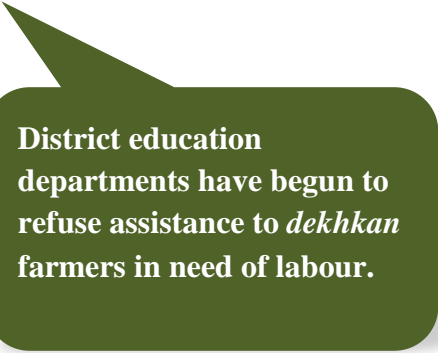
Jilikul District

IOM's NGO partner in Jilikul District conducted monitoring visits in the region from 16 October to 19 December. Over the course of this period the NGO visited 19 *dekhkan* farms in the district and was able to speak with 18 farm managers and owners, as well as 21 workers. Although school aged children were seen at the majority of farms in the district, IOM's partner that all of the 21 children observed had come to the fields voluntarily after the completion of their classes in order to help their parents and to earn money for their own clothes, textbooks, and school supplies. No cases of organized coercion were reported in the district.

In conversations with local farm representatives and workers, IOM's local NGO partner determined that not only were there fewer children this year than last in the district, but more farm workers demonstrated a working knowledge of the regulations covering the use of child labour in the cotton harvest.

At the same time, however, the NGO did report cases of labour violations related to adult workers. For example, on one *dekhkan* farm the workers' brigade leader reported that his workers had not received monetary wages for months, and so far had only been provided with the *guzpoya* cotton stalks in terms of payment. The brigade leader's own salary, he reported, had not been paid for seven months. As with the children assisting with the cotton harvest, the adult workers also reported that no written agreement or contract of any kind had been signed between farm workers and owners. While IOM's NGO partner was not in a position to follow up on the brigade leader's situation, it is hoped that further monitoring will limit cases of pay withholding or other labour violations.

In addition to interviews conducted with farm workers and manager, IOM's regional NGO partner also arranged meetings with the Jilikul Deputy District Chairman, Mehriniso Nasrulloeva. In these meetings Nasrulloeva also demonstrated awareness of the labour laws regulating the use of children in the cotton harvest, and also emphasized the degree to which the local education department has worked to limit the coercion of children by teachers or school directors. In particular, she pointed out that when, towards the beginning of the cotton harvest, two managers of larger *dekhkan* farms had asked the district administration for assistance in mobilizing children to the fields they were not only refused but reminded of the laws outlawing such activity. It is worth noting, however, that awareness of these laws was found to be much lower amongst both children working in the fields and their parents.



District education departments have begun to refuse assistance to *dekhkan* farmers in need of labour.

During IOM and government labour inspectors visited *dekhkan* farms in Jilikul District, they found that the cotton workers still in the fields were by and large adults, although individual cases of child labour were identified. In the cases of children's participation, however, parents were present and the children reported working in order to earn extra income for their families outside of class hours, and for no more than a few hours per day, in accordance with Tajik law. IOM and the government labour inspectors informed cotton workers and farm representatives of the relevant labour laws, but no fines or administrative violations were given.

Jomi, Khuroson, and Yovon Districts

From 15 October to 30 November IOM's NGO partner in Yovon, Khuroson, and Jomi Districts visited a total of 58 cotton farms on which it conducted monitoring and interviewed those present. Over the course of these visits the NGO's representatives were able to speak with 34 *dekhkan* managers, as well as 13 adult workers and 62 schoolchildren and students. All told, the NGO observed 110 children and students at work in the fields during the course of the harvest.

As a result of the interviews conducted, the NGO partner determined that all of those school aged children and students in the fields were picking cotton without outside organized motivation, and that they were doing so outside of school hours. In many cases, children were harvesting alongside their parents, who for their part reported that the local schools were unaware of their children's participation. No active coercion was observed, and *dekhkan* farm managers stated in conversation that the earlier practice of coordination with schools and district education departments has in recent years stalled. When proposals

are made to the education department for help with additional workers, some *dekhkan* officials noted, they are now rebuffed, with laws against the use of child labour cited as the main justification.



Joint inspection visits conducted by IOM and government labour inspectors in October 2012 confirmed the limited use of child labour in the 2012 harvest. In Khuroson District *dekhkan* farm owners informed IOM representatives that no school children were employed during this year's harvest and that the laws regulating the use of child labour are well known in the region. No fines or administrative referrals were made by government labour inspectors in Yovon, Jomi, or Khuroson Districts.

Kobodiyon, Nosir Khusrav, and Shahrituz Districts

During monitoring visits conducted by IOM's NGO partner in Shahrituz, Nosir Khusrav, and Kobodiyon Districts, a total of 84 farms were visited from October through the end of December 2012. The NGO partner interviewed 6 *dekhkan* owners, and spoke with an additional 17 adult workers. It also observed 112 school aged children involved in the harvest. For the most part, the NGO reported that children were working in the cotton fields in a limited fashion not likely to interfere with their schooling or provide harm to their health or development. When seen working in the fields, they appeared to be in small groups of around five each – more likely a sign of individual action than any organized coercion enacted by one or another school. Interestingly, the NGO noted that the vast majority of those children involved in the cotton harvest (80%) were girls. Schools in these districts, the NGO also reported, appear to do what they can to discourage students from picking cotton, and when they do so, it is before and after classes.

Notwithstanding the understanding demonstrated by local schools about the need to limit children's participation in the cotton harvest, IOM's NGO partner found the local district administrators difficult to coordinate with and frequently prone to conflict. As a result, the NGO's representatives found it somewhat difficult to have extensive conversations with farm workers or children on the monitored *dekhkan* farms. When they were able to hold longer conversations, however, they found that as in most districts, both adult and child cotton pickers continued to work without written agreements or contracts, and that workers, child and adult alike, were drawn to the fields for the chance to earn additional income.

Over the course of IOM and government labour inspector visits to *dekhkan* farms in Shahrituz, Nosir Khusrav, and Kobodiyon Districts, no children were seen working in cotton fields. It is worth noting, however, that in many of these districts' *jamoats* the cotton harvest had been completed prior to the arrival of the inspection visits, thus perhaps limiting the need for additional labour, although where the harvest was ongoing only adults were involved in cotton picking. IOM and its government partners reminded farm workers and managers of the limitations on the use of child labour but issued no fines or administrative referrals.

Kulyab and Vose District

Beginning on 15 October and continuing through the end of December, IOM's NGO partner in Kulob and Vose districts visited 45 *dekhkan* farms and was able to interview 45 farm owners and managers, as well as 100 *dekhkan* workers. Throughout the course of these visits, only eight children were observed in the cotton fields, all of whom were found to be older students, either tenth or eleventh graders, who were harvesting cotton outside of school hours for their own benefit and on their own volition in order to earn additional income.

At the time of IOM and government labour inspector joint visits in October 2012 the entirety of the cotton harvest in Vose and the area of Kulob had already been completed. No workers or others were observed in the cotton fields at the time.

Panj and Qumsangir Districts

IOM's NGO partner in Panj and Qumsangir conducted monitoring visits in these two districts from 15 October through 27 November. During these visits the NGO visited 39 farms and interviewed 39 *dekhkan* managers and owners, as well as 34 adult workers. At the same time, 68 children were observed in the fields picking cotton. The NGO determined that while there were children involved in the harvest on the majority of farms monitored, these were overwhelming older students who were picking cotton after school hours. Of the 68 children observed, it was determined that only three of them were at the field when they ought to have been in class. All three children stated that their 'teacher released us from class to harvest cotton, because we have to pay a textbook fee.' In all other cases of children's participation in the harvest, no further examples of missed classes were found. By and large, the students with whom the NGO spoke said that they were picking cotton in order to help out with the family budget or to pay for school supplies – and doing so outside of school hours and in general accordance with Tajik law.



During joint inspection visits paid by IOM and government labour inspectors to *dekhkan* farms in Qumsangir District, only one child was seen in the cotton fields. Adult labourers were interviewed by IOM representatives, as were farm managers and owners, and all were reminded of the legal restrictions in place on the use of child labour.

At the time of IOM and government labour inspector joint visits in October 2012 nearly the whole of the cotton harvest in the Panj District had already been completed. Only a very few workers, and no children, were observed in the cotton fields at the time.

Vakhsh District

From 15 October to 30 October, IOM's local NGO partner in Vakhsh District conducted monitoring visits to 14 *dekhkan* farms, during which time it was able to interview 3 farm managers, as well as 11 adult workers and 14 children. As a result of the interviews conducted, the NGO came to the conclusion that although individual children were involved in the harvest on some farms, there was no evidence of organized or coerced child labour on the part of teachers, school directors, or other officials.

Additional monitoring visits were not conducted in Vakhsh District by IOM or its partners at the Labour Inspection Service.

SUGH D OBLAST

Asht and Mastchoh Districts

From 15 October to 31 December IOM's NGO partner in Asht and Mastchoh districts visited 68 *dekhkan* farms, where it conducted monitoring of the cotton harvest and interviewed those involved. Although a small number of children were observed in the fields during the NGO's visits, the vast majority of those present were adult workers and *dekhkan* managers, of which the NGO interviewed 3 and 65, respectively. An additional 13 children were also identified and spoken with, but it was ultimately determined that all of them were harvesting cotton after school in order to earn additional income. In addition, the majority of children observed at the harvest proved to be the children of *dekhkan* farm members and none were actively coerced into the fields in any way.

Throughout the whole of inspection visits conducted by IOM and its labour inspector partners in Mastchoh District, only one child was observed participating in the cotton harvest. This child appeared to have arrived at the field with her mother, and while IOM and the labour inspectors made sure to remind everyone present about the labour regulations covering the use of child labour, no fines or administrative violations were reported.

J. Rasulov and B. Gafurov Districts

IOM's NGO partner in Gafurov and Rasulov Districts conducted monitoring visits to 76 *dekhkan* farms between 15 October and 31 December. Over the course of these visits, the NGO was able to interview 17 adult workers and 68 *dekhkan* owners and managers, as well as to speak with 19 children observed picking cotton at the time. These 19 children were determined to be picking cotton together with their parents, and doing so only after the completion of their classes that day. While a few *dekhkan* owners went so far as to express a preference for adult workers – “children do not harvest well” – the majority of those involved seemed to understand the need for parents to bring their children to the fields in order to boost the family's overall income.

In Gafurov District the harvest had already been nearly completed by the time of IOM and labour inspector joint visits. Amongst those remaining workers observed in the fields during the visits no children were noticed.

At the time of IOM's joint visit to Rasulov District with labour inspectors, a group of 25 students from the local Industry and Agricultural College were observed picking cotton together with their teachers. When interviewed, both students and their teachers confirmed that they were picking cotton outside of

class hours and in a way that ought not to negatively affect the students' health, schooling, or personal development. To confirm their story, IOM representatives and labour inspectors visited the College in question and discussed the case at length. Although further investigation may be ongoing, at the time of the visit the labour inspectors chose, rather than issue a fine or administrative violation, to simply warn the College administration about the laws regulation the use of student labour in the cotton harvest and the possible consequences of oversight.

In J. Rasulov District a school was fined for mobilizing schoolchildren to the harvest.

In addition, more than fifty schoolchildren were observed picking cotton at another farm in Rasulov District. Upon investigation by the labour inspectors and IOM representatives, it was determined that the students had been coerced into picking cotton, since their teachers were overseeing them and had a list of their names. The labour inspectors later visited the children's school and levied a fine for the illegal mobilization. In later meetings with the educational department of Rasulov District, the labour inspectors once again reiterated the need to strongly discourage school directors from allowing or promoting the mobilization of children to the cotton fields, no matter the time or date. Finally, IOM and the labour inspectors requested that the regional labour office continue an investigation into the activities of the farm owners and managers in question, and, as needed, levy further fines.

Spitamen and Zafarobod Districts

Beginning in October and continuing through the end of December, IOM's NGO Partner in Spitamen and Zafarobod Districts conducted 20 monitoring visits to local *dekhkan* farms and interviewed 20 farm owners and managers, as well as additional 10 *dekhkan* workers. In addition, the NGO's representatives spoke extensively with 15 children from amongst the more than 200 they observed in these districts' fields.

From their interviews, the NGO determined that although the local educational department and district government is well aware of the legislation regulating the use of child labour in Tajikistan, cooperation between *dekhkan* farms and school administrations remains an important source of labour during the harvest. "Local governments" in these districts, the NGO reported, "facilitate harvesters' mobilization." Although children are not taken out of school during class hours, they are frequently pressured into the fields in groups after classes. Adult *dekhkan* workers generally declined to comment on the use of coerced child labour, often simply noting that the "farm's chairman had negotiated with a school administration" to guarantee sufficient workers during the harvest.

Three possible violations of labour regulations were reported by IOM's NGO partner in these districts. In one visit to a farm in Zafarobod District, the NGO determined that a group of vocational school students numbering approximately 25 had been sent by their school to assist with the harvest – a task they fulfilled



Numerous labour violations were reported in Zafarobod and Spitamen Districts.

for five hours each day following their lessons. In another, school children were observed in a large group picking cotton, and in conversation admitted that they had been encouraged by their school to participate in the harvest.

Finally, in Spitamen District 50 children were observed working on a single farm, all of whom turned out to have been sent to the fields by their school's administration. All three cases were referred to IOM through the established referral mechanism and have been since sent to the competent bodies in the government of Tajikistan for further investigation.

During inspection visits conducted by IOM employees and government representatives to Spitamen District no children were observed picking cotton. Employees of various farms visited during the inspection cited previous monitoring visits and noted that they had specifically avoided the use of child labour during this year's harvest. In Zafarobod District, IOM employees and government labour inspectors also noticed very few children during their inspection visits in October. In addition, meetings were held with the local district educational department, the head of which was well aware of the legal restrictions on the use of child labour in the cotton harvest.

On one visit, however, a group of children were observed, along with two teachers, picking cotton in the afternoon. These children, aged 14-16, reported that they were picking voluntarily, but were often involved in the harvest for up to four hours a day after the end of classes. The labour inspector, having discussed the situation with the children, teachers, and farm manager, issued a fine to the manager in the amount of 800 somoni (at the time of writing, one somoni was equal to about 0.20 USD). In addition, the manager was required to meet with the regional labour inspection office in Khujand in order to verify his compliance with the labour laws regulating the use of child labour in the cotton harvest.

REGIONS OF REPUBLICAN SUBORDINATION

Hissar and Tursunzoda Districts

IOM's local NGO partner conducted monitoring visits to 17 farms in the Tursunzoda and Hissar Districts from the middle of October through the end of December. During these visits interviews were conducted with 34 farm owners and managers and a total of ten children were observed in the cotton fields. The NGO reported that in all conversations with farm workers, owners, and managers a clear understanding of the laws regulating the use of child labour emerged, and that nearly everyone involved expressed a working knowledge of the limitations in place on their participation in the harvest. In two cases, moreover, *dekhkan* farm chairman cited previous cases in which they had been fined for employing schoolchildren in the harvest as reason why they were now opposed to the practice.

During the 2012 harvest, IOM's NGO partner did not observe any cases of organized or coercive child labour in need of further reference to government labour inspectors, although they did observe scattered cases of individual schoolchildren picking cotton. By and large, the NGO reported, these children were picking cotton for a few hours a day outside of class hours, and in the company of their families, whom they were assisting. As in other districts, the main motivation for their participation in the harvest was

found to the possibility of earning additional income to cover the cost of school supplies. In a single case, a small group of schoolchildren stated that they had been ‘brought’ to the field in which they were working, but this case proved impossible to investigate further or follow up on.

Additional monitoring visits were not conducted in Tursunzoda or Hissar Districts by IOM or its partners at the Labour Inspection Service.

Rudaki District

The local NGO working on IOM’s behalf in Rudaki District visited 37 cotton farms between 15 October and the end of December. During these visits the NGO’s representatives were able to speak with 37 farm owners and *dekhkan* managers, as well as 58 farm workers. They also observed 16 children at work. Notwithstanding the presence of these few children, the NGO reported that cotton during this harvest was overwhelmingly picked by adults throughout Rudaki District. Conversations with school directors and representatives of the district administration moreover confirmed that child labour in the cotton harvest is being actively discouraged. The 16 children who were observed in the fields, the NGO reports, had neither been pressured into the harvest by their schools, nor forced to participate by their parents, but had rather chosen to come to the fields after class and earn additional income in a way that appeared unlikely to negatively affect their health, schooling, or personal development.

Additional monitoring visits were not conducted in Rudaki District by IOM or its partners at the Labour Inspection Service.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO OBSERVED VIOLATIONS

As noted earlier, over the course of the 2012 cotton harvest, IOM and its NGO partners referred a total of four official reports of observed labour violations to the Inter-Ministerial Commission for Combatting of Trafficking in Persons. In response to these four reports, as well as labour violations observed and recorded by government labour inspectors, the Government Service for Labour Oversight of the Tajik Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Population levied a total of 31 administrative violations against employers who had used child labour during the cotton harvest. In addition, fines equalling 28,400 somoni, or approximately USD 6,000, were collected from those violating labour laws and employing children in the cotton harvest.

Moreover, the Government Service for labour Oversight of the Tajik Ministry of labour and Social Protection of the Population, taking into consideration the reports provided by IOM and its partners, conducted monitoring visits to cotton farms in districts across both Khatlon and Sughd Oblasts, as well as in the Regions of Republican Subordination. In all of the districts visits, not only were those involving children in the cotton harvest levied administrative violations, but lengthy discussions were had with farm owners, teachers, and education administration officials to clarify the negative effects of child labour and work towards its prevention in future harvests.



COMPARISON TO PREVIOUS STUDIES AND MONITORING REPORTS

When compared to previous studies and assessments of Tajikistan’s cotton harvest conducted by IOM in 2010 and 2011, as well as those of other international organizations and local NGOs, the 2012 Annual Assessment of Children and Student Exploitation in Tajikistan’s Cotton Harvest demonstrates ongoing progress towards the limitation of child and forced labour in the cotton harvest. While the number of cases brought to light and investigated for possible labour violations during the last three years’ IOM Cotton Monitoring Campaigns has remained relatively stable, the severity of these violations has decreased with each year. IOM’s 2010 Cotton Harvest Study reported on multiple cases of possible forced labour, as well as the forced coercion of students to the cotton harvest, whereas during the following harvest no cases of forced coercion were found whatsoever. Instead, the violations found and investigated tended to fall into the category of limited pressure placed on schoolchildren outside of class hours and the allowance of children’s absence from class in favour of their participation in the harvest. This trend has continued through the 2012 cotton harvest, with IOM and its NGO partners, along with labour inspectors from Tajikistan’s government bringing to light cases of child labour primarily related to their absence from school or overly lengthy labour outside of school hours.

Cotton-related labour violations are decreasing in both scale and degree.

These results also demonstrate improvements in the use of child labour when placed in comparison to studies conducted by other organizations in previous years. In 2009, both the Centre for Contemporary Central Asia and the Caucasus at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) and the Tajik Young Lawyer’s Association “Amparo” conducted studies on the use of child labour in Tajikistan’s cotton harvest. Both studies found that child labour was extensive throughout the harvest, and frequently coerced on behalf of *dekhkan* owners by school principals (SOAS, 2010; Amparo, 2010).

SOAS concluded at the time that “schools are central to the mobilization of children” to the cotton fields, a circumstance that has fortunately changed significantly in the past few years, especially following the government of Tajikistan’s increased enforcement efforts beginning in 2009. These efforts, in coordination with independent monitoring campaigns and the increased attention paid to the problem of child labour in the cotton harvest at the highest levels of the government after President Rahmon’s speech on the issue in 2009 do appear to have led to notable reductions in the number of children pressured into the harvest by local schools.

Over the last decade, research conducted has pointed to a clear, if incremental trend: the use of child labour has slowly decreased, and actual, if minor, improvements in labour conditions have been observed across the agricultural sphere. Studies conducted a decade ago found that *dekhkan* workers were paid only 15–20 diram per kilo of cotton picked (IOM, 2004), whereas today there are paid approximately 50 diram per kilo; cases of forced labour and coercion of both children and adults are on the decline. Clearly, further efforts will need to be made to further the steps taken, but the available data does point to clear improvements on a variety of fronts, from the position taken by schools to the overall knowledge demonstrated by farm workers, owners, and teachers about the legislation regulating child labour in Tajikistan.

INCREASING ENFORCEMENT AND AWARENESS

In comparison to previous years, IOM and its local NGO partners found a significant increase in the number of *dekhkan* workers and owners, as well as local education department officials and school directors, who were aware of the laws regulating the use of child labour. In part, this may be credited to increased enforcement mechanisms: *dekhkan* farmers frequently cited previous fines or warnings as cause for their inclement turn against child workers in their fields, and local prosecutors’ offices were alerted towards the beginning of the 2012 harvest to the need to closely follow possible and observed cases of labour violation during the harvest. In Gissar District, for example, the local prosecutor’s office investigated a case of schoolchildren’s involvement in the harvest during school hours, and on its own initiative returned sixteen children found in the fields to school and levied fines against the farmers who had employed them. Similar cases were reported in Rumi District as well, and as the result of one such case the director of that district’s school No. 18 was required to pay a disciplinary fine.

In addition, school directors and teachers have shown an increased willingness to actively limit the number of students participating in the harvest, and have made efforts to track student attendance during the harvest period – as well as to reprimand those who do skip class to pick cotton. This marks a notable change from years past, and may be the result of increased pressure placed by local educational departments on school principals, a factor that many of the latter cited in conversation with NGO representatives. The Tajik Education Ministry, for its part, reports having sent letters to all of the regional and city educational administrations in the country with a clear demand that children not be involved in the cotton harvest in any way that would interfere with their studies or development, as per Tajik legislation.

Improved enforcement and monitoring efforts are beginning to have an effect.

It is also worth mentioning that the efforts of NGOs and the monitoring campaigns financed and conducted by organizations such as IOM may have begun to take an effect, especially in combination

with the Government of Tajikistan’s own efforts to increase attention to the problem of child labour in the cotton harvest. Together, local school districts, teachers, and educational department officials have come to take a tougher stance on the use of child labour, and some *dekhkan* farms, expecting the previously welcome assistance from the district administration in mobilizing labour for the harvest, have come to receive not only a cold shoulder, but open refusal and reprimands.

As was noted in IOM’s 2011 Assessment of the Exploitation of Children and Students during the Cotton Harvest in Tajikistan, however, awareness of the legislation covering child labour does not always guarantee its implementation or even support for implementation. In certain districts, NGOs reported that the educational department or local district administration attempted to delay the approval of monitoring visits, while in others some farmers and farm workers reported that they had been visited by “officials” and told not to say anything to outside monitoring teams. Finally, and as will be discussed in more detail later in this report, parents of children involved in the cotton harvest remain the least aware of the legislation in force in Tajikistan regulating their children’s participation in agricultural or other labour. Although institutional actors such as schools and district educational departments have grown increasingly aware and in favour of strengthened labour regulations, parents will also need to be made better aware of the regulations in place if improvements in the use of child labour in the cotton harvest are to be improved upon further in coming years.

In light of the need to provide more information to parents – as well as teachers and other local officials – about the particulars of Tajikistan’s labour legislation and its relation to the use of children in the cotton harvest, IOM required its NGO partners to conduct informational seminars in each of the districts in which monitoring was conducted. These seminars were by and large held in local schools and brought together small to medium sized groups of parents, teachers, and others. At each seminar, NGO representatives discussed the legal restrictions in place covering the use of child labour: how many hours a child can work, what conditions need to be in place, and the requirement that school be attended. In addition, the seminars included discussion of the consequences of children’s participation in the harvest, as well the possible legal and financial repercussions involved in cases of proven labour violations.

Awareness-raising seminars were held in all 25 monitored districts.

The NGOs participating in the 2012 Cotton Monitoring Campaign and conducting the informational seminars reported that they proved an important element of the broader campaign and an important opportunity for parents and teachers to express their feelings about the use of child labour. “Teachers were generally against the participation of schoolchildren in the cotton harvest,” one NGO reported, “because having gone out to the fields after class, children don’t prepare for classes.” Although most parents initially came prepared to defend their children’s participation, and often cited their needing the additional income provided by children’s additional picking, NGOs argued that the perspective provided by teachers often helped them to see the negative consequences as well. Altogether, the seminars proved an important meeting place for parents and educational officials, as well as teachers, to discuss their sometimes contrary interests and to come to an understanding of the rules and regulations covering children’s ability to participate in the cotton harvest. In addition, IOM’s NGO partners used the district-level seminars as an opportunity to distribute informational brochures to complement



those provided to interviewees in the field. Over the course of the 2012 Cotton Monitoring Campaign a total of 2664 brochures were distributed.

Some NGOs did point out that the relatively small size of the seminars held – frequently including around twenty individuals – did limit their reach and may not have brought information about labour legislation to the rural families and *dehkan* operators least likely to already know about it. These NGOs have recommended expanding the number of seminars held per district in future years, and if possible, broadening their geographic reach to increasingly rural settings.



MEDIA COVERAGE

In the past few years, as international attention paid to cotton production and the use of child and forced labour has grown, Tajik media and journalists have also given over more of their time to covering stories of labour violations and the cotton harvest. For example, in 2011 the newspaper Asia-Plus reported the possibility of forced labour mobilizations to cotton fields in Asht District in September, as well as, later that year, the use of coerced child and student labour in Kanibadam District. Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty's Tajikistan service also reported in 2011 that prosecutors had begun to investigate cases of child labour in cotton picking, citing in part a "local television program" on the channel Mavji Ozod. In 2012, further attention was given to the use of child labour in each year's cotton harvest, as was reported in April 2012 by Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty. Overall, in 2012 IOM tracked 23 independent stories published by Tajik print and electronic sources covering the cotton harvest and possible cases of labour exploitation from a variety of viewpoints. At the same time, however, the majority of the stories published suffer from a lack of reliable information and sources, journalists remain limited in their professional training and knowledge about Tajikistan's labour laws, and cooperation between the media and the competent government bodies remains limited. In addition, although the number of stories printed in the media has grown, it still remains markedly low, given the importance of the cotton sector and yearly harvest for Tajikistan's agricultural output and economy as a whole.

In light of these factors, IOM, together with the Inter-Ministerial Commission on Combatting Trafficking in persons, found it worthy to conduct three seminars for journalists and other media representatives about cases of labour exploitation and the use of child labour in the cotton harvest. These seminars were planned for and held on 14 December 2012, in Dushanbe; 28 December 2012, in Kurgan-Tube, Khatlon Oblast; and 23 January 2013 in Khujand, Sughd Oblast.

A total of eighty one journalists attended the three seminars, representing a wide swath of experienced representatives of media from across the country. The seminars were also frequently visited by notable government officials, such as Amirshoh Hatloni, the Head of the Analysis and Information Department of

the Khatlon Oblast, who gave the opening remarks at the Kurgan-Tube seminar. Each seminar was further prefaced by Professor Sharifov, who explained to participants the particular significance of child and forced labour for Tajikistan, especially in light of the country's overwhelmingly agrarian economy. In addition, Professor Sharifov discussed the current legislation covering the use of child and forced labour in Tajikistan in order to provide participants with a working knowledge of the relevant laws and prohibitions in the field.

A total of 81 journalists attended IOM's regional seminars on child labour

Over the course of each seminar, participants continued to discuss important concepts closely related to the coverage of cases of labour exploitation in the agrarian sector. This included a presentation by Miraliyev Muhammadtolib on the efforts made by the State Labour Control Agency to limit and undermine the use of forced labour in the country, a conversation led by the head of IOM's Counter-Trafficking Unit, Bahrom Rahmatjonov, about ongoing efforts to monitor the use of child labour, and consideration of the ongoing implementation of the 2009 Code of Conduct for Journalists adopted by the Union of Journalists in Tajikistan.

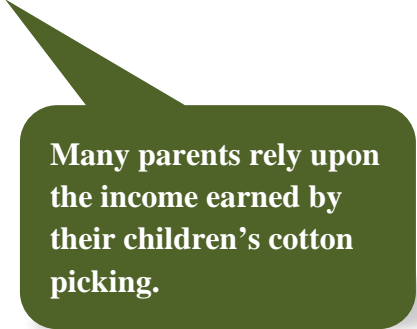
Discussions throughout all three seminars were lively, and the participating journalists took away a great deal of useful knowledge, data, and refocused direction for ongoing and future investigations. Everyone involved left pleased with the proceedings, and following the completion of the seminars, participants have expressed a sense of renewed dedication to the coverage of labour exploitation and possible cases of child labour in the cotton harvest. Following IOM's media seminars, moreover, increased attention was immediately given over to child labour in the cotton harvest, with an article printed in the following weeks on the topic in Khatlon Oblast's main daily newspaper and radio programs dedicated to the issue on Radio Ozodi and Radio Imruz. In general, articles published by local media sources and covering the cotton harvest have come to include more information about the workers involved in the harvest, as well as about cases of forced and coerced labour. In the coming years, it is hoped that journalists will continue to dedicate their time, and coverage, to cases of forced and child labour in the cotton harvest – and with further media attention, not only will the need for NGO monitoring drop, but social awareness of the problem may increase as well.

SOCIETAL VIEWS

Following the Tajik government's efforts to lower the use of child labour in the cotton harvest, as well as President Rahmon's speech to this effect in 2009 and recent years' independent monitoring campaigns, overall awareness of the laws regulating child labour in Tajikistan appears to have risen notably. During the 2012 cotton monitoring campaign, both IOM representatives and those of its NGO partners frequently remarked upon the number of parents, teachers, and school directors who were aware of the limitations in place on the use of children in the harvest, and who were able to cite to labour inspectors the relevant laws. In light of the country's extensive history of student and schoolchildren mobilizations to cotton fields in the past, it is especially remarkable that both school directors and farm owners would have begun to actively discourage children from participating in the harvest. Yet given the results of the 2012 cotton monitoring campaign, there is good reason to believe that this is now happening in districts across Tajikistan.

At the same time, however, child labour remains an accepted part of life for many rural families in Tajikistan. According to the results of an in-depth survey conducted by IOM amongst parents during the 2010 cotton monitoring campaign, the extra income provided by children's participation in the cotton harvest is an important part of many families' yearly budget. In particular, families cited this income as a valuable source of monies to cover the cost of their children's schooling – notebooks, textbooks, or new clothes for the school year. While this survey indicated that an average child likely added somewhere between 100 and 200 somoni to his or her family's budget over the course of a cotton harvest, given the overall income available to rural and agrarian families, this amount should not be considered insignificant, and in some cases makes up as much as 8–10 per cent of a family's annual budget. During the 2012 cotton monitoring campaign, moreover, the parents of children who were actively participating in the cotton harvest frequently cited the additional income as an important factor in their choice to include their children in the picking.

It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that the practice of child and student participation in the cotton harvest remains to one degree or another accepted and widely observed. Although parents and school officials are increasingly aware of the laws regulating the use of child labour, many believe that this relates only to school hours, and that outside of school children are free to help their parents. In addition, one of the most frequently forgotten – or at least unmentioned – aspects of Tajikistan's labour legislation is the fact that children under the age of 14 are banned from working at all. In light of the financial needs of many rural families, it is often difficult for the parents of small children to understand how they are breaking a law when they have simply brought their children after school to help them pick cotton and add to the already strained family budget. While institutional figures such as teachers and directors have in recent years refrained from mobilizing or otherwise encouraging schoolchildren to participate in the cotton harvest – and have at times demonstrated an increased understanding and awareness of the laws covering child labour and its negative consequences – parents remain the strongest factor pushing younger children towards their ongoing participation in cotton picking.



Many parents rely upon the income earned by their children's cotton picking.



The results of the 2012 Cotton Monitoring Campaign conducted by IOM and its partners in Tajikistan have demonstrated that while significant improvements have been made over the past few years in limiting the use of child and forced labour in the cotton harvest, further effort will be necessary to solidify these steps forward and guarantee ongoing forward progress. Based upon its analysis of the 2012 Cotton monitoring Campaign, as well as a broader consideration of data collected over the past three years, IOM and its NGO partners offer the following series of recommendations to the government of Tajikistan, along with institutional donors considering ongoing monitoring efforts.

First, independent monitoring of the cotton harvest remains a necessity, and should be continued.

While the government of Tajikistan's efforts to oversee and enforce the implementation of labour laws restricting the use of child labour in the cotton harvest have in recent years been laudatory, they remain limited in some regions, and have proven most effective when applied in combination with independent monitoring conducted by local or international organizations. As one of IOM's NGO partners worried, "without ongoing monitoring efforts, a return to the previous order may be inevitable." In addition, future monitoring campaign should begin earlier in the year – ideally as early as August – in order to monitor the whole duration of the cotton harvest and to include further awareness-raising seminars *before* the start of the yearly harvest.

Second, increased emphasis will need to be placed on the investigation of labour violations by journalists.

While monitoring has proven an effective tool in improving social awareness of labour legislation, bringing to light cases of child labour and other violations, and undermining the broader use of child labour in the cotton harvest, media coverage of labour exploitation can go much further in changing social views and behaviours. In order that the trends observed in the past few years are able to be improved upon, wider distribution of information about the cotton harvest and the labour practices

employed there will need to be provided by the media. The seminars conducted by IOM with journalists in Tajikistan on this topic, it is hoped, may prove the start of a broader refocusing of media energies, but further assistance and encouragement is likely to be needed in this trajectory as well.

Third, greater emphasis needs to be placed on the role played by parents in children’s participation in the cotton harvest. Throughout the past three years of cotton monitoring, IOM has found it increasingly clear that while school directors, teachers, and local education officials are less and less likely to pressure schoolchildren to pick cotton, their parents remain convinced of the value. In order to spread information about the negative consequences of cotton picking on children’s education and health – not to mention the violation it frequently represents in reference to established labour legislation in Tajikistan – informational seminars will need to be expanded to more rural areas outside of district or oblast centres. By and large, parents have motivated their choice to include their children in the cotton harvest through simple economic need and the hope to boost family budgets, and it may also prove necessary to consider these factors in light of the broader efforts to lower child labour in the cotton harvest, thereby developing compromises with parents whereby children of a certain age may still be able to pick cotton, but do so in accordance with Tajik law.

Finally, with notable improvements made in regards to child labour, additional focus may now be turned to additional labour violations observed during cotton harvests. While outside of the scope of the current Monitoring of Children and Students in the Cotton Fields in Tajikistan project implemented by IOM and sponsored by INL, numerous violations of adults’ labour rights have been observed over the past years by IOM representatives and its NGO partners across Tajikistan. It is recommended that the competent bodies of the Tajik Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population, together with the Tajik Inter-Ministerial Commission for Combatting Trafficking in Persons consider methods of targeting labour violations related to the signing of contracts, timely payment for labour provided, and the conditions of labour during the cotton harvest. Given the successes demonstrated by the last three years’ cotton monitoring campaigns, this may prove an important area for further coordination with international donors, and an opportunity to bring the labour practices in Tajikistan all the closer to the international standards to which the state is party.

Glossary

- Guzpoya* – name given to the stalks of cotton plants collected by farm workers and used for heating fuel.
- Dekhkan farms* – private farms, owned either by individuals or a collective of workers.
- Kolkhoz* – name given to “collective” farms (*kollektivnoye khozyaistvo*) during the Soviet Union.
- Sovkhoz* – name given to government or “Soviet” farms (*sovetskoye khozyaistvo*) during the Soviet Union.
- Oblast* – territorial division in Tajikistan.
- Somoni* – basic unit of currency in Tajikistan.
- Diram* – currency unit equivalent to 1/100 of one somoni.
- Hukumat* – local district administration.
- Jamoat* – district subdivision provided with some degree of autonomous administrative function.

Abbreviations and acronyms used

IOM	International Organization for Migration
INL	United States Department’s Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs
IMCCTIP	Inter-Ministerial Commission for Combating Trafficking in Persons of the Government of Tajikistan
GOT	Government of Tajikistan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SOAS	School of Oriental and African Studies

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- Front Cover: IOM local NGO partner, Shahrituz District, Khatlon Oblast.
- Pages 2 & 3: NGO partner, Jilikul District, Khatlon Oblast.
- Page 4: NGO Partner, Tursunzade District, RRS.
- Page 5: NGO Partner, Gafurov District, Sughd Oblast.
- Page 6: NGO Partner, Spitamen District, Sughd Oblast.
- Page 7: NGO partner, Jilikul District, Khatlon Oblast.
- Page 9: NGO Partner, Shahrituz District, Khatlon Oblast.
- Page 10: NGO Partner, Rumi District, Khatlon Oblast.
- Page 12: NGO Partner, Rumi District, Khatlon Oblast.
- Page 14: NGO Partner, Jilikul District, Khatlon Oblast.
- Page 18: NGO Partner, Rumi District, Khatlon Oblast.
- Page 20: IOM Tajikistan employee, Khatlon Oblast.
- Page 21: NGO Partner, Qumsangir District, Khatlon Oblast.
- Page 23: NGO Partner, Zafarbod District, Sughd Oblast.
- Page 26: NGO Partner, J. Rasulov District, Sughd Oblast.
- Page 28: NGO Partner, Gafurov District, Sughd Oblast.
- Page 29: IOM Tajikistan employee, Dushanbe.
- Page 32: NGO Partner, Jilikul District, Khatlon Oblast.
- Back Cover: NGO Partner, Rumi District, Khatlon Oblast.

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"Moreover, the ministries of agriculture and education, as well as the executive bodies of state authority in oblasts, cities, and districts are mandated to categorically refrain from involving schoolchildren and students in field work, especially in the cotton harvest."

President of the Republic of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon



International Organization for Migration (IOM)

