

**Effect of Child Labour in Miraa Farming on Pupils' Participation in P  
Schools in Kiengu Division of Igembe South Sub County, Meru County**

*Kirikua Honjen Thiharu Maingi*

*Maasai Mara University,*

*P.O Box 861 (20500) Narok, Kenya*

*Enlail:maingikirikua@yahoo.com*

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**Abstract**

*The purpose of this study was to investigate effect of child labour in miraa farm on pupils' participation in primary schools in Kiengu Division of Igembe South Si Meru County. The researcher used descriptive survey design in this study. The target population of this study comprised of all the 24 head teachers of the primary Kiengu division and all 48 class teachers of standard four and eight. The significant because the findings may be used by the ministry of education and stakeholders to solve the problem of drop out in Kenya as a whole and in primary schools division, Igembe South District. The study findings revealed that Miraa farming related trade activities were the main contributing factor that deterred p participating in primary education. This accounts for the largest percentage labour activities impeding pupils' participation in primary education. Results showed Miraa growing and use in the division affected the quality of primary school education that income is used in non-school related activities significantly affected participation in educational activities. This study recommends that the government institute public awareness campaign especially for the most vulnerable groupsto educate them on the side-effects of Miraa because it affects pupil's participation in education in Kiengu division in Igembe South District. In addition, the government should implement laws forbidding children under the age of 17 to chew and to encourage villages unwritten law to prevent children from chewing. The government should take stern measures against traders who employ children in their Miraa farming business to pave ways for these children to go to school' This will eventually increase their participation in primary school education.*

**Introduction**

There is a strong and sustained global effort to eliminate child labour in Agriculture and other areas, especially hazardous child labour in which both International Labour Organization (ILO) and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) are playing leading roles. Worldwide, agriculture is the sector where by far the largest share of working children is found - nearly 70 percent. Over 132 Million girls and boys aged 5 to 14 years old work in crop and livestock production. Child labour is defined by the ILO (1973) convention N 0.138 on minimum age, and the ILO (1999) Convention No.182 on worst forms of child labour, as work that harms children well-being. and hinders their education, development and future livelihoods When

children are forced to work long hours in the fields their ability to attend schools or acquire skill training is limited preventing them from gaining education that could help lift them out of poverty in future. Girls are particularly disadvantaged as they they often undertake household chores following worker in the fields(World day Against Child Labour, 12 June 2007) In the Africa, primary education has been affected by agricultural, mi ning,quarrying activities. In Kenya, child labour is an important factor that interferes with schooling mainly common Nyanz Eastern. Coast and central parts of Kenya. In school dropouts work mainly on plantations and fishing industry. Central and Eastern, tea picki picking, miraa picking and sand harvesting

are economic activities that attract school dropouts (MOEST, 1999).

The young people in Nyambene see miraa as a successful commodity which is linked to their heritage and is regarded as "poa" by many of their peers in other parts of the country as it helps forge their identity as modern and young Meru (MOA Igembe South District, 2009). Miraa, (khat) being a cultural plant, has acquired a big commercial angle beyond the traditional and social importance. All families depend on its economic value because, besides chewing as a livelihood, the money got from miraa is used in buying food, school fees and other school levies, school uniform and clothing and many other family needs. Despite these miraa has its negative side. Many miraa traders use children to pick and pack miraa since they are less expensive to pay for their labour than grownups. This compromises the physical, psychological, social and moral development of the child besides curtailing their education and denying them the opportunity to be children (Abdulahi, 1983). The Government of Kenya National Development plan (1997- 2001), indicated that of the pupils enrolling in standard one only 79 percent of boys and 80 percent of girls reach standard 4 while only 55 percent of boys and 35 percent of girls reach standard 8 to sit for final examinations. The Children Act (2001) Republic of Kenya, states that every child shall be protected from economic exploitation and work that is likely to be hazardous or interfere with the child's education or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental or spiritual, moral or social development (OAK Kenya Children Act, 2001).

The sum total of all this is general lack of discipline and poor academic performance of the schools. Daily school attendance is poor and sometimes schools are left with very few learners which jeopardizes the work of the teacher. Many children play truant without the knowledge of the teacher or even the parent. By the time some of these children are noticed they are already spoiled which further complicates the work of

school administrators. Besides failure to attend school, miraa is a mild drug with medical and psychological effects on children, such as memory impairment. Further miraa has implications to girl child besides the general aspects of child labour, girls drop out of school because the rich uneducated miraa businessmen lure them with money from miraa business and marry them at very tender ages. The same miraa is used to request to be allowed to marry the girls from their illiterate parents. It is on the basis of these factors that there is a need to investigate the effects of miraa farming as a cultural, economic and social influence on pupils' participation in school (MOA Igembe South District, 2009). This study was therefore designed to investigate the effect of child labour in miraa farming on pupils' participation in primary schools in Kiengu Division of Igembe South Sub county, Meru County.

### **Research Methodology**

The researcher used descriptive survey design in this study. Descriptive survey is a method of collecting information by interviewing or administering a questionnaire to a sample of individuals (Orodho, 2003). It can be used when collecting information about people attitude, opinions, habits or any of the variety of education or social issues (Orodho and Kombo 2002). The choice of this design was made based on the fact that the study the researcher was interested on the state of affair of existing Miraa farming as an independent variable and pupil's participation in education as a dependent variable. There are 24 primary schools in Kiengu division and all the 24 head teachers in the 24 public primary school were included in the study and class teachers of standard four and eight making a total of 48 class teachers. Purposeful sampling was used as the sampling technique. Therefore the total sample size was 72. In this study a questionnaire was used. If a school with more than one stream, simple random sampling was used to identify the respondents. The names of

the stream was written on a piece of paper and then put in a box, mixed and then picked one at a time until the desired number of two class teachers per school was reached. Class teacher for the selected stream was included in the sample. The sample size was 72 and the sampling techniques was purposeful technique. To test the reliability of the instrument the researcher used split-half technique. By using this method the researcher aimed at determining the coefficient of internal consistency or reliability co-efficient whose value vary between 0.00 (indicating no reliability) and + 1.00 (indicating perfect reliability). The research instrument was split into two (2) subtests one consisting of odd numbered items/questions and the other made of all even numbered items. The score of all the odd-numbered and even numbered items of the responses in the pilot study was computed separately. The odd numbered scores for all items were then correlated with the even numbered scores using the Pearson product moment correlation coefficient of the entire test as 0.75 thus the instrument was concluded as satisfactory. After data collection the researcher also scrutinized the instrument for completeness, accuracy and uniformity. Collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. This helped to measure the various variables of the study. Coding was done to classify the answer to a question into meaningful categories so as to bring out their essential pattern. The researcher used Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) for windows version 15.0 to generate frequency distributions using descriptive statistics it: order to examine the pattern of the responses. The findings presented in form of frequency tables and percentages so as to bring out the relative differences of values.

## Results

Miraa fanning and related trade activities were the main contributing factor that deterred pupils from participating in primary education. This accounts for the largest percentage of child labour activities impeding pupils' participation in primary education.

Miraa picking (39.13%) and earl~ marriages (34.78%) acc~unt for the mo~ common reasons for pupils' drop-out from

SCh.OOl. Additiona.ny .Child lab.our (13.04%j as a result of Miraa farming and relate trade was also a contributing factor to drop out from school. Other causes cite included FGM (4.35%), family confli and problems (21.75%), lack of school fee (10.87%), irresponsible parents (6.52% and poverty (17.39%). Eighty seven (87%) of the respondents sai that the parents had difficulty in paying school levies while 13% did not agree this. This is evidence that school fees and other levies could be an impediment to pupils' participation in primary school education. This could be explained by the fact that most parents were middle level, class income earners. Parents were positive (supported teachers for punishing their children) about teachers punishing children for failure to attend school. It implies that 50% of respondents were in harmony that parents reacted positively while 39.6 agreed parents reacted negatively (did not support the idea of teachers punishing their children). This implies that parents supported learning activities for their children and deterred any behavior that would lead to reduce participation in primary education among their children.

Furthermore, the money they get from the Miraa trade makes it difficult for them t concentrate in school (4.5%). Additionall Miraa plucking requires unskilled and cheap labor (4.5%) which school goin children can easily offer.

Head teachers also pointed out that parents had abandoned their responsibilities and were not taking care of their children(4.5%). This implies that some parent were not paying school fees for their children and when children are sent home for fees they have to work for that money (4.50/0) so as to get the school fees. 71.7%) of the respondents said that the economic status of majority of the parents

was medium mainly sourcing income from Miraa fanning and related Miraa trade activities. It was also found out that parents in these miraa regions 68.5% have never been to school, as a result they do not guide their children well. The importance of education as a tool to individual development. 28.6 % of the home instead indicated that both father and mother spend most of their time drinking liquor thus they had no time to take care for their children as they go to school. These lack of care resulted to people dropping out of school early.

Study findings reveal that primary school children in their school chew Miraa. In addition, children were also involved in the packing and selling of Miraa which reduced time for studies consequently increasing chances of children absconding school resulting in minimal participation of this children in primary education.

### **Conclusions**

The study findings revealed that Miraa farming and related trade activities were the main economic activities that deterred pupils from participating in primary education. This accounts for the largest percentage of child labour activities impeding pupils' participation in primary education. Results showed that miraa growing and use in the division affected the quality of primary school education and that earnings, use, participation in non-school activities significantly affected children participation in educational activities. Even though, Miraa fanning was found to be a contributor to reduced participation of pupils in primary education, the study

established that it was through this economic activity that parents were able to raise school fee to educate their children and also meet other financial obligation

### **Recommendations**

This study recommends that the government should institute a greater public awareness campaign especially for the most vulnerable groups to educate them on the side-effects of drugs and drug abuse on the families and social welfare. The government should take stern measures against traders who employ children in their Miraa farming business to pave way for this children to go to school. This will eventually increase their participation in primary school education. In addition, the government should put in place education and counseling programs to educate pupils and teachers on the dangers of drug abuse since most of them are young people who have a whole life ahead of them. School administrators should come up with school policies for drug free learning environment and the administrators to play an active role in enforcing the policy. Action should be taken when students begins to show a consistent pattern of problem behavior. This would help the management to focus on school performance, even it thinks that the problem may be caused by drugs or alcohol, and this allows the management to balance both the rights of the pupils to privacy and fair treatment and the rights of the students to a safe, secure and productive environment.

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