

**HISTORY OF CHILD LABOUR ON MIRAA PRODUCTION AMONG THE MBEERE
OF GACHOKA DIVISION IN EASTERN KENYA, 2003-2013**

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ABSTRACT

This study focused on child labor in the miraa industry from 2003 to 2013. The study was carried out in Gachoka Division, Mbeere South in Embu County. The main objective was to document the history of child labour on miraa production among the Mbeere of Gachoka Division in Eastern Kenya. Mbeere community depends on Miraa as one of their major economic activity. As a result of this, children have become the main target in providing labour in miraa farms. The proposed study adopted the articulation of modes of production theory. Through the use of oral history, this study sought information about lived experiences of 90 informative and child labour on miraa production among the Mbeere of Gachoka Division, Kenya. The choice of oral history as a method of data collection was necessitated, among other reasons, by the lack of historical sources on child labour on miraa production among the Mbeere of Gachoka Division. Semi-structured open-ended interviews were administered to a sample of ninety respondents, picked from the Mbeere community. The choice of open-ended questions was preferred in order to gain in-depth perspectives from the participants. The use of oral histories is regarded as a valid and credible form of qualitative research. The analyzed data were reported in the form of narrative text with first hand quotations from the narrators. The study concluded that the need for children to work in miraa industry is linked to the pervasive poverty within the majority of homes. A lot of male children are hired as labourers mostly in miraa farms where they are overworked and underpaid. The study established that child labor in miraa industry is exposed to accidental and other injuries at work. The study further established that Child labour in miraa production is widely perceived to impede the educational attainment of children in a multitude of ways. The study noted that most child laborers in miraa production begin working at a very young age, are malnourished, and work long hours; frequently they do not attend school. They receive very low wages or are unpaid, and their income or help is usually essential for family survival. Looking at in miraa production, boys and girls appeared to differ little in terms of the length of their working week. Boys put in more weekly hours in miraa production, but differences by sex in the intensity of work are very small. Also in many families, the need for the working child is so urgent that they cannot afford to enroll them in the education system at all. There are no comprehensive national policies on child labor. There are however, several legal provisions governing the employment of children and these are scattered in different Acts. What is needed is an explicit, coherent and comprehensive policy on child labour, which addresses all forms of intolerable child labour, the various strategic sectors where they predominate and sustainable measures to combat it. More importantly, an effective strategy against child labor requires a concerted action at all levels by governments, employers and workers' organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), representatives of working children and their families and other members of civil society all united in a coherent, integrated and multi-sectoral approach.