

Learning by Ear 2009 Children's rights 02 Child labor

Topic: Child labor
Author: Mahamadou Koné (Mali)
Editor: Yann Durand
Translator: Anne Thomas

	Women	Men	Age	
IN/OUTRO		X	Unimportant	
Narrator	X		Ca. 25	
Abdoulaye		X	16	
Moulaye Hassan Tall		X	Ca. 40	
Madani Doumbia		X	Ca. 30	

LbE Soundtrack

Intro

Hello everybody and welcome to the second episode of our Deutsche Welle Learning by Ear series on children's rights and working for peace.

Many international organizations and human rights groups have denounced the violation of children's rights and especially the fact that children often have to work. Many countries have also ratified international conventions banning child labor. But child exploitation continues nonetheless. Today, we're going to Mali where two out of five children work. We're going to meet a 16-year-old who goes to work after school.

Report

<p>1. Atmo Workshop: (sound of wood-cutting machine – at the end the boss says in Bambara "We are in the carpentry workshop": 24”</p>
--

Narrator:

Madani Doumbia's workshop is one of the biggest and oldest in Bamako, the capital of Mali. It was set up in 1949 by the father of the current owner. Some 20 people work here. Eight of them are children aged between 10 and 16. Abdoulaye is 16. He's been working here for seven or eight years but he has never stopped going to school.

2. OTON : Abdoulaye (bambara): 26''

"I am still a schoolchild. I get up every day at 5 o'clock in the morning. I wash, eat my breakfast and by seven I'm in school. After class, I come here to this workshop to do odd jobs. Then I go home. Sometimes I get home at 5 p.m. I usually take a shower, watch TV. I never go to bed without doing my homework."

Narrator:

Just like Abdoulaye, many children in Mali end up working and doing odd jobs that are meant for adults. Moulaye Hassan Tall is the manager of the national program against child labor in Mali. This is also the main focus of the International Labor Organization's work in Mali:

3. OTON: Moulaye Hassan Tall (French): 28''

"It's true unfortunately that children have to work in Mali and this is happening more and more. The last national survey in 2006 found that two out of five children in Mali work and sometimes they are also doing dangerous work, work that can damage their health, stability, psychological or physical integrity."

Narrator:

Child labor both in the cities and in rural areas. Both boys and girls under 14 work. Some of them, like Abdoulaye, don't consider themselves as workers but people who are learning a trade. But that doesn't make any difference, says Moulaye Hassan Tall:

4. OTON: Moulaye Hassan Tall (French) Length: 31''

"Our work code is clear. No Malian child should work if he or she is not 14, even as an apprentice, unless the work inspector makes a special exception. We have ratified the two main conventions of the International Labor Organization. Convention 138, which fixes the minimum working age at 15 and Convention 182 that says all the worst forms of child labor should be abolished by 2016."

5. Atmo Workshop (sound of polishing machine...) Length: 41''

Narrator:

In the workshop where Abdoulaye works, the children are apparently not treated badly. They do work according to their age and weight. Madani Doumbia is the manager:

6. OTON: Madani Doumbia (bambara): 20''

"We don't give the children hard work. They don't use heavy machinery where they could get injured. It's true that some already want to work on the machines but we prefer it if they take their time and just watch – also to preserve their health."

Narrator:

Many parents have a habit of bringing their sons with them to the workshops. They want them to get them used to the idea of work at an early age. But for human rights activists, just the fact that children are present in certain places carries risks. Moulaye Hassan Tall again:

7. OTON: Moulaye Hassan Tall (French): 20''

"You'll see that these children, even if they're accompanying their parents, are exposed to chisels here, hammers and nails there, and they don't have shoes on or gloves, or protective glasses if their father is doing welding. These activities can directly or indirectly damage a child's health and safety."

Narrator:

Abdoulaye has been lucky so far. He's been working for almost 10 years but he has stayed in good health. Not only has he been able to gain knowledge, it's rare for him to come home with his pockets empty. He is happy:

8. OTON: Abdoulaye (Bambara): 16''

"I earn a bit of money here. I make stuff that I sell. Some of the locals commission stools, chairs and stuff. It's all right – I'm not complaining."

9. Atmo Workshop (Abdoulaye is assembling a photo frame) : 44

Narrator:

There are many Malians who start careers as carpenters or ironworkers just because they somehow found themselves in workshops at an early age. Some are there because they have to make money to help out their families who are in financial need. Others start working out of curiosity or pleasure. But most do not realize that they are basically learning their trade. Madani Doumbia:

10. OTON: Madani Doumbia (Bambara): 39''

"The children who come to work here are generally future entrepreneurs. Once they've mastered the techniques they set up their own workshops. Some of them stay in touch with us. They ask us for help using big machinery. The children who come here want to learn. They don't earn any wages. But they make small chairs, tables etc with the wood we no longer need. They sell this stuff to get some pocket money."

Narrator:

Abdoulaye is from a middle-class family. He does not have to support his family but money can always be spent he says:

11. O-Ton : Abdoulaye (Bambara): 17''

"At the moment, I spend the money I get as I see fit. You can't always depend on parents and ask them for money all the time. I often buy clothes and shoes. I use the money for other pleasures too."

12. Atmo Workshop (employees are clearing the wooden planks away...)

Length: 19''

Narrator:

Children's work is dangerous. But the fundamental question is: How can a person in dire straits be persuaded that his child is not old enough to work? Even human rights activists find this question a challenge.

Moulaye Hassan Tall again:

13. Moulaye Hassan Tall (French): 20''

"You know very well that we're in a poor country so it's often difficult to tell people that children will be taken out of jobs systematically. We have to have information and awareness campaigns and a change of behavior so parents can understand that children aged up to 12 or 14 belong in school."

14. Atmo Workshop (a young man is manually polishing wood with the help of a machine...): 1'19

Narrator:

Abdoulaye is aware that his studies come first but he won't ignore certain facts:

15. OTON - Abdoulaye (Bambara) Length: 10''

"I encourage children to go to school. But those from poor families can also work a little to get some income like in this workshop. That is also beneficial."

Narrator:

Abdoulaye is now in the second year at a professional college in Bamako. He'll graduate with a building technician and public works certificate. He has managed to reconcile work and school. He is optimistic about the future:

16. OTON Abdoulaye (Bambara) Length: 13”

"My ambition is to finish my studies first. Then I'll see. Either I'll look for work in the public sector or I'll carry on working here or I'll set up my own workshop. I've got no problems."

Narrator:

Abdoulaye may have no problems but countless other children are exploited. The argument that they are training only goes so far. Human rights activists say that children should not be removed from the worst forms of paid work only to be given the worst form of training without wages.

End

OUTRO

This report from Mali was written by Mahamadou Koné. And that's all from Learning by Ear for today. You can listen again to the programs that have already been broadcast by Deutsche Welle by visiting our website at: www.dw-world.de/lbe

Thanks for listening and don't forget to tune in next time!