



## **Children and Work Research Series: Session 7**

### **Questioning 20 Years of Child Labour Bans in Malawi's Agriculture**

Mavuto Banda (University of Hull, UK)

[m.k.banda-2020@hull.ac.uk](mailto:m.k.banda-2020@hull.ac.uk)

Malawi is an agriculture-based economy where tea and tobacco constitute about 75% of total export earnings. As one of the many countries that ratified ILO's C138 and C182, Malawi has put in place policies and legal instruments to operationalise their international obligations towards combatting child labour. While the general minimum age for entry into employment is 14, work in tea and tobacco production is considered hazardous and the minimum age of entry is 18. Led by multinationals and supported by the government and international stakeholders, Malawi has implemented programmes to keep children from tea and tobacco work since the early 2000s. However, over the past two years reports of children's continued participation, especially in tobacco production, shocked the international community and threatened the country's export earnings. With close to twenty years of implementing interventions meant to keep children out of tea and tobacco production, no studies has been conducted to evaluate the impact of the bans on children and their families' lived experiences. In my research I examine the impact of under-18-year-olds ban from working in tea and tobacco plantations by enaging with the following questions: 1) To what extent the universal minimum age policy interventions have contributed to the elimination of child labour in tea and tobacco-growing communities? 2) How have the universalised minimum age policies and related interventions influenced the lives of children, their families and their communities?

#### **Speaker Bio**

Mavuto is a PhD candidate (University of Hull, UK) researching children's work in Malawi. He holds an MA in Global Development and Social Justice (St. John's University-USA) and BSc. in Natural Resources Management (University of Malawi, Malawi). Mavuto has over 12 years of experience working on rural development, environmental justice, community resilience building, nature-based enterprise development, financial inclusion and child labour in Malawi and sub-Saharan Africa. He has worked with the Wildlife and Environmental Society of Malawi (2009-2012), University of Malawi (2012-2015), and Ethical Tea Partnership (2016-2020), among others.