

Carbon off-setting increasing child labour



In a bizarre twist on the viability of carbon off-setting, there is now evidence that some of the schemes are causing an increase in child labour in poorer countries. In an example of such a scheme, Climate Care is paying poor and impoverished families in India to stop using diesel-powered pumps to irrigate their fields and replace them with human-powered treadles instead. One family 'benefiting' from Climate Care's scheme is the Ram family. Their six year old daughter and her four young brothers now work flat out in the searing sun to pump water into their family field. Climate Care is the company that sells off-sets to British Airways customers, so they can feel better about their long-haul flights.

Michael Buick of Climate Care admitted that children were working the pumps, but he said people had to focus on the benefits to the whole family. He went on to say his group was proud of its scheme, which had led to more than half a million foot treadles being sold, and had won several awards. Ashutosh Pandey of Emergent Ventures India, which advises companies on clean technology said: "The problem is the number of times child labour is involved... It's not being monitored properly. It's not reducing emissions. People are selling their diesel pumps to others who are using them."

The effectiveness and overall impact of carbon off-setting needs to be reviewed. Carbon off-setting has to actually work, otherwise it is simply an exercise in assuaging people's guilt.

[Via The Times]

Posted by Andrew Chrysostomou on September 24, 2007 in Carbon Neutral Living, Green News, Planet saving