



Evaluation Summaries

Supporting the time-bound programme in El Salvador (ELS/01/50/USA) and Combating child labour through education (ELS/02/02/USA)

Quick Facts

Countries: *El Salvador*

Mid-Term: *August 2004*

Mode of Evaluation: *independent*

Technical Area: *Child Labour*

Evaluation Management: *IPEC*

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Project Code: *ELS/01/50/USA*

Donor: *USA*

Keywords: *Education and child labour*

Extracted from the Executive Summary of the Main Report

The evaluation's aim is to provide criteria so as to determine if the projects are either achieving or are about to achieve their objectives. In the case that there are deviations, the reasons for them will be identified and recommendations proposed, thus allowing the reorienting of their management in order to make them more effective and efficient.

The methodology used was qualitative and incorporated the opinion of all participating actors, including the technicians and supervisory personnel of IPEC and the implementing agencies, members of the National Committee, political decision makers of the present and former administration, as well as parents and children benefited by the projects' work and other actors relevant for their implementation.

After analyzing a wide range of information, the evaluation **has concluded** the following:

Regarding the projects' design

The efforts undertaken clearly provided a clear direction to the implementation process. It has been relevant to promote the Time-Bound Programs (TBP) framework in the country, as well as to prioritize education as the main strategy for the initiative in order to eliminate the worst forms of child labor.

Among the design problems are the wish to implement a wide range of activities that have not been properly prioritized, as well as having failed to fully take into account the political turmoil and changes that condition the times needed for implementation.

In light of the progress made and of the changes achieved thus far in the operational context of the projects, this may be the opportune moment to prioritize those action strategies that have proven to be most effective to achieve the proposed objectives.

Regarding the efficiency and effectiveness of the implementation process

The projects' management structure has proven to be effective despite the existence of multiple political and administrative problems. The IPEC-El Salvador staff comprises a well-coordinated team of individuals with a great deal of experience. Despite the administrative and operational challenges they had to face, they assumed a dynamic attitude so as to start the various activities. It may be stated that the start-

up phase for two of the projects has just concluded, and their full execution recently begun, especially the implementation of the direct action programs.

The low efficiency of the implementation process in terms of time and resources used up to now has mainly arisen from the administrative contracting processes of the implementing agencies, which include several officials and multiple levels and decision-making entities. However, considering the new end dates of both projects, the goals in terms of coverage of the target population seem feasible.

Regarding the actions to generate an enabling environment

The awareness-raising strategies that have been targeted at the society as a whole and some key actors have been successful both in their goal of giving visibility and relevance to the issue, as well as generating an enabling environment to implement actions that favor the eradication of the worst forms of child labor.

The issue of child labor has been positioned at the decision-making levels in all significant contexts, with the exception of trade unions and municipalities, but this has not yet translated into more operational directives for the intermediary ministerial levels.

The generation of a technically adequate knowledge base to allow for the assessment of the magnitude, location, and characteristics of child labor, especially in its worst forms, has also been successful. This information base provides for an adequate follow up of the action programs; implementing agencies are even entitled to include variables in the system. However, the project monitoring systems lack process indicators and means for analyzing qualitative aspects of the work that is being done. The establishment of a child labor monitoring system is a pending issue that will require from IPEC officials an additional effort, especially if the intention is for national authorities to implement it in the future. The governmental organization in charge of monitoring has not been identified. The major challenge for this would be the financial resources necessary for monitoring. The exact amount is unknown at this point because there have not been discussions on

the scope of the system or its organizational implications.

Progress has been made in several aspects related to adjusting the country's legislation to the commitments assumed with the signing of ILO Conventions, in particular the modifications to the Penal Code. The tasks still pending with regards to the legislation are the discussion and approval of the list of hazardous occupations for children, one of the keys for the definition of child labor elimination policies, and of the National Children's Code. It is also essential to work with judges in order to further advance toward effective application of the new regulations.

In the educational field, which is where most of the projects' resources are concentrated, the advances have been substantial. Together with the head officials of MINED, the following actions have been implemented: awareness-raising and creation of the necessary conditions to specifically work with the target communities of the intervention; development of teacher-training materials, both for initial and ongoing training; development of literacy materials and accelerated courses to complete basic education, thus collaborating with specific programs of MINED; design of the remedial study rooms that have incorporated an innovative teaching methodology which is fundamental to prevent children from dropping out of the school system and to keep them from engaging in labor; and the still rather incipient development of vocational training activities. These actions have permeated the educational community in the areas of intervention of the direct action programs and have transformed it into a strategic ally. The generation of alternative income for families is a complex issue where there has been little progress so far. However, consultations with key actors have been held and some training courses have already been organized.

Regarding the action programs

The actions taken locally by the action programs, although recently implemented, have already achieved considerable mobilization in the community.

On the one hand, the technical teams of the implementing agencies have been strongly involved in the field actions, and have established a strong presence in the locations where they are involved. Both teachers and parents are satisfied with the actions taken in the schools. The reasons for this support are due to their new understanding of the matter, as well as the support received from the technicians, the instructional training received, and the support for the implementation of the Proyecto Educativo Institucional—PEI (Education Institutional Project).

The operation of the remedial study rooms is the core and most innovative strategy of the Education Initiative (EI) in the action programs. The contribution of these remedial rooms from a pedagogical point of view and the use of novel didactic materials and supplies are important.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to establish mechanisms that would make it possible to evaluate the quality of what children have learned and to monitor any potential improvements in their school performance. Moreover, it is important to start systematizing and disseminating experiences identified as “good practices.”

CIPOTES is an excellent instrument to follow up and monitor the children and adolescents that have joined the action programs. However, there is need for a follow-up and monitoring system of processes at the local level that would make it possible to determine the performance of the implementing agencies and which would provide feedback for programming on a permanent basis.

The provision of job opportunities to adolescents is highly valued by the beneficiaries. There has been little progress, however, in the generation of productive alternatives to families as part of the action programs. The implementation of this component is complex due to the lack of basic literacy skills of the potential beneficiaries and the distance between some of the project sites and the markets and consumption centers.

Regarding the sustainability of the actions undertaken by the TBP and the EI

Beyond an unquestionable change in the visibility and awareness of the child-labor problem that would contribute to social sustainability, there is no evidence as yet of tangible outcomes within the institutional and economic spheres of sustainability. It is necessary to develop strategies that would establish the ministries that will work on the matter, the needed human and budgetary resources for them to do so. The formulation and implementation of a National Plan assumed by the country itself, which is the ultimate objective of the TBP, is also pending.

Thus, the evaluation team **recommends that:**

IPEC-EI Salvador office carry out a strategic planning exercise in which all of the members of the staff participate, using planning tools (for example, SPIF) familiar to the facilitators. They should discuss and rethink about the axis of their future activities. The purpose is to identify the critical issues both in the socio-political scenario in which the projects are taking place and in the bureaucratic-administrative entities in order to take the action to the expected outcomes; this needs to be done in order to prepare a realistic prioritization, after the corresponding assessment, of the activities to be developed.

The internal administrative systems for approval of IPEC/ILO contracts be modified, amended, or made more flexible.

The educational strategies be evaluated, especially several aspects of the operation of the study rooms in order to determine the quality of the knowledge gained there. The methodology of these rooms should be transferred to the MINED for incorporation into its regular programs. If this is not possible, it would be necessary to identify other institutions which could at least finance the recurring expenses of the rooms that are currently operational. It is also necessary to start identifying the public or private institutions or organizations that could assume in stages the distribution of instructional supplies and material in the participating schools. Furthermore, the systematization of the experiences being evaluated should be started immediately, as well as the multiplication of efforts to reinforce the adolescents' vocational training.

The production alternatives require reflecting about the true possibilities available to develop specific undertakings for each of the action programs, and, as a result of this assessment, a decision should be made regarding the investment of efforts and resources.

Monitoring requires the creation of a process-monitoring system to complement CIPOTES.

Child-labor issues should be owned by the national institutions in order to ensure sustainability; the working strategies with national authorities should be revised so that the commitments assumed become concrete governmental policies and actions. It is also important to advocate a change in the vision of the members of the National Committee as to their roles, and to make concrete efforts in order to strengthen the governmental institutional capabilities that would allow for continuing with the project' actions; locally, it is fundamental to involve the municipalities. Another relevant issue is the transfer of capacity to access and to manage diversified financial sources.