Evaluation Summary

Supporting the Time-Bound Programme to eliminate the worst forms of child labour in Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Swaziland - Midterm Evaluation

Quick Facts

Countries: *Lesotho, Swaziland, Namibia, Botswana, South Africa*

Midterm Evaluation: *06/2006*

Evaluation Mode: *Independent*

Administrative Office: *IPEC*

Technical Office: *IPEC*

Evaluation Manager: *IPEC/DED*

Evaluation Consultant: *Zenda Ofir (team leader) and Lise Kriel*

Project Code: *RAF/03/50/USA and RAF/02/50/USA*

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Keywords: *Child Labour*

Excerpt from the Executive Summary

The TECL programme
The TECL programme ('*Towards the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour*') was established in April 2004 by ILO-TECL with funding from the US Department of Labor in the five countries of the Southern African Customs Union (SACU; South Africa and the 'BLNS countries' – Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, Swaziland). It was launched in response to the need to kick-start implementation of the most urgent action steps in the South African Time-bound (TBP) Programme to combat child

labour, the '*Child Labour Programme of Action*' (CLPA), and to help set up such a national TBP in each of the BLNS countries. TECL therefore has three distinct but interlinked components aimed at (i) South Africa; (ii) the BLNS countries; and (iii) the SACU sub-region.

It focuses mainly on the worst forms of child labour, structured in 34 projects linked to three overarching strategies: (i) strengthening the knowledge base and increasing understanding; (ii) building capacity in policy design, implementation and monitoring; and (iii) implementing direct action through pilot projects that can also add to the knowledge base. The programme is managed by a central team (in this report called the 'TECL team') based at the ILO Area Office in Pretoria and supported in each country by a steering committee that draws together representatives from government, NGO networks, the UN system, labour and employer organisations. Each BLNS country has an in-country Secretariat responsible for the work of the steering committee in that country.

This independent mid-term review, conducted over 40 days during April-June, was seen as an opportunity to help identify issues to be resolved, improvements to be made and lessons to be learnt for future national as well as ILO-IPEC programming, and to determine the implications of the implementation delays. There are 19 TBP support programmes across the world, but TECL has several innovative components: It includes projects beyond the definition of WFCL. Five countries are coordinated under one programme framework and by one central management team, supported by a sub-regional focus. And it has a very strong focus on upstream work aimed at

mainstreaming relevant issues into policies and programmes across many sectors of government.

Programme scope and progress
These factors contributed to its ambitious scope - it includes 31 of the 131 action steps in the CLPA and has the potential to influence 50 more – which is one of the reasons for the slow pace of implementation over the past two years. Implementation of some projects is nearly a year behind schedule; most by several months. This has serious implications for delivery of expected results within the relatively short timeframe of three years.

Few of the reasons for the delay could be controlled by the management team. Information on which to act has been limited; child labour is relatively low on development agendas; the pace at which governments move is slow; capacities are limited not only in government but also among service providers; and efforts to limit certain types of child labour are meeting with some resistance as they are perceived to be in conflict with culture and tradition. In South Africa in particular, the CLPA has yet to be adopted as an official government programme and this has limited financial and human resource allocation – TECL has essentially been *the* major source of *dedicated* funds for CLPA implementation, although a number of departments have also provided significant levels of support. Administrative and procurement processes are time-consuming and where this has not been taken account during planning, have led to significant changes in timeframes.

Management and coordination
These reasons highlight the need for sympathy with the time, effort and skill required to implement a programme of this nature and magnitude. The programme has also suffered from the TECL team's lack of capacity in terms of time, resources and initially, lack of experience in managing and coordinating a programme of this scope. They have to deal with equal competency and elegance across 34 projects in five countries in policy work, field interventions and significant levels of administration. The quality and amount of work delivered by the team speaks of a high level of dedication, competence and drive, yet suffers from a tendency to spend too much time on devising and revising plans, drafting 'perfect' documents and controlling and micromanaging tasks that lower productivity. It also exposes ambiguities in roles and responsibilities within the team. The TECL team are perceived as 'local' rather than 'ILO' experts who not only provide advice, but assist the South African Department of Labour yet retain some distance from government. This has mostly been beneficial to programme objectives. The TECL team has strong support from their key stakeholders in all five countries, to the extent that this may threaten sustained action after TECL ends - too much dependency on the work of the team to drive the extensive coordination that is required. Once TECL ends, an institutional home has to be found in each government with sufficient authority for the coordination of large inter-departmental, cross-sectoral initiatives. In South Africa the best mechanism has yet to be devised between the Department of Labour and the Office of the Rights of the Child (ORC) in the Presidency which serves as an acknowledgment of the importance and interdepartmental nature of children's rights and wellbeing in South Africa.

Institutional model
The institutional model on which the programme is based has been very well received in all five countries, with the caveat that it will be essential to have stronger local coordination once national action plans have been developed. The current model works because BLNS stakeholders understand that it is resource efficient, value the sharing of South African and other regional experiences, have their own local steering committees, make extensive use of technology and feel that extensive consultation processes have created ownership as well as an emphasis on local contexts. Much of the positive feeling has been credited to the efficient and non-prescriptive way in which the TECL team has managed their work in the BLNS countries.
But all agree that ownership has to be completely transferred to each country for execution of national action plans.

Programme design
The programme design is logical and coherent and based on a clear theory of change5. The clarity of the logic has been pivotal in helping the programme keep on track towards achieving the expected results – although many results are unlikely to be achieved before termination of the programme within the current timeframe. Small improvements can be made, also to the accompanying monitoring plan, but there is no need for change in direction or focus at this time. The profile of gender and HIV/Aids as cross-cutting issues can be strengthened. The logic of the programme demands stakeholder buy-in and trust and

justifies the emphasis that the TECL team has placed on consultative processes. While these processes were long and added significantly to the implementation delays, they have led in each country to a common understanding of and agreement on terminology, context and priorities, and improved the chance of sustainability once TECL ends. Nearly all informants agree that the strong emphasis on evidence, mainstreaming and upstream work is necessary because of the dire need for information and enabling environments that can sustain on-the-ground interventions in the long term. The ownership created in South Africa through consultation as well as collaboration among the steering committee (the CLPA Implementation Committee) has brought some strain into the relationship with ILO-IPEC and the donor. Their different perspectives on priorities and approaches have been reflected in an ongoing debate on target setting for numbers of direct beneficiaries in the absence of adequate information for informed decision-making.

Achievements
TECL already has some achievements although these are slower to appear than in direct action interventions on the ground. A mainstreaming approach is necessary but challenging and depends on a number of factors the management team cannot control. The programme demands great emphasis on stakeholder buy-in and capacity building across many departments and levels of authority; evidence for policy inputs and work on the ground; credible and transparent processes to safeguard quality of products and pull in knowledgeable and effective service providers; and constant driving and 'pushing' to ensure that the planned interventions have priority among many others. Results may increase significantly as implementation unfolds and gathers momentum, but much will depend on the extent to which approaches, methods, experiences and good practice can be documented and used to inform the future implementation of national action plans. In the meantime TECL is being recognised in each of the countries for (i) expanding the knowledge base on child labour (which was also raised as the most urgent need) through research and the formation of networks of steering committees and project reference groups; (ii) raising awareness and insight into the nature and extent of child labour, what can be done to address it and how, thus building the capacities especially among steering committee members; (iii) coordinating and supporting government role players through technical advice, facilitation of inter-sectoral

cooperation, articulating sensitive child labour issues and acting as intermediary; and (iv) maintaining a commitment to stakeholder-owned and –driven approaches to child labour interventions. In South Africa TECL is noted for facilitating the implementation of important CLPA action steps and convincing departments to allocate resources in spite of the lack of official adoption of the CLPA. A number of project-specific outputs have been produced or are being finalised.

Linkages and partnerships
Due to the mainstreaming nature of the programme, establishing partnerships and gaining their trust are a very important part of TECL activities. Effective linkages with key organisations for each of project has been a major challenge due to the number and diversity of stakeholders involved, especially in the four pilot projects6. As could be expected, partnerships have been formed mainly with government agencies. More work is needed to capitalise on synergies within the UN system and with other donor interventions. TECL and RECLISA7 are collaborating on several fronts but as complementary approaches (one focusing upstream and the other downstream) can be pursued with greater attention to the 'policy-practice link' and how this can be strengthened also with other partners. The standard tripartite arrangement is not the most appropriate in the SACU context, but labour and employers can play important roles in creating awareness, educating, and acting as watchdogs. Their potential role still has to be clarified and better integrated into the implementation plan although they serve on the steering committees and reference groups.

Credibility, relevance and responsiveness
TECL is regarded as a timely, credible and relevant intervention. Its credibility and relevance stems to a great extent from the strong stakeholder- and evidence-driven approach to its development and the insistence on local interests. The best available expertise and information were used to compile the priorities for action in each of the countries. The research components, the scanning of the policy environment as well as the engagement of steering committees and reference groups play a major role in keeping it relevant, although more systematic and strategic emphasis can be placed by the formal structures on efforts to track external and internal changes that may impact on the programme direction and implementation. The TECL team is flexible and amenable to change, although the monitoring and self-

evaluation systems can be used more effectively to inform new ideas. At the same time a careful balance has to be kept between changes aimed at improving operations and ensuring a sense of stability and clear direction among service providers. Several service providers in South Africa as well as BLNS countries reported perceptions that too many changes are made as reporting formats and implementation processes are influenced by official requirements and lessons from other countries.

Sustainability

The sustainability of TECL interventions and results was considered from the start and is the basis for the mainstreaming approach in spite of the greater risk of failure. Many aspects that should increase the chances of sustainability are already incorporated. Capacities in government are being built, systems and plans developed and awareness created. An exit strategy still needs to be constructed to ensure that momentum is maintained and that essential capacities and commitments are in place.

Future challenges

Challenges remain. The CLPA needs to be adopted as soon as possible. Ignorance, conflicting political interests, too many priorities and inadequate mechanisms for intra- and inter-departmental collaboration may (continue to) hold back government commitment and action. Steering committees suffer from inconsistent membership and lack of attendance of key players. Effective institutional homes for child labour in government need to be secured and networks of champions, including among community leaders and the media, have to be established to assist with education and awareness. International experiences need to be better mobilised to inform programme tactics. Communication of analyses and results in a manner that increases their use should receive attention, especially where national and regional development frameworks need to be influenced. Donor agencies need to be mobilised to commit resources, preferably in budget support rather than project modality. Most importantly, TECL implementation needs to be accelerated and counter-productive management styles and inadequate administrative systems improved through a team effort by all relevant role players, including ILO, ILO-TECL and the US Department of Labour.
In spite of difficulties and inefficiencies TECL is on track towards achieving its objectives and is starting to yield results. Its management team and advisors are committed and competent and enjoys the trust of most of the stakeholders. Key relationships have been established. But delivery has been slow compared to the Supporting the Time-Bound Programme to eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labour in South Africa's Child Labour Action Programme and laying the basis for concerted action against Worst Forms of Child Labour in Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Swaziland initial planning and an extension of one year to April 2008 will be imperative to achieve the majority of what it set out to do, to document reliable lessons and good practices, to retain a focus on quality and to ensure a good exit towards sustainable action and results. Enough funding for staff and their coordination functions should be made available, subject to certain conditions. And finally, every effort should be made to ensure that the various governments commit human and financial resources to complete what TECL had started.