Evaluation Summary

Eliminating child labour in El Salvador through economic empowerment and social inclusion – Final Evaluation Summary

Quick Facts

Countries: El Salvador

Final: December 2016-February 2016

Evaluation Mode: *Independent Final (Expanded with sub-studies on areas of impact)*

Administrative Office: *ILO DWT/CO – San Jose*

Technical Office: *IPEC/FUNDAMENTALS Branch*

Evaluation Manager: *Ricardo Furman*

Evaluation Consultant: *Mauricio García Moreno (team leader) and Silvia Rubio (team member)*

Project Code: *ELS/10/50/USA*

Donor(s) & Budget: *US Department of Labor (USDOL)*

Keywords: *child labour, impact evaluation, livelihoods, national capacity, local government, schools/education*

Background & Context

Summary of the project purpose, logic and structure

The project Elimination of Child Labour in El Salvador through Economic Empowerment and Social Inclusion was carried out by the ILO between December 2010 and March 2016 with a total budget of 12.7 million dollars.

The project was designed with a new strategy in mind, to reduce child labour through poverty reduction, strengthening of national capacities to design and implement public policies, and action on all the forms of child labour found within a specific geographic area. The project worked on three levels: macro (national policies and institutional framework); meso (municipalities and schools); and micro (households of child workers), in rural and urban areas, with the intention of developing a strategy that integrates the work of local governments, schools and households. The project's immediate objectives targeted the development of complementary institutional capabilities in each of those spheres. At meso level, the project's target was to intervene in 15 municipalities and 75 schools. At micro level, it proposed to offer services to improve the income of 5,100 families, and education services to 5,200 working children and 7,800 in risk of entering in child labour.

Purpose of the evaluation

The specific objectives of the evaluation are as follows:

- Determine the effectiveness of the project: achievement of the objectives and outcomes, and of understanding of how and why they were achieved (or why not);
- Identify undesired changes/side-effects;
- Assess the effectiveness of project implementation;

- Establish the pertinence of the project outcomes and the degree of sustainability achieved;
- Provide recommendations, based on the achievements of the project, in support to the Roadmap for Combating Child Labour at local and national level, so as to achieve sustainability of the project's outcomes and the initial impacts, and their replication and scaling-up;
- Identify lessons and potential emerging best practices that are valid for the various interest groups;
- Provide pertinent recommendations for the various national- and local-level stakeholders, in order to achieve sustainability of the outcomes and the initial project impacts.

Methodology of evaluation

The Expanded Final Evaluation methodology combines the classic evaluation process (carried out by an evaluation team through a desk review, field work, a workshop with the stakeholders and an evaluation report), with other studies and reports as inputs that have been carried out previously to feed into the process of final evaluation. These reports included three regarding local government, national capacities and the outcome in schools; an impact assessment of one of the interventions, and a statistical report comparing the results of an endline survey to a sample of beneficiary households that was applied at the end of the project with the baseline in the same universe; and a statistical report of the data provided by the project monitoring system.

Main Findings & Conclusions

Findings and conclusions

The design of the project was based on quantitative and qualitative information, the result of a strategic planning exercise in which many governmental and non-governmental institutions participated. The design took into account the legal, institutional and policy framework of the country, as well as lessons learned from the implementation of previous projects. The Government of El Salvador, the United States Department of Labor (USDOL) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) participated in

the project design. The assumptions regarding the capacity of municipalities and local organizations to meet the goal of preventing and eliminating child labour were undervalued. Expectations about the results of implementing subsistence alternatives for families and about school interventions were not realistic enough. The following weaknesses were identified in the project design: (is) it does not take into account the difficulties that the model presented (strengthening the country's institutional capacities for the prevention and eradication of child labour) entails in terms of institutional coordination efforts (Ii) the institutional capacity diagnosis is weak and does not account for the actual degree of development of the municipalities and the feasibility of implementing Local Councils, (iii) the design of the Livelihoods alternatives to reduce family dependence on child labour (objective 5) did not sufficiently take into account the characteristics of the beneficiaries, the lack of experience of the implementing agencies with the rural poor families and under estimated the costs of the training service and delivery of the seed capital (Iv) coverage of Objectives 4, 5 and 6 is oversized considering the existing national and municipal institutional capacities.

In order to ensure evidence-based project management, an ongoing monitoring and evaluation strategy based on indicators, a quasi-experimental evaluation of one of the interventions, baseline and direct beneficiaries (the households of the 15 municipalities), reports on the changes produced by some of the interventions and two independent evaluations (an intermediate evaluation and an extended final evaluation). Regarding the extended final evaluation, although the various reports had descriptive rather than analytical purposes, different universes within the overall universe of the project (such as families, schools or municipalities), and were completed with delay within the overall expanded evaluation process; all generated valuable information to be hat should be analysed and contrasted, considering them as valid sources of existing trends.

The project has contributed to generating improved institutional capacities for implementing the national policies regarding child labour as set out in the El Salvador Child labour Roadmap. The point of

departure for those capacities was low along the majority of the dimensions that the project sought to affect. Generally speaking the situation has improved, and today the institutions have more knowledge, tools and trained staff than at project start-up.

The project has contributed to developing mechanisms for application of the legislation on child labour, through support to various governmental and non-governmental organizations for them to draw up standards and instruments indicating (within the framework of their own institutional mission) the function and the actions that they should comply with in order to prevent and eradicate child labour and protect working children. In that way the country advanced both in improving the degree of specificity of the standards, as well as in broadening the coverage of the actors monitoring their compliance. The country faces the challenge of continuing to engage more institutions in this task and to follow up on them.

The project has contributed to improving the national capacity to carry out studies of the child labour situation and monitor institutional actions. The support afforded to DIGESTYC (General Directorate of Statistics and Censuses) has created sufficient national capacity to undertake independent statistical studies on this topic. On the other hand, a system has been created to track institutional actions at national level (SIMETI), but the recording of information and its use – which depends on the institutions that supply services or implement projects – constitutes a challenge for the country, since it is necessary to incorporate more institutions into the system and improve the frequency of the recording and the relevance of the information for monitoring.

The project proposed to improve the capacity of 15 selected municipalities to prevent and eliminate child labour, through the constitution of Local Committees for the Rights of Children and Adolescents, the formulation of municipal childhood and adolescence policies, and implementation of municipal monitoring systems. The degree to which this purpose was achieved varies among the 15 municipalities, although in general progress has been made slowly. This is due to the fact that the municipalities lack the necessary financial resources to fulfil the duties that the law assigns to them; the capacities of the local institutions are low; and there are insufficient skilled human resources for the wide variety of technical fields required to solve the problems.

The project implemented four initiatives aimed at improving the livelihoods of 5,100 families in 15 municipalities and reducing dependence on income generated from child labour: 1) support the creation of micro enterprises, 2) improvement of agricultural activity, 3) access to microcredit and 4) labour intermediation. An impact evaluation of the initiative to support the creation of micro-enterprises was carried out, as it was the one with the greatest coverage. The impact assessment shows that the impact was substantially positive, although the design of the evaluation does not identify the mechanisms by which that impact was achieved. Thus, it concludes that this initiative increased the attendance of children to school, declined the proportion of children who worked and did not attend school and reduced the amount of time that working children devote to child labour. The impact assessment also indicates that the objectives of increasing household incomes or reducing the labour force participation of children were not achieved. These limitations can be interpreted as a result of deficiencies in the methodological design and implementation of this initiative.

The project supported the Ministry of Education (MINED) to implement five educational models in 74 schools making education more relevant and attractive, and by that means improving the enrolment, retention and promotion rates, which is a prerequisite for preventing and eliminating child labour. Implementation of the models sought to provide the country with valid alternatives that it could include within the educational offering. MINED considered that three of the five models were appropriate and it has partially adopted them. There is no official documentation to assess the degree of ownership and use of these model in the creation of the educational strategies and policies directed to prevention and eradication of child labour. The challenge for the country consists in analysing the experience and proposing measures to make the best use of it within the framework of the education sector strategy.

The project monitoring and evaluation tools developed to identify changes in the children at the

school and on child labour show the following. The report on education indicators points out that school enrolment has decreased by 5% between 2012 and 2014 in schools that participated in the model of extracurricular educational, recreational and cultural activities. On the other hand, the endline survey indicated 48.8% decrease in the proportion of children and adolescents on child labour in relation to the total population aged 5 to 17 years (from 63.6% in the baseline to 14.8% in the endline survey). The plausibility of attributing to the project these results (both positive and negative) is weak considered context information. According to the endline survey, the reduction of work activities is not only observed in children and adolescents, but also in the households' heads, especially among women (56.6%). In addition, data from the Ministry of Education indicate that school enrolment in the rural area at the national level has decreased by 4% between 2012 and 2015. Therefore, the reduction of children in child labour and the decline in school enrolment may be due to factors external to the project.

On the other hand, the Impact evaluation of the initiative to support the creation of microenterprises indicates that there was neither reduction in enrolment among the children of the women who participated in this initiative nor on child labour. This would indicate that the families that participated in this initiative behaved differently than the rest of the population. Since the initiative failed to increase household incomes, it is proposed as a hypothesis that this difference may be due to the effect of the awareness-raising activities developed by the project, combined with the commitment signed by the parents to send their children to school.

The sustainability of the project, i.e. the likelihood that its results will have lasting effects once it has been completed and there won't be external resources, varies between different objectives. Objectives 1, 2, 3 and 6 present an average probability while objectives 4 and 5 have a low probability. The lowest probability of sustainability applies to those results related to the municipalities and families. In the case of the municipalities the reasons is their low degree of institutional development combined with the nascent institutionalization of the CONNA. In the case of families is based on the fact that the objective 5

Initiative to support the creation of micro-enterprises, did not work as expected.

Recommendations

Minister of Labor and Social Security
- Track compliance of the "Instruction" No. 02/2015 on the rules for preventing and eradicating child labour in public procurement;

Technical and Planning Secretary of the Presidency Office
- Carry on with the efforts for the country's strategies for combating poverty to take child labour into consideration;

Minister of Education
- Carry on with the efforts for the Ministry of Education to have an educational strategy to prevent and eradicate child labour;
- Carry out a study on reduction in enrolment in the rural area;

National Council of Childhood and Adolescence
- Analyse the municipal policy documents on children and adolescents, and feed back to the municipalities;
- Adopt the SMMTI (Municipal System for Monitoring of Child Labour) for managing care to all of the children whose rights are infringed in the municipalities;

CAMAGRO and CASALCO
- Track compliance with the clauses on child labour set out in the codes of conduct of the employers' organizations and in the collective agreements;

ILO
- Expand the time limit for implementation of the projects for strengthening of national capacities;
- Design an instrument to analyse institutional capabilities;
- Design and use longitudinal studies as a monitoring and evaluation instrument;
- Analyse and systematize the methodologies that exist in other countries to improve education, as a way to eliminate child labour;
- Analyse and systematize the interventions that exist in other countries to improve the income of poor urban and rural families.
- Systematize the lessons learnt during the design and implementation of the impact assessment;

- Design and apply studies on the changes in Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) within the target population.

Major lessons learned

- Building the institutional and policy framework at the macro and meso levels is a slow process that does not depend only on the technical efforts to build it. It also requires the priority by political authorities to child labour, the degree of development of national capacities for the management of public policies in general, the availability of local services for children, among others.
- Supplementing the legal framework on child labour with a regulatory framework involving actions by a broad spectrum of organizations:
- It is necessary to understand how much and in what way the awareness-raising activities contribute to changing cultural patterns:
- Support to increasing family income should consider a wide menu of options according to the characteristic of the beneficiaries group.

Major good practices

- Application of a work strategy at macro, meso and micro levels is a practice that strengthens the country's capacity to prevent and eradicate child labour.
- The execution of several project components by public institutions fosters the taking on of ownership of the objectives and the development of institutional capabilities.
- The actions for prevention and eradication of child labour in which the employers' and workers' organizations participate should contribute to their institutional mission.