



Evaluation Summaries

Prevention and elimination of the worst forms of child domestic labor in Central America and the Dominican Republic” (Phases I and II)

Quick Facts

Countries: Costa Rica, Panama, Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras

Final Evaluation: November 2004

Mode of Evaluation: independent **Technical Area:** Child Labour

Evaluation Management: IPEC

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Project Code: RLA01/02/CAN, RLA/02/54/CAN

Donor: Canada

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Abstract on the report

This report is the final independent evaluation of the sub-regional Project “Prevention and elimination of child labour and its worst forms in Central America and the Caribic”. The countries involved were Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and the Domenic Republic. At its first stage it also included El Salvador. The project was implemented by the International Programme on the Elimination of Chile Labour from the International Labour Organisation (IPEC-ILO) with the financial support of the government of Canada.

The project was developed in two phases and its main objective was to contribute to the prevention and elimination of child labour and its worst forms in Central America and the

Dominican Republic. The seven main immediate objectives established in both project documents have been integrated into five strategic components addressing:

- 1) Establish an important knowledge base of the child labour phenomena (CDL) in the region;
- 2) Develop a vast process of awareness raising and social mobilization to sensiblize the population and the key-institutional agents, raising social awareness on the CDL problem in the different countries, and creating solutions;
- 3) Develop actions to contribute to reinforce the institutional learning process of governmental organisations, non-governmental organisations and civil society in their involvement in the fight against CDL;
- 4) Promote studies and legislative proposals in order to modify the subject’s legislation in the different countries;
- 5) Develop programmes and actions addressing the prevention and elimination of CDL and provide services to the population of child workers and domestic adolescents (TIADs).

IPEC-ILO calculates that around 175,000 people are under 18, and majority females,

who are working as domestic workers in the mentioned Central American countries and the Dominican Republic. The domestic child labour (CDL) is an economical, social and cultural phenomena of complex nature that brings a triple discrimination: gender, social-class and legal rights.

The central themes of the evaluation were: validity of the project design, strategy focus, management and implementation of the project (efficiency, effectiveness, and unexpected effects), special questions (gender, ethnicity, monitor systems on child labour) and sustainability.

Main Findings

Based on a general conclusion of the evaluation of both phases of the project, it can be confirmed that the project was successful in achieving the majority of the goals. It has also shown flexibility and sensitivity towards the local demands, having had as key achievements, the establishment of an important body of knowledge on the phenomena of child labour in the sub-region, and the awareness and beginning of social responsibility towards a phenomenon that until now was object of high social tolerance and cultural acceptance. The project has obtained the sensibilization and positioning of the key institutional stakeholders (government organisations, non-governmental and social community), in favour of the prevention and progressive elimination of CDL, as well as the involvement of different organisations in the institutional networks and communities of the different countries, in the development of actions against domestic child labour. It addresses not only at a prevention level, but in the improvement of the educational conditions of child domestic workers and withdrawal from CDL.

The principal weaknesses of the project, which are object of recommendations in this report, refer to the lack of homogeneity in the definition of the concepts of prevention and withdrawal used by the different implementing

agencies that participate in the project. There is an absence of strategies for:

- The development of a more coherent system that joins the institutional efforts at local and national level, which can translate into stable mechanisms to cover the needs of TIADs.
- The insufficient influence over the legislative bodies of the countries, and the limited and discontinued presence in the public means of communication.

Moreover, the existence of a set of administrative and management factors that have negatively impacted the efficiency of the project, like:

- The extreme complexity of the administrative procedures of the IPEC-ILO.
- The centralization of decisions in the OSR
- The absence of an operational decentralized anticipative planning system, based on a structure per costs and output, the existence of a high ratio of indirect costs related principally to the activities of HQ and OSR;
- The insufficient development of a monitoring system for activities and the beneficiaries of the project.

Recommendations

Project's design requirements

- 1) It is recommended that more time be assigned for projects like this, taking into account a preparatory stage of at least two years to generate knowledge, make the issue visible, raise awareness among the population, and establish a judicial and institutional action framework. Moreover, at least three additional years are needed in order to validate, consolidate, and strengthen strategies to approach each component.

- 2) It is recommended to identify and prioritize key strategic lines of action which would ensure a greater impact in the prevention and elimination of the worst forms of child domestic labor, such as mainstreaming the issue of child domestic labor in projects with a wider scope (e.g. the poverty reduction program geared toward high-risk populations/areas of origin, access to education, vocational training, poor women's training, and promotion of small and medium enterprises, etc.) rather than the small-scale direct attention efforts.
- 3) It is suggested that the concept of "prevention" and "prevented child" used by the different implementing agencies and IPEC be expanded and unified, using geographic (area of origin) criteria rather than "family ties" of the beneficiaries.
- 4) In order to avoid confusion, it is suggested that the educational compensatory actions (accelerated elementary education and others), as well as educational remediation, and vocational training for child-domestic workers, as well as recreational, health-care, legal, and psychological counselling services, all be considered as alternatives for "improving the living and working conditions of child-domestic workers." These actions should be distinguished from children leaving current labor activities, or a reduction of the number of girls' working hours.
- 5) In order to have a fuller vision of approach options according to each country's characteristics, an array that would help make decisions about the most pertinent strategies, it is important to synthesize the experiences in each country and region. Moreover, it is necessary to compile and summarize information about the other experiences used to fight against child-domestic labor that were not used directly in the project.
- 6) Gender, as a cross-cutting issue in any social intervention, should be integrated as a thematic axis, taking advantage of the natural spaces of the project, such as the awareness-raising activities, the training courses, the individual and collective reflection spaces, and the messages which are broadcasted by the media. The design of the project's products should take into account the integration of this type of contents if it is expected to achieve a real holistic integration of the gender perspective.
- 7) It is recommended that in new projects about child-domestic labor, a child-labor monitoring system based on the community be incorporated, linking to other thematic projects or items related to the labor activity and relating the child labor monitoring system with the project's monitoring one.

Implementation

- 1) It is recommended that the criteria to select the implementing agencies, such as their prior experience in handling children's programs or child-labor programs, handling community networks, etc., be standardized. There should be an institutional study or analysis of the main institutional local actors related to the issue of child labor, as took place in the case of IPEC-Nicaragua. This is an advisable practice for any Country Office.
- 2) It is suitable to increase the frequency of the spaces for exchanging experiences amongst implementing agencies and other key counterparts of the project in each country, as well as among IPEC's Country Offices, thus favouring the systematization and dissemination of alternatives to approach the issue.
- 3) It is necessary to activate an institutional approach and response in

each country for attention to child-domestic workers for institutions involved in child protection. In this sense, it is advisable to give priority to the development and consensus on inter-institutional attention protocols for the cases of child-domestic workers requiring social intervention.

- 4) Future projects dealing with CDL should deepen the analysis of the problem of applying a gender approach through Rapid Assessment Surveys (RAS), as well as carrying out participatory diagnoses of the practical and strategic needs of CDL from a gender perspective. This should be used to design specific strategies in order to contribute to empowering girls involved in domestic labor and their social repositioning in vulnerable groups.

Effectiveness

- 1) When important efforts to raise awareness are carried out in the mass media, it is important to measure their impact (both before and after) or at least, it should be gauged, that is, whether people remember the actions as reported in the media, which would allow for knowing their actual effect on the public opinion.
- 2) Beyond the overall awareness about the issue of child labor, the institutional strengthening initiatives should be based on an assessment that indicates where it is most important to create impact in the institutions, and to develop a specific strengthening plan for each institution. The training sessions held within this framework should include the application of entry and exit tests of knowledge and attitudes for the participants, as these are elements that would allow for evaluating their usefulness.
- 3) The detection strategies using pairs of child-domestic workers or adult domestic workers, as well as the work

with the local networks at an institutional and communal level and the detection efforts in school, are more recommendable alternatives than the use of the RAS in order to identify the population that is to be benefited by the projects.

- 4) It is necessary to deepen and systematize those factors that promote children's abandonment of domestic labor activities when they live with their families or identity group. The successful models for children who abandon domestic labors when they are far from their families or group of origin and living in the employer's house still need to be validated.
- 5) It is advisable that in future actions on this issue, strategies to effectively approach the employers of child-domestic workers be designed, an activity that was very limited in this project in the various countries. Similarly, future efforts that deal with this issue would require developing preventive and impact strategies for the networks and people that frequently recruit children to engage in child-domestic labor, such as adult domestic workers, teachers, and store clerks, among others.

Efficiency

- 1) It is important to deepen the recent processes to facilitate administration promoted by IPEC-ILO Sub-regional Coordination in San José.
- 2) It is recommendable for ILO to review its administrative procedures, including the amounts budgeted that have been used to determine the authorization levels for the approval of projects at the headquarters at each level, in order to make them more adaptable to the requirements of the educational and social development programs such as IPEC's.
- 3) It is appropriate to review the validity of applying a sub-regional approach for

addressing certain issues, such as CDL, when in practice not enough channels are created to apply unified or standardized approaches among the participating countries. In some cases it might be better to handle certain issues at the level of a TBP (time-bound program).

Sustainability

- 1) In the formulation of future projects and action programs, it is important to include a realistic projection of their sustainability, and to identify the specific strategies needed in order to ensure it. This should be included in the pre-agreements with governments that deal with the progressive investment plans of the local counterparts over a period of five years, as is done with other UN programs (e.g., the World Fund to Fight AIDS, Malaria, and TBC).
- 2) It is important to reflect about the suitability of including “institutional capacity to give sustainability to the action programs” as one of the criteria to select the implementing agencies, in addition to their institutional experience and trajectory in issues related to childhood, child labor, or CDL.

Recommendations regarding some actions and potential axes on which to base a new project on CDL in the Central American sub-region

- 1) Focus the preventive messages on “pushing back the age to enter employment” (not before the minimum age for admission to employment). Focus the preventive efforts on the rural areas and small towns, addressing the needs and concerns of the population through the community organization for the promotion of children’s rights, the development of preventive campaigns against CDL in the local media, and the support to initiatives that deal with economic

development in small communities, these being conditioned to the specific commitments they make in their fight against child labor. This can also be done by crossing over the issue of CDL with other public initiatives or initiatives from ILO, and using the criterion of “areas (of origin) with more prevalence of CDL” as an indicator for the implementation of programs in agricultural development, poverty reduction, improvement of public education, elimination of child labor in agriculture, and others. If financially possible, develop 4 to 10 action programs of this type that are methodologically similar, and that can later be consolidated into a “work model for the areas of origin” of child-domestic workers.

- 2) Strengthen the institutional capacities of the local governments and municipalities (e.g., children’s ombudsmen and coordinating advocate committees for childhood, among other entities), as well as the community networks of the medium-sized towns and certain specific districts of the main cities, so that they can develop preventive activities and establish sustainable institutional mechanisms in order to approach the issue of child-domestic worker in key communities (those with higher prevalence of this phenomenon). They should also work on the protection of the rights of adolescent domestic workers by highlighting the most urgent cases of abuse against child-domestic workers (including the issue of access to quality education). It would be important not to invest too much in expectations for perfectly drafted laws dealing with CDL to be enacted and enforced, but instead to start applying the existing labor and child-protection laws of each country, using the bases of the creation of a platform of institutional alliances between the public sector and the organizations of the civil sector. Within

the framework of a new project about CDL, and if it proves financially viable, it is suggested that at least four pilot programs of this kind be carried out in a smaller number of selected countries (it is suggested that efforts be focused in order to increase the probabilities of success of a new project). These entities and action programs could become part of the basis for strengthening a child-labor monitoring system in each country. The training of labor inspectors on the issue of CDL carried out in some countries is a preliminary effort that could be organized in this direction.

- 3) Link the local initiatives and action programs with the support of national governmental agencies. It is recommendable to use the action programs as illustrative examples in order to increase the level of awareness in the population about CDL. This can be done as a response to the problem of CDL, and in order to create a front to promote the improvement of local legislation about child domestic labor in general, and adolescent domestic labor in particular. Within this framework, incidence activities developed by community organizations lobbying before national parliaments should be supported in order to promote changes in the labor legislation and to look for ways for the respective state to sustain the actions against child labor. It would be necessary for the parliaments, which are the entities that pass the laws and approve the budgets of the governments in these countries, to start understanding the issue of the fight against child labor as a problem that is closely linked to the national development of the countries.

Lessons learned

Project's design and strategy selection

- 1) It is appropriate to consider longer implementation terms than those set for the project (one or two years) so as to achieve ambitious goals, being these objectives that take time, such as the raising of awareness and the modification of public opinion, the consensus about the national strategies that may be viable, or the modification of the codes and other legislation of a country.
- 2) It is important to include in the project design a vision of "prevention" as meaning the "prevention of the causal factors of child labor," including the approach to poverty, adult employment, and the income sources of the families of child-domestic workers.
- 3) It is important to design differentiated strategies both for working in areas of origin and in areas of prevalence of child-domestic workers, as well as differentiated strategies of withdrawal for the population of child-domestic workers, whether they are living with their families or far from them.

Implementation

- 1) It is important to integrate in the action programs parallel strategies to work in the areas of origin of child-domestic workers and in areas where there is prevalence of the phenomenon. Given the relative scarcity of the resources available to fight against this problem, only the sustained maintenance of the preventive efforts will promote a sustainable reduction of this problem in the long term.
- 2) It is necessary to create a clear and unambiguous consensus about the definitions of the terms "prevention" and "withdrawal," their operationalization, and the difference between these options and the "improvement of

educational and life conditions of child-domestic workers.”

- 3) It is fundamental to clearly establish in the field, as well as by mutual agreement with the institutions in the sub-region, the priority criteria needed for approaching the cases of child domestic workers. This step needs to be accomplished by setting priorities in the application of actions to withdraw minors from labor activities when they are under the minimum age of admission to employment.
- 4) While generating a demand for services by the beneficiary population, it is important to work on the creation of sustainable mechanisms to meet these needs, starting with quick systems to receive reports about abuses of personal rights.
- 5) It is necessary to maintain a holistic vision of CDL (including issues of gender, children’s rights, ethnicity, social exclusion, poverty, family organization, rural-urban relationships, labor aspects, and others) in order not to reduce this complex phenomenon and the actions on only a few variables.

Effectiveness

- 1) In as much as possible, it is recommended not to base the detection strategy of child-domestic workers on the initial studies regarding the issue (RAS), because these samples usually are not stable over time and do not necessarily correspond to the cases with the most urgent need for support.
- 2) Raising awareness is not the same as “changing attitudes.” To achieve an important and lasting impact of the message against CDL on the public, it is necessary to develop a more constant presence of the issue of CDL in the media. This should be comprehensively developed in each country within the framework of a single strategy to handle the media, this

to be done as part of the child labor issue dealt with by IPEC-ILO.

- 3) In addition, it is necessary to stratify the types of messages of the prevention campaigns according to the characteristics of each target group.
- 4) Training is not the same as “strengthening capacities.” The latter process is of a more complex nature, and requires a prior evaluation of the institution, a specific strengthening plan, very close support for its implementation, evaluation of the results, and the implementation or updating of the capacities through the implementation of systems or mechanisms that imply their constant exercise.
- 5) The processes that aim at reforming the national legislation should be based, from the very beginning, on a more systematic effort of creating impact on the respective parliamentary representatives.
- 6) The differentiated strategies to withdraw girls living at home with their families or far from them should include elements that allow for helping these girls to design a life project vision, and the necessary actions to advance toward their achievement.

Efficiency

- 1) The increase of the coordination and integration of the issue of CDL is fundamental wherever possible in other national or sub-regional programs of IPEC-ILO in Central America. It is important that IPEC-ILO develop a holistic vision about child labor in the sub-region that is reflected in the integration of objectives and actions of its programs (for instance, in some countries, CDL is a source of “temporary work” for the insertion of girls in the urban context, that is, an occupation between child labor in agriculture and adolescent labor in maquilas).

- 2) The improvements made in terms of reducing the complexity of the internal administrative processes may contribute to increasing the time and resources available to benefit the projects' target populations. Decentralizing the administrative and decision-making processes, providing quick feedback, and simplifying procedures can become important strategies in the fight against domestic child labor (in favor of a decent job).

Sustainability

- 1) The sustainability of the different project components should be considered separately, and they should be addressed from the beginning in order to achieve the financial and social sustainability of the actions.
- 2) The prospects of financial sustainability of a project increase when the financial contributions to the implementing agencies are estimated on the basis of the institution's effective capacities for continuing the activities once the project ends, and when specific mechanisms of gradual withdrawal are implemented through the project.
- 3) It is difficult to achieve a growing sustainability for the actions in the mid-term unless they involve from the beginning both the commitment and financial investment of the government in the fight against child labor.