



Evaluation Summaries

Evaluation: Preparatory Activities for Eliminating the Worst Forms of Child Labour in the Dominican Republic // Support to the Time Bound Programme for Eliminating the Worst Forms of Child Labour in the Dominican Republic

Quick Facts

Country: Dominican Republic

Mid-Term Evaluation: November 2004

Mode of Evaluation: Independent

Technical Area: Child Labour

Evaluation Management: Standards and Rights Sector

Project Start: September 2001

Project End: July 2006

Project Code: DOM/01/50/USA,
DOM/02/50/USA

Donor: United States

Background & Context

Project Background: IPEC's aim is to gradually eliminate child labour by giving urgent and highest priority to the elimination of its worst forms. IPEC has been carrying out activities in the Dominican Republic since 1995. The country is currently running a Time-Bound Program (TBP) against the Worst Forms of Child Labour (WFCL) within the framework of Convention N° 182. The ratification of this Convention implies implementing time-bound measures to eliminate the WFCL. A TBP is essentially a strategic programmed framework of policies and programs which are closely coordinated so as to prevent and eliminate the WFCL in a country within a given period of time. TBP emphasize the fight against the root causes of

child labour by integrating their actions within the national development efforts, particularly within economic and social policies intended to reduce poverty and universalize basic education. The objective of the TBP in the Dominican Republic is the elimination of the WFCL by giving priority to three sectors: commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC), dangerous jobs in agriculture, and informal urban labour. It is expected that the action in these and other sectors will be expanded to have significant progress and advances in the urgent elimination of the WFCL in the country. Recently, child trafficking and smuggling has been recognized as one of the WFCL requiring urgent attention. As a result, a new component against child trafficking has been added to the TBP.

Evaluation Context: The aim of this evaluation is to establish criteria in order to determine if the projects are reaching or are about to reach the proposed objectives, and, if there are deviations, to point out the reasons and provide recommendations that would allow for reorienting the project to increase its effectiveness and efficiency.

The methodological approach used is qualitative. It incorporates the opinion of all participating actors, including the staff and managers of IPEC, representatives of the implementing agencies, members of the National Steering Committee, policy decision-

makers of the current and former government, technicians, and people responsible for other related areas, in particular the Child Labour Education Initiative (EI), parents and children benefited by the project, as well as relevant actors for the implementation. This meant using different techniques and sources to obtain data and compare findings.

Main Findings & Conclusions

Implementation process: The appointment of a highly professional, humanist team imprinted a dynamic pace on the implementation process so as to start the multiple actions that contributed to the strengthening and legitimization of the intervention in diverse scenarios. Although the division of tasks within the local office was done according to thematic specializations, the office members participated in technical assistance and follow-up activities for the Action Programs (AP) by coordinating the sub-regional initiatives with a wide range of governmental and non-governmental actors who were likely to become involved in the eradication of WFCL.

It could be noticed that the delays in starting the Direct Action Programs, as well as the problems with the budget delivery, arose from the bottlenecks in the approval processes for the proposals, progress reports, and accountability. Solutions were gradually found; one of them was the progressive delegation of administrative decisions to the office in the Dominican Republic, which permitted more efficiency in the projects' implementation.

The accumulation of previous delays, plus the new activities to be started within the framework of the child trafficking amendment, created a scenario with many responsibilities and a heavy work load for the members of the local team.

The actions for generating an enabling environment: The actions undertaken by the projects have been effective in terms of generating an enabling environment to eradicate the WFCL, and to collaborate in establishing the basis for the development of a

national TBP. The awareness-raising efforts have been successful in terms of providing visibility for the problems, as well as encouraging the collaboration of SET (Secretaría de Estado de Trabajo), SEE (Secretaría de Estado de Educación), and even CNUS (Consejo Nacional de Unidad Sindical). Substantial progress has been made in the generation of technically adequate information that made it possible to assess the magnitude, location, and characteristics of child labour, especially its worst forms, and adapt the intervention to the needs detected. This information has been useful both as a tool and as input for the awareness-raising actions.

The achievements regarding the commitment assumed by key actors for the treatment of commercial sexual exploitation (CSE) have been significant. More intense work with the judges in order to assure effective enforcement of the existing legislation is still pending. It has been possible to adapt the legislation to the international conventions thus far assumed. It is suitable to undertake an academic discussion in order to clarify the discrepancies between the existing regulations (the Labour Code and the Children Protection Code, mainly) and the gaps that still persist in the legislation.

Regarding the development of national policies, the approval of the national plan against the WFCL is still pending, as well as the specification of commitments assumed by some governmental actors. Despite of the evident link and the explicit and unanimous vision that the TBP is a national project that requires the financial and technical attendance of the IPEC office, in an important number of cases the assumed commitments not yet extend the formal participation in meetings of the National Steering Committee (NSC) or other activities to which invitations are sent.

The action programs: The three institutions contacted proved to have enough implementation capacity to go ahead with the actions proposed in the respective AP. They know the field and have used strategies to work with working children.

Among their strengths, the following are worth emphasizing: appropriate methodologies to identify, approach, and select beneficiary children and to work with their families, as well as to coordinate local institutional actors, sometimes along with the communities. The weaknesses vary according to the case: in one, there is absence of community commitment to the withdrawal strategies and in another there are difficulties in the implementation of the professional training component for youth.

The programs share the lack of experience to develop the remedial classrooms, a core component not only to keep children in school and away from work, but also to adapt their learning to the school grade they are registered in. Each AP is making its own efforts in this sense, but they should be coordinated in order to take advantage of the implementation of the EI and the results of an in-progress evaluation of other IPEC experiences.

Sustainability: Progress has been made in the area of social sustainability in terms of an unquestionable change in the visibility and knowledge of the problems of CL. Certain government agencies have been encouraged to participate, and consultation and joint work initiatives with other organizations of the civil society have been created.

Progress is required in awareness raising and the strengthening of some sectors, such as the business sector where there has been little presence so far. It is also necessary to increase awareness about the role that each actor should play in the eradication of the WFCL, and to ensure that the law be enforced.

Regarding the political and institutional sphere, important achievements have been the consolidation of NSC's coordinating role and the Labour Secretariat's leadership role, as well as the creation of the Child Labour Unit. Locally, the municipal authorities where APs have been implemented and the NGO partners have assumed obligations to sustain activities. However, the promotion of child labour networks (CLN) that may assume the continuity of the programs after IPEC leaves is a strategy that should be strengthened.

The creation of a child-labour monitoring system (CLMS) is a matter which is still pending, and it is urgent to define the modality of its insertion within the governmental apparatus so that it is functioning by the time IPEC leaves.

There is no evidence of tangible outcomes regarding the economic sustainability: SET's few resources make it seem improbable that in the medium term, specific funds will be allotted in the national budget to allocate funds to matters that are currently financed through the project.

Recommendations & Lessons Learned

Recommendations:

Project monitoring: It is recommended to design a monitoring plan that assesses the performance of the different project components. It should focus on processes, and identify the causes of the problems in order to review the implementation of the project. Dimensions, variables and indicators need to be defined to establish appropriate techniques, sources of information and instruments that allow providing a homogeneous picture.

In addition, a specialist should be hired to design the tools and to facilitate or to lead the evaluative process. The complexity of the projects and of the topics of the AP, and the amount of the funds assigned to them, merit that this resource be considered.

The Action Programs: It is recommended to carry out systematization exercises, beginning with the APs that are more advanced, since it is impossible to systematize what has not yet been done. Related to the recovery of the experience, it is also proposed that exchanges be held among the executing agencies by holding periodic meetings for the technical teams of the AP and IPEC staff members at the sites where the actions are being carried out.

Regarding the economic alternatives, it is suggested that the resources of this component be used to provide training for youth, and, if possible, for their parents and siblings.

The operation of task rooms is a core strategy in the APs and is fundamental in keeping children away from work. The contents and methodologies used in the task rooms should be standardized beyond the particularities currently used for the development of the teaching-learning cycles.

To take advantage of the input being generated by the EI in the Dominican Republic, it is necessary to strengthen the relations with Dev-Tech Systems in order to use the capacities being developed in the educational field. This has to be done to coordinate actions in the remedial classrooms, or to use the produced input to improve the quality of the contents.

Sustainability: Work strategies for the national authorities and other relevant actors should be created to turn the commitments thus far assumed into specific policies and actions. Given the tendency towards the fragmentation of policies, it is necessary to generate collaboration that allows bundling the available resources, particularly the National Action Plan against the WFCL, the Plan to Fight Poverty and the Plan for Childhood.

The training at the intermediate levels of SET and particularly for the UTI (Unidad de Trabajo Infantil) and the Under Secretariat officials recently appointed to their positions should be continued and deepened. A similar strategy should be followed with the judges.

The awareness-raising campaign should be continued with other relevant actors currently absent, in particular the employers' associations and the business sector. To do so, an incentive system should be organized that helps to become aware of the problem and to actively collaborate in the eradication of the WFCL.

The municipalities should be involved using specific strategies to inform and to invite them to participate, by making use of the coordination entities of municipal policies.

A specific line of action should be developed in order to mobilize resources. The actions should include the permanent tracking and updating of a list of national and international organizations that support initiatives which are

geared toward children and adolescents, as well as the organization and implementation of activities that allow resources to be mobilized through company and organization donations.

For the implementation of the National CLMS, it is suggested that a specialist in information systems be hired who can link the data from the various sources, who will design an adequate system after consulting with the entities involved, and who will be responsible for the first data collection and realizing the necessary adjustments.

Locally, the construction or consolidation (whatever the case may be) of the CLN is undoubtedly the issue in which effort and resources should be invested. It is recommended that the definition of some organizational and management mode be encouraged that would allow to be transformed into the instrument for monitoring policies, advances, and any difficulties that may arise.