



Engaging the public health sector in the fight against child labour (Brazil)



International
Labour
Organization

BACKGROUND

With a view to engage the health sector in the fight against child labour, a joint strategy was developed with the Brazilian Ministry of Health and the Adolescent Worker's Health Program of the State University of Rio de Janeiro's Center for the Study of Adolescent Health and the IPEC. The aim was to disseminate a methodology for comprehensive health care of economically active children and adolescents.

The purpose of the methodology is to train health care professionals on how to identify workplace accidents and health consequences related to occupational hazards experienced by children. The method was developed by academics, experts in child labour and representatives from the health sector who displayed sensitivity to the diversity of child labour in Brazil, with IPEC's support. This venture was initiated at the beginning of the Time-Bound Programme in 2004 and carried out until 2008.

ACTION

Initially, an assessment of necessary steps to achieve comprehensive health care for economically active children was performed, focusing on primary care. It was essential to respect and take due consideration of each child's situation. Based on the information collected, the publication *Guidelines for the Comprehensive Health Care of Economically Active Children and Adolescents* was created. It contained basic steps for introducing working children and their families into the health system.

A training methodology for health care professionals was also developed. This method focused on strengthening the role of the health sector, along with an inter-sectoral network, in eradicating child labour and protecting adolescent workers.

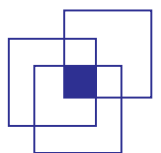
The primary target audience of this methodology was professionals who work with children and adolescents in the following areas: health, labour inspection, social welfare, education and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The ultimate goal was to strengthen the inter-sectoral network so as to enable the effective implementation of all actions to eradicate child labour and protect working adolescents, throughout Brazil. To this end, courses were held in all States of the Federation from 2005-2007. In 2007, also with IPEC support, this training methodology was adapted into a distance learning course.

ACHIEVEMENTS/ACCOMPLISHMENTS

From 2005-2007, a total of 3,500 professionals from the health, social welfare, and education sectors, along with labour inspectors and NGOs were trained. Since 2007, training of technicians from the National Health System has been done through distance learning courses (see References). So far, three distance courses with approximately 350 participants from all Brazilian States have been carried out.

Two evaluation methodologies were applied during the implementation of the training courses, namely: (1) a questionnaire aimed at assessing the participants' knowledge on child labour, the participants' interest in the topic and the quality of the training offered; (2) a qualitative report prepared by the instructors of each course, to assess the different experiences and to identify limits and possibilities for achieving the course objectives. The results showed that the participants were satisfied with the acquired knowledge and that the skills and knowledge could be used in their profession thus affecting their future work performance.

Good practice



SUSTAINABILITY

Although IPEC has phased out its financial support, the activities linked to the above-mentioned training methodology are still in use by the institutions that were initially trained. The new training carried out by the trained professionals has also been supported by periodic distance learning courses since 2007.

A study focusing on this good practice was recently created. This publication, which serves as a reference for the replication of methodology and experiences, identified the following actions that will lead to the eradication of child labour:

- implementation of a notification system to identify injuries and diseases related to child labour;
- elaboration of guidelines and technical standards for the implementation of the health care framework/flux and the follow-up of identified cases of child labour;
- training and certification of trainers;
- structuring of inter-sectoral networks to fight child labour in all Brazilian States.

Lastly, a large amount of information was consolidated into publications, representing an increase in the knowledge base on the health aspects of child labour (see References).

LESSONS LEARNED

During the development of the methodology it was clear that there were certain knowledge gaps among the health professionals about the existence of programs and projects to address child labour. Another limiting factor was the lack of knowledge about the corresponding roles and responsibilities of each sector.

The involvement of public health system actors in this practice led to the identification of certain relevant aspects to be strengthened in the development of Brazilian social policies. Furthermore, this training process illustrated how the development of simple strategies can help professionals in differing sectors to overcome challenges and address particularly difficult themes.

NECESSARY CONDITIONS

One of the aspects considered fundamental to the effective implementation of the methodology described above, is the involvement of the public authority in charge of the health sector. Brazil can also be seen as a progressive in terms of legislation and has made many significant advances in its regulatory framework in the fight against child labour.

To ensure fundamental rights for all, including the right to health care, it is necessary to have a process of social mobilization. Such mobilization is often a result of knowledge acquisition combined with critical reflection on practices. The publication of rules and ordinances, combined with an ongoing process of professional training, has helped ensure standards are established and put into place.

REFERENCES

- Web Portal for the distance learning courses (www.saudetrabalhoinfantil.pro.br/).
- *Módulos de Auto-Aprendizagem sobre Saúde e Segurança no Trabalho Infantil e Juvenil* (www.oit.org.br/info/downloadfile.php?fileId=198).
- *Boas Práticas do Setor Saúde para a Erradicação do Trabalho Infantil* (www.oit.org.br/topic/ipec/pub/boas_praticas_setor_saude_144.pdf).
- *Trabalho Infantil: Diretrizes para a Atenção Integral à Saúde de Crianças e Adolescentes Economicamente Ativos* (portal.saude.gov.br/portal/arquivos/pdf/diretrizes_miolo.pdf).

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