

Institute for Educational Strategies and Curricula Development
Center for Non-formal Educational Strategies and Curricula Development

Workshop

EDUCATION-EFFECTIVE MEASURE IN THE PREVENTION AND ELIMINATION OF CHILD LABOUR

(Summary report)



Hanoi, 4 November 2003

I. BACKGROUND

Child labour is an urgent problem as much for Viet Nam as for other countries region wide and worldwide. Education is regarded as an effective tool to prevent and minimize child labour. However, in Viet Nam, civil society, parents, children, education managers and experts are not fully aware of education's power in that regard. Therefore, within the framework of "APEC Awareness Raising Campaign: Eliminating Worst Forms of Child Labor and Providing Educational Opportunities" that was initiated by the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), the Institute for Educational Strategies and Curricula Development under the Ministry of Education and Training collaborated with the Ministry for Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs and the ILO Office to organize a workshop on titled education measures to confront child labour.¹

OBJECTIVES

- To raise awareness of the importance and the role of education in preventing and gradually eliminating the worst forms of child labour in Viet Nam.
- To review what concerned organizations and agencies have done toward preventing and eliminating child labour through education efforts.

PARTICIPANTS

Some 100 people attended the workshop, of whom:

- 49 were delegates from relevant ministries and agencies (such as Ministry of Education and Training, Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, Ministry of Culture and Information, National Committee for Population, Families and Children (CPFC), Viet Nam Women's Union, Viet Nam General Labour Union, Viet Nam Chamber for Commerce and Industry, Adults Education Society and the Institute for Educational Strategies and Curricula Development);
- 4 were delegates from Long An and Ha Nam provinces;
- 22 were representatives of press agencies (such as Viet Nam Television Company, Voice of Viet Nam, Nhan Dan or People's Newspaper, Viet Nam News Agency, Educational Magazine, Saigon Giai Phong or Liberated Saigon Newspaper, Epochal Education Magazine, Women Newspaper, Tien Phong or Pioneers Newspaper, Viet Nam News, Labour Newspaper which belongs to the General Labour Union of Viet Nam, Labour and Social Affairs Magazine which is run by its respective Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, Youth Newspaper, People's Police Magazine, Today's Rural Areas Newspaper, Viet Nam Net and VTV 1's Television Programme for Children.
- 18 were representatives from local and international organizations (such as the ILO Office in Geneva, the ILO Office in Bangkok, the ILO Office in Viet Nam, US Department of Labor, US Embassy in Viet Nam, Save the Children UK, Save the Children Sweden, UNICEF and World Vision); and
- the others were observers, organizational staff and so on.

¹ "Education-Effective Measures for Preventing and Eliminating Child Labour", on 4 of November 2003 at the Tay Ho Hotel, Hanoi.

AGENDA

The one-day workshop began with an opening ceremony, followed by the presentation session and then discussion of the presentations and the closing ceremony. Dr. Nguyen Huu Chau, Director of the Institute for Educational Strategies and Curricula Development under the Ministry of Education and Training opened the workshop, followed by speeches from Mr. Jan Sunoo, representative of the ILO Office in Hanoi and Mr. Bruno Bui, representative of the US Department of Labour. Associate Professor Nguyen Huu Chau led the morning session and Dr. Nguyen Loc, Deputy Director of the Institute for Educational Strategies and Curricula Development led the afternoon session. Dr Nguyen Loc also provided closing comments.

MAIN ACTIVITIES

Participants to the workshop listened to and then discussed 11 presentations from educational experts and representatives of government, quasi-government and non-government organizations, including international specialists. The workshop focused on the following points:

- Clarifying related instrumental concepts, such as child work and child labour;
- Current situation, reasons and negative effects of child labour in Viet Nam;
- Current situation and reasons for Vietnamese children to drop out of school;
- Current situation of children dropping out of school and child labour in Long An province and potential solutions;
- The role that education plays in preventing and minimizing child labour (specifically the respective roles of universal education, non-formal education and vocational training, and so on);
- Activities and contributions made by governmental ministries and agencies and other organizations toward preventing and eliminating child labour; and
- Other countries' experiences.



II. WORKSHOP PROCESS

Opening ceremony

1. In his opening speech, Dr. Nguyen Huu Chau stressed that the issues to be addressed in the workshop were very useful and interesting as child labour was a globally urgent problem. By briefly reviewing the fact children were dropping out from school and entering child labour worldwide, he sketched an impressive panorama on child labour and affirmed that education acted as a powerful tool to prevent and minimize the child labour phenomenon. If child labour was to be dealt with, he reasoned, there must be synchronous solutions. However, he emphasized that within the workshop “focus will only be given to discussion and search for educational solutions on how to enable children to go to school and not to drop out”. Dr. Chau also strongly stated that the workshop was intended to raise awareness on the current situation of child labour and of children being left out of the educational system, the relations between education and child labour and to concurrently consider possible collaboration among government and non-government agencies and organizations with the educational sector to reverse the situation of child out of school – which he cited as a significant factor enabling child labour.

2. In the next welcoming remarks, Mr. Jan Sunoo, representative of the ILO Office in Hanoi, briefly introduced the ILO programme and its seven years in Viet Nam, mentioning its International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC). Under the IPEC programme, leaflets, posters and pamphlets were developed, printed and distributed to authorities, parents and children to communicate the role that education and schooling could play in preventing and

minimizing child labour. He made clear the purpose of the workshop, which was an IPEC activity, was to create a link between organizations and motivate their commitments to the problem of child labour. He hoped that from this workshop the educational sector would make commitments to better and more proactively participate in solving the problem of child labour in Viet Nam.

3. In the third welcoming remarks, Mr. Bruno Bui, representative of the US Department of Labor, stated that his department was very much interested in this issue and had worked with the ILO in implementing IPEC activities in Viet Nam. He urged all relevant individuals and organizations to promote their own roles in preventing and minimizing child labour so that children could receive schooling free of charge and could be prevented from entering hazardous and exploitative labour.

Workshop content

The morning session, led by Dr. Nguyen Huu Chau. Participants listened to seven presentations and then discussed them.

1. Dr. To Ba Truong tried to differentiate between related fundamental concepts in an effort to give a clear orientation to the workshop. According to him, “child work” and “child labour” were being translated from English into many Vietnamese variations. However, he believed that there should be agreement on their meanings to at least facilitate discussions in the workshop. In his presentation, he gave an orienting analysis of the consequences of child labour and the benefits of sending children to school, as well as the responsibility and role that education should take in this regard.

2. Ms. Urmila Sarkar, representative of the ILO Office in Geneva, Switzerland, introduced the participants to the ten years' experience of IPEC in utilizing education as a tool for preventing child labour. Currently, she said, ILO was proactively promoting the objective of education for all within the context of its campaigns. She also affirmed that there are always complex reasons that lead children into child labour; thus, while access to education is a key factor, it needs to be incorporated with and supported by other solutions and measures so that children can effectively be withdrawn from hazardous forms of labour. Ms Sarkar commented on the intimate and inextricable relations between the Education for All programme and the eliminating child labour goal. She also noted that these two areas were not really interconnected nationally in both granting and granted countries and that the ILO had therefore been exerting its efforts in abolishing such disparity. She spoke about personal and social benefits and mentioned obstacles to children's access to schooling, such as geographical and social disparity, difficult family economics, lack of facilities, insufficient working conditions for teachers, shortage of

materials and lack of sensitivity toward children's needs. Sharing with the participants some case studies from India and Pakistan, she stressed that interventions must be suitable to a child's age and that non-formal education had to be combined with formal education and vocational training. Introducing "the unique feature of ILO's interventions", Ms. Sarkar explained that there is always a dual objective principle of concurrently helping children to be included in the educational system and offering social protection measures to their families, including ways to help them obtain better income. She then talked about other countries' experience in training their teachers on the risk of child labour and in developing programmes where child rights, child labour and life skills were included and where community involvement was encouraged. Finally, Ms. Sarkar asserted that IPEC could never achieve its goals without coordination with between it and other programs.

3. Mr. Le Quang Trung, representative of the Labour and Employment Department of the Ministry's of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs spoke on the current situation of child labour in Viet Nam. He noted that there had been a significant drop in the number and proportion of boy and girl labourers at all ages in economic activities, from 41.1% in 1993 to 29.3% in 1998. He also mentioned that there were notably more working children in rural areas than in cities, and among them, there were more girls than boys. He listed factors that encouraged child labour, including poverty and limited awareness and understanding of anti-child labour legislation. He suggested that in the immediate future 1) there be agreement on the term "child labour"; 2) amendments/adjustments be made to the inconsistencies in the Labour Code and the Law on Protection, Care and Education for Children, and 3) similar amendments and changes be made to the relevant legislation, including laws and bills.

4. In his presentation, Mr. Le Minh Hong, Vice Director of the National Assembly's Committee for Children and Young People, cited as the main reason for child labour was economic difficulty or poverty, accompanied by poor social awareness of the problem. He also affirmed that education had an important role to play in preventing and minimizing child labour and that the workshop should come up with specific conclusions that could then be turned into suitable directives and policies.

5. Mr. Tran Kiem, from the Institute for Educational Strategies and Curricula Development, spoke about the current situation, reasons and solutions to child labour from an educational perspective. Briefly reviewing the child labour situation in Viet Nam and analysing fundamental reasons to the problem, he suggested some educational solutions, such as: 1) developing a comprehensive programme to gather children who had dropped out into centres where they would receive general education and vocational training; 2) paying special attention to

mountainous and particularly difficult areas; and 3) motivating schools to actively participate in preventing bad academic performance that would otherwise lead to children dropping out.

6. In her presentation, Ms Thai Xuan Dao talked about the role of non-formal education in the public education system and in preventing and minimizing child labour. She asserted that non-formal education was the obvious trend of development and was essential to help solve contemporary problems such as population, environment, poverty and unemployment and in lessening the disparity between the rich and the poor, as well as between urban and rural areas. She then appreciated the economic, political and social significance of non-formal education and its ever-



A continuation class for young people in a community learning center

growing importance in every country's educational system, including Viet Nam's. As for child labour, non-formal education has become more important, she noted, as it influenced the fundamental reasons of child labour: namely no schooling, poverty and poor awareness. Ms. Dao also elaborated the role of non-formal education in relation to universal education and the Education For All goals. Thanks to its mission, mandates, target groups, diverse and flexible curricula, content, methods and organizational modes, she explained that non-formal education could be the main and most suitable learning mode for children who were left out from the mainstream, including child labourers. Additionally, non-formal education plays a very significant role in raising awareness for families and civil society through themed classes, communication and group discussion sessions. It also helps children's families to raise their income by offering training courses where technologies were transferred and knowledge shared on production and so on. Using tables, charts and figures, Ms. Dao illustrated non-formal education's role in reducing the rate of illiteracy, enhancing the general knowledge level among young people who had dropped out of school and especially in realizing universal compulsory primary and secondary education. She highlighted that non-formal education faces difficulties currently, such

as poor awareness among families, children and the general public of its usefulness. Child labourers typically encounter difficulty when they are reintegrated into the formal educational system: they feel inferior, they do not want to try to learn and achieve, their awareness is poor, there are not enough facilities, materials and budget for non-formal education, and the curricula as well as the content, methods and organizing modes are not diverse and flexible as they are supposed to be. Thus, non-formal education deserves support and assistance from all social resources, including local and international organizations.

7. Mr. Le Vinh, representative from the Vocational Training General Department of the Ministry of Labour, Invalids, and Social Affairs talked about child labour and issues to be addressed in relation to vocational training. Using various illustrative figures, Mr. Vinh asserted the importance and urgency of confronting child labour as well as the reasons that enable it. He provided an overview of the current situation of vocational training in Viet Nam and raised issues related to vocational training as a means to minimize child labour. Examples of such issues include unsuitable scale and location of vocational training schools/centres and the unbalanced proportion between vocational training vs. other educational and training forms.

The afternoon session, led by Dr. Nguyen Loc, who first facilitated discussion and questions among the participants in response to the presentations by Ms. Dao and Mr. Vinh.

1. Dr. To Ba Truong spoke on the role of universal compulsory education. Presenting analysis of the criteria for primary and secondary school qualification for individuals and for universal education completion certificates granted to commune, district and provincial authorities, Dr. Truong commented that universal education could be very effective in encouraging most school-aged children to go to school if it was well conducted and thus would make a very active contribution to preventing and minimizing child labour.

2. Ms. Dang Thi Phuong Phi, Deputy Director of Long An's Provincial Department of Education and Training, talked about the current situation of school drop-outs in her province and suggested solutions. Child labour, she explained, receives much attention from Long An's educational sector, which is striving to find ways to eliminate it. Ms. Phi presented reasons that led to the problem in Long An, such as the province's special geographical and natural conditions, public thinking about livelihood and children's schooling, and the province's close proximity to the focal economic centre of Ho Chi Minh City. On the other hand, she acknowledged that there were also subjective reasons that were related to shortcomings in the local educational sector, such as the poor network of schools that could not meet the learning needs of local children and slow innovative changes in teaching methodology that restricted the

quality of education. She recommended some local solutions to the problem of child labour in Long An.

3. Ms. Duong Thi Xuan, Director of the Education and Communication Board of the Viet Nam Women's Union, talked on the role of multi-tier women's associations in preventing child labour. She reported on the various activities carried about by women's unions at different levels in terms of hunger and poverty alleviation, public communication, inter-sector coordination and enhancing support from international organizations, noting that these efforts were also effective in preventing child labour.

4. In her presentation, Ms. Dang Thi Bich Thuan, Deputy Director of the Communication and Education Department of the CPFPP, mentioned the need for communication and sensitization, as well as the benefits that education can bring to young people. She emphasized the effectiveness of communication in preventing and minimizing child labour, as communication programmes could be very powerful in raising public and children's awareness of education's benefits and child labour's negative consequences. She hoped that communication activities and solutions could sensitize and help authorities, managers, executors and businesses to change their thinking and to take action toward the progressive elimination of child labour.

5. Mr. Dominique Plateau, a Save the Children Sweden's expert on child labour, presented examples of international experience in relation to promoting educational opportunity as means for preventing and minimizing child labour.

Dr. Nguyen Loc then summarized the main points made during the workshop:

- After listening to the 11 presentations, the participants came to a consensual affirmation of the necessity and urgency of the child labour problem in Viet Nam and were aware of the significant role of education in solving the problem.
- However, if the problem is to be solved, there needs to be a clear definition of concepts and an overall research of reasons that enable the problem to sustain as well as a study of necessary educational solutions that would promote education's role in preventing and minimizing child labour.
- The participants' common mission was to find a way for all children to access the educational system; special attention must be paid to disadvantaged children if the Education For All agenda is to be realized.

Mr. Loc also concluded that the workshop was very successful and achieved its desired outcomes, although it was restricted to only one day. Even as an initial step, the workshop

proved to be of great importance in that it created a basis for follow-up activities in the course of combating child labour in Viet Nam. Mr. Loc expressed his sincere thanks to the various related government and quasi- government ministries and agencies as well as donors and international organizations, and especially to the organizers of the workshop.

III. WORKSHOP OUTCOMES

The workshop achieved its desired outcomes, specifically in that:

- Participants were sensitized about the importance of education (universal education, Education For All, non-formal education, vocational training and so on) in preventing and eliminating child labour.
- An initial overview of activities and contributions made by government and non-government organizations toward solving child labour was sketched. The participants left the workshop with a better understanding about government and NGOs' roles and capacity in collaborating with the educational sector to create better educational opportunities for disadvantaged groups of children, including child labourers.
- Other countries' experiences in promoting and improving educational opportunities for child labourers were shared during the workshop.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Child labour is a somewhat new problem in Viet Nam but has rapidly become a difficult and urgent one to be confronted. The workshop was able to:

- Acknowledge the significance and urgency of child labour in Viet Nam, as well as the negative consequences that child labour could cause to families, children and the development of the society and the general community. If the problem is to be solved, there must be a common endeavour of the whole country and the entire society, from government to quasi-government ministries and agencies and non-government organizations to communities.
- Acknowledge the great persuasive importance of education, especially of universal and non-formal education, vocational training and Education For All goals in preventing and minimizing child labour. Education influences some of the main reasons that provoke child labour, namely poor awareness, no schooling and poverty.
- Acknowledge the various suitable directives and policies and the many efforts of Viet Nam in:
 - Providing universal primary education for all children;

- Providing universal secondary education for all children younger than 19 in the near future (2010); and
- Providing education for all.

However, it was noted that many children did not yet have access to education. These included poorer children, girls, children of ethnic minority backgrounds, children who lived in distant and mountainous areas, etc. Participants also admitted many shortcomings in Viet Nam's current education system, namely:

- Limited awareness among educational managers and experts and teachers about child labour and about the role that education can play;
- Lack of specific policies for this special group of child labourers; and
- Difficulties in implementing directives and policies at local levels in terms of budget, facilities and teaching equipment, as well as problems with few and unqualified teachers, rigid, non-diverse and inflexible teaching methodologies, and curricula and forms that are not suitable for child labourers.

Recommendations

Child labour is an urgent and complicated phenomenon. If the problem is to be solved,

- There needs to be better communication and awareness raising through the media, workshops and training courses for central to local authorities, especially for educational managers and experts as well as teachers.
- A network needs to be established and enhanced among government and non-government organizations and other resources in the society.

With educational sector

- Revise its policies, making amendments and/or innovations to motivate and create more favourable conditions for disadvantaged children to access the educational system.
- Conduct research and recommend suitable educational solutions and models (including curricula, content, methods and organizational forms) that can motivate many child labourers to reintegrate themselves as soon as possible to the educational system.

With the ILO

- Acknowledge that a workshop of this kind is very important and effective. However, this is just the first workshop and its effects are limited to initially raising people's awareness. Thus, the

ILO needs to continue its support to organize similar workshops nationwide, with more in-depth topics so that higher-level leaders and more ordinary people can be sensitized.

- Provide more support for research and studies on the current situation and reasons that lead to child labour in Viet Nam (so far, there has not been a comprehensive and persuasive investigation into this).
- Pay more care and support in terms of finance, techniques, materials and experts for education, because education is an effective solution to preventing and minimizing child labour. ILO could possibly consider support for some of the following research programmes/ activities:
 - Research programmes to investigate the reasons why children do not receive schooling and the relation between lack of schooling and child labour, as well as feasible solutions to minimize the rate of drop-outs and to motivate children who have dropped out, including child labourers, to return to school as soon as possible.
 - Workshops and training courses to raise awareness for educational managers, experts and teachers so that they fully understand the current situation and negative effects that child labour causes, as well as education's role and ability in preventing and minimizing child labour.
 - Research programmes that suggest educational solutions and models (including curricula, contents, methods and organizational forms) that can motivate many child labourers to reintegrate themselves as soon as possible to the educational system.
 - The development of non-formal education, because this is seen to be the most suitable and effective educational form for child labourers although it receives little investment in Viet Nam.