



Evaluation Summaries

Evaluation: Fighting the worst forms of child labour in Costa Rica: Support to the Time Bound Programme

Quick Facts

Country: Costa Rica

Final Evaluation: November 2005

Mode of Evaluation: Independent

Technical Area: Child Labour

Evaluation Management: Rights and Standards Sector

Evaluation team: Regional team leader and a National consultant.

Project Start: July 2003

Project End: March 2006

Project Code: COS/03/03/CAN;
COS/02/50/CAN

Donor: Canada (US\$ 1,134,052)

Keywords: child labour, plan of action, institution building, capacity building, awareness raising, social mobilization, legislation, decentralization, child labour monitoring system, sustainable development, poverty alleviation, participatory development

Background & Context

Project Background: A Time-Bound Program (TBP) is essentially a strategic framework of policies and programs which are closely coordinated to prevent and eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labour (WFCL) in a given country within a specific period of time. The critical point in all TBPs is that the responsibility for their implementation is with each country. The development of a TBP implies a commitment to mobilizing and designating national human and financial resources to combat this problem.

The IPEC Project in Costa Rica essentially consists of assisting the government in this process through the identification and the support of programs, measures, interventions, resources, institutional mechanisms, and associations. It comprises two strategic components: the first focuses on raising awareness and on the mobilization of society as a whole, as well as the development of capabilities for the implementation of projects and enforcement of the law. The second has the purpose of creating intervention models designed to withdraw children from the WFCL and to bring about the prevention of child labour (CL) in the Brunca region.

The Project had two phases. The first phase started in July 2002. This phase consisted of a series of preparatory activities meant to create favourable conditions for the implementation of the TBP; these activities were related to the establishment of a solid knowledge base, the strengthening of capacities of relevant institutions, the mobilization and raising of awareness of the public as a whole, and the establishment of public policies. The second phase, support to the TBP itself, started in July 2003, and it consists of two levels: national and local.

At the national level, policy formulation, along with inter-institutional coordination, legislation enactment, as well as the training of public and private officials, all continued to be promoted and strengthened. At the local level, the project focused on achieving the eradication of the WFCL in the Brunca Region through a direct attention model for child workers and for the victims of commercial sexual exploitation (CSE).

Evaluation Context: The purpose of this final evaluation was to determine if the project is meeting the proposed objectives, and to explain the reasons for achieved targets or deviations from the targets. The purpose was also to identify aspects and lessons learned that might be of interest for the more general application of the TBP concept, and to formulate recommendations that allow sustaining its achievements.

The methodological approach was qualitative and included the perspective of stakeholders, including IPEC staff, executive and technical representatives of governmental entities and institutions and non-governmental organizations which were involved in the issue of CL and in the development of the project and its action programs, parents and children who have benefited from the project as well as other relevant actors.

Main Findings & Conclusions

Project design:

The assumptions have been realistic and adequate in terms of the strategies adopted. The national scenario and the accumulated experience allowed identifying the conditions to carry out the TBP: stable political context, possibility to cooperate with national health, education, and protection authorities and involving the relevant actors at the national level. However, the premises regarding institutional decentralization, in particular of OATIA¹ (office that specializes in CL), have not been sustained and this is one of the main failures of the design.

Advances and outcomes reached in the main TBP areas:

Performance. The project has been effective in the generation of a favourable scenario for the development of a national TBP, and it contributed to placing the issue of CL on the public agenda, to promote national legislation

on this matter, and to incorporate specific aspects for the eradication of CL in the public policies. At the local level, the strategies adopted allowed generating synergies with national initiatives carried out at the same time as the TBP.

Awareness. The project managed to involve all important actors and it has advanced toward the achievement of tangible commitments in terms of resources allocated for the eradication of the WFCL. The issue of CL and its worst forms is seen by all actors as a national social problem that has to be approached with an integral perspective. The population as a whole is clearly informed about this matter. A very important advance is the training and raising of awareness at the mid-levels of the ministries. Most of them have tenure and will remain in their positions after the government changes.

For the topic not to get lost among the multiple social problems, the country is facing, it is necessary to have permanent presence in the media. It is necessary to continue disseminating to educate and create active awareness about the topic, in particular about the differences between CL and the protection of adolescents' work. In addition, it is necessary to continue working with the decision-making levels of governmental organisms that are part of the CDN², in particular to include the topic in the electoral discourse and in the priorities for the new administration.

Legislation and policies: Progress was made regarding a proposal for legislation on the WFCL, which updates the "Rules for Labour Contracts and Occupational Health Conditions of Adolescents", and it is in the complementary agenda of the legislative assembly. The formulation and approval of the Second National Plan is an important achievement, which demonstrated the possibility of building inter-sectorial policies

¹ Oficina de Atención y Erradicación del Trabajo Infantil y Protección del Trabajador Adolescente

² Comité Directivo Nacional para la Prevención y Erradicación Progresiva del Trabajo Infantil y la Protección del Adolescente Trabajadora en Costa Rica

as well as involving MIDEPLAN (Ministerio de Planificación) in the monitoring of the allocation of resources for CL eradication actions.

What is still pending is to further disseminate the existing national laws and international commitments in order to increase awareness about the rights and the obligation to enforce them. It is also necessary to implement policies according to the guidelines in the Second National Plan, and to insure their continuity in the next administration.

Key actors' capacities: It has been possible to raise the awareness and train officers of many governmental entities at the central and local levels as well as members of trade unions and employers' organizations. The technical assistance provided by IPEC helped to establish meetings, exchange mechanisms, working tools such as intra and interinstitutional protocols, and to create some monitoring and evaluation entities for realized activities and outcomes. The formulation of the Second Plan contributed to the creation of a Technical Committee of the CDN. Moreover, new protagonists are appearing in the fight against CL, such as PANI (Patronato Nacional de la Infancia), which are starting to assume responsibilities.

Unfortunately, it has not been possible to decentralize the actions and institutional resources in the most needed areas. Although OATIA continues to be technically strengthened and leads the inter-institutional actions with the support of IPEC in the areas of the TBP, it is necessary to reinforce the development of activities at the local level.

Action Programs: The intervention model developed in the Brunca Region may be replicated in other regions of the country. Significant achievements:

- Raising awareness on the issue of CL and the problem by different local stakeholders.
- The development of inter-sectorial instances that collaborate in the building

up of monitoring networks for child workers and the affected families.

- The institutional learning of the implementing agencies.
- The introduction of innovative aspects such as the use of participatory diagnostic methodologies.
- The possibility of linking research and action based on initiatives from the UCR.

An important unexpected outcome of the established collaboration is the recent implementation of the component on professional education, with local contributions from IMAS (Instituto Mixto de Ayuda Social).

Time has been scarce for the implementation of the Action Programmes (AP), and at the time of withdrawal, more time is needed to strengthen inter-institutional linkages, to empower the CL monitoring networks, to consolidate the recently created base committees, to generate new funds, etc.

Recommendations & Lessons Learned

Recommendations:

Awareness-raising activities: To prevent the issue from getting lost among the many social problems the country is facing, it is necessary to keep the dissemination and awareness actions open both to educate on this matter and to raise awareness about it.

Policies and legislation: Since the government will change soon, the last tract of the electoral campaign should be taken as an opportunity to position the issue among the candidates and their teams in order to look for their public commitment with this issue and to include it in their campaign. The role of CDN, trade unions, and employers' associations is to lobby as needed to achieve this. On the other hand, the presence that the issue would acquire in the next few months would be useful to raise awareness among other social actors who are not yet well informed.

Institutional strengthening: To try to institutionalize the issue of CL, it is required to

continue the training of line officials, to be aware and learn about the problem and transmit the information to all strata of the governmental institutions involved in the eradication of the WFCL. A specific aspect of the institutional capacities transfer refers to the access and management of diverse financial sources; usually referred to as fund raising.

Direct action programs: At the local level, it is recommended to systematize the experience, especially the reflection and evaluation process that allows identifying the success and failure conditions of the integral attention of withdrawn children. It is also recommended to carry out a strategic planning exercise that aims at preparing a gradual withdrawal strategy that takes advantage of the existing collaboration, and that aims at empowering the public institutions.

How to exit: The responsible people for the support to the TBP in IPEC should do a strategic planning exercise with the Technical Committee of the CDN to transfer their role of support, technical assistance, and “engine” of activities. They should share the outcomes and recommendations of the evaluation and based on this, build together the continuity strategy, thus establishing responsibilities, time frames, and necessary resources.

Lessons Learned:

- The participatory approach in the formulation of the Second Plan because of its outcomes regarding the identification of linkages and the need for intersectorial work
- Intersectorial collaboration as a practice among traditionally isolated institutions
- The communication strategy as cross-sectional practice in all actions
- The decision of choosing well known institutions (such as University of Costa Rica and the Catholic Church) at the national and regional level to implement local projects
- Having set priorities in only one region for the intervention and carrying out all the initiatives there

- The collaborative management model which promoted the cooperation of the implementing agencies, empowered their actions, and contributed to the social recognition of the project as a whole.
- The utilization of the regional and local inter-institutional decision-making spaces related to the national development and poverty-reduction policies.
- The creation of the basis for a community child-labour monitoring system.

Social sustainability: It may be affirmed that it made it possible for the population and main key actors to recognize CL as a social problem, which the country has to fight against. There are still some sectors that need further awareness and training, especially about the implications of the WFCL and the role that each actor has to play to contribute to their eradication.

Economic sustainability: The main achievement is the inclusion of actions and funds for the eradication of CL in the Annual Operational Plans of all public institutions. Yet, to guarantee their allocation, the Ministry of Finance should be included in the CDN because it is the entity that ultimately makes the allocation of resources to each entity.

Institutional sustainability: the consolidation of the interinstitutional coordination role of CDN and, in particular, its Technical Committee and its coordination with MIDEPLAN, implies certain guarantees to continue the policies. At the local level, the activities to promote and strengthen the social network may assure the continuity of the programs once IPEC withdraws, but these networks need to be consolidated and there is little time left in the AP to do so. The central issue is that it is not clear what institution will take charge.

IPEC’s strategy to achieve sustainability has been to relate the issue with poverty and insert it in the Vida Nueva Plan and the Development Plan of this administration. The arrival of a new government, whose priorities are not yet known, poses new challenges.