



INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION
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IPEC SOUTH AMERICA



Executive Summary

Analysis of the Policy and Strategy Educatives Context

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Regional Information System on Child Labour – SIRTI-

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PREFACE

“Any society that is determined to improve the life of its people must also be determined to guarantee full rights under conditions of equality for all.”

The objective of the International Programme of Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) is to achieve the gradual elimination of child labour by reinforcing national capacities for addressing problems related to the issue through creation of a worldwide movement to combat child labour.

IPEC's actions are based on each government's willingness and its political commitment to address the issue of child labour in collaboration with public and private agencies, organisations of employers and workers, non-governmental organisations and other relevant sectors of society, such as universities and the media.

With the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Ecuadoran government and the ILO and subsequent actions in the country by the IPEC Programme, Ecuadoran society in general has united around the objective of creating the conditions necessary to eliminate child labour, especially in its worst forms.

This national commitment became clear in 2000, when the government ratified ILO Conventions 138, on the minimum age for admission to work, and 182, on the worst forms of child labour and immediate action for its elimination. Both documents are fundamental in the fight against child labour.

To demonstrate that the worst forms of child labour can be eliminated within a set timeframe, IPEC established a new, integral concept known as the Time Bound Programme (TBP), which is the result of its own experiences and those of many related organisations throughout the world.

As a result of the agreements with the ILO and the need for specialised agencies to define a consensus-based policy on child labour, the Ecuadoran government established the National Committee for the Gradual Elimination of Child Labour (CONEPTI) in 1997 by Executive Decree No. 792. This committee includes the ministries of Labour and Human Resources; Education, Culture, Sports and Recreation; and Social Welfare, as well as the Federation of Chambers of Production, the United Workers Front and the National Institute of Children and the Family (INNFA). The International Labour Organisation (ILO) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) serve as advisors.

The main function of National Committee for the Gradual Elimination of Child Labour (CONEPTI) is to formulate and follow up the National Plan for the Elimination of Child Labour, enabling the country to comply with national and

international norms. It is also responsible for establishing policies to encourage the gradual elimination of child labour and a sense of responsibility on the part of the national community, so that commitments are made to solve the problem.

“The causes of child labour are mainly rooted in the poverty caused by social and economic inequality, as well as the lack of sufficient educational opportunities.”

The analysis of the context of educational policy and strategies in Ecuador includes the philosophy, proposals, agreements and recommendations made by ILO-IPEC, and recommends projects and programmes to lead to the elimination of the worst forms of child labour through efficient, effective, pertinent and sustainable actions for including the issue in government policies and those of the government and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Recreation.

The results of this study provide inputs for designing — through ILO-IPEC, with a Time Bound Programme (TBP) and with CONEPTI's active participation — legislation, policies, educational projects, curricula and complementary measures aimed at eliminating child labour.

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) places Ecuador at a moderate level on the Human Development Index, which is based on such factors as life expectancy at birth, education and income. Since 1990, the UNDP and other UN agencies have reformulated this concept, focusing on the “expansion of the potential of the person as the central objective of development” and establishing that economic growth is only one means, and not always the only or the most appropriate one.

Any development project must take in to consideration human beings’ needs, aspirations and options — education, health, nutrition, housing, decent employment, and the elimination of social inequalities, violence and exploitation — in order to make the educational and social dimensions the central elements of development with participation by the government, the family and the community, thus ensuring a sustainable life and fostering flexibility and respect for diversity.

It is within this framework that ILO-IPEC proposed the Analysis of the Context of Educational Policy and Strategies in Ecuador, with the principal objective of determining whether these policies and strategies respond to children’s rights with regard to the elimination of child labour.

The study began with an overview of Ecuadoran legislation, government policy and education sector policy, which reflect the extent to which the government assumes its responsibility for guaranteeing a quality of life that provides education for children and adolescents and priority care for vulnerable groups in an effort to eliminate child labour.

This was complemented by a study of the national education budget and the quality of educational plans of all types and at all levels.

It also included information about national systems of libraries, improvement of human resources in the education sector, complementary training and educational supervision with the goal of determining the quality of the results achieved in education and their role in addressing the problem of child labour.

National statistics are also presented, with special attention to national enrolment and dropout rates, repetition of grades and absenteeism, broken down by educational level, age and gender. Connections are made with the quality of teacher training and conditions of educational infrastructure.

The study also examines various organisations’ perceptions of child labour, the actions and measures they recommend, and the stakeholders’ commitment to making the problem visible.

The study includes such proposals as:

- The design of educational policies and strategies directed toward the elimination of child labour.
- Inclusion of the issue of the gradual elimination of child labour in the proposal for reform of the Education and Culture Law being debated in the national Congress.
- Inclusion of the issue of the gradual elimination of child labour in the General Basic Education curriculum.

Education is understood as a right of all people, regardless of age, throughout the world. Education helps ensure a world that is more secure, prosperous and environmentally pure, and also contributes to social, economic and cultural progress and international cooperation. Education is an indispensable condition, although not sufficient in itself, for personal development and social improvement.

1. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- ◆ To identify and analyse educational legislation, policies, strategies and actions, as well as national and international commitments, to serve as a basis for addressing the worst forms of child labour.
- ◆ To determine the levels of investment in education by the government and international cooperation.
- ◆ To analyse training plans and how they are related to the quality of education.
- ◆ To develop a statistical database of the student population at the basic and baccalaureate levels, broken down by net enrolment, dropout rates, grade repetition and absenteeism.
- ◆ To understand the various stakeholders' perceptions of the problem of child labour.
- ◆ To present proposals and recommendations for possible interventions in the area of education in order to eliminate child labour.

2. SOCIO-ECONOMIC PANORAMA

a) *Socio-economic context of the country*

The social and economic crisis and high levels of corruption that have affected Ecuador for a number of years have resulted in social problems that concern not only the government, but also the community of non-governmental organisations and civil society in general.

For the purposes of this study, the most relevant social problem is clearly the early entry of children and youth into the country's work force, with the sole objective of relieving the poverty in which their families live. This has a negative effect on education, because it results in a failure to take advantage of the educational capacity of children and youth.

In the sections below, we will review some statistical indicators in order to analyse the country's social and economic problems (Social Emergency Plan for Education 2000).

Political imbalances:

- Political and institutional crisis: seven governments between 1995 and 2000.
- Corruption at various levels in the public and private sectors.
- Juridical insecurity.

Economic imbalances:

- The lack of internal and external investment. Public spending on education currently represents 10.7% of the total state budget and 2.9% of GDP for 2002, although according to the Constitution, it should represent 30%. This indicates that education is not a priority for public social investment.
- The increase in indebtedness and fiscal problems resulting from the war with Peru in 1995.
- The El Niño phenomenon (1997-1998), which destroyed houses, roads and production on the Ecuadoran coast.
- The low price of oil, which stood at less than US\$10 in 1997 and 1998.
- Payment of the external debt, to which more than 40% of the state budget is dedicated.
- The collapse of the financial and banking system (1999), which cost US\$4.5 billion.

- The economic recession, paralysis of the productive apparatus and closing of businesses.
- The change of the monetary system (“dollarisation”).
- Inflation, which stood at 36.1% in 1998 and 96.1% in 2000, although it dropped to 37.7% in 2001.
- The decrease in production.

Social imbalances:

- Poverty rates have increased since 1995, when this indicator reached 33%. In 1998, it rose to 46.4%, and in 1999, 55.9% of the population lived in poverty. In 2001, the rate rose to 70.4% (National Survey of Employment, Unemployment and Underemployment - ENEMDUR-2001, carried out by the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses – INEC).
- Malnutrition indicators show that in 2000, 25.8% of children under 5 suffered from malnutrition. The rates of chronic and overall malnutrition stood at about 11.6% (National Survey of Employment, Unemployment and Underemployment - ENEMDUR-2000 and the Survey of Measurement of Indicators for Children and Households - EMEDINHO-2000).
- More than 50% of Ecuadoran households are unable to meet their basic needs (National Survey of Employment, Unemployment and Underemployment - ENEMDUR-2001).
- The unemployment rate in 1998 stood at 11.5%. In 1999, unemployment reached 14.5%, the highest rate in the country’s history. In 2000, the unemployment rate dropped to 9.0%, but it increased again in 2001 to 10.9% (Survey of Employment, Unemployment and Underemployment in urban areas, carried out by INEC: 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001).
- In one year, wages lost more than half their purchasing power. National wealth was concentrated in a small percentage of the population, with the wealthiest 10% receiving more than 40% of national income while the poorest 60% received less than 1%. As a result of the unequal income distribution, 60% of the poorest Ecuadorans had to reduce the number of meals they ate each day, 36% of poor households postponed medical care for their children under age 15, and 22% of children in the poorest sectors were not enrolled in school for economic reasons (Social Emergency Plan for Education 2000).
- There is a shift of students from private to public schools. This represents pressure from an impoverished middle class on a public educational system

that is exhausted and lacks resources (Social Emergency Plan for Education 2000).

b) Educational and working conditions for children and youth

The following data are taken from the National Survey of Employment, Unemployment and Underemployment - ENEMDUR-2001, done by the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses-INEC.

Child labour

- 74% of working children indicate that they started working before age 15, meaning they began before they were physically or psychologically prepared or legally able to work. A total of 21% began working between ages 5 and 9.
- 21% of children and adolescents between ages 5 and 17 work. Of these, 68% live in rural areas and 31.9% in urban areas. Some 15% of working children are between ages 5 and 9, while 44.2% are between ages 10 and 14 and 41% are between ages 15 and 17.
- In rural areas, there is a strong trend toward the early incorporation of children and youth into the work force. While only 6.5% of children between ages 5 and 9 in urban areas work, that percentage rises to 19% in rural areas. In the 10-to-14 age group, the percentages of working minors are similar (41.2% in urban areas and 45.5% in rural areas). The balance reverses between ages 15 and 17, however, with 52.3% of youths in urban areas and 35.6% of those in rural areas working.

Jobs and education

When we consider the population of working children, we see that children's right to an education is still incipient. Nationwide, 39% of children do not attend school. The rate is 32.8% in urban areas and 42.1% in rural areas.

Nationwide, 79% of children and youth attend school during the day, 10% attend afternoon sessions, 6% study at night after working and 5% participate in distance learning programmes. Attendance at night classes is characteristic of working children and youth in urban areas (14%); in rural areas, only 2% attend night classes.

Children's employment and its characteristics

At least 6 of every 10 working children (between ages 5 and 17) work in agriculture, livestock, hunting and forestry, while 14.2% work in commerce and services and 11.1% in the manufacturing industry.

These data show the direct relationship between poverty and types of work characterised by low profits. The poorer the population, the higher the percentage of children working in jobs related to livestock and agriculture.

Work in these sectors exposes children to chemical substances (insecticides, fertilisers, etc.) that could affect their health. It also involves the use of tools and equipment that endanger their physical and psychological wellbeing.

Because of their low level of education, working children and youth perform low-paid jobs that do not require skilled labour. Three of every four working minors between ages 5 and 17 are classified as “unskilled workers.”

At least seven of every 10 working children and youths receive no remuneration. Child labour is characterised as mainly related to agriculture and livestock raising, which do not require skilled labour. Because the workers receive no pay, it represents a significant savings for families.

One of every four working children (12.3% in urban areas and 31.3% in rural areas) is forced to work by parents or guardians. This violates their basic human and constitutional rights, because the children themselves do not want to work at such an early age.

The conditions under which the children work clearly violate their rights and endanger their development.

Quality of work

The problems that most frequently affect children and adolescents are delinquency, sexual abuse, drug trafficking, mistreatment and prostitution. Many of these minors are accustomed to working in environments that are dangerous, contaminated or unhealthy, such as areas of prostitution, brickmaking and construction sites, and garbage dumps, or working late into the night, which exposes them to problems that cause their physical, mental and moral health to deteriorate and seriously jeopardise their personal integrity.

Twenty-five percent of children work more than 40 hours a week. The situation of these children and adolescents is dramatic. Most work more than eight hours a day, under terrible safety and hygiene conditions, without receiving even the minimum wage and with no social security, and they usually end up dropping out of school.

c) *Educational characteristics of children and youth*

The differences in enrolment rates at the pre-primary, primary and secondary levels are related to the country's demographic structure. The largest number of students at all grade levels is found in urban areas, and there are more students enrolled in school on the coast than in the highlands.

Nevertheless, the demographic structure varies greatly at the ages corresponding to middle school: 85% of middle-school students are in urban areas and 15% are in rural areas. There is no demographic explanation for this; rather, it is a result of the following factors:

- A large number of children and youths at these ages are already part of the rural work force. This has a direct impact on the school dropout rate, which is much higher in rural areas at this grade level, because the children have little interest in education.
- There are not enough middle schools in rural areas, and the few that do exist are in small towns that are far from the communities where the children live, making access difficult.

The following relationships affect the quality of education:

- Students per teacher: There is an average of 17 students per teacher in urban areas and 18 in rural areas.
- The number of students per school is higher in urban areas than rural areas. This is due not to more extensive infrastructure (schools and learning centres) but to the low enrolment rates in rural areas. The ratio for this social problem is three to one.
- The number of teachers per school. The educational system's deficiency in rural areas is clear. One example is the single-teacher school. The difference between urban and rural areas is significant. At the primary level, there are 10 teachers per school in urban areas and three per school in rural areas.

Poverty is reflected in the low enrolment and high dropout rates among the school-age population. One reason is early entry of children and youths into the work force.

The school dropout rate cannot be explained only in economic terms. It also has geographical causes, including the distance between homes and schools, changes of residence and even migration to other countries. In one way or another, these reasons are also related to the families' economic situation.

One clear indicator of this reality is that rural areas, where the highest rates of poverty occur, also have the lowest enrolment rates and highest dropout and repetition rates.

One way in which the schools' capacity is wasted is in the repeating of grades by students. This is a prelude to dropping out of school and obviously implies that investment in education becomes a running expense for households and the government.

Ecuador's illiteracy rates are perennial evidence of the level of social and economic welfare in the country. Education is key to a country's development. High illiteracy rates indicate difficulties in the families' economic situation, especially taking into account the "inter-generational circle of poverty."

d) Legal framework

The existing legal framework reflects the progress that has been made in addressing children's issues. It includes the Constitution, the Education Law and its enabling legislation, the National Government Plan, the Social Emergency Plan for Education, and education policies and strategies of the various public sectors (the government; the Social Emergency Plan; the national educational system; the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Recreation; the Metropolitan District of Quito; SECAP and CEOSL; and the National Institute of Labour Education). There are also international, Ibero-American, regional and national commitments.

Within this framework, strategic educational programmes and actions have also been proposed for addressing the problem of child labour:

- The Constitution

The Ecuadoran Constitution enshrines rights and guarantees. It calls for priority attention to be given to children and adolescents in high-risk situations and those who are victims of child abuse. Special protection is to be provided in the workplace and against economic exploitation under hazardous working conditions or those that endanger the child's education, health or personal development. It is the obligation of the government, society and the family to foster the integral development of children and adolescents; in this area, the principle of the children's higher interest prevails.

As strategic actions, the national government proposes the adoption of such measures as:

- The integral development of children and adolescents, based on the principle of the children's higher interest.
 - Decree 536, dated June 27, 2000, which ratifies ILO Convention 182 on the prohibition of the worst forms of child labour and immediate action for their elimination, as well as Recommendation 190.
 - Convention 29 on forced labour, 1930.
 - Convention 105 on the abolition of forced labour, 1957.
 - Executive Decree 792, dated October 29, 1997, which establishes the National Committee for the Gradual Elimination of Child Labour (CONEPTI).
 - Executive Decree 2767, dated June 25, 2002, which established the National Council on Children and Adolescents.
 - Executive Decree 1527, dated June 24, 1998, which established the National Human Rights Plan of Ecuador.
 - Executive Decree 1466, dated November 17, 1999, which issues the enabling regulations for the permanent commission for the evaluation, follow-up and adjustment of operational plans for human rights in Ecuador, which includes labour as a sub-component.
- The Education Law and enabling legislation

The Education Law of 1983 and its enabling legislation establish the basic regulations for the educational system's organisation and operation. It emphasises that education is one of the government's principal duties, and that it is carried out by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Recreation. It guarantees free and mandatory education, based on principles of continuity and permanence, and focuses on pre-school, primary and middle school, as well as literacy and the social, civic, economic and cultural development of marginalised groups. It is the government's responsibility to allocate financial resources for all types and levels of education.

As strategic actions, educational authorities have promoted certain decrees and agreements to support the provisions of the law, including:

- Decree 2959, dated August 6, 2002, which formulates enabling legislation for the Regulations on the Cost of Education in Private Schools.
- Executive Decree 1786, dated August 21, 2001, which establishes the General Regulatory Framework for the Baccalaureate.

- Ministerial Agreement 1947, dated June 14, 2002, which establishes the Initial Education Program for children under age 5.
- Ministerial Agreement 944, dated April 30, 2002, which gives the Provincial and District Offices of Education and Culture the power to authorise types of education, baccalaureates, specialised education, terms and courses in middle-level schools throughout the country.
- Ministerial Agreement 945, dated April 30, 2002, which establishes the District and Inter-District Education Offices in jurisdictions with more than 100,000 residents that are far from provincial capitals, in order to better meet the needs of the users of educational services.
- Ministerial Agreement 396, dated January 21, 2002, which calls for the National Office of Ongoing Popular Education (*Dirección Nacional de Educación Popular Permanente* - DINEPP) to assume responsibility for pedagogical and administrative management and oversight of night schools throughout the country (the programme that mainly attracts working children and youths).
- Ministerial Agreement 1883, dated September 22, 2000, which establishes the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Recreation's National Permanent Commission on Education for Human Rights.

e) Education policy

- National Plans

The Government of Ecuador's National Plan for 2000-2003 proposes a more humane social order, based on solidarity, to improve the population's quality of life and satisfy health and education needs.

One proposed strategy is the implementation of a juridical framework that provides people with the greatest possibility of enjoying a decent life and human development based on education, training and access to health-care services.

Among the action programs is the establishment of long-term commitments through job creation and economic reactivation through sustained growth of national production and more equal income distribution, as well as greater equality in social and political participation.

The Social Emergency Plan for Education, called "Together in School," is aimed at providing social protection to ensure that children from the poorest families in rural and marginal urban areas have access to education and remain in school. It is designed to respond to the government's international commitments, as well as the mandates of the Constitution. Political priorities, strategies and actions are proposed as part of the Plan.

- Education Policy

National government policies are based on ongoing national economic objectives and the general principles of the Constitution, which establish overall policy goals and guidelines for short-, medium- and long-range policy.

Among the short-term policy guidelines, through the strengthening of the Social Emergency Plan, is to increase government assistance to poor and vulnerable households. This makes the areas with the least development, target population groups and priority social sectors the priorities for public spending.

The medium- and long-range policy guidelines are aimed at making Ecuadoran products more competitive through the formation of human resources at the middle and upper levels of the educational system, through the Ministry of Education, SECAP, universities and polytechnical schools, as well as the revision and design of educational programmes based on the real needs of the country's production sector.

Strategic actions are aimed at:

- Prioritising, with the participation of specialised civil society organisations, the allocation of resources for the organisation, administration and management of social services and care centres for children and adolescents.
- Designing a system that ensures efficient, effective social investment by introducing juridical reforms in the ministries to improve management, the allocation of resources and the delegation of responsibilities.
- Establishing a system for allocating resources based on national education policies and objectives.
- Creating mechanisms for making disadvantaged groups the priority recipients of the benefits of public actions. This implies including in educational programmes issues related to collective rights and creating and reinforcing mechanisms for oversight and for denouncing the lack of compliance with these rights.
- Reaffirming SECAP as the key agency for professional formation and the training of skilled workers. This requires a rethinking of the organisational structure, management and services.
- Establishing a model of citizen security that enables people to exercise their freedoms and individual and collective rights, thus fostering public participation.

The National Policies defined by the Vice President's Office of Planning (*Oficina de Planificación de la Vicepresidencia de la República* - ODEPLAN) include:

- Improving the quality of education, with preferential attention to the poorest sectors of society.
- Decentralising and modernising educational administration and management, with the participation of community and local governments.

- Fostering equal access to education for the entire population.

Proposed strategic actions include:

- Creation of options and methods for encouraging high-risk groups, such as working children, to stay in school.
- Adequate implementation of scholarship programmes and aid for single-teacher schools.
- Prioritising investment in basic and technical education.
- Reinforcing education for intermediate professions and job training.
- Strengthening teacher training programmes.
- Support for the budget allocation system.
- Providing educational infrastructure.
- Free schoolbooks and educational materials for the poorest students.

- Policies of the Social Emergency Plan

- Guarantee the right of all children to attend and remain in school under the principles of equality, inclusion, non-discrimination and universal education.
- Protect the human capital, especially school-age children and adolescents, of the population living in extreme poverty in rural and marginal urban areas.

Proposed strategic actions include:

- Maintaining and increasing the demand for education, removing the factors that interfere with access and discourage children from staying in school. This will be done through programmes implemented by the Social Ministries.
- Developing programmes of mass communication, mobilisation and citizen participation.
- Signing a "Social Contract for Quality Improvement in Single-Teacher Schools."

- Policies of the National Educational System

- Related to educational services

The policies propose ensuring that students have universal access to and remain in the educational system at the pre-school and basic levels, based on the principles of inclusion, equality and rights. The strategy proposes focusing on specific populations that suffer discrimination or are excluded from the educational system, by designing flexible, integral curricula for working children and youths.

- Related to educational management

The policies propose decentralisation of management and administrative responsibilities, with increasing degrees of autonomy in the decentralised

agencies, as well as participation by parents and the community in school management. They also propose establishing ties to civil society and government authorities, both dependent and autonomous, for providing educational services.

Strategies include fostering and funding the social, political and technical strengthening of provincial, district and inter-district governments so that responsibility for management and administration can be transferred or delegated to them successfully.

- Policies of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Recreation.

Preferential attention in education for school-age children in marginalised and vulnerable sectors, increasing their access to education and encouraging them to stay in school, and the inclusion of strategic allies in the management of the educational system.

This policy indirectly refers to the treatment that working children should receive from the Ecuadoran educational system.

Strategic actions include the allocation of resources for developing programmes and projects, fostering mechanisms for community participation in institutional and local management and a Social Contract for Quality Improvement in Single-Teacher Schools.

- Local Public Policy in Education, formulated by the Metropolitan District of Quito.

This is a mandate for government action, in consensus with civil society and the public sector, to guarantee citizens' human rights (children and adolescents) and social equality, oversight and accountability.

Strategies include a decentralised government, ensuring citizen participation through national and local councils, and information campaigns.

These actions would make child labour more visible and foster a commitment by the government and society to accountability and compliance with laws, policies, mandates, agreements and other documents.

- SECAP's policy for professional training and education.
- The education policies of CEOSL and the National Institute of Labour Education.

These agencies participate actively in the elimination of child labour. Their strategic actions are directed toward the implementation of an Action Plan for Training, Formation and Education for workers, focusing on three areas: political

and union formation, formal education and professional formation. This is complemented by participatory seminars and workshops at the national level to raise awareness about the elimination of child labour and the strengthening of labour organisations so they can participate in the prevention and elimination of the worst forms of child labour.

- International, Ibero-American, regional and national conventions and commitments.
- World Declaration on Education for All.
- World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children, adopted by the World Summit for Children. New York, September 3, 1990.
- IV Meeting of the Regional Inter-Governmental Committee for the Major Project for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean. Quito, Ecuador, April 22-26, 1991.
- Declaration of Quito, 1991.
- Declaration of Panama, 2000.
- World Forum in Dakar, Senegal, 2000.
- General Conferences of the International Labour Organisation.

3.- PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS

- Ecuador has many regulations on child protection and they are very rich in philosophy. The Constitution has enshrined the higher interest of children and adolescents, protection against abuse, and protection in the workplace against hazardous working conditions that interfere with the child's education, health or personal development.
- The Education Law and enabling legislation, which serve as the basic regulations for the government, provide a regulatory framework for the organisation and administrative, technical and operational management of the educational system, but do not address the issue of child labour.
- The Education Law and enabling legislation do not, in themselves, guarantee that education will be mandatory and free of charge.
- The specific objectives of pre-school, primary school and the basic programme (Basic General Education) do not address the issue of child labour. The diversified programme provides technical and job training for students between ages 15 and 18. Formal and non-formal compensatory education provides professional training and formation for students between ages 14 and 20 and older.

- The educational system's administrative structure includes national, regional, provincial and local levels through various national, provincial, district and inter-district offices and educational institutions.
- According to the National Government Plan, the implementation of a juridical framework and the provision of adequate education and training are elements of the strategy for meeting educational needs.
- The National Government Plan, the Education Law and its enabling legislation, and the policies of the Metropolitan District of Quito do not address the objective of eliminating child labour.
- The Social Emergency Plan for Education, "Together in School," considers social protection a way to ensure that children from the poorest rural and marginal urban areas have access to education and remain in school.
- The elimination of child labour has not been included in the National Government Plan's policies and strategies.
- Among its efforts to ensure universal access to education, ODEPLAN's strategies include the creation of options and programmes to encourage high-risk groups, such as working children, to remain in school, as well as to reinforce processes for decentralisation and modernisation.
- The policies and strategic actions of the Social Emergency Plan are consistent with and linked to the elimination of child labour. The strategic actions include the following programmes: *Redes Amigas*; Improvement of Single-Teacher Schools; Quality Improvement of Bilingual Intercultural Education and School Nutrition; "Our Children;" ORI; the Scholarship Programme; community kitchens; Mobile Health Units; and PANN 2000. There are no specific guarantees for working children.
- The education sector's policies and strategies are complementary and take into account attention to groups that suffer discrimination or are excluded from the educational system.
- In their policies, the National Educational System and the Ministry of Education do not address the elimination of child labour.
- Policies for the administration and management of education provide for the delegation of responsibility to provincial, local, district and inter-district offices.
- Ecuador has signed national and international conventions and cooperation agreements for the protection of children and adolescents who are particularly vulnerable.

- International, Ibero-American, regional and national conventions and commitments indicate that the problem of child labour is a priority, and that education and adequate levels of development are necessary if children and pre-adolescents are to realise their potential.
- Ecuador has ratified ILO Conventions 138 and 182.
- National and international cooperation funds are available, along with the participation of universities, local governments and communities, for implementing projects designed by the social ministries.
- The Ministry of Education has strategic allies for carrying out its policies. State funds for education come from national and international sources, including donations, internal and external reimbursable loans, and self-supporting activities with community participation.
- Education represented 10.69% of the government budget in 2002.
- Government investment in education and culture in 2002 was equivalent to 2.9% of the country's gross domestic product.
- Government and Ministry of Education budgets include no specific allocations for programmes and projects aimed at and connected with the elimination of child labour.
- The government does not have an operating budget that guarantees children's school attendance during the day and the elimination of child labour.
- The educational system's various official plans and programmes do not address the issue of child labour.
- Through the national offices of Ongoing Popular Education, Technical Education and Bilingual Intercultural Indigenous Education, the Ministry of Education provides programmes for professional and vocational formation and training for adolescents between ages 15 and 18.
- Through Operating Centres in four regions, the Ecuadoran Professional Formation Service (SECAP) offers professional training and formation in various areas, using various models and strategies, including dual formation, youth formation and training in specialities in the industrial, commercial and service sectors in which adolescents between ages 15 and 17 generally work.
- The Ecuadoran Confederation of Free Labour Unions (CEOSL) and the National Institute of Education have designed a political-union education

program for workers to collectively encourage values for the development of the working class. They have also developed strategies for reinforcing the labour movement so that it can address the issues of prevention and elimination of the worst forms of child labour.

- The various community stakeholders interviewed indicated that child labour is an affront to human dignity and that its elimination is an urgent need. They suggested actions in which they would not have a direct commitment, and in very few of the actions would institutional responsibility be assumed. These actions would address the problem in a general way, but would take no specific steps to eliminate child labour.
- Monetary poverty increased by more than 100% between 1995 and 2001, from 33.9% to 70.4% of the population. Structural poverty affects at least 50% of Ecuadoran households. National wealth has been concentrated in a small percentage of the population. The poorest 10% of the population receive barely 1% of the national income while the wealthiest 10% receive 40%.
- Unemployment is phenomenon that reflects the 1999 economic crisis. When the national financial and banking crisis reached its peak, Ecuador registered record unemployment rates of 14.5%. After that, unemployment gradually decreased to 10.5% in 2002.
- The socio-economic crisis affecting the country has had a direct impact on the composition of the national work force. Currently one of every five children and adolescents between ages 5 and 17 works to help cover household expenses. In urban areas, the figure is 11%, while it rises to 36% in rural areas.
- Nationwide, 39% of working children do not attend school. This figure stands at 32.8% in urban areas and 42.1% in rural areas.
- At least seven of every 10 working children and youths receive no remuneration. Child and youth labour is mainly in agriculture and livestock raising, which does not require skilled labour. Because the work is not remunerated, it represents significant savings for the families.
- Of the total number of children enrolled in school during the 2000-2001 school year, 6.4% were in pre-school, 62.8% were in primary school and 30.8% were at higher levels. Of the entire enrolled population, 68.1% were in urban areas and 31.9% in rural areas. The coastal area accounted for 56.5% of the students, while the highlands accounted for 43.5%.

- With regard to school administration and financing, 74.9% of students are enrolled in public schools, 24.6% in private schools and 0.5% in municipal schools. Boys represent 50.6% of enrolment while girls represent 49.4%.
- Of the total number of teachers at the pre-school, primary and secondary levels, 69.8% work in urban areas and 30.2% in rural areas. Distribution is as follows: 7.7% at the pre-primary level, 47.2% at the primary level and 45.1% at the middle-school level. Some 67.1% of teachers work in public schools, 32.5% in private schools and 0.4% in municipal schools. Of the teachers and principals working during the 2000-2001 school year, 80.6% had teaching degrees, 19.1% had degrees in other fields, 0.2% had less than a bachelor's degree and 0.14% had no degree.
- With regard to school buildings, 56.5% are located on the coast and 43.5% in the highlands. Of these, 19.2% are pre-primary schools, 67.8% are primary schools and 13.1% are middle schools.
- Of the school buildings, 83.7% are owned, 8.4% are rented and 7.9% are borrowed. Some 64.7% were built specifically as schools, while 21% of the classrooms have been adapted, 22% have not been adapted and 12.2% are special classrooms or buildings. In administration and financing, 73% are public schools, 0.4% are municipal and 26.6% are private.
- Nationwide, the average non-enrolment rate is 5.9% for primary school and 28.7% for middle school. The rate for boys is 7.5% at the primary level and 28.7% at the middle-school level. For girls, the rate is 4.3% at the primary level and 28.9% at the middle-school level. Non-enrolment rates are substantially higher in rural areas than in urban zones.
- The school dropout rate is 5.4% nationwide, 5.3% in urban areas and 5.6% in rural areas. Nationwide, the grade-repetition rate is 3.4%, standing at 3.2% in urban areas and 4.9% in rural areas. In general, dropout and repetition rates are higher among boys than among girls.
- In the area of literacy, national trends have not varied. The highest rates are among women, especially in rural areas. The national average illiteracy rate is 8.8%. The rate is 7.1% among men and 10.4% for women. The illiteracy rate is 4.4% in urban areas and 17.5% in rural areas.
- A more visionary commitment by the government and all agencies, along with appropriate legislation, is needed to foster an educational and economic climate that guarantees fundamental freedoms. Connections should be established among the various sectors: citizens, governments, non-governmental organisations, companies, political leaders, multilateral organisations, etc., to ensure decent living conditions, adequate nutrition and health care.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Legislative harmonisation in the areas of education and child labour.
- Seek alternatives for implementing International Labour Organisation (ILO) Recommendations 146 and 190.
- Through cooperation agreements with the national education system, optimise international cooperation for implementing programmes and projects for eliminating child labour.
- Consider the following proposed projects as ways of strategically positioning within the national educational system the objective of elimination of child labour:
 - National Rural Education Office. Project: Rural Schools as Centres of Social and Productive Development. "CEDESPRO.
 - National Office of Ongoing Popular Education. Projects: Craft Training for Professional Formation and Vocational Training and Extracurricular Activities.
 - National Curriculum Office. Projects: Education as a cross-cutting theme and labour rights in the curriculum.
 - National Education Planning Office: Project. Inclusion of the study of and research on Child Labour and the Ecuadoran Educational System in the National System of Educational Statistics of Ecuador.
 - National Office of Professional Improvement. Project: Training and education programme for rectors, principals, supervisors and teachers at all levels of the Ecuadoran educational system.
 - Autonomous Rural School Networks Programme (*Redes Amigas*).
 - Programme for quality improvement in single-teacher schools.
 - National Programme of Values.
 - National Permanent Commission on Education. Project: Addressing Human Rights in the Curriculum of the Ecuadoran Educational System.

Other projects:

- Family cooperatives.
- School for production.

- Education, Work and Production.
- Community farms.
- Development of the Community School.
- Agriculture training and education programme.
- Microenterprises, student cooperatives.
- Institutionalisation of student governments.
- Marketing of puzzles.
- Production of balls.

5.- PROPOSED ACTIONS

Medium-range recommendations:

- Create a National Office for Elimination of Child Labour in the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Recreation.
- Guarantee basic public education for all (10 years of schooling)
- Design mechanisms and policies for external debt forgiveness to enable the allocation of 30% of the national budget to education.

Recommendations for immediate actions:

- Expand the coverage of the programmes of the National Social Emergency Plan.
- Include the strategic objective of elimination of child labour in the Social Contract for Education in Ecuador.
- Create a Permanent National Committee on the Elimination of Child Labour in the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Recreation, made up of a multidisciplinary team of delegates from the ministry headquarters and National Offices.