

Update Sialkot



"The Project to Eliminate Child Labour in the Soccer Ball Industry in Sialkot, Pakistan" is a joint project under the Agreement signed by the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Atlanta, Georgia (USA) on 14 February 1997. The project is being implemented by ILO, UNICEF, SCCI, Save the Children - UK, Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal and Bunyad Literacy Community Council

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EDITORIAL

April 1 marks the beginning of the second phase of the Sialkot Soccer Ball Project and brings about two significant changes. First, participating manufacturers are now bound by the Atlanta Agreement and Partners' Operational Framework in which they shift 25% of their target production capacity to child labour free stitching centres. Second, the Chair of the Project Coordinating Committee has been transferred from ILO to UNICEF. We would like to extend to our ILO colleagues a special word of thanks for their leadership in the important first phase of the project.

In this issue of Sialkot Update, Mr. Nasir Dogar, ILO Project Coordinator, reports on the Global March against Child Labour which passed through Sialkot on 15 April. Also covered in this update is the extensive media coverage of the project and challenges and opportunities that go with it. Finally there is a note of introduction from the new ILO international monitoring expert. In short, the project is still going strong and needless to say, as the new PCC Chair, we will continue to work together with all participating partners to reach our mutual goals.

*Stephen Umemoto,
Representative, UNICEF, and Chair, PCC*

GLOBAL MARCH PASSES THROUGH SIALKOT

The participants of the Global March Against Child Labour entered Sialkot on the evening of 14 April 1998. ILO Project Coordinator Nasir Dogar gives an account of the events.

The March, which began in Manila in January this year, is one of three such demonstrations. The other marches began in Sao Paulo, Brazil, in February and in Cape Town, South Africa, in March. All these marches will finish in the first week of June 1998 in Geneva where the International Labour Conference will meet to consider a draft of a new Convention on the extreme forms of child labour.

In Sialkot, the marchers were received at Daska Road near Saga City. They were, then taken to a nearby school in *Pakki Kotli* where the local organizers of the march had arranged a dinner to be followed by a musical programme in honour of the marchers. The event was also marked with speeches by marchers and local organizers who stressed the need to create opportunities for children to get free and meaningful education. Next morning the marchers were brought to *Chand Chowk* where the renaming ceremony of the Chowk (roundabout) took place. The chowk was renamed as "Child Labour Free Chowk". A plaque to mark the ceremony was unveiled by the Administrator of the Sialkot Municipal Corporation. After this ceremony, the marchers were taken to the Sialkot Chambers of Commerce and Industry (SCCI). To greet the marchers at the SCCI, around 15,000 school children, representatives of NGOs, and other national and international organizations concerned about the issues of child labour had gathered, waving banners and placards. Among

all this, the most prominent and eye catching object was a beautifully decorated float. The float, which was prepared by the Bunyad Literacy Community Council (BLCC) with assistance from ILO-IPEC. Built on a 50 feet long troller, the float presented scenes of a stitching centre, a carpet weaving loom, a class room of BLCC's Umang Taleemi Centre (UTC), and health and recreation activities of children participating in UTCs'. The float was following the marchers leading to the *Anwar Club* where the gathering was to be addressed by the local, national and international organizers of the Global March and other notables of the town. Passing through the roads of Sialkot, the march reached *Anwar Club* around noon. The hall of the *Anwar Club* was packed with thousands of the participants of the march. The sweating audience listened to the emotional speeches of the speakers, who pledged to make Sialkot a Child Labour Free City in five years, and urged everybody present there to join hands to work for this noble cause. In the end, the marchers from abroad were presented shields on behalf of Sialkot Municipal Corporation. The marchers then left for Gujrat.

Nasir Dogar

Sialkot and the media

CHILDREN AND SOCCER MAKE A GOOD STORY

The media have played an important role in bringing the Sialkot Project about: the wave of publicity on children stitching soccer balls for the last World Cup created the momentum which eventually led to the signing of the Atlanta Agreement in February 1997. Now, some six months into the implementation of the project, the media are still very keen on what's new in Sialkot. Children and soccer just make a good story, which is potentially good for the project and for general awareness of child labour. But is it always helpful?

The media coverage on the project has so far been generally positive, with some exceptions. These exceptions mention the persistence of child labour in Sialkot, not taking into account the phased approach of the project. This phased approach means that by 1 April 1998, 25% of target production capacity of participating manufacturers should be shifted to child labour free stitching centres; by 1

October 1998, 50% should be covered; finally by 1 April 1999, 100% production is to be child labour free. So the real test of success of the project lies ahead. The results of the ILO monitoring team indicate that the participating manufacturers are complying with the 25% target. Some of the larger companies are even ahead of schedule and have provided the internal monitoring information on more than what is required under the project.

Labelling

Another recurring misunderstanding is the issue of labelling. The project does not aim at issuing certificates or labels of 'child labour free' production. Although some manufacturers print this, or similar phrases, on their products, this has not been endorsed by the Project Coordinating Committee. Again, only at the end of the project can we ascertain whether production is actually child labour free. Last month a large company in Europe suspended the sale of soccer balls from Sialkot after reports that children were involved in their manufacture. ILO promptly reacted to explain that participation in the project is at this stage not necessarily at odds with occurrence of child labour. Unfortunately, a problem of this size cannot be eliminated overnight.

Visit

Frequent visits by journalists are facilitated by the project. The ILO has taken this a step further, by hosting a group of ten journalists from various European countries qualified for the World Cup Finals in France, representing well reputed dailies such as *The Times*, *El Pais*, *L'Equipe* and *La Gazzetta dello Sport*. Invited by the Bureau of Public Information of ILO Headquarters in Geneva and facilitated by the ILO offices in Islamabad and Sialkot, the journalists visited the project in the first week of May. They visited several stitching centres and some of the Bunyad run UTCs. They also met with representatives of the SCCI, who gave their view on the project's progress. Saga Sports and Recto Sports received the group and showed them their facilities. The Director of ILO Islamabad hosted a reception for the group on May 6 in Islamabad, which was attended by representatives of the Ministry of Labour and the donor and NGO community. The group evaluated the visit as highly educating, transparent and productive. It is a good example of how thoughtful and balanced press can be promoted, by investing the time and energy to show the reality on the ground.

Michael van Winden

INTRODUCING... Mr Antaro Vähäpassi, new international expert on the ILO Sialkot team

I was born 51 years ago in Finland. I did my Masters degree in civil engineering and my Licentiate of Science in safety engineering (equivalent to PhD in the USA). My latest career achievements have taken place within the ILO where I have worked for the last 15 years mainly managing occupational safety and health as well as labour inspection projects in Central and Eastern Europe, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, China, India and Thailand.

My duties in my new assignment as Senior Expert on Child Labour Workplace Monitoring for Pakistan include general supervision and assistance for ILO-IPEC's share in the Sialkot Soccer Ball Project, and later on, for the ILO-IPEC Carpet Industry Project, especially concerning monitoring activities. I will be based first in Sialkot, and later in Lahore.

We in the ILO regard these projects in Pakistan extremely challenging and very important, not only for Pakistan but for all countries in the world where child labour problem exists. My personal expectations are to focus on the establishment of close relations to all partners involved in these projects, learning more of inter-relationships between external monitoring and social protection activities, and generally on making these projects successful and beneficial for the children involved.

Antero Vahapassi

AGENCIES UPDATES

Following is a brief update by each of the participating agencies on their progress during the last three months.

ILO

Both in the prevention and monitoring and in the social protection component, the ILO has been making substantial progress in the last three months. As to the monitoring, the teams are now monitoring the production of 32 manufacturers. In total, 34 manufacturers have now voluntarily joined the project; two manufacturers have not yet satisfactorily submitted the required Internal Monitoring Information, to enable the ILO's external monitoring. The information received so far indicate that the 1 April 1998 target (at least 25% of target production capacity shifted to centres) was achieved. In the next five months, manufacturers will have to make the shift to 50%. The performance of the various companies show a great variety, but it is clear that it will take a big effort to achieve the target. ILO's monitoring team will continue to sensitize the manufacturers regarding the discrepancies between internal and external monitoring.

The ILO's social protection programme, implemented by Bunyad, is also expanding steadily. By the end of April, 56 Umang Taleemi Centres (UTCs) had been opened, imparting non-formal education to close to 2000 children. Meanwhile, 30 other UTCs are being set up and teacher training is being conducted. By now, the number of field counsellors has risen to 7. Reactions from the communities are on the whole very encouraging.

UNICEF

Among the highlights of UNICEF supported activities under the project are:

* Two separate agreements were signed with the Pakistan Council for Social Welfare & Human Rights and Pakistan Crescent Youth Organization to create awareness on child labour issues and mobilize communities in the selected Union Councils.

* During Phase One (April — July'98) the awareness and mobilization activities are being carried out in six union councils. The NGOs are collecting basic information about the villages allocated to them; identifying and preparing a case history of each child in the village who is under 14 years of age and is engaged in child labour. An important aspect of their work is also the awareness raising on the hazards of child labour and the importance of education.

* UNICEF has set up its office in Sialkot, sharing the building with Pakistan Crescent Youth Organization. Two staff members, Mr. Imran Sajjad and Mr. Khalid Khalil have joined UNICEF as Coordinator and Community Worker, based in Sialkot.

* Key members of government and non-government counterparts were trained on Interpersonal Communication & Mobilization Skills. More than 25 participants from the Education Department, the Social Welfare Department, Sudhaar, Save the Children, Pakistan Council for Social Welfare & Human Rights and Pakistan Crescent Youth Organization attended the workshop.

* A rapid data collection exercise was carried out in the six Union Councils, as a step

towards Union Council level EFA and school improvement plans.

* The Adult Basic Education Society NGO conducted a workshop on child centered teaching methods and multi grade teaching for 27 Additional Education Officers and Learning Co-ordinators from 3 tehsils.

* UNICEF held extensive discussion with the district education Office, who submitted a proposal for action to UNICEF.

SAVE THE CHILDREN UK

Save the Children's contribution to the Social Protection Programme is accelerating following the receipt of funding in March this year. There are 4 elements of SCF's work:

Credit and Savings: By 30 April the National Rural Support Programme had introduced the programme in 29 villages and dispersed 255,000 Rupees of credit from the Habib Bank for family businesses such as livestock, establishing grocery stores, welding and shoe making. This helps to replace family income lost as children stop work.

Education: Sudhaar is working to strengthen the formal education system in villages with higher concentrations of football stitching by involving the community more in schools through the formation of school management committees. Committees have been formed in 18 villages and 35,420 Rupees have been provided for the infrastructure improvement of 5 schools, with the communities themselves contributing on average an extra 20% of the total cost of building work. UNICEF is also strengthening formal primary education and Save the Children works closely with them to coordinate work and ensure the involvement of the Department of Education.

Women's Employment: The SCCI have formally agreed with Save the Children ways to actively promote the continuation of women's employment in the football industry, wishing to ensure that the programme does not result in women losing income. Save the Children supports the manufacturers work to establish all women stitching centres and recognises the value of both the centres in villages close to women's homes or the factory type stitching centres which provide progressive employment packages for the women who are able to travel away from home to work.

Social Monitoring: Save the Children has a team of monitors assessing the impact of the programme on the lives of children. The data collected is providing valuable information on whether children are working, moving into other more hazardous forms of work of attending school. This information is valuable when communities are being selected for social protection work. Data will be available on a website later in May.

SCCI

The SCCI provided the chair and secretary to the Sialkot Implementation Team (SIT) until 1 April. The SIT met three times in the period under review. In March a meeting was held between the participating firms and the SIT to discuss, among other things, the establishment of female stitching centres. The Meeting recommended that Save the Children should provide data on the female stitchers to the Chamber; the firms willing to establish such centers might collect the information from the Chamber. The Meeting also recommended that a SCF proposed Strategic Planning Workshop might be held in the third week of April, 1998. Another decision by this meeting was to adopt a common statement on soccer balls, after receiving suggestions from participating firms, and to forward it to the PCC for approval. A large number of manufacturers and their workers participated in the Global March against Child Labour on 15 April. The March started from the Sialkot Chamber, passing through the city roads and culminated at Anwar Club. 34 firms have now joined the Sialkot Project.

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