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SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES AND EXPERIENCES IN COMBATING CHILD BONDED LABOUR IN NEPAL



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International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC)
Sustainable Elimination of Child Bonded Labour Project (SECBL-II)



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PREFACE

Child bonded labour is one of the worst forms of child labour. Its prevention and elimination require special strategies that first cut to the root causes of its practice and then sustain the impact. Because of the complexity, tackling child bonded labour also requires partnerships working in a concerted and holistic approach that covers several fronts simultaneously. It is never easy – but it is possible.

Starting in 2002 and with support from the International Labour Organization's (ILO) International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), the Government of Nepal with social partners (employers' and workers' organizations) and other partners tested models of interventions that focused on resolving the child bonded labour problem. These efforts continued through two phases of the ILO-supported Sustainable Elimination of Child Bonded Labour (SECBL) project.

The second phase operated from September 2006 to December 2010. Despite challenging political and social contexts, significant progress was made in the targeted communities. As a result, children and their adult family members received appropriate formal and non-formal education, targeted families were trained and gainfully employed and agricultural workers, particularly freed Kamaiyas, Haruwas and Charuwas, started to receive minimum and equal wages. Additionally, an enabling environment was created for enforcing the Kamaiya Labour Prohibition Act-2001 and the Child Labour Prohibition Act-1999.

This document, *Successful Strategies and Experiences in Combating Child Bonded Labour in Nepal*, reflects the commendable progress of the SECBL project; it is based on what the project partners consider successful approaches in addressing the issues of child bonded labour. We hope that the sharing of the experiences will encourage the replicating and scaling up of the strategies so that the goal of preventing and eliminating child bonded labour is achieved in the foreseeable future – with children enrolled in school and families engaged in decent work. Nepal has ratified a number of the ILO's core conventions related to bonded labour and child labour, and this project provided effective technical assistance in understanding the issues and demonstrating how the problems could be confronted.

I would like to acknowledge with thanks the contribution of Binod Kumar Bhattarai and Karen Emmons (ILO-IPEC Consultants) for writing this document. Sherin Khan (Senior Specialist on Child Labour, Decent Work Country Technical Support Team-South Asia) edited the document and provided overall guidance; Uddhav Raj Poudyal (National Chief Technical Adviser of the project) initiated the process and provided valuable insight into the experiences. Thanks also go to IPEC-Geneva for technical input and to Hirendra Lal Karna, Project Assistant, for his administrative support. I would like to acknowledge with appreciation the funding and support from the United States Department of Labour as well as the support and involvement of the Government of Nepal, the social partners and the many beneficiaries and partner agencies who contributed significantly to the experiences that have been documented.

Shengjie Li, Country Director
ILO-Nepal
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ACRONYMS AND TERMINOLOGY

CLMC	Child Labour Monitoring Committee
CRPF	Child Rights Protection Forum
DDC	District Development Committee
DEO	District Education Office
DLRO	District Land Reform Office
GEFONT	General Federation of Nepalese Trade Union
IGA	Income-generating alternative
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPEC	International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour
MOLRM	Ministry of Land Reform and Management
MOLTM	Ministry of Labour and Transport Management
NFE	Non-formal education
NGO	Non-government organization
NTUC-I	Nepal Trade Union Congress-Independent
OSP	Out-of-school programme
PLA	Participatory learning and action (adult NFE course)
SEBL	Sustainable Elimination of Bonded Labour (Project)
SECBL	Sustainable Elimination of Child-Bonded Labour
VDC	Village Development Committee

Freed Kamaiya are the people – male and female, adults and children – who were identified in 2000 for release from their bonded labour situations after the abolition of the exploitive but centuries-old system of human labour used to “pay off” family debt, either for a loan or “leasing” of land. The Government’s abolition of the practice (through a regulation in 2000, followed by a law in 2001 that set a fine and prison term for violators) imposed a process to identify Kamaiya to target for release and to receive a “rehabilitation” package of support.

Additionally identified freed Kamaiya are people identified during a second stage of targeting the bonded labour system for elimination.

Haruwa and Charuwa are bonded labour systems in agriculture similar to the Kamaiya system but prevalent in the eastern and central regions of the country; people stuck in these systems were not identified for release through the government process, even though the abolition cited all bonded labour systems.

INTRODUCTION

Background

Child bonded labour has been a socio-economic phenomenon in South Asian countries for centuries. Only recently have these countries moved to confront the problem, in different ways and with mixed results. Comparatively, Nepal's response has been the most recent; a cabinet decree abolished bonded labour in July 2000, followed by a law enforcing it in 2001 (the Kamaiya Labour Prohibition and Regulation Act, which was passed by the parliament by an overwhelming majority of support for it). It outlawed all forms of bonded labour, but principally the Kamaiya system, primarily found in the western Terai districts and the Haruwa and Charuwa systems in the eastern Terai districts.

In the Kamaiya system, landlords or moneylenders provide loans to families typically in exchange for a child member who is sent to "work off" the debt as a household "servant". In the other systems, a landlord gives a family a meagre parcel of land in exchange for labour service. In this arrangement, wives or other family members (including children) are sent to the landlord for agricultural work, which is sometimes remunerated though slightly, or children do menial work in the landlord's home. These unwritten arrangements are interpreted as a contract between a landlord and the labourers, although they bear no time limit. Thus, the obligation of service is often passed on to the next generation due to a family's alleged inability to pay off its debt for the loan or land or the landlord's willingness to release them from the obligation.

In these systems, children work long hours, with no opportunity for education. (Children of Kamaiyas are called "Kamlaris";¹ children in the other systems have no special reference.)

Despite the landmark proclamation and law, the practice of bonded labour continued. This was attributed partly to the lack of alternative options for families to borrow money or earn income. The Government initially established a "rehabilitation package" that contained a piece of land (up to five kattha (.03 ha)), 35 cu ft of timber, 10,000 rupees (US\$139) for construction of a house and vocational skills training for livelihood development. But the packages targeted only the freed Kamaiyas. However, the packages were not actually provided immediately; it took almost ten years before a freed Kamaiya received the compensation due to the lack of planning before abolishing the system. The delay provoked discontent and a series of attempts to push the Government to come through on its pledge; still some 3,000 families have not yet received their package. In this transition period and with no other options, some families returned to the bonded labour practice, which many landowners were all too happy to accept. The Government more or less ignored the other systems in terms of enforcing the law or providing help to address the reasons why families entered into the bonded agreements – despite the law's direct reference to these systems.

ILO involvement

Nepal ratified the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Convention No. 182 in 2004, committing to "take immediate and effective measures to prohibit and eliminate all the worst forms of child labour". To assist Nepal in eliminating bonded labour, the ILO, with funding from the United States Department of Labor, initiated the Sustainable Elimination of Child Bonded Labour (SECBL) project in December 2001.

The SECBL project's first phase (SECBL-I), which involved a comprehensive package of socio-economic activities, focused on the five western Terai districts of Dang, Banke, Bardia, Kailali and Kanchanpur where the Kamaiya system was largely practised. Ending in August 2005, the SECBL-I project was

¹ "Kamlari" is actually the female term and "Kamlara" is the term for male children, but for this report only "Kamlari" is used.

evaluated as successful in bringing real change and removing children from the practice. That success led to the development of a programme to address the Haruwa and Charuwa bonded labour systems in three eastern Terai districts (Dhanusha, Siraha and Saptari) that had been ignored by the Government when it first set out to free bonded labourers but only targeted Kamaiyas. A similar comprehensive package of socio-economic activities was launched from early 2008 to June 2010 in those three eastern districts; the SECBL-II project also strengthened the work it was doing in the five districts of the first phase, specifically targeting gaps and included Kamaiyas.

In areas where the bonded labour lingers, many parents also send their children to other working situations to offset their household income needs. These families are among the extremely impoverished, majority (about 95 per cent) of them are members of the indigenous Tharus and Terai Dalit minorities who have endured generations of discrimination, exploitation and alienation. Both phases of the SECBL project aimed for the removal of all working children; they also targeted an adult family member for a particular skill training and setting up a micro enterprise as an income-generating scheme that would provide an income alternative to a working child.

The project worked with 13 implementing partners, ranging from government agencies, non-government organizations, technical education providers and trade unions (see the list of partners at the end of the report).

The project's objectives

The project operated to achieve four primary objectives:

- I. By the end of the project, children and adults from the targeted families have received or are enrolled in formal and non-formal education.
- II. By the end of the project, targeted families are gainfully employed.
- III. By the end of the project, agricultural workers, particularly freed Kamaiyas, Haruwas and Charuwas in the targeted districts, receive minimum and equal wage rates.
- IV. By the end of the project, an enabling environment functions to enforce the Kamaiya Labour Prohibition Act 2001 and the Child Labour Prohibition Act 1999.

The project's second phase targeted 9,600 boys and girls, 7,000 men and women parents of child bonded labourers and 3,400 families. Of the targeted children, 6,600 were considered vulnerable to being sent to work and 3,000 were to be withdrawn from the various forms of bonded child labour and other worst forms of child labour by providing different support services as well as mobilizing government agencies, employers, workers, NGOs, community-based organizations and other civil society groups.

The major strategies for reaching those objectives entailed the provision of formal and non-formal education, vocational skills training, employment options (on-farm and off-farm micro enterprises and links to a savings group scheme or a microcredit facility) and the unionizing of agriculture workers to bring about changes in wages paid.

In addition, awareness campaigns on child labour issues, including trafficking in children, and social dialogues concerning the enforcement of the minimum and equal wage rates were conducted at the community level. The project also assisted various ministries in reviewing, drafting and enforcing the necessary appropriate legislative measures and a national plan of action for the elimination of bonded labour, including child bonded labour. The overall programme approach called for work simultaneously with children, families and communities, with both direct actions targeted to the beneficiaries and indirect actions through capacity building and policy reforms at the appropriate levels.

Challenges

Nepal's long era of peace and stability began to crumble after a popular revolt against the monarchy in 1990 restored multiparty democracy. Although the change was welcomed, it wasn't long before dissatisfaction among the various power struggles led the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) to break away from the political mainstream and take up arms in 1995 to push their ideology and rail against the inefficiencies of successive governments. The conflict spread across the country and proved costly in economic terms (millions of dollars) and loss of lives – more than 13,000 people died. Characterized as a brutal conflict, the Maoists were responsible for a large-scale abduction of minors, their forcible recruitment as conscripts, closure of schools and brutal killings that terrorized people in the countryside, largely in the Terai area. The political instability and chaos peaked in 2006 when the then king sacked the elected prime minister. However, that move served to bring together the Maoists (who wanted an end to the monarchy) and seven other political parties. They signed a peace agreement and then jointly launched the 2006 April Movement, forcing the king to reinstate the parliament. An interim Constitution was promulgated and the first meeting of the Constituent Assembly abolished the 200-year-old monarchy and declared Nepal a Republic state in May 2007.

The decade-long armed conflict resulted in continuing government instability and ethnic and religious tensions (erupting periodically in armed conflict) and the emergence of small armed groups, particularly in the Terai – a small belt of land running east to west that borders India. Phase I of the SECBL project was launched when the conflict was peaking, which made several areas inaccessible. Although the second phase was initiated after the peace agreement was signed and the previously blocked areas became open, it was a volatile transitional period and thus difficulties remained due to the new political conflicts; strikes were frequent and roads were sometimes blocked or agencies were extorted for money. The project adopted a “do-no-harm” approach and refused to align with any side but insisted on carrying out its activities. Both phases of the SECBL project worked within this unstable environment, reaching what has been described as remarkable achievements.

Objectives of the successful strategies study

The objective of the study (reflected in this report) was to document what worked well in the second phase of the project and why and thus identify lessons that could be applied in other situations that look to replicate the successful strategies.

Methodology

The study looked at how each implementing partner was drawn into the project and how each carried out their respective contributions and the subsequent impacts from that work. The SECBL-II activities, as in the first phase, were designed to set up and strengthen institutional systems at the grassroots level that would function to protect children from bonded or other worst forms of labour. Generally, the project aims centred on building up local support systems, generating household income and enhancing human skills.

The research began as exploratory to determine the feasibility of the SECBL-II models, followed by deeper investigation into the processes to describe first the phenomenon (social and psychological impacts) and then to analyse what worked well.

Sources of information

The study began with a review of the project documents, field reports and progress reports made available by the ILO office in Kathmandu. The information gathered from those reports was checked for conformity during field visits. The main information was collected during the field visits, through interviews with ILO

and implementing partner field staff, local government officers and the community members involved in the project, including the beneficiary households. The study looked at both qualitative and quantitative programme achievements, drawn from focus group discussions in the district headquarters and in villages, to identify the reasons for the successes. A review of decisions made by the newly formed social structures, such as the Child Labour Monitoring Committees, was carried out with members of those groups. Discussions were conducted also with graduates (mostly mothers of former bonded labourers or vulnerable children) of the participatory learning and action courses, who acquired skills and options for pursuing income-generating schemes.

Constraints

Memory and recall among the various respondents likely reflect errors and biases. Some of the people interviewed had not maintained their records sufficiently or couldn't remember important points. To safeguard against these errors and biases, information on various issues that were pertinent to the project activities was elicited through indirect questions, focus group discussion or through interviews with neighbours of targeted beneficiaries. Additionally, the field visits coincided with the peak wheat harvesting season; most of the project's beneficiaries were engaged as labourers in other people's fields and not available for interviews.

SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES

INTEGRATED TARGETING

Combating child bonded labour of the Haruwa and Charuwa systems in eastern Terai

Background

As vital as the Kamaiya Labour Prohibition Act 2001 was, it alone could not end the tradition of bonded labour so deeply knitted into the society. Thus the SECBL project stepped up to help enforce the prohibition by informing landlords and bonded families of the law and their rights and then to withdraw the children of the Kamaiyas (both phases). The project also targeted another form of bonded labour –the Haruwa and Charuwa systems (phase II) that the Government did not address, removing children from the landlords' grip and returning them to their homes. The project also included other working children, or those vulnerable to working, for education and skills training. Additionally, it then helped integrate the children withdrawn from a working situation into school or vocational training.

The strategy was initiated in the districts of Dhanusha, Siraha and Saptari of eastern Nepal under the Sustainable Elimination of Child Bonded Labour-II from early 2008 to June 2010 (although it also continued other activities in the five districts targeted in the first phase). The policy, implementing strategies and processes adopted to target the children of Haruwas and Charuwas were developed and adapted according to the experiences and recommendations from the previous phase of the project. The SECBL-I focused on five western Terai districts from December 2001 to August 2005 and targeted the bonded-labour children of the Kamaiya system or children of freed Kamaiyas.

According to the baseline study conducted prior to the phase II activities, the prevalence of Haruwa or Charuwa households in the targeted districts was somewhat significant, at 372 (6.4 per cent) in Dhanusha district, 514 (20.8 per cent) in Siraha district and 708 (24.5 per cent) in Saptari district. The baseline study found 743 children aged between 5 and 14 years in these households who were living at home but likely to fall in a bonded or other labour situation. The majority of them had never been to school.

The strategy

The project was designed to empower bonded child labourers by removing them from a labour situation and providing them with access to education or vocational training. Primary school-age children vulnerable to being sent to work were targeted for enrolment in a formal school. To help secure the children's safety from a work situation, a family member was offered training in a particular livelihood (such as pig or goat raising) and seed money to start up the micro enterprise that would then generate income as an alternative to what a child might have earned. Additionally, female and male parents who were freed from bonded labour were given access to social and economic empowerment through a participatory learning and action (PLA) non-formal education course that focused on basic literacy and numeracy as well as life skills; PLA graduates then were encouraged to form income-earning collectives or self-help groups, through which they learned a livelihood skills and business management. Participants in the PLA course received information and awareness on human and children's rights, workers' rights in Nepal and financial literacy.

The PLA graduates were encouraged to create cohesive groups through which they could collectively pursue a micro enterprise and generate a habit of savings as well as a pool of credit that they could access. The groups were also encouraged to take on social responsibilities, particularly the protection of children, through their own group or by participating in other local structures established or strengthened through the project. Trade unions opened their doors to them and educated them on their right to fair and minimum wages. The sum total of the different activities was to make families aware of exploitive labour and how they and their children can avoid it.

Ultimately, the project's aim was to establish and strengthen social structures for protecting and educating children and promoting inclusiveness of all minority groups, at the grassroots up through the national levels, and thus strengthen both communities' and the country's development.

The process

- A baseline survey of all Haruwa and Charuwa households was conducted, with particular focus on their children's status in terms of their education and employment, along with the family's socio-economic conditions. A complete profile of each household was prepared; the information was inputted into a database for future tracking.
- An orientation meeting was organized in each village and included all political party leaders, school teachers, elders and other influential persons, families connected to bonded or other child labour practices and landlords. The discussion centred on children's rights, the importance of educating children and the prohibition of bonded labour. The facilitator from the implementing partner encouraged interactions among the participants to clarify any confusion.
- To attract landlords to the meeting and to open their minds to the project's objectives, implementing NGO staff approached them individually before the general village meeting. They were informed about the project and its strategies as well as the country's laws abolishing bonded labour, which they were well aware of. They were invited to work with the community and thus to attend the meeting so that collectively they could eradicate the practice. This approach worked to motivate many of the landlords who even agreed with some of the issues raised during the meeting. Their cooperation was also perceived as based on fear that they might be targeted in some way by the community if they do not cooperate (a legacy of the armed conflict ethos). As well, suggestions were made that landlords who did not release their child bonded labourers might find themselves subjects of media exposes.
- The implementing partners then made repeated visits (four to six times) with the parents of the targeted children individually, in their homes, to further discuss the importance of educating children and the prohibition of bonded labour. The point was to convince them to withdraw their children from the bonded labour or other work situation they were in and to keep other children from leaving home to work. The available options for education or vocational training were discussed.
- Repeated visits were also made to the landlords, who obviously were initially reluctant to change the situation. These visits were conducted by NGO staff along with trade union or community leaders working together. The involvement of the trade union and community leaders was critical; the pressure that their presence represented worked to convince the landlords that they had no choice but to follow the law.
- Parents and landlords were given one month to remove children. The law includes punishment in the form of a fine of 50,000 rupees (US\$697) or a six-month prison term or both, depending upon the nature and magnitude of the exploitation. However, due to shame and fear of exposure in the local media, landlords were willing to release children.
- A second meeting was organized 15 months into the project period in the targeted villages that involved the chiefs of the Haruwa and Charuwa communities, elders, teachers and political party representatives. The participants were encouraged to form a Child Labour Monitoring Committee from among them, which would then be the actual group to initiate the withdrawal of children from bonded labour situations. The Child Labour Monitoring Committee also had responsibility for monitoring vulnerable children still at home as well as the integrating of children into school. The Child Labour Monitoring Committee was crucial to the whole strategy because of the links between children and the community, between the community and implementing partners and between the community and the local government units. The Child Labour Monitoring Committee represented the political will to enforce the law and to protect children from working.

- The targeted children (those withdrawn from working and those vulnerable to it) were categorized into age groups, 6–9 years, 10–16 years and older than 16. The children aged 6–9 years were directly enrolled into school. Children aged 10–16 years were enrolled into a non-formal education programme, referred to as the out-of-school programme (OSP), to catch them up to their age-appropriate level. Children needing additional help were provided with “bridging” courses. The OSP used a government-approved curriculum; the bridge courses helped older children, particularly in English, math and social studies for grades 4, 5 and 6. Upon finishing the OSP, children’s school readiness was checked; those deemed able were then enrolled into a regular school. Those not yet ready were offered vocational training. Children older than 16 who wanted to participate in school also joined the bridge course; those not keen to study received vocational training.
- Once a child was removed from a working situation and returned home, a family member was offered opportunity to set up an income-generating activity to compensate for the lost income that the working child would have brought in or to cover the education expenses in the long term. A compensatory cash transfer of 2,400 rupees per child was made to help the family through the transition period between ending the working child situation and earning from the new income activity. Training for an income-generating activity was provided individually at first to determine each person’s true interest and affinity; after a couple sessions, six to seven interested people came together as a group for one to two weeks of more intense training, which an NGO coordinated in collaboration with government experts who conducted the actual sessions. The participating family member typically was the mother though some fathers sought out the opportunity.
- Each child still at home (but not in school) received a school uniform, school bag, books and stationery supplies amounting to 550 rupees (US\$8) after they had enrolled in school. (In the project’s first phase, each school received 225 rupees (US\$3) per child from the targeted families who had newly enrolled; by the second phase, the Government had initiated its Education for All project, which was providing schools with financial assistance to accommodate the increase in students.)
- The implementing partners monitored the progress of the enrolled children by following up quarterly with teachers and parents, using a “tracking sheet” (a form for gathering specific information later inputted into a database).
- The implementing partners publicized the negative effects of child bonded labour through radio, street drama and video documentary messages that began at the start of the project and helped reinforce the conversations in the village meetings as well as the individual household visits. The awareness raising continued throughout the project’s life cycle, particularly during village festivals and a Welcome to School campaign conducted in April each year. Former child bonded labourers were then invited to participate in awareness raising; their presence in the publicized messages boosted the effectiveness. A competition involving story telling or paintings to recount their bonded experiences produced powerful and poignant mind-changing first-person accounts that were particularly effective with landlords and parents.

Achievements

Based on their targeted intentions, the implementing partners achieved the following:

Withdrawal from work/bonded labour targeted	3,000	successfully removed	1,919 (64%)
Preventing children from leaving home targeted	6,600	successfully prevented	6,025 (91%)
Enrolling children into school targeted	8,000	successfully enrolled	6,619 (82%)
Enrolling parent into PLA class targeted	4,000	successfully graduated	3,340 (84%)

Some 3,000 family members (mostly mothers but some fathers) participated in the alternative livelihood scheme to learn a skill for an on-farm or off-farm activity.

A total of 150 community support systems (structures) were formed and remain mobilized towards preventing and withdrawing children working in bonded or hazardous conditions. These include women's savings groups, children's and youth groups, the Child Labour Monitoring Committees, Child Rights Protection Forums and Haruwa/Charuwa Concern Groups who are working proactively to tackle the continuing use of child labour as well as creating awareness against it.

Necessary conditions for success

Because the bonded labour system has been entrenched for centuries, several conditions are necessary to successfully remove or prevent children from entering such exploitive situations:

- **Conducive political atmosphere:** The policy and project essentially are based on egalitarian principles and thus the political environment should be conducive to such a context. This also means support will be provided from the various state organs, from the executive to the legislature to the judiciary. Societal support is critical, including from all political parties.
- **Legal framework:** Changing behaviour and long-held practices such as bond labour needs a legal basis. A law enacted by representatives of the population provides the societal as well as legal impetus for demanding change. Complementing by-laws and regulations provide extra procedural basis for enforcing the law.
- **Support of local administration:** Local administrations in this part of the world are much influenced by local leaders and the members of the parliament representing that area. Although national leaders may advocate or require certain changes, if the local administration is not aware or in agreement, more hurdles than otherwise may impede a project's progress. Local administration support is vital.
- **Commitment of partners:** Local partners are the frontline response; the strength of the project is based on the commitment of the local partners to the issue.
- **Coordination among implementing agencies:** There is often reference to the necessity of coordination but not always understanding of what it really implies. Many involved agencies or departments may not have a history of working with each other, such as education and labour offices; some projects need to invest in developing commitment to working together in harmony among the different agencies as well as with the implementing partners.
- **Commercial viability of income-generating activities:** If the livelihood options offered as compensation for keeping children from working provide no real alternative, children will remain vulnerable to being sent to work. Due to villagers' lack of entrepreneurial skills, implementing agencies need to properly evaluate the market success of proposed ventures or products.
- **Vocations imparted are in demand:** The vocational skills training provided to both parents and the children also needs to have viable potential in the local market. Any skills taught that are in abundance in the area or are rarely in demand locally can jeopardize the project's objectives.

PROFILES OF PROBLEMS AND PROGRESS

Using a household survey and a child labour tracking system to expand protection

Background

In Nepal, regular monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are generally lacking, particularly one that involves the participation of people who are poor in any planning process. Also, the impact of programmes is not typically measured. There is little linking between the macro and meso levels of initiatives in poverty reduction or even basic service delivery, so that even if there were monitoring mechanisms, it would be difficult to measure the level of impact over time, region and different strata of the population.

Before the launch of the SECBL-II activities, very little was known about the communities in which many families were still absorbed and affected by the bonded labour systems. That the families belong to the discriminated Tharu and Dalit minority groups was known, but their socio-economic situation and bonded labour relationships – how many children trapped in these situations – was not known. Thus, baseline surveys were conducted on the situation of child bonded labour in the targeted eight districts (phases I and II).

The surveys provided crucial information of the whole gamut of family and social issues associated with bonded labour; in particular, it revealed their socio-economic status, relationship with a landlord and terms and conditions of work involving children. The results were shared among the implementing partners and other government agencies and helped in devising strategic actions to eliminate the problems. For instance, the second phase survey showed that the majority (about 85 per cent) of children of these families were out of school; this finding was a surprise to the government agencies, particularly the education office, when their 2008 records under the Education for All programme indicated a net enrolment rate at the primary level of 89 per cent. With this baseline finding, they realized that the “hard-to-reach” children were the children of bonded labourers or living in those areas still where the practice of bonded labour continued. Because of the finding, they were highly supportive to find ways to enrol those children or young working children into a formal school. Similarly, the annual wages of bonded labourers as revealed through the baseline survey was much lower than the minimum wage fixed by the Government. This finding exposed the level of exploitation occurring, particularly among officials and leaders in local administrations whose help secured support for imposing minimum wages in agriculture.

Although baseline surveys were typically conducted before projects began for guiding activities and to measure progress, it was rare in the Nepal context that information derived from the surveys would be used by different implementers for continuous tracking of the targeted beneficiaries to assess the impacts of the project activities covering a sizable number of households. This also helped in taking corrective measures to achieve the objectives of the project. The project demonstrated the ongoing value in using the data and provided a model database.

The strategy was used in both phases of the Sustainable Elimination of Child Bonded Labour project, first in the western Terai districts of Dang, Banke, Bardiya, Kailali and Kanchanpur (first phase) and then in the eastern Terai districts of Dhanusha, Siraha and Saptari (second phase).

The strategy

Once the implementing partners were aware of who the child bonded labourers and other vulnerable children as well as their parents were, they created a database of profiles on each one for tracking how their lives were helped or not by the project. The database system enabled easy access and thus easy monitoring of each family's status and up-to-date reporting. The system remained in use after the project ended.

The profiles contained such information as enrolment in school, attendance and completion status; a tracking form developed during the SECBL-I facilitated the process. The tracking form proved extremely useful in conducting tracer studies. The form is used by the Child Labour Monitoring Committee as well to track children for their reporting purposes. The data also is useful for impact assessments beyond the project.

In addition to monitoring the children within its coverage area, the Child Labour Monitoring Committee maintains information on the child labour situation that is shared with the local government education and social protection offices. These offices are focal points for information collection on child labour issues; they then relay the information to the Ministry of Labour and Transport Management. The Ministry then enters the information into the national collection process. The SECBL-II implementing partners worked closely with the Ministry and the local government office to institutionalize the child labour monitoring system at all levels for use in planning and improving policies.

The process

The project's emphasis on building the knowledge base entailed research, documenting and disseminating the different aspects of child bonded labour:

- Before any activity designs were finalized, the implementing partners conducted a household baseline survey, called the Initial Child Beneficiary Profile (ICBF), in the eight districts to determine the situation of working and vulnerable children. It was not easy to do and took considerable time to carry; however, it helped immensely in tracking the progress and regularity in school attendance and the working situations of children. The information compiled helped in building confidence and encouragement of the communities. When the compiled information was shared with them, it pinpointed that those (large number) who previously had not been attending school were now going regularly as well as those who were working before and were no longer working, they felt good about their efforts. They had been the ones to persuade employers and parents and now could see a positive impact from their involvement. This then encouraged them to work more on the issue. Although the survey focused on child bonded labourers and other working children, it covered the whole gamut of socio-economic and cultural information from every household. And it improved the attitude of respect and understanding among local authorities towards these families.
- Staff members of the implementing partners participated in a three-day training seminar that the ILO project staff conducted on using the ICBF and how to input information. (Subsequent reports indicate the duration was too short and mistakes thus occurred both in collecting information and inputting it.) Ongoing technical support from the ILO project staff remained available.
- Each implementing partner entered its collected baseline information into a software program developed for the SECBL-I project. The inputted baseline information was then emailed to the project office, where project staff compiled the reporting from all districts into the database. After the initial baseline information was set up, each implementing partner used the tracking form to update the information; quarterly reports were then sent to the project office; project staff then would update the database. The database for each district is available to the implementing agencies responsible for that area; the greater database of all project beneficiaries was available only to the project office in Kathmandu.
- The knowledge then shaped the intended activities, from awareness raising on the perils of child labour to the withdrawal of children from labour situations and the protection of vulnerable children from hazardous work or trafficking. Awareness raising entailed discussions with local influential people, religious leaders, political leaders, teachers and the village secretary and home visits with the targeted families and landlords as well as campaigns conducted in collaboration with civil society and community-based organizations. The campaigns relied on local and national print, radio and

television media as well as street and village theatre and other novel approaches, such as wall paintings by children and other drawing activities. The success of the messages and campaigns relied on the information obtained during the baseline survey.

- Additionally, the implementing partners conducted a research study on migration and trafficking incidence among children in the targeted families during the first couple months of the project (in the social mobilizing period). They were looking for details on to where and how children are trafficked. The research focused on the qualitative aspects of the trafficking to help build the knowledge base and address the issues that enable the trafficking. Case studies were documented. The information helped in identifying ways to promote safe migration
- At the end of the project, good practices and lessons learned were researched and documented and then circulated among all people, government agencies and organizations involved in the project.
- An end-of-project survey and impact assessment were conducted in the targeted districts; the outcomes were distributed in report form among all people, government agencies and organizations involved in the project.
- The tracking system and database were thus critical tools for the Child Labour Monitoring Committees set up in each targeted village.
- Successful models of community-based child labour monitoring systems, such as the Child Labour Monitoring Committee, were documented by the project and shared among agencies working on child protection, such as UNICEF and World Education, with the idea they could be incorporated into a child protection system.

Achievements

The baseline survey covered some 13,000 kamaiya households in five districts of western Terai and about 1,600 Haruwa and Charuwa households in the three eastern Terai districts, providing unique and detailed information on the situation of children. The knowledge emanating from this baseline survey contributed significantly towards reducing the incidence of the worst forms of child labour by informing replicable models for the withdrawal of young workers or preventing others and for integrating many of them into the formal education system. It helped formulate a Ministry of Education policy linking child labour issues with poverty reduction programmes and in establishing a child labour monitoring system for the country. The baseline data increased the knowledgebase by addressing child bonded labour in households, in agriculture, in brick kilns, in restaurants or other service enterprises.

Due to the availability of information, the district authorities directed their programmes towards building synergies at the grassroots level and monitored the progress by visiting villages, thus improving the link between the micro and meso levels.

The surveyed data has become a rich source of information for researchers with other projects or purposes. The success of the tracking system used within the SECBL project indicates its usefulness for other government and non-government agencies.

The tracking system was commended by a variety of users, indicating its flexibility and usefulness in different agencies and contexts. For example, Pasupati Chaudhary, chairperson of the Mukta Kamaiya Samaj, an NGO of freed Kamaiyas, praised the value of the system for protecting the rights of young people: "This is a tool by which we can ensure the rights of children as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and this should be replicated in other districts where children are deprived of their rights." As well, the chief of the District Land Reform Office in Kailali praised its technical utility and sought permission to install the whole package in his office to track the whereabouts of the freed bonded labourers in his district.

Necessary conditions for success

The following conditions enabled the successful expanding of the knowledgebase on the worst forms of child labour in the targeted areas:

- Political will: The Government was willing to initiate the child bonded labour programme but lacked resources to meet the requirements.
- Implementing agency commitment: There was willingness among the implementing agencies to adopt the monitoring system for tracking the situation of all identified child labourers or those vulnerable to such situations. As well, district government agencies were supportive of the tracking system, particularly the District Land Reform Office, which is the designated agency for tracking bonded labour in agriculture.
- Training in the use of the tracking system and ongoing technical support: The ILO conducted training on project strategies, approaches, baseline surveying, monitoring and evaluation and tracking system in the beginning to explain the software program and work with the implementing agencies to develop a mastery of maintaining the database. ILO technical assistance was available throughout the project for any problems or refresher help needed. The assistance ensured familiarity and ultimately nurtured local expertise to carry on the monitoring without any ILO input in the future. Basically, the project enhanced the capacity of its implementing partners in monitoring and tracking of beneficiaries, providing added value in sustainability, although lessons learned indicated the initial training needs to be longer to ensure the users fully understand how to properly collect and input data.

CREATING A COMMUNITY SPIRIT

Mobilizing an indigenous socio-cultural support system and nurturing of social capital

Background

There was a variety of traditional social “structures” in the targeted areas, such as the Guruwa (traditional healers of the Tharus ethnic minority), Barghar or Bhalmansa (traditional community leaders of Tharus) and Majjans (traditional community leaders of the Mushahars in Dhanusha, Siraha and Saptari districts). The traditional chiefs of the Tharu and Mushahar communities are chosen unanimously by households and are regarded by all community members as their supreme chief, whose decisions on any issue or controversy are regarded as the community perspective and thus obeyed by all.

These leaders were not oriented towards preventing the use of children as bonded labourers or even to contribute towards household income; neither were they in positions to deal with the socio-economic and political implications of advocating for change. Within communities, there was no sense that children would be more productive and earn more if they were first educated. And there was no tradition of child protection or working together as a community to protect children.

The indebted parents, the landlords, the communities’ own hierarchical social system, the School Management Committees, Forest Users’ Committees and local governing bodies would all be affected by the withdrawal, prevention, rehabilitation and integration into school of child bonded labourers. None were prepared for handling the change the project proposed, let alone the support, cooperation and co-action needed.

The strategy

The strategy was initiated during the second phase of the Sustainable Elimination of Child Bonded Labour (SECBL-II) in the western Terai districts of Dang, Banke, Bardiya, Kailali and Kanchanpur and the eastern Terai districts of Dhanusha, Siraha and Saptari in early 2008 and completed in June 2010.

The implementing partners convinced the traditional community chiefs and other community leaders of the perils and law-breaking as well as rights-violating implications of child bonded labour; the national legislation and penalties (fine and imprisonment) were particularly emphasized. The information changed the attitude among the chiefs and leaders, which triggered shifts in other people’s perceptions and eventually led to acceptance of and participation in new social structures, such as the Child Labour Monitoring Committees and women-initiated collective business ventures, and greater support from existing mechanisms such as the Child Rights Protection Forums, youth clubs and children’s clubs, the School Management Committees, the Forest Users Groups or the Village Development Committees.

Several rounds of dialogues involving parents, teachers, leaders, landlords, community chiefs and political party representatives eventually created a conducive atmosphere towards the protecting of children from child labour. Initially, it was not easy and required the different parties to work together – and ultimately agree to act together in the best interests of the children.

The new community spirit motivated the women from households that offered their children as bonded labourers to participate in the non-formal education (participatory learning and action, or PLA) course and the skills training schemes and then seek out an income-generating venture that would boost individual family income and thus circumvent the need for the children to work. The PLA graduates (mostly women) formed groups and pooled their funds in a revolving credit scheme for emergency needs or to start micro enterprises. Ventures were started individually or in groups.

Parents from former Haruwa, Charuwa and Kamaiya households were motivated to participate in the local School Management Committee. Involvement in these types of self-governing groups indicates a generating of strengthened social capital and ultimately the empowerment of families previously or currently engaged in the bonded labour system to seek out alternative solutions to their household financial needs and thus educate and better protect their children. It also represents the inclusion of people previously discriminated against or alienated from involvement in community affairs.

The process

Prior to the launch of activities within the communities, the project staff worked with The Friends of Dhanusha (one of the implementing partners) to adapt the ILO's Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) training package to the Nepal context, mostly through translation but also with appropriate language and changes in various examples, so that it could be used in an economic empowerment training with the PLA graduates. After completing the PLA course, participants who were interested in pursuing their own business were selected based on their interest, competence and skill; those selected were grouped together for a short training that TFD conducted using the SIYB module to prepare them for starting a micro enterprise. SIYB is a globally successful ILO tool for nurturing women's entrepreneurial competency and financial literacy; The Friends of Dhanusha is a certified organization to provide training on SIYB.

Then as previously noted, the implementing partners conducted a series of dialogues with community members to explain the project, its purpose and the need to keep children from working. They also began working with existing support structures and systems (such as youth and children's groups, School Management Committees, Forest Users Groups, Village Development Committees) to strengthen them in terms of teaching them about children's rights, the importance of education and community involvement in tackling social issues, which helped ease acceptance of the project activities. As noted, these groups were mobilized to help implementing partners convince families to enrol out-of-school children (at first, those not working) and then to remove children from working situations and participate in the Out-of-School non-formal education programme or vocational education.

Then the implementing partners conducted a household survey to determine the socio-economic status of the families with child bonded labourers. These activities of course helped launch the idea of community spirit and cohesion; but it was not until eight months into the project that the more focused work began, as follows:

- The PLA courses were organized, involving up to 30 members in one group who were mostly mothers but some fathers, to acquire livelihood skills. At the end of the course, the participants typically organized themselves into self-help groups, also referred to as collectives. As a group they developed an income-generating activity that involved each of them. They also set up a savings scheme and revolving credit scheme, which members and other people in the community who were not PLA graduate could draw from to develop individual livelihood enterprises, such as vegetable farming or raising pigs, goats or poultry. The collectives set up businesses making tapari (a plate made from leaves), dalmoth (dry lentil snack), candles, spices or furniture (among other things) or took up farming, growing crops on project-leased land.
- It was the training, activities and discussions that took place during the PLA course that worked to strengthen the self-help group principles of solidarity and mutual trust among the members. The SIYB training introduced entrepreneurialism and business managing skills. All this in turn helped influence local mindsets in terms of their social responsibilities towards children and other victims of violence, trafficking, etc. (see the strategy highlight on earning alternatives for details of the PLA course). For example, when the word "byapaar" (business) was being taught, they identified potential activities by which they can increase their income individually or in a group. They developed a flow chart along with the market analysis that they had identified. Thus, they learned that the market is an important

ingredient of any successful business. This also highlighted how a single person cannot manage all activities but that in a group, labour divisions can be made and a greater profit can be shared equally among members. The encouraging of group economic activity was a huge part of the solidarity building.

- At the same time as the PLA courses were initiated, the implementing partners worked with two trade unions (NTUC-I and GEFONT) to promote fundamental principles and rights at work, including educating workers on minimum wages and equal wages for men and women for the same work. The unions have members residing in these villages who follow up with communities. In addition, the trade unions established a unit in the villages under the project. Then trade union leaders initiated a campaign among the project's targeted group to join the trade union. They also organized dialogues among workers, landlords and local government officials to fix the minimum wage and ensure its enforcement. Through a series of three to seven meetings, the minimum wage in agriculture under the Kamaiya Labour Prohibition Act 2001 was fixed. The trade union leaders along with the district authority and representatives of the small farmers' associations met to review the national minimum wage and fix the local wage. The information was then disseminated among all the union members and other agriculture workers in a mass campaign conducted by the trade unions. This was typically done in the planting and harvesting time, particularly with paddy rice (June and November). The dialogue process helped to promote a common understanding among all parties of labour standards and build a healthy social relationship between workers and employers (see the strategy highlight on unionizing freed bonded labourers and family members for more details).
- Fifteen months after the project had started and just after the first PLA courses had been conducted, the implementing partners then worked with each targeted village to set up a Child Labour Monitoring Committee. By this point, communities were highly sensitized on children's rights and child protection and a sense of inclusion among people traditionally excluded from community cohesion had been established. There was a sense of the community needing to work together to help each other. This does not come about easily; but through the heavy awareness raising efforts and promoting economic empowerment, a social empowerment emerged.
- Each Child Labour Monitoring Committee consisted of 7–11 members, including a community chief, other influential leaders, a former child labourer, a teacher, a social activist, PLA graduates and members from the newly formed collective initiatives. Members were selected through a meeting of the community. Part of the role of the PLA course had been to empower participants (mostly mothers) socially as well as economically so that they can contribute towards the prevention and withdrawal of working children.
- Once formed, the Child Labour Monitoring Committee members then engaged in a three-day training followed by two-day refresher training seminar (about three months later) to learn more about child labour issues as well as their duties, responsibilities and working procedures. The training also included group mobilizing, gender issues, violence against women and children and identifying resources. A terms of reference (TOR) was developed for the Child Labour Monitoring Committee and agreed by the members. Having a TOR for the Child Labour Monitoring Committee was significant because it provided them guidelines for their work and equally made them responsible to the community. The TOR represents the trust and responsibility that the community has given them, which became a big motivating force to work more proactively in their monitoring of child labour. The moving of children out of hazardous work conditions and into school gave committee members a sense of social honour.
- A monitoring committee of three Child Labour Monitoring Committee members was designated to keep track of the child labour situation in their village. The monitoring committee produces a quarterly monitoring report and submits it to the Child Labour Monitoring Committee with recommendations for prevention, withdrawal or referral of a child. Depending on a situation, the Child Labour Monitoring Committee receives agreement on the recommended action from other social groups and village authorities and then acts on it.

- The project staff then worked with the existing (in the Haruwa and Charuwa districts) Child Rights Protection Forum (CRPF) to strengthen its capacity to tackle children's rights issues. The CRPF helped to carry out decisions made by the Child Labour Monitoring Committee within villages. The CRPF members also received training on group mobilizing, gender issues, violence against women and children and identifying resources for supporting Child Labour Monitoring Committee initiatives in the village.

Achievements

- A total of 196 self-help (collective) groups consisting of more than 3,000 women from the Kamaiya, Haruwa and Charuwa households were formed. Through financial literacy training, they have learned to be self-governing and to mobilize resources and provide financial services in a sustainable way.
- The self-help groups have been empowered to make their own decisions about local development and resolve conflicts. The women have found a forum to work together towards common goals and give them opportunity to make improvements, if only subtle, to their social position. Because the project's targeted population was the indigenous Tharus and Dalits minorities, they have found an opportunity to articulate their voice and priorities and be an equal member of the community – they have found a way to mobilize themselves.
- There are now 61 Child Labour Monitoring Committees in the eight project districts of SECBL-II. The Child Labour Monitoring Committees have become meeting points for government and non-government organizations for delivering services. Child Labour Monitoring Committees now request funds from the Village Development Committee or other resources for activities or specific support. For example, a Kamalaris' father was able to buy a rickshaw through Child Labour Monitoring Committee-negotiated assistance from a national NGO as a livelihood scheme that would enable his son and daughter to go to school. The Child Labour Monitoring Committees have created a healthy competitiveness among government agencies, NGOs, private sector and grassroots organizations of the poor in providing basic services as well as preventing children in engaging in work. The Child Labour Monitoring Committees are essentially doing the work of government authorities by withdrawing children in hazardous work situations and enrolling them in school at no cost; government agencies and NGOs doing the same work would have needed to spend 1,000 rupees (US\$14) for the same task. The Child Labour Monitoring Committees have emerged as the primary community authority to protect the rights of children at the village level.
- There were nearly 200 women's groups when the project closed.
- There has been a significant achievement in terms of raising the confidence level of the targeted families through all efforts of social mobilizing at the community level. Many of these people had been haunted by a sort of loan-phobia; it is because of the loans received from the nearby landlords and not repaid by their parents that many adults remained in such precarious socio-economic conditions. The stigma, which had loomed large in their lives, gradually evaporated due to inclusion in the community activities and the empowerment the women gained through the PLA course. The PLA course taught them how to make a living more productively and gave them access to affordable money for emergency needs through their own pooled savings. It also gave them a community support system.
- The involvement of trade unions greatly helped in raising awareness among the targeted households on their labour rights, specifically the minimum wage structure and equal wages between male and female workers and the benefits of unionizing and collective bargaining. In exchange, 3,000 people from former Kamaiya families and 2,000 people from Haruwa or Charuwa households joined a national trade union – having never belonged previously. This has given the minority groups new local and national allies to champion their needs.
- The DLRO chief of Kailali said that the Government has allocated 12 crore rupees (120 million rupees) to enhance employment opportunities through the income-generating activities, although only in five kamaiya-prone districts. To access the fund, freed bonded labourers need a recommendation from

their local Village Development Committee. Similar funds will be mobilized for access by the Child Labour Monitoring Committees and women's groups.

- The referral system opened opportunity for the Child Labour Monitoring Committees and other local groups to collaborate with NGOs and government bodies to secure coordinated services (including enrolment in school) of bonded child labourers, which is significant considering these are areas in which government initiatives in tackling the issue of child labour had been lacking.
- More women than men participants in the PLA course found it a useful platform for nurturing social capital, building awareness, resolving disputes and initiating productive activities that can support their children's continuation in school. With small savings and a modest scale of investment, the women reaped incremental benefits. Their confidence levels have gone up after participating in the PLA course due to the literacy initiative. Awareness levels on AIDS, women's rights and human trafficking also have increased. During interviews and the focus group discussions conducted for this report, many women commented on how they had stopped drinking alcohol and gambling or had the will to stand up against domestic violence after joining a group and becoming socially empowered. The women discovered that group solidarity is an effective tool for controlling or preventing many social vices (alcohol drinking, gambling, domestic violence and, most importantly, early child marriage).

Necessary conditions for success

- **Conducive political atmosphere:** Organizing and empowering the poor, particularly the freed Kamaiyas, Haruwas and Charuwas, would have been near impossible two decades ago, when the country was under an authoritarian political system. In that system, all resources allocated for poverty alleviation programmes, including donor contributions, were channelled through a centralized delivery structure. The civil society institutions, such as NGOs, did not have freedom to advocate or organize the poor. The reintroduction of a multiparty system in 1990 enabled the return of civic institutions and political parties to act upon social issues, particularly empowering them economically. Despite the adverse institutional environment, people used their ingenuity to build community-based organizations in the form of users groups, particularly to harness the benefits from common property resources, such as the forest and water, through cooperative efforts.
- **Laws and regulations are enacted:** Making societal change typically requires a legal basis. A small yet influential segment of society has remained in favour of continuing the child bonded labour system. The enactment of laws and regulations to eliminate the practice was a necessary first step because it provides an irrefutable basis for the abolition and provides a consequence for those who do not desist. Overcoming the tradition of caste discrimination can only begin with a legal basis.
- **Support of local administration:** Although the Government enacted a law against the bonded labour, the enforcement of it and its benefits as well as the child labour law may not reach the intended beneficiaries if the local administration officials are not aware or not in agreement. Again, overcoming the tradition of caste discrimination requires political will and social support at all levels, but most particularly within the more influential sectors of society, such as the local administration units in Nepal.
- **Commitment of implementing partners (NGOs):** With the opening of political space due to the reintroduction of multiparty political system, civil society institutions, including NGOs, have emerged as a strong force and change agents. NGOs are flexible, innovative and generally responsive to the needs of a community. The broadening of civil society has included the expansion of social capital and the inclusion of all groups. Again, entrenched traditions are difficult to change and without strong commitment among the agents on the frontline, progress can be very difficult to achieve.
- **Coordination among implementing agencies:** In the bonded labour system, families were "looked after" relatively by the landlord. Since the abolition of the system, however, the families were confronted with a host of problems and issues that they had to resolve on their own, such as extreme poverty, illiteracy and unemployment. Giving them the services and skills they need for a

life beyond bonded labour requires inputs from a variety of government, non-government and private sector agencies. Without coordination among the implementing agencies, it is likely many people in need could be overlooked or unreached; services provided could well not complement one another and thus render each inadequate or inappropriate and ultimately wasted. Thus, a coordinated effort among all involved parties is mandatory to build synergy across the programmes and avoid duplicating support and assistance while implementing activities for freed bonded labourers.

- **Commercial viability of income-generating options:** The success of withdrawing children from work situations depends entirely on a family's income level. If livelihood options are provided as compensation, they need to be marketable and viable and appropriate for a particular individual. Targeted markets need to be assessed before the selection of skills or income-generating training is decided.

FORTIFYING FRONTLINE RESPONDERS

Strengthening the capacity of service providers to enforce the law and protect against bonded labour

Background

Families who have been gripped by the bonded labour systems generally lack access to alternative support services; with nowhere else to turn, they repeatedly fall into the dependency trap of the landlords, sending a parent or their children as bonded labourers to “pay off” another debt.

Additionally, the relevant district government agencies have not been equipped to follow through on the legislation outlawing bonded labour. And because of their relative newness on the development scene in Nepal, NGOs and other organizations that could provide protective or monitoring services also lack sufficient practical know-how to address the issues and respond to needs.

The strategy to build up the capacity of service providers was initiated during the second phase of the Sustainable Elimination of Child Bonded Labour (SECBL-II) project in the western Terai districts of Dang, Banke, Bardiya, Kailali and Kanchanpur and the eastern Terai districts of Dhanusha, Siraha and Saptari in early 2008 and ended in June 2010.

The strategy

Policy, advocacy and capacity building were mutually reinforcing elements within the SECBL-II to bring about the final abolition of bonded labour, but especially to remove children from those situations. The project was designed to work simultaneously with children, families and communities, with appropriate direct action targeted to the beneficiaries (withdrawal from work and enrolment in education or vocational training and) and indirect action in the form of social mobilizing, capacity building of social-protection structures and advocacy for policy reform.

Various trainings, orientations, workshops and seminars were conducted through the SECBL-II project to build up the skills and other capacities of both the implementing partners, including government agencies, and the targeted beneficiaries. This included sharpening service providers’ skill in determining what services are needed and then how to appropriately respond.

The goal was to instil self-governing capabilities that would endure beyond the project and allow community groups, NGOs and government agencies to identify problems, find solutions and seek out whatever external resources would be needed to deliver those solutions. The withdrawal of children from bonded and other worst forms of labour and finding alternative solutions to prevent them and other vulnerable children from returning to those situations was the entry point and immediate focus; additionally, mothers or fathers who were freed from bonded labour were given the tools needed to develop productive employment and thus contribute to keeping their children in school or at least keep them from an unacceptable work situation. Ultimately, the aim was to develop and strengthen community-based responses towards protecting children from the worst forms of child labour and educating them as much as possible.

Local agencies, both government and non-government, would of course provide the training to prepare the beneficiaries to change their lives and to benefit from the change.

The capacity-building training programmes for organizations was designed to expand skills as well as encourage the development of clear a vision, mission, goals and purpose, including writing proposals. As well, the implementing agencies would be responsible for developing the capacity of the project’s targeted

beneficiaries on socio-economic and political empowerment as well as entrepreneurial business skills, including bookkeeping and accounting; the staff in these agencies also needed to hone their knowledge as well as training skills in these areas.

The process

The weaknesses and needs of the NGOs and other government line agencies, as well as employers' and workers' organizations, were identified in early 2008 during the appraisal process of the proposals submitted to the SECBL project staff; the appraisal process included a field assessment of each NGO, organization or government agency's capacity requirements. After an awareness orientation on child labour, bonded labour, gender discrimination and trafficking, including cause and effect analysis, the project staff then coached or organized skills trainings for the staff members of the various implementing partners on how to effectively carry out their responsibilities in relation to the project's goals regarding communities, children and bonded labour.

Implementing partners received training on account keeping, monitoring and reporting and social auditing and project cycle management. The different trainings enabled the implementing partners to better analyse various situations using social mapping, resource mapping and well-being ranking tools as well as writing concept notes and proposals. The coaching continued throughout the project cycle. The trainings involved three- to five-day workshops. The capacity-building training course was designed in consultation with a relevant expert; for example, a three-day training workshop in July 2010 focused on sustaining the project's initiatives to strengthen the implementing partners' capacity to continue the activities after the project ended.

After the initial orientation, the implementing partners turned to the community structures to prepare them for their various social responsibilities. A series of group discussions and several capacity-building activities on conducting a situation analysis, resource and social mapping and well-being ranking, social mapping were organized in each village, and also focusing on child labour, bonded labour, gender discrimination and trafficking, including cause and effect analysis. Participants were members of the Village and District Development Committees, District Education Offices, District Labour Offices, the municipal office employers' organizations, the youth groups, Forest Users Groups, etc. The point was to strengthen the different groups' ability to contribute from their perspective a role that would work to combat child bonded labour. Once the Child Labour Monitoring Committees and the Child Rights Protection Foundation were formed, the implementing partners repeated the same trainings with them.

Later in the project cycle, members of the Child Labour Monitoring Committee, the School Management Committees and PLA graduates participated in a two-day leadership training in which they learned how to manage a child labour monitoring system and how to withdraw bonded labourers and help them integrate into schooling or other options that will lead to safer conditions. This included exposure to Nepal's labour and child protection laws.

Some members of the local structures were trained as facilitators for overseeing the out-of-school programme or managing income-generating activities and the collectives or self-help groups.

Achievements

Around 200 staff members of the 13 implementing agencies received training on child bonded labour and on expanding their skills and other capacities; this entailed around 150 staff members from government agencies, 6 officers from an employers' organization (and its district chapters), 16 officers from two workers' organizations and NGO staff.

The withdrawal of 1,919 working children that involved several local networks is taken as evidence of the improved capacities. Similarly, school mainstreaming is considered an example of coordinated efforts, involving the Child Labour Monitoring Committee, the Parent-Teacher Associations, the School Management Committees and children's clubs; jointly, they run the school enrolment campaign now in April/May and organize activities for the World Day Against Child Labour, awareness-raising campaigns (rallies, radio programmes).

The Child Labour Monitoring Committees in Naubasta and Bankatuwa (Banke district) received financial support from their Village Development Committee's annual budget to carry out activities, particularly in education and monitoring after applying and negotiating for it. The Village Development Committee's, mainly in the female members, in turn appealed to their District Development Committee for the additional funding. Using the small amount allocated to it, the Child Labour Monitoring Committees now conduct school enrolment campaigns and monitors children's school attendance. Although the allocation was very small, an important channel was established.

The training with officials of the Village and District Development Committees sensitized them to the issues of child labour so much that they subsequently pushed to allocate a portion of their annual budget to address child labour issues. That budgeting has been used in prevention and withdrawal activities and for covering education costs.

The implementing agencies, mainly the NGOs, continued the efforts to sensitize people on the negative side of child and bonded labour; they also encouraged District Development Committees to commit resources to the issues.

Once the Child Labour Monitoring Committees and the Child Rights Protection Forums were set up and trained, their bargaining confidence took off, and they lobbied international and local NGOs for programming support.

The numbers of former adult bonded labourers in the School Management Committees, Parent-Teacher Associations and other groups doubled to around 250.

The training opportunities had triple the coverage of ordinary group members in SECBL-II than what was achieved in the first phase, reaching 3,000 people. Participants (beneficiaries, NGO staff, government trainers, etc) in a focus group discussion organized as part of the research for this report remarked that the capacity-building initiatives were well targeted and provided focused support. Further, the various trainings and assistance through the project raised the social standing and awareness as well as income level of the families previously struggling in extreme poverty and trapped in a bonded labour system. Anecdotal evidence indicates the income-generating scheme doubled household income, replacing the 300-700 rupees per month that children in those families earned (final data available).

Necessary conditions for success

- **Locally adapted, translated materials and training modules:** The ILO has a variety of training tools that have been successful around the world once they are adapted into a local context. In Nepal, materials were translated in three languages: Tharu, Maithili and Nepali.
- **Commitment of implementing partners:** Partners, whether government or non-government agencies, need to be open to improving their skills and capacities and be willing to invest the time required to train staff members. All partners commented in the evaluation on the too-heavy workload to implement the project but ultimately appreciated the many skills and competencies they acquired.

TRADE UNION VIGILANCE

Unionizing freed Kamaiyas, Haruwas and Charuwas and promoting minimum and equal wages

Background

Labourers in the informal sector, including agricultural workers, make up the majority of the workforce in the Terai region. They have long been subjected to various forms of exploitation by the landlords (including the handing over of their children as servants), local money lenders and government authorities. There was no tradition of self-organization or standing up to landlords, nor had there been any organized structure that spoke out on their behalf.

The extremely poor families of the Terai region fell into the trap of dependency on landlords largely because of their educational and financial illiteracy and their lack of skills for increasing their income. Most families in the region are involved in sharecropping, but they bear the cost of seed, fertilizers, planting, weeding, harvesting and threshing and then, in the end, carry the landlord's share to his home. To cover those expenses, they need help from the landlord, who then imposes the bonded labour system in exchange. The daily wage they get in the village is lower than the national minimum wage, and women are paid less than a male counterpart.

Additionally, most did not understand the perils of child labour. To protect their children, they needed to improve their income-earning capacity and have access to a channel that would help them achieve changes in their socio-economic situation. The SECBL project capitalized on the link between building up collective empowerment and individual empowerment.

Based on experiences in the first phase of the SECBL project, in which people who are extremely poor came to understand the disparity between the national and their local wage structures and the benefits that could be obtained if they joined with a trade union, including improving their wage level.

The strategy

Two national trade unions, the Nepal Trade Union Congress-Independent (NTUC-I) and the General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions (GEFONT) were brought into the project to sensitize the adult members of the Kamaiya, Haruwa and Charuwa households about their rights and entitlements according to the labour law as well as the collective bargaining process and what it would mean to be a union member. The NTUC-I was given responsibility of sensitizing households in the targeted five western Terai districts while the GEFONT concentrated on the three eastern districts.

By unionizing people from the former bonded labour households, it became possible to raise issues concerning them at the central policy and executive level, such as a minimum wage, limits on working hours and social protections for workers in agriculture as well as equal wages for men and women.

Union leaders also were engaged to confront landlords on the continuing illegal use of bonded labour and exploitive conditions in general through both seminars and face-to-face visits. Trade union members worked with the newly joined members from the targeted villages in exercising vigilance against the bonded labour system.

The strategy actually started during the SECBL-I (June 2003 to May 2005) with the unionizing of freed Kamaiyas. But the SECBL-II, which ran from January 2009 to July 2010, worked to strengthen the groups that had formed previously in addition to setting up new groups with freed Kamaiyas and family members of Haruwas and Charuwas in the three eastern Terai districts of Dhanusha, Siraha and Saptari.

The process

- To develop trainers who could skilfully conduct seminars with both landlords and villagers, the NTUC-I and the GEFONT trade unions developed lead trainers within their district offices, with the help of ILO Nepal staff. A few of them were also sent to the ILO's International Training Centre in Turin, Italy, for a course on promoting the fundamental principles and rights at work, with a particular focus on the ILO Declaration (1998) that covers all ILO Core Conventions.
- The trainers then worked with the implementing partners (NGOs) who organized meetings to sensitize and ultimately organize agricultural and other informal economy workers. The meetings took place within each targeted village and involved 20–25 people at a time; the discussions looked at national labour standards, Nepal's labour law and workers' rights (including the right to be paid a decent minimum wage equally) as contained within the constitution as well as their right to be paid a decent minimum wage equally. They also discussed children's rights (particularly to an education) and the negative effects of child labour.
- The trade union trainers then worked with the District and Village Development Committees in the project areas to set up a subcommittee for monitoring the payment of minimum wages as well as the incidence of bonded labour. The 38 subcommittee members then participated in a two-day training to learn about their roles and responsibilities for monitoring, including making monthly reports to the district trade union offices and to work with the local NGOs (the project's implementing partners) focused on bonded labour.
- The trade union trainers then formed a Vigilance Committee in each settlement (a cluster of more than 300 former bonded labourer households), consisting of agriculture workers, social activists (trade union members affiliated with agriculture-based NGOs), the Village Development Committee secretary and representatives from the women's and youth groups. The purpose was engage them as a kind of village watchdog for monitoring the level of wages paid and to mediate between employers and workers in dispute cases. The training was similar to what the monitoring subcommittee experienced. In a two-day session they learned about labour standards and tools for monitoring and reporting. The Vigilance Committee reports to the trade union and the district authority that is responsible for labour standards. Each Vigilance Committee now monitors or conducts awareness-raising campaigns on: i) children's rights protection and guarding against child labour (children younger than 16 are not to be employed), ii) equal wages, iii) domestic violence and iv) the various child protection mechanisms now in place. (The Vigilance Committee differs from that Child Labour Monitoring Committee in that the latter consists of parents, local leaders, school teachers and other social group members while the former is made up of only trade union members and is largely focused on labour rights.)
- The trade union trainers then organized meetings in the districts, villages and settlements once a month to discuss the wage and child labour situations. The district meetings include government authorities and NGO staff; the village meetings involve the Village Development Committee and the Vigilance Committee; and in the settlements, the trade union trainer meets with general community members (mothers and landlords specifically) as well as NGO staff. A special meeting is organized if there is a particular problem. The purpose is to promote regular dialogue on the labour situation to both address issues but to impress on villagers and officials that these issues retain an ongoing relevance; they include the community to sustain the community-based protection "systems".
- During the project period, the trade union trainers also organized coordination meetings with implementing partners and other relevant organization staff to keep them up to date on the wage payments and village situations in order for them to respond to problems promptly, which served to reassure the communities of the project's commitment to improving the local conditions.

Achievements

- At the close of the project, a little more than 4,000 people living in the targeted areas had joined one of the two unions connected with the project; the unionizing process remains ongoing.
- A total of 43 Vigilance Committees were established, with about 300 members total.

Due to the trainings and awareness raising on minimum wages, workers' rights and Nepal's labour law, the minimum wage for many agriculture and other informal economy workers increased. For example, the Dang District Development Committee increased the daily wage rate to 200 rupees from 90 rupees in 2010 due to strong pressure from the trade unions in the district. The Siraha District Development Committee also increased the minimum daily wage rate within its jurisdiction to 150 rupees; however, landlords at first refused to abide. In response, the trade unions organized a two-day meeting between landlords and tenants to negotiate, with 21 participants. They talked about labour standards, the commodity price index and local living standard to address the need for changing the minimum wage and thus landlord's mindsets against it. To increase the minimum wage ultimately required that a majority of landlords. By the end of the workshop, the landlords had agreed to pay the 150 rupees per day minimum wage to all workers, an increase from the previous 70 rupees for female workers and 100 rupees to male workers. The Siraha Community Development Committee and the GEFONT Siraha Trade Union Confederation monitors the commitment of the landlords to respect their agreement. If there is a violation, workers stop working and the organizations submit a protest letter to a government authority for initiating action against the landlord. Workers can assemble, voice their demands, padlock the District Administrative Office, organize rallies or similar activities that call for redress of an issue and compel authorities to take action (issue circular or negotiate with a landlord and workers).

The district units of the NTUC-I and the GEFONT trade unions are preparing a statistical profile of the labourers in all eight districts. The GEFONT set up 11 vigilance committees in its three targeted eastern districts while the NTUC-I established 27 committees in its five districts, which includes clusters of freed Kamaiya settlements. The GEFONT also set up 11 ward committees that cover a cluster of villages particularly in the Haruwa and Charuwa districts (a ward is a small catchment area within a village).

From working collaboratively during the project with the implementing partners, the two trade unions developed a strong relationship that remains focused on protecting the rights of agriculture workers, especially those who are extremely poor and those who previously experienced exploitive discrimination.

Necessary conditions for success

- **A well organized and respected trade union or some similar labour rights champion.** GEFONT and NTUC-I are regarded as champions of labour rights in Nepal.
- **Political support from the local administration to back up workers' right to the minimum wage and thus the political will to counter exploitive landlords.**

EARNING ALTERNATIVES

Income-generating alternatives and vocational skills training

Background

The families that have succumbed to the bonded labour systems have had very limited income-earning options and thus little choice but to rely on the exploitive resources available to them through the landlords. Although there was a clamouring of political parties to be the first to free minority groups from the system of bonded labour once political pluralism was restored in 1990, nothing was put in place to assist them socio-economically after they were freed (first by national decree in 2000 and then by law in 2001). The thousands of former bonded labourers suddenly had food and shelter issues because they were “forced” to leave the exploitive landlord’s employ.

And so the practice of bonded labour continued as many freed workers returned, willing to take exploitive “security” over no security. Remaining particularly at risk were children in families struggling to make a bearable living. When emergencies arose (through illness or natural calamity) or they encountered other setbacks, they had little recourse but to turn to the landlords for loans that typically required they send their children as servants in exchange. The SECBL project set out to not only rescue children from these situations but to prevent siblings and other children from entering into the exploitation. This required helping their parents increase their income and thus break the cycle of subsistence, deprivation and survival of the extremely poor families in the Terai region.

Through its District Land Reform Offices (DLRO), the Ministry of Land Reform and Management (MOLRM) first offered opportunity for alternative income-earning activity for workers who left the Kamaiya bonded labour system in 1995 when the Government provided assistance to help bonded labour households repay their debts (but without abolishing the system) in the western Terai region. ILO-IPEC added its support to the income-earning activity during the first phase of the SECBL project (December 2001–August 2005) and then during the second phase (early 2008 to June 2010) in all targeted eight districts.

The strategy

Because the first phase of the SECBL project only targeted the five districts in the western Terai region, only Kamaiya families were covered by income-generating activities. The second phase expanded to the eastern region and thus to families involved in the Haruwa and Charuwa bonded labour systems. Included in the holistic package to help withdraw children and integrate them back into their communities (either in school or through decent work opportunities) was emphasis on providing skills training to parents and new livelihood options they could pursue as well as other individuals who were also freed.

What was needed was not simply skills training but a more complex “tutoring” that would build the confidence of people accustomed to centuries of exploitive subjugation. Whereas the government’s programme engaged only men, the SECBL project appealed largely to women to join; it also included social issues and coping strategies within its trainings.

The SECBL project introduced the participatory learning and action (PLA) course that included basic education and basic financial literacy. The graduates from these courses were then offered assistance through various skills training to pursue a microenterprise either collectively or individually. The approach included a mechanism for microfinance. Additionally, one family member per former child bonded labour household or family with children vulnerable to being sent to work, were offered opportunity to start an income-generating activity that would serve as alternative income to what a child would earn.

The process

- An assessment of the potential farm and off-farm activities and products was made by Kamasu and The Friends of Dhanusha (TFD) NGOs (implementing partners), in collaboration with the district government authorities (the Terai is an area of plains that predominantly produces rice and wheat). Based on the assessment, trainers for the particular skills decided upon were brought into the project. Training options covered around 48 skills, such as vehicle driving, plumbing, carpentry, masonry, hosiery, brick making, rickshaw/bicycle repair, beautician, computer maintenance, electricity wiring, steel welding, sewing/tailoring, radio/ TV repair and barbering in the western districts and laha bangle making (bracelets worn by South Asian women), tapari making (disposable eating plate made of tree leaves), sewing and carpentry in the eastern districts.
- As previously noted, the NGO partners adapted the ILO's highly successful entrepreneurial training package Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) to the Nepal context at this point, with translation into Nepali and examples that relate to the Terai region. Trainers from the United Nations Development Programme's Micro Enterprises Development Programme coached trainers from the NGO partners on using the SIYB.
- Meanwhile, one member from each targeted household, mostly mothers, was offered enrolment in the PLA non-formal education programme, which also included training on entrepreneurial income-earning activities. The trainings were conducted in the three local languages (Maithili, Tharu and Nepali). Although many of the training sessions took place in villages, skills that required the use of equipment meant that trainees had to attend a training course in a government centre in the district headquarters, thus requiring travel and accommodation expenses; participants were given 100 rupees daily subsistence allowance.
- Towards the end of the nine-month PLA course, DLRO trainers worked with the Kamasu (in the western districts) and TFD (in the eastern districts) to assess each PLA participant to find an income-generating activity most suited to them. Most of the participants ended up collaborating and creating a collective group to run a business (also referred to as self-help groups). Each group received a grant of 4,500 rupees from the project to initiate their venture, which they could use at their discretion; some used it to buy goats. One group used the funds to replace the roof of their community house, while another group bought cooking appliances for their community parties and ritual activities and another group purchased a water pump to aid their vegetable farming.
- Among the group activities, the project promoted cash crop growing, such as vegetables and watermelon, on leased land. The implementing partners in collaboration with the DLRO found the land for them, although it belonged to private individuals. The DLRO convinced the landowners that the group members would not be able to establish tenant rights eventually, that the land would remain belonging to the land owners, which was necessary for them to agree. The law in Nepal allows anyone growing crops on land they do not own for two consecutive years can be established as a tenant and thus is entitled to have half ownership of the land, and thus this was a concern to landowners.
- The implementing partners also provided whatever technical support for growing crops might be needed: production techniques, irrigation support and marketing arrangements. For irrigation, they provided the labour to install the peddle irrigation system that the project supplied; the two NGOs coordinated with vendors in the local markets to sell the products that the collective groups produced, but did so with a group member involved as a kind of on-the-job training in marketing.
- The two NGOs then organized training sessions for the various skills; session length varied, depending upon the skills required, from 7 to 40 days. The aim was to prepare the PLA graduates for pursuing small- or medium-scale enterprises. Because there had been a large degree of unemployed cases after the completion of training in the project's first phase, the methodology was revised in the second phase, moving away from a classroom approach to an apprenticeship or on-the-job training.

The training was made suitable to the time available for the participants and breaks down into the following stages: i) training of potential entrepreneurs (three days), ii) sensitize trainees and motivate them on what is involved in running a business (two days), iii) training of entrepreneurship (five days) to help trainees select a suitable enterprise; iv) training of emerging entrepreneurs (five days) to help improve an existing venture; v) training of “growing entrepreneurs” (five days), which covered management and marketing skills (after three months). Each training stage was followed by a week off in order to give the trainees time to absorb what they had learned. Coaching remained available throughout the project period.

- Around 230 participants in the alternative income-earning scheme were hired by local employers, such as entrepreneurs of carpentry, auto or TV repair workshops. These were employers who had been counselled by the trade union trainers to agree to pay a minimum wage and pay men and women equally. The two trade unions involved in the project conducted campaigns to promote minimum wages and to establish the practice of paying wages equally between men and women for similar work.
- The District Land Reform Office hired the best performers in the first training as trainers.
- In some districts, targeted individuals who received vocational skills training and were involved in wage or self-employment were given opportunity to upgrade their skills after a year so that they could pursue more specialized jobs. For example, masons or bicycle repairers could move on to fixing marble or plaster, and bicycle repairers could be upgraded to motorcycle repair.
- People opting to start their own venture received a grant of 12,000 rupees to start their business. The grant was conditional in that families had to pledge to keep their children in school.
- For every child removed from a bonded labour situation, the family received a grant of 2,400 rupees to pursue a livelihood venture (or sustain the family until such a venture started up), such as goat or pig raising, small grocery shop and bicycle repairing.

Microfinance access

- To embark on a micro enterprise, the targeted families needed access to capital for raw materials or technical services. Because of their training in business skills and financial literacy, including enhanced capacity to tackle the business, the targeted families suddenly became more reliable borrowers of formal credit through established microfinance sources. In some areas, the implementing partner operated microfinance services, which the targeted families could access either individually or through their collective group. The linkages with existing micro-finance services were made to the graduate trainee to receive loan to start as well as to expand their business. For example, in Siraha district, the implementing partner operated the Srijana Micro-Finance Cooperative, which acquired wholesale loans from the Rural Micro-Finance Development Company, which were then made available to targeted families. Both Kamasu and TFD provided technical backstopping in appraising loan applications to start micro enterprises and helping individuals negotiate with a micro finance facility on the terms and conditions of a loan.
- The project also encouraged training participants to organize savings groups that would be funded with their pooled savings. Although the project provided an initial grant to start the revolving credit scheme, members also pooled their savings. Each group set and agreed on the interest rate to charge: for the revolving fund credit for an income-generating activity, they charged 2–5 per cent; however, a loan request for a social cause was charged 18–36 per cent to discourage investment in unproductive activities. The overhead costs are virtually nothing because the members voluntarily manage the revolving scheme as part of their shared responsibility.
- The implementing partners worked to establish a strong relationship with the district government agencies providing services to the targeted communities so that activities established through the project could sustain after it closed.

Achievements

Vocational skills training

- A total of 4,000 adults received vocational and technical training; a total of 300 young people aged 14–17 years who opted against schooling also received training.
- A total of 1,702 people set up their business, 2,394 people joined a collective group and around 230 people were hired by a private employer. According to an informal assessment made by the Ministry of Land Reform and Management, more than 50 per cent of the 320 vocational and skill development graduates were engaged in wage employment. Some of them were working only part time. About 200 people went to India or the Middle East for a job in carpentry, machinery or agriculture farming.
- Anecdotal evidence through a few case studies indicate that some incomes have doubled, from 5,000 rupees a month to 10,000 rupees.
- Vehicle driving training was a popular skill among young men and women (older than 18) considered vulnerable to a bonded labour situation and those withdrawn from bonded labour in the western districts; the training included the provision of a cost-free license upon completion of the course. Some 60 young men completed the training and were hired by different transportation companies within a month.
- The District Land Reform chief in Kailali set up an Employment Contact Centre within his office. It is managed by a freed bonded labourer and operates to match the demand and supply of skilled workers who participated in the project's activities. This includes looking for foreign employment options. However, there is difficulty in running the centre with only a budget of 116,000 rupees and only the junior clerk.
- The PLA course proved to be effective in helping to change the attitudes of parents or guardians. After completion of the course, the participants were found to be more concerned about the future of their children and much more conscientious of good health precautions, including the sanitation conditions in and around their households. In the targeted villages, the participants also were motivated to get involved in their communities, for example, by joining the Forest Users' Groups that manage the community resources or their School Management Committee. They found new ways of resolving common problems through collective action, for example, when there was need for a new toilet in the school in one area, the PLA group, in collaboration with the Forest Users' Group, built the facility.
- The very high recovery rate in the revolving credit scheme made the women's self-help groups financially viable. Had the scheme been run by an external agency that subsidized both the interest and administrative costs and determined the systems and procedures, it might not have been as successful. The initial funds, which ranged from 5,000 to 10,000 rupees depending upon the group size, grew to 30,000 to 50,000 rupees.

Income-generating alternatives

- Families engaging in an income-generating activity established through the project are now earning 1,000–3,000 rupees per month, which replaces the on average 500 rupees income (or in-kind remuneration) that children previously earned.
- The households with a family member who joined a collective group are now earning on average 100 rupees a day. Those who belong to a group that is growing a cash crop on leased land have earned 10,000–25,000 rupees per season (around a three-month period) per person, which adequately supplements other household income.

Creation of small and micro enterprises

- The majority of the collective groups initiated on-farm based micro enterprises. There were fewer micro enterprises initiated than the project envisioned mainly because it requires more competencies in production and there are greater market challenges. The 55 businesses set up include a furniture shop and bicycle-repairing ventures, earning around 5,000 rupees (US\$70 per month), which is considered an adequate income.

Necessary conditions for success

- **Comprehensive strategies for working with targeted beneficiaries.** Implementing partners **must be prepared to provide a package of support:** livelihood, entrepreneurial and business management training, microfinance facilities and technical backstopping of production techniques, irrigation support and marketing arrangements.
- **Local government support:** Because the targeted families are primarily landless and extremely poor, finding suitable land to lease for off-season vegetable production can be beyond their reach initially. Local government can help by guaranteeing landowners who make land available will not lose control of their ownership despite what the law may guarantee.
- **Careful and continuous market analysis:** Continuous monitoring of the market is necessary for off-farm oriented livelihood ventures because of the competition of similar products from across the border. This livelihood alternative can be high risk for small entrepreneurs with a limited capital base, and thus the selection of enterprise has to be done cautiously.

OUT OF WORK AND INTO SCHOOL

Mobilizing support structures to help return children to school

Background

As previously noted, outlawing the bonded labour systems was not enough to eliminate the practice due largely to its entrenchment in the society and because many families had no other options. To successfully remove children from the exploitive work situations or to prevent them from entering required assisting parents to become more self-sufficient with productive livelihood alternatives and access to decent credit terms as well as educating their children so that they could break the cycle of illiteracy and dependency on exploiters.

The practice was initiated in the five western Terai districts of Dang, Banke, Bardiya, Kailali and Kanchanpur and three districts of Dhanusha, Siraha and Saptari of the eastern Terai region under the second phase of the Sustainable Elimination of Child Bonded Labour (SECBL-II) project from early 2008 to June 2010.

The strategy

Due to the years of dependency, many parents needed help with making major household changes; the project based its strategy on the notion that it indeed takes a village to raise a child and involved various support structures in helping remove children from exploitive work situations and reinforcing the need to keep them in school.

A combination of intensive motivation with parents and the community and limited financial support to cover the cost of a school uniform, bag and stationery resulted in high enrolment of removed or vulnerable children in the local primary school.

The process

- The baseline study provided the disaggregated profile of all children in the targeted areas and their household situation. The results pinpointed which children were in a bonded situation and which were vulnerable. It also help to clarify which children could enrol directly (those aged 6–9) into a school and which needed what type of preparation course, either the out-of-school programme or a bridge course. The out-of-school programme was nine months of six days a week schooling that took place in the community centre near the targeted families. The curriculum is a government-approved NFE course for older children to catch up to the competency of their age level in a formal school. The bridge course is three months long, also six days week, in the same facility.
- While the baseline survey was being conducted, the project staff and implementing agencies successfully lobbied the District Education Offices (DEO) and the School Management Committees to void the school registration fee and examination fees for the targeted children.
- The Child Labour Monitoring Committees and the School Management Committees were mobilized, first through training to raise their concern on the perils of children working and then how they could contribute to helping the community and children by lobbying landlords to release the bonded servants. Then the Child Labour Monitoring Committees and School Management Committees members met with parents to convince them to enrol their children in school. The project provided a small cash transfer payment (550 rupees) for each child who enrolled that would cover basic school expenses (one uniform, a school bag and school stationery), which helped in winning over parents. There is concern, however, that when the financial support stops, there is likely to be a very high drop-out rate and fear that many of the children will go back to working in their previous exploitive situations.

- Children aged 10–16 were first enrolled into the nine-month Out-of-School programme and then into the four-month bridge course. At the end of each course, each child is assessed for readiness to join a government school classroom. The children assessed as ready were enrolled into a class appropriate to their capability and age. Those not yet ready were offered lower class enrolment or vocational training. This “rehabilitation” period also provides counselling services to help the participants make needed adjustments, although it is basically career and vocation counselling to build confidence and self-esteem of children in selling their skills in the job market. They also conducted a kind of mapping of the available jobs within a certain parameter.
- Each school received 225 rupees for each targeted child who enrolled. The subsidy was mostly used for hiring an additional teacher or upgrading infrastructure, such as classroom renovation and toilet construction through coordination with the Education for All programme.
- The implementing partners monitored the targeted children’s progress in school, using the database system that was set up from the baseline survey.
- The Parent-Teacher Associations were engaged to help in the monitoring of children’s attendance, to promote a child-friendly environment within the school and the equal inclusion of all people, regardless of minority group or sex.

Achievements

- The total number of children targeted for prevention activities was 6,505² of which 4,685 lived in the western Terai districts and 1,820 lived in the eastern districts. At the close of the project, 4,284 (91 per cent) in the western districts were living at home and continuing their education and 1,458 children (80 per cent) were safely at home in the eastern districts. Thus, a total of 5,742 (88 per cent) children were living at home – had been removed from a work situation or kept from entering one; 58 per cent of them girls.
- Of the total 5,742 children still at home, 4,934 of them (86 per cent) were enrolled in school (933 of them, or 16 per cent, in the eastern districts and 4,001, or 70 per cent, in the western districts). Of the total enrolled in the eastern districts (933), 49 per cent were girls; of the total enrolled in the western districts (4001), 49 per cent also were girls.
- Compared with the outcome data from the first phase, there was an increase in the number of children enrolled into school, from 80 per cent to 86 per cent. The remaining 14 per cent (818 children) who did not enrol into school in the project’s second phase likely participated in a non-formal education and vocational training programme. Of them, 9 per cent (535 children) lived in the eastern districts and 5 per cent (283 children) lived in the western districts.
- Only 2 per cent of the children who enrolled through the project dropped during the project period; the national average per year 14 per cent.
- The United Youth Community NGO (implementing partner in Bardia district) successfully linked scholarships provided by Room to Read, an international NGO that provides scholarship to underprivileged children, to freed Kamlaris in an effort to keep them from dropping out of school.

² The SECBL-II project document referred to a target of 6,600 children for protection from being sent into bonded labour; however, the targeted figure used by the project staff was 6,505.

Necessary conditions for success

Collaboration among the implementing, government and community partners: The District Education Office, the Child Labour Monitoring Committees, the School Management Committees and the self-help and other newly formed groups each fills a useful role in helping protect children from exploitive work situations. Engaging them in training on the dangers of child labour to both children and communities and creating an atmosphere in which it is clear that the economic and social growth of the community depends on their contribution helps create a sense of belonging in a collaborative partnership. Additional support is needed also to accommodate the sudden increase in students, in terms of recruiting teachers and expanding the school facilities. These groups also play an important role in conducting the Welcome to School campaign in April each year; through this campaign, each child who is out of school is traced and attempts are made to enrol her or him into a formal school.

Financial support as incentive: Cash transfers have proven to be cost-effective incentives in many programmes and projects, including the SECBL. Conditional cash transfer is a popular programme in many countries, particularly to the poorest of the poor families, that contributes toward eliminating child labour.

IMPLEMENTING EXPERIENCES

PHASING OUT THE SECBL-II WITH AN INTERNALIZING PROCESS

What worked

The success of SECBL- I would not have been possible without the comprehensive approach. Uprooting a centuries-old practice required all-out commitment from government and non-government partners. Ultimately, however, the partners worked together to make the project community based; community members and newly formed groups were brought in as partners and given the main responsibility for removing children from exploitive labour conditions and helping them to either find a decent income-earning alternative or achieve an education. Making the project as imbedded within community responsibility was the only way to sustain the beginnings of social change. Providing parents with practical skills and outlets for earning greater income was also crucial to protecting children from bonded labour situations.

If removing children from bonded labour situations and improving the enrolment of children were left to agencies not known in the community, the outcomes most likely would have been quite different. It was treated as a local problem and although the strategy was new to the area, the resolution was seen as essentially a locally managed one, involving all strata of the community and imbuing them with the role of “critical change agent”. It is a model than can and should be applied to any area or geographical region of the country for protecting children from harmful work conditions.

What was learned

However, this is not to say there are no limitations. Major social change is difficult to achieve in a project’s typically short time span. It takes years for agencies and communities to internalize new mind sets and new approaches. After six years of actual project activities (spread over a nine-year period, many of the good elements of the SECBL project are still somewhat weak. With a few exceptions, most of the implementing NGOs are not yet sure how their own achievements can be sustained beyond the project. The government agencies and local government bodies that were heavily involved have yet to cover vital elements of the project with their annual programme budgets. For example, it took about five years for the Rajhena Village Development Committee in Banke district to allocate operating funds from its annual budget to support the local Child Labour Monitoring Committee in tracking and assisting children found in unhealthy work situations. Not all the project’s NGO partners have adopted the good practices that they helped manage.

The United Youth Community in Bardia district successfully linked scholarships provided by the Room to Read (international NGO) to freed Kamlaris in an effort to keep them from dropping out of school. The Aasaman Nepal, a children’s rights NGO based in the Terai and an implementing partner in Dhanusha district directed some of the funding support it receives from Save the Children to supplement some of the SECBL components, such as organizing the Welcome to School campaign and supporting children enrolled under the project. The SCDC in Siraha district is gradually extending the delivery of its microfinance services to cover more PLA enterprises.

These are the few examples of the “internalizing” of the project’s strong points that other non-government groups and government units need to adopt. A transition strategy for the project might have helped facilitate the internalizing process and provide a stronger sustaining foundation to continue the good practices.

DEVELOPING SOCIAL CAPITAL BY STRENGTHENING SUPPORT STRUCTURES

What worked

The central strategy of the SECBL-II project was the development of social support structures at the community level and principally the Child Labour Monitoring Committees but the CRPF also. The members consisted of local leaders and influential people, such as teachers, traditional chiefs, political activists, PLA graduates and representatives of local collective ventures. The first phase certainly offered more time (four years) to solidify the influence of the Child Labour Monitoring Committee, while the second phase enabled only two and half years. At the close of the second phase there was a clear difference in the experience and maturity of Child Labour Monitoring Committees developed in each phase. Some are much more proactive than others, for instance; some are very clear on their role and function while others seem to lack clarity. The link between the Child Labour Monitoring Committee with the Child Rights Protection Forum that was created in the first phase should help strengthen the work of the Child Labour Monitoring Committees.

The social capital of a structure such as the Child Labour Monitoring Committee is considered developed if: i) every member is clear on their duty, stand by decisions made and work hard to carry out their duties; ii) the group has established external relationships and mobilized resources to cover its activities; iii) the group can analyse socio-economic situations and debate the pros and cons before making decisions; and iv) decisions are made after proper discussion. Observations made during the study for this report suggest that the most of the Child Labour Monitoring Committees and CRPFs are not yet able to take responsibility for their own development; in short, their social capital has not yet been fully developed.

The targeted beneficiaries have grown accustomed to receiving support; the dependency on an exploitive landlord appears to have been transferred to supportive organizations, particularly in reference to educating their children. It may be partially related to their economic condition, but clearly there is an expectation that continuing education will be supported by some outside source. This has been reduced among Kamaiya families due to project interventions on awareness raising, training, education and income generation. Now parents are inclined to accept that they may end up having only one meal a day but they will not send their children to work in order to eat more. This attitude change was brought about through the social support strategies.

In interviews for this report, Child Labour Monitoring Committee and women's group members suggested that the social structures still need mentoring. They are just beginning to assert themselves; the initial successes have instilled a sense of confidence among them. However, such positive indications and the initial cohesiveness in these structures are likely to wane after the end of the project. Implementing partners and NGOs could take on more of an overseer's role to help improve the management capability of such groups and to provide training, technical and financial support to enable them to expand their outreach and improve the quality of services. Such training to the executives of the community support structures would be crucial. Once the groups are strengthened, they could be linked with formal institutions that could be government line agencies or formal financial institutions so that they have access to additional resources. Various functional groups can be encouraged to establish horizontal links in order to build a support system and synergy between programme activities so that a greater degree of impact can be achieved. For example, forest users groups could provide funds collected from their users' fees on an interest-charged basis to the women's group to increase their lending capacity.

And yet, there are many internal problems because of disparities in income level and capacities resulting in an unwillingness among some members to accept collective liabilities; in some groups, stronger members are usurping the managing structure. The group meetings have become irregular and the participation of the members is decreasing. There is a need for continued mentoring; unless the institutional capability of such social structures is enhanced, the groups may not be sustainable in the long run.

There is a gap between the institutional development based upon local initiative and their capability to deliver services on a sustainable basis. One important insight from the visits to all eight districts is the lack of a single converging platform for the executives of the support structures of Child Labour Monitoring Committees, CRPFs and women's groups. Such a forum would serve to link the different groups with external agencies and thus better mobilize resources, but requires some technical and financial support.

What was learned

The Child Labour Monitoring Committees, the Child Rights Protection Forums and even women's group members need more sensitizing training on group dynamics. Unless the members are sensitized, mobilized and organized through a catalytic process, they will not be empowered.

Once empowered and trained, members are better able and confident to argue for the allocation of resources for their activities from government line agencies, such as the Village Development Committees and the District Development Committees, which then avoids dependency on external support in the long run.

DEVELOPING AN INFORMATION BASE FOR SHARING AND FOR DESIGNING FUTURE INTERVENTIONS

What worked

Drawing on the results of the baseline survey, called the Initial Child Beneficiary Profile (ICBF), a tracking sheet for each child bonded labourer or children vulnerable to being trapped into the system was developed. The sheet was and remains crucial to monitoring the status of children removed from the exploitive situations. The survey also generated the information that the ensuring project-related policy, interventions, monitoring and evaluations were made. It was crucial for the success of the project and for helping best protect children.

What was learned

The knowledge base created by the ICBF baseline survey can help individuals and other implementing groups to share valuable organizational insights, reduce redundant work, reduce training time for new employees, retain intellectual capital as employees turnover in an organization and adapt to changing environments and markets.

Sufficient training time (about three weeks) needs to be provided for collectors and collators of any survey information. Provisions for translations of all tools should be ensured. Staff within implementing partner organizations who found the survey format user friendly could be used in other coverage areas or to help bring them up to speed on using it.

Cognitive, social and organizational learning processes are essential to the success of a knowledge management strategy. Measurement, benchmarking and incentives are essential to accelerate the learning process and to drive socio-economic and cultural changes. In short, knowledge management programmes can yield impressive benefits to individuals and organizations if they are purposeful, concrete and action oriented.

The survey format was in English, which was not always understood in the field. It was regarded as not user friendly by some organizations, partly because it was not translated into a Nepali language but also because of inadequate training/orientation on using it. This then resulted in the incorrect input of information and thus implementing partners' staff were able to produce correct analyses. As well, it meant that the people using the information to monitor the status of children had wrong information at times to work with.

VOCATIONAL SKILLS FOR INCOME GENERATION AND SOCIAL SECURITY

What worked

Families vulnerable to the bonded labour systems typically experience shortages in their basic needs. This is what landlords exploit. Unexpected expenses are almost always disastrous. Families that don't fall prey to the bonded labour system may still send their children to work to offset their income needs. Through the project, the DLRO (in the western districts) and the TFD (in the eastern districts) provided vocational training to adults in the targeted households to help them seek out alternative and higher-earning employment opportunities or as a supplement to their current livelihood, which would then support the schooling expenses of their children and prevent them from sending their children out to work.

What was learned

However, several weaknesses in the skills training were cited during field interviews and focus group discussions:

- There was widespread complaint that the norms adopted for the costing of different vocational trainings was different between the DLRO and the project; the ILO's norms were considered more rigid than that of the DLRO, regarding, for example, curriculum (theoretical versus practical), duration, learning exercises, skills testing, etc. The SECBL-II project rigidly stuck with all norms to improve the quality whereas the DLRO was reluctant to follow the norms.
- Many training providers think the vocational training became allowance oriented. During the training period, the participants received 100 rupees per day; some people seemed more interested in this payment rather than improving or learning new skills. Allowing only one family member to study one vocational skill left out many other family members who could have benefitted, which in turn would have benefitted the family.
- Banks were reluctant to recognize the vocations as income-generating alternative and provide credit for setting up enterprises.
- The off-farm vocational training could not be carried out in all five western Terai districts due to limited time of less than a year, which was not sufficient to cover a full cycle of enterprise development.
- Some of the project's policies for generating employment through collective ventures had rigid limits for expenditure. Leasing of land for collective cultivation or the interest in top-breed goats or pigs for fast income generation has been hindered due to the limit set for expenses.
- Although the PLA graduate women formed groups and built alliances, the process of socio-economic betterment was slow; there was hardly much programme focus in terms of pursuing sustainable livelihoods. While the project emphasized the transfer of technology at the grassroots level, there has been very limited evidence of market links to expand the production as per the demands of the market. One exception was the linking of PLA groups with microfinance institutions to initiate micro businesses by the SCDC in Siraha district and the UNYC in Bardia district.
- In one area, however, there were comments of insufficient funding for the livelihood scheme. Saligram Dhakal, District Land Reform Officer in Bardia district noted that the costs allocated for buying raw materials needed during the training came up short, with 110,000 rupees earmarked for 20 trainees. Buying timber alone for the training of carpentry required 1,700 rupees per cu ft; 50,000 rupees was allocated to disperse as grants to 20 trainees to buy tools after completing the training but that meant less than 1,700 rupees each, which is not enough to for a tool kit; trainers were only allotted 6,000 rupees a month salary, which is considered extremely low. A chief trainer for the DLRO also in Bardia district said he was paid half of what a trainer should be paid, receiving 230 rupees per day rather than 400–500 rupees.

- There were also comments that the budget for leasing land was inadequate. Each self-help group was limited to 10,000–12,000 rupees. But for a group of 13 or 14 persons, at least 10 katthas of land was needed; in some areas such as Dang district, no land was available and in Bardiya it was more expensive than the allotted budget. A good-quality breed of goat and pig was beyond the budget limit of 2,000 rupees, even though an ordinary baby goat or pig cost 2,500–3,000 rupees. But even buying ordinary animals meant that a group could purchase only four or five, which would not provide sufficient income for all 13 or 14 members. Groups were asking for a minimum of 20 goats.
- Sufficient time should be given for completing technical training, specifically the entire production cycle. Where the training period was ample, tangible changes in production technology was evident.
- Both the TFD and Kamasu should assist in the forming of entrepreneur associations at the village level so that they can provide “tutoring” on marketing and the use of new technology.
- Vocational skills provided by different implementing partners should be standardized so that the training certificates make the participants eligible for other jobs. The Center for Technical and Vocational Training, a government authority, could assist in recognizing such training and provide certification of trained participants.

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