



Evaluation Summaries

Panama country programme to fight the worst forms of child labour (Phase I)

Quick Facts

Countries: *Panama*

Final: *February 2006*

Mode of Evaluation: *independent*

Technical Area: *ex.: Child Labour*

Evaluation Management: *IPEC*

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Project Code: *PAN/02/50/USA*

Donor: *United States*

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Background & Context

The present document is the result of the evaluation of the program to eradicate the worst forms of child labour in Panama, which took place between January and February of 2006. The first part of the evaluation mission was dedicated to the systematic review of documents produced by the program, documents of program execution, and documents of the design of the program. The second part was oriented to the collection of first source information in Panama through personal interviews and focus groups with different people connected to the program throughout its execution, as well as visits to the execution areas. The evaluation mission finished with a workshop for the interested parts in which the first results of the evaluation were presented, the reached objectives were discussed and the contributions of the attending people were collected in synthesis.

Among the main conclusions of this report we would like to point out, first, that the main advances of the Project are the information publishing and diffusion work within the Panamanian society, which is sensitized with child labour and includes sectors that have taken a stand and have generated a consensus on the necessity of the EPFTI. An important commitment on the subject has been achieved among the mass media, and the society is being informed regularly on both the situation of child labour and the advances of the country program.

Second, the advances are related to the inter-institutional coordination, field in which there have been quick advances due to the success of the diffusion campaign. The official restructuring of the CETIPPAT, its high level launching and its organic life, constitute the most important achievements, even if the current commitment level of the different public organisms is heterogeneous and there is a lot to be done for the public institutions committed to the solution of PFTI to develop concrete actions that will reveal their institutional commitment with this issue.

A very important third level of advance in the country program came with the enlargement of the legal framework with the proposal of the law for the protection of childhood and adolescence, today waiting to be approved. The entire previous process of discussion among several institutions of COLPINA contributes to the legitimacy of this norm and probably will subscribe to its observance. At the same time, the country's effort to define the worst forms of child labour in a consensus way is another very

important element to sustain the laws. There has been no advance in the training of justice attorneys, as it only started at the end of the program.

As far as the training and skill generation to face the EPFTI, the country program shows, as far as we are concerned, smaller achievements. The training actions were not focused on specific people, but were given to several participants in a heterogeneous manner and not in a systematic one. The evaluation considers that there was an advance in the development of capacities and skills specifically among the staff of professionals and technicians who has worked very closely with the country program or has received technical assistance directly from it. This situation would change with the implementation of the UDELAS training program, although the necessary measures should be taken to obtain the active and beneficial institutional participation in the program.

As far as the topic of the initiatives from different social actors, the country program has received two important initiatives, with the public commitments signed by the organized workers and with the journalists, but there is no public commitment from the employers. The public institutions have shown important initiatives in the field of the EPFTI, such as the INFARHU scholarship program, but today others seem more formal than real.

Without a doubt, one of the achievements of the country program is the restructuring and launching of the CETIPPAT, which is recognized among the institutions involved in child labour, and it is considered a success by the same participants. However, there are limitations for the fulfilment of the acquired commitments by the participants, and there is an unbalanced level of commitment with the issue, even if the participation is assured by the presence of the first lady.

One of the most important objectives of the country program was not achieved: the creation of National Plan of the EPFTI, due to the same difficulties with disallowed the launching of the CETIPPAT. Both incidents point to the necessity

to consider, when a program is designed, the level of the country's context for the definition of results and the datelines assigned to obtain them.

The execution of the direct action programs suffered an excessive delay due to a long process of program proposal approval, the high formal demands of the country program to approve them, the lack of training in the filling of report formats for the financial agencies, the changes in them, the prerequisites of the financial organizations which were different from the local ones, the delay on the initial payment (in the rural area), the presentation of a monitoring data base unknown to the implementing agency and not oriented to the population, and difficulties in the collection of base lines. We conclude that it was due to the lack of a previous appropriate evaluation of the characteristics of the local institutional profile, the political context, and the level of cognitive and institutional resources of the communities.

The direct intervention on the population still shows weaknesses in the achievement of its most important results: the separation of NNAT from forms of dangerous child labour and the creation of income opportunities for parents. The population helped include an important percentage of children that are not part of the profile of the NNAT in the PFTI, but it was a population with a big educational shortage. On the other hand, the worst aspect for the PADs was the creation of alternative means of income for the parents of the NNAT, which shows that the initial design planned excessive goals due to an inappropriate evaluation of the real resources and to the complexity of the employment problem. Only 11 self-management projects were created for 11 parents in the urban areas and 12 projects for 128 parents in the rural areas. The task was especially difficult for the urban area due to its high dependency on the institutional support of public institutions committed to it. Both in the urban area and the rural area this absence generated an informal strategy to resort to personal contacts. In this line of action there was a big evidence of the fragility of the institutional commitment of some of the members of the CETIPPAT. In spite of this, there are very good perspectives in the rural

areas to advance in the self-management projects.

The sensitization of the participants in the local level is a relative achievement because there was no specific work done with the participants to whom the workshops were designed for. Even though there was a population objective in the design of these workshops there was a heterogeneous assistance, with the parents of the NNAT one of the most numerous. There is much work to be done with the assistance of key authorities and with the specific focus on each kind of participant. Despite everything an important number of workshops were organized (20 in urban areas and 20 in rural areas).

From the collected information and what it was observed in the field, the evaluation makes several recommendations for the program, based on the Immediate Objective 1 and the Immediate Objective 2. First, the extension of the country program is recommended for at least two years to obtain continuity and sustainability on the achievements reached to this point, and not to abandon the population who has been benefited and who has expressed a wish to continue with the program. At the same time, it is recommended to enlarge the country program work team maintaining a national coordination but assigning responsible technicians for the two immediate objectives.

There is a special recommendation to include a person in charge of the supervision, monitoring and technical assistance for the direct action programs. It is also recommended to apply a process monitoring on the direct action plans, in order to provide periodical information to help making decisions and correcting problems at the time they occur. There should be an exchange of experiences between the rural and urban action programs, and between them and the Panama team, since the later one should be highly linked to the execution of the direct action programs, both for monitoring purposes and to strengthen its own inter-institutional coordination work with field information. Regarding the immediate objective 1, it is recommended to work on the internal strengthening of the CETIPPAT, developing an operative plan that will show clearly the institutions and their responsibilities,

and assuring that the institutions included in the committee will develop the necessary mechanisms to fulfil the acquired commitment to fight against the PFTI. It is specially recommended to integrate the population organizations (urban Neighbourhood councils and rural defence committees) as very important subjects inside the CETYPPAT, and to develop with them an institutional strengthening work for the autonomous defence of their communities and methodological training to face child labour. At the same time, it is recommended to work on the strengthening of the commitment on the EPFT from social organizations, because they can be a guarantee for the issue to stand beyond political changes in the country.

On the operative level, it is recommended to prioritize on the elaboration of a national plan for the EPFTI. Equally important, to continue and extend its second phase, the training of specialized participants, such as judges, prosecutors, magistrates, legislators, and civil servants involved in the direct attention of child labour. Finally, it is recommended to insist on working with employers, which was originally planned but it is a field which has no professional commitment yet.

Regarding the immediate objective 2, it is recommended to consider a revision of the prerequisites to fill information on the advance reports (ITA), to make them fit for the characteristics of the population, and an appropriate training in the correct filling of the forms to avoid delays from the country team. Also, it is recommended to create guides to design PAD which will be useful for IPEC, for the implementation agency and for the users, just like the EMT announced.

There is a series of recommendations related to the generation of information for the programs, such as taking part on the lifting of base lines; revision of the information collection files by the IPEC technical team to guarantee the appropriate process, and to avoid changing of the information registers in the middle of the program. At the same time, it is recommended the use of the SPSS package to make a monitoring data base due to its versatility when providing systematized information. It is also

recommended that the technical team of the IPEC should monitor closely all the population included in the attention service, so it can adjust to the population objective profile of the program.

On the other hand it is recommended to redefine the strategies for generating alternative means of income for the parents of the NNAT, especially in the urban area, insisting on the adaptation of the public institutions which provide educational or financial services to the needs of the population objective. Also, it is recommended to reinforce the connection with fathers and not only with mothers, especially in the urban area; this should be linked to the development of topics associated with gender and family so the families can process the changes introduced by the elimination of child labour. Finally, it is recommended to prioritize the participants on the sensitization and training work to be done on authorities and institutions on the local level, so these training activities are not dispersed on a heterogeneous public.

Among the learned lessons during the execution of the country program for the eradication of the worst forms of child labour, the need to consider in future programs a line of work oriented to achieve the necessary coordination to press for changes in the institutional level is pointed out. It is clear that the increase of the institutional capacity and the quality of the response before the EPFTI, depends not only on the publishing, training, coordination, planning and legal framework but also on the internal structure of the public organisms. It is also pointed out the need for a quick previous analysis of the starting point concerning the knowledge and familiarity that society has on child labour issues in order to establish a base for the rest of the work, since it has happened that the levels of coordination, planning and legal development which can be aspired to depend on the success of the previous diffusion work.

A fundamental learned lesson is the necessity to contact the public through its representative organizations, present the project and evaluate the possibility to include some of the community members. This strategy has given very good results when implementing the plans of direct

action, particularly in the indigenous area where the levels of organization are high.

At the same time, the experience has shown that the separation of children from the working world and their reintegration to the educational system not only depends on monitoring, diffusion and social mobilization but also on the level of consolidation of the institutional background on the communities. Finally, another important lesson has been the need to make a complete evaluation of the context and the political conditions at the beginning of the Project to avoid unnecessary delays.