



Evaluation Summaries

Assessing the situation of children in the production, sales and trafficking of drugs in Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand

Quick Facts

Countries: *Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand*

Final Evaluation: *December 2004*

Mode of Evaluation: *independent Technical Area: Child Labour*

Evaluation Management: *IPEC*

Project Code: *RAS/02/52/USA*

Donor: *United States*

Keywords: *Illicit activities, Crime, drugs, child labour*

Background & Context

ILO-IPEC started executing this project in Indonesia, Philippines, and Thailand in September 2002. The project aimed to develop and demonstrate an action-oriented research methodology that provides better understanding and information on the use of children in the production, sales, and distribution of illegal drugs. In the course of conducting the research, the project also aimed to reach children at risk as well as those involved in drugs through community organizing/mobilization, training, advocacy, counselling, referrals, and networking/linkages. At the end of the project, it also aimed to propose models of interventions for future replication or adaptation in other areas.

The purpose of this evaluation is to assess whether the objectives of the action research

were attained, particularly in increasing the knowledge base on children in drug trafficking and in identifying/documenting effective models of intervention. The evaluation aims to give recommendations and lessons learned for incorporation into future planning or modification of activities or strategies, for TBP countries in particular.

Main Findings & Conclusions

The evaluation found that project outputs were fairly successfully delivered, demonstrating that it is possible to work in this difficult sector. But the immediate objective – to enhance knowledge of key stakeholders including government – was only partially completed and may have been too ambitious for such a short project. Engagement with key stakeholders was in most cases limited at the provincial, national, and sub-regional levels, although community level participation was a strong feature of the outputs.

In sum, the evaluation finds sufficient evidence of progress, cost-effectiveness and relevance to justify continued engagement in this sector. Longer-term, more nationally owned approaches will be required, with more emphasis on engaging other bodies over time. IPEC alone will not solve the problems encountered in this field, but by working with domestic partners it can contribute to common efforts and improved policy.

Recommendations & Lessons Learned

Research findings are valuable, giving a picture of a highly complex problem. CDT as a sector is geographically dispersed, and child drug users can rarely be easily separated from drug traffickers. This, and the links between drug problems and a range of other issues, means that a holistic understanding is required in order to engage effectively.

Prevention work in this sector makes more sense than ‘withdrawal’ of children from WFCL for a host of reasons related largely to the difficulty of working in an illegal field. It is hard and often counterproductive to divide child traffickers from child users. In general, attempts to reach specific numbers of children were usefully balanced by partner organisations’ own wider mandates and interests; a focus on root causes as well as on prevention is recommended for future work.

The project has developed partnerships and documented lessons that can be built upon and added to in order to engage with policy. Research in itself is unlikely to have policy impact unless it is part of a broader process designed to engage others, especially at a higher level, and focuses on advocacy or change objectives. More broadly, the project showed some of the shortcomings of government policy and practice on drugs, which in all pilot countries prioritises tackling crime over solving social problems. In doing so can exacerbate problems faced by children.

Different intervention models that have been developed give ideas about how to engage. No one model emerges as preferable – it depends on the situation and available experience in any one location, and all models should be adapted to local circumstances if employed in future. School-based approaches offer valuable opportunities to go to scale, if accompanied by policy engagement, but may miss out those children who have already left the school system.

It is hard to engage appropriately on a national basis within a regional programme, and the project has done reasonably in this regard. It is recommended that future efforts take place on a national basis, and begin with a long, participatory design phase in order to build local ownership and define appropriate project management structures, plans and outputs.

Experience of working with intermediary organisations in delivering programmes is generally positive, and it is a strategy that can be employed more widely. But relations with key partners were affected by financial management and administrative constraints that IPEC could try to tackle in future work.