

Dominican Republic – Social dialogue: IPEC and workers cooperation in sustainable action against child labour

We are in Azua, Dominican Republic. Before the launch in 2002 of the national Time Bound Programme supported by the ILO's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), for four months of the year school attendance would drop by 50% as children went to work in the fields. Azua produces some two thirds of the country's tomatoes. With 75% of the population living in poverty, the province is a top priority for national social policy.

Script:

Dominican Republic, March 2009

ISSUES: child labour, social dialogue, workers' organisations, trade union focal points

Action by the public authorities and the social partners, including a commitment to fairer prices and to remove child labour from the supply chain, were anchored in an agreement between enterprises in the sector and the *campesinos* organisations.

To make sure that children are at school and not at work, in addition to public school provision, a network was established of after-school kids' clubs known as the *Salas de Tarea*.

More than 1400 children attend the Salas, which are managed under local community governance.

Dan Cuniah – Director, ILO's Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV)

Right from the inception of the ILO, trade unions have been at the forefront of the struggle against child labour. This is very explicit in the ILO mandate. Social dialogue and collective bargaining are the most effective means to achieve the elimination of child labour in a sustainable manner, because they ensure universal application of workers' rights and negotiated socio-economic policies that tackle the root causes of the problem.

Michele Jankanish – Director, ILO's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC)

We are constantly building our collaboration with the workers' and employers' bureaux of the ILO to make sure that we are reaching out to employers' organisations and trade unions and also receiving the priorities, the needs as identified by employers' organisations and trade unions from the field. So our collaborations are very valuable in the fight against child labour.

On the trade union side, we are very excited about a new partnership that is working between IPEC, ACTRAV and the Turin Centre along with national trade union centres in various countries around the world. A key aspect of this is training focal points to work in trade unions, to be well informed, to be trained, to be educated to become really motivated advocates for the elimination of child labour in their countries.

A key part of this strategy are workshops that we are organising: a very recent one was held in Central America, in the Dominican Republic for Central American and Caribbean trade unions. We have also done one in Turin Centre in Italy for countries in Africa and Asia and also for Latin American trade unionists in the state of Bahia in Brazil, so we are really building this network of trade union focal points. They are following up by developing their own national action plans that reflect the realities in their own countries, that reflect the priorities and needs of the trade unions there in the fight against child labour.

Dan Cunniyah – ACTRAV Director

This workshop in Santo Domingo is organised in the context of the cooperation that we have established between IPEC and ACTRAV and we are going to continue to train national trade union focal points on child labour in the other parts of the world..

Elimination of child labour is central to the Decent Work Agenda. IPEC's work, while concentrating on the Child Labour Conventions, builds on the mutual interdependence of fundamental principles and rights at work: the rights to organise and bargain collectively and the rights to work free from discrimination, forced labour and child labour.

Social dialogue lies at the heart of the struggle against child labour. It is founded on the representative mandate of governments, employers' and workers' organisations. At the national level, the social partners engage in tripartite social dialogue to establish and oversee effective public policies for the elimination of child labour. And at the enterprise and workplace level, the role of employers' and workers' organisations is indispensable. Strengthening their presence is a key tool to ensure that children are where they should be: in school!

Michele Jankanish – IPEC Director

It's really very important to show the work on the ground that trade unions and employers' organisations are doing.

As you will see, we've had the Spokesperson for the Workers' Group of the ILO Governing Body recently visiting some of our child labour projects on the ground, see what's happening in a country different from his own, but to also participate in the training for the trade unionists to be a very valuable resource person and to engage with trade unions from other parts of the world.

This is an extremely valuable exercise for IPEC and we feel for the trade unions as well.

Mr N.M. Adyanthaya, ILO Governing Body Workers' Group Spokesperson in the IPEC Steering Committee and Simon Steyne, Head of IPEC Operations, visited the Salas in Azua in March.

Mr N.M. Adyanthaya – ILO Governing Body Workers' Group

You have frankly expressed your views how to make this particular global project a success, how to eliminate child labour from the world of work and make decent work a reality.

And in a spirit of South-South solidarity, the children learnt the two phrases in Hindi “down with child labour” and “long live education”.

Children screaming

Trabajo Infantil... Katam Karengi! Shiksha Zindabad!

Words of thanks (text)

We would like to thank all IPEC and ACTRAV colleagues for their collaboration to this video and commitment to ensure that social partners be important players in the initiatives to combat child labour.

We would like to extend our sincere gratitude to Mr. N.M. Adyanthaya, GB member, for visiting IPEC projects with trade unions in Central America.

This video would not have been made without the help and support of many people in the field, mainly the children in Azua for whom we devote our work.