Good Practices
for the Prevention and Progressive Eradication of Child Labor in Agriculture
in Central America and the Dominican Republic

Subregional Program on the Eradication of Child Labor in Agriculture
The development of effective actions for the elimination of child labor in agriculture requires a series of data concerning working conditions, the risks associated, the effects on those who carry out these tasks and the social causes that prompt this type of activities. This information is fundamental for the design of intervention strategies to remove and protect children and adolescents from different agricultural labor.

Agriculture proves to be one of the sectors of production with the highest level of risk and danger attached to it. A large number of serious injuries and even deaths are related to this kind of work. In particular, children involved in this labor are in a highly vulnerable situation as they are not physically or emotionally prepared to carry out this type of activity.

In response to this reality, the Projects on the Eradication of Child Labor in the Coffee Industry and in Commercial Agriculture proposed the development of knowledge-building actions in an attempt to bring the problem to light and sensitize, involve and integrate the various agents, ranging from the State to the community, in the fight for the eradication of dangerous labor in every country in the region. As a result, a series of safety and health fact sheets on hazardous child labor were posted in various production areas. These technical fact sheets contain valuable information that permit the worker to assimilate and understand the risks and dangers which children face when working in agricultural activities.

Therefore, the making of fact sheets constitutes a good practice as they not only contribute to an increase in awareness on this issue but they also offer first hand information, collected in a systematic way, on the working conditions and environments of children that labor in agriculture.
Level 2: Successfully demonstrated practice

Key words: agricultural work, working conditions, safety, health, psycho-social factors, risks.

Description of good practice

According to studies carried out by ILO, the rate of child labor is averagely twice as high in rural areas as in urban areas. Thus, nine out of every ten child laborers in rural areas dedicate themselves to agriculture or similar activities. Without a doubt, this indicates that more focus must be placed on the agricultural sector of production. The participation of a child work force may appear in various forms, e.g. carrying out necessary work with their families or being directly contracted by companies which is concealed within commercial agricultural production or sub contracted by big companies when the owners of small farms or land sell their work force to the agricultural companies of the area.

Agricultural labor, independent of who carries it out, involves a series of risks and dangers. However, this is particularly true for children and adolescents due to the fact that their vulnerable condition of growth and development makes them more susceptible than adults to work hazards. Children's anatomical, physiological and psychological differences represent a huge vulnerability factor and as a result, the negative outcomes of such work could be devastating and cause irreversible damage to the physical and emotional development of these children.

Moreover, since 1999, the ILO International Labor Conference unanimously passed Convention No. 182 “On the worst forms of child labor” in which it clearly establishes the need to apply immediate and effective measures that prohibit and eliminate the worst forms of child labor, particularly those that damage children’s health, safety or morality.

---

In addition to the latter, the Projects on the Eradication of Child Labor in the Coffee Industry and in Commercial Agriculture propose the need to create a research methodology that would evaluate the working conditions and environments of child labor in agriculture. This would facilitate a closer look at the daily situation of these child and adolescent laborers and determine the different dangers and risk factors which they are exposed to in their duties and in the production of coffee, broccoli, tomato, flowers and melons.

In order to make safety and health fact sheets on hazardous child labor in commercial agriculture, a study was first carried out on the working conditions and environments of each one of the industries, as well as base-line studies in the selected manufacturing zones. The studies were carried out in Guatemala (broccoli and flowers), Costa Rica (coffee), Honduras (melons) and the Dominican Republic (tomatoes).

With the information obtained in the various studies it was possible to establish:

1) The characteristics of each production in relation to the use of the workforce and the method of contracting employees, in particular that which concerns child and adolescent participation.

2) The stages of the work process associated with each production, providing a task plan and the type of work required in each stage.

3) Child participation in crop production and the risks, hazards and possible effects on their health that are directly associated with the activity.

Furthermore, with information collected in a systematic way and directly from the terrain, it was possible to create safety and health fact sheets for the various production areas. The fact sheets include data concerning the physical, chemical, biological and mechanical, basic hygiene, ergonomic and psycho-social risks directly related to the activity. For every type of risk there is a
detailed description of the dangers involved, the potential adverse effects on health and the preventative-corrective measures.

These sheets have managed to stabilize, among other things, the long and exhausting working days which children were submitted to in agricultural labor, the forms of contracting workers (previously informal and concealed), the physical and mental demands which they face, the forms of payment in exploited conditions and the difficult environmental and climatic conditions in which these children carry out their work. The nature and conditions in which these children go about their work interfere with their comprehensive development and they have a negative impact on the fulfillment of their rights, particularly their rights to health, education, recreation and rest.

In this process, we have not only contributed to constructing a basis of knowledge on this theme but we have also established an operational and systematic methodology for the creation of future studies on the safety and health of child laborers in commercial agriculture. Thus, the results of the investigations have allowed for the reality of these children and their agricultural tasks to be made known and, in an explicit and detailed way, to expose the risks and potential hazards which they face. Also, the latter has helped to sensitize, involve and integrate state and non-governmental institutions, organizations, universities and professionals from various fields, particularly work safety and health specialists in the current networks, against dangerous child labor in each participating country.
Key steps in the creation of safety and health fact sheets on child labor in agriculture

• Carrying out base-line studies on the working conditions and environments in each industry with a lot of technical support, that act as quality inputs to detect risks and propose preventative-corrective measures.

• A careful selection process for research teams in order to obtain specialists in safety and health in the workplace, but also with experience on the subject of child labor and gender equality.

• Defining a similar methodological strategy to allow for comparisons but at the same time with the flexibility to adapt itself to different countries and industries.

• Publishing the results in each country and publicly presenting these results as a sensitization and informative tool.

• Using these results as central elements for the orientation of actions to remove under-age children from admission into employment and for the protection of adolescents.
Why was the process successful?

The making of safety and health fact sheets on hazardous child labor in agriculture is constituted as a good practice given the fact that it not only increased knowledge on this matter as a result of a systematic research process, supported by substantial, empirical evidence gathered from field experience but, it also managed to establish an operative methodology that may be repeated in further studies of this nature. Thus, this activity was relevant as it brought to light the harsh realities and conditions of child and adolescent labor in agriculture and the risks to which these children are exposed.

Furthermore, the publication and circulation of fact sheets have contributed to the sensitization of different agents, from civil society and the State, on the dangers faced by children involved in the manufacture of a series of highly commercial products in the region. From this perspective, the security and safety fact sheets constitute an instrument that shows, through solid and conclusive information, how children and adolescents are vulnerable to a series of risks and rights-violating situations in activities that generate profit and which are sustained by a model of development that the children benefit little from.

Finally, the information offered on these fact sheets is converted into an excellent tool to set the definition of priorities and actions that facilitate the withdrawal and protection of children and adolescents from child labor and that guarantee the rights of those laboring in commercial agriculture.
Necessary conditions for the making of safety and health fact sheets on child labor in agriculture

- The carrying out of technically solid studies on child labor conditions and environments in agriculture, as a preliminary step;

- The willingness of the different institutional bodies involved to understand the importance of social research as a tool for action, sensitization and change;

- The careful selection of research teams with people who are competent in matters of safety and health in the workplace, but also equipped with sensitivity and experience on the issue of child labor from a gender perspective;

- A thorough and close inspection of the process by ILO-IPEC technical personnel;

- A clear, but flexible, methodological design which unifies results and at the same time, leaves space for the retrieval of regional diversity and the particular habits of each culture;

- A good strategy for using research and fact sheet results, which provides input and relevant information to the different departments so they can orientate actions and define priorities, in order to take on child labor in the different industries.
Contacts and references:

Josip Margetic  
*Chief Technical Advisor*  
Program on the Prevention and Elimination of Child Labor in Agriculture  
ILO/IPEC

Tatiana San Millán  
*Program Officer*  
Program on the Prevention and Elimination of Child Labor in Agriculture  
ILO/IPEC

ILO/IPEC Subregional Office in Costa Rica  
Ofiplaza del Este, Rotonda de la Bandera.  
**Telephone:** (506) 280-7223  
**Fax:** (506) 280-6991  
San José, Costa Rica
It is widely recognized that a good education constitutes one of the fundamental requirements for obtaining a decent job, exiting the poverty cycle and constructing a more stable future. However, the various studies carried out in many countries clearly show that children who are immersed in work from a young age almost never have access to education or they normally abandon their studies early on due to the demands and exhaustion of carrying out both activities at the same time.

Moreover, traditional educational methods are inaccessible to child laborers in rural zones due to their remote location, their timetable or even their lack of relevance or ability to satisfy the needs and expectations of this population. Thus, the offer of formal and non-formal alternative educational services and vocational training is crucial for children and adolescents in rural areas, who face a series of obstacles and limitations in order to access traditional education. Education and training that is closer to the needs of these children will facilitate their personal growth and it will improve their skills and knowledge. The latter, will also open up new opportunities for their future and increase the possibility of later reintegration into the formal educational system.
In response to this, the Projects on the Eradication of Child Labor in the Coffee Industry and in Commercial Agriculture and subsequently the Project on the Prevention and Gradual Elimination of Child Labor in Agriculture have sponsored a series of alternative educational programs in order to facilitate the access of children and adolescents that work in agriculture to these services and, therefore, activate their right to education and even their eventual withdrawal and protection from child labor. Thus, many children and adolescents from the areas included in the project have been able to re-enter the educational systems and consequently improve their prospects for the future.
The Active Rural School in Guatemala

Level 3: Replicated good practice

Key words: agricultural work, rural education, alternative educational methodologies, educational evaluation, cooperative learning, multiculturalism.

Description of good practice

In Guatemala, despite the fact that the Political Constitution guarantees a secular, free and obligatory education for all children under the age of 14 years, illiteracy affects 31% of the national population. Factors such as the restrained access to educational centers, the rigidity of the system, little coverage, an excess student population, low quality education and ethnic discrimination mean that many children and adolescents are not guaranteed their right to education.

Moreover, the poverty which characterizes the rural zones of Guatemala, - fostering a high rate of child labor, particularly amongst indigenous children -, the hidden costs of education and the lack of relevant study plans are elements that promote the exclusion of large sectors from the educational system. All of the latter provokes much disheartenment and frustration among children as well as their parents, who, faced with a lack of a quality,
rigid system, the inadequacy of traditional methodologies to respond to the needs of working rural families and the high repeat rate in schools, do not consider education as a viable alternative in their lives.

As a response to this situation, IPEC, since 2001, through its projects on the prevention and eradication of child labor in coffee plantations in San Marcos and in the broccoli industry of Salama, decided to unite its efforts with the Rural Development Fund (FUNRURAL) in order to implement the Active Rural School model in the areas included in its projects. Thus, in May 2001, the training process of educational personnel was begun and the integration of children into the active rural school started in January 2002.

The Active Rural School introduces the concept of flexible education that allows pupils to develop their educational process by means of self-teaching guides that are evaluated according to the work that is being carried out. Therefore, graduation up through the educational system is flexible and moving up a grade does not necessarily comply with the calendar year but, it is based on the satisfactory development of all of the guides corresponding with the each school grade. The self-teaching guides are designed by learning processes and steps, i.e. they are not text books but rather a didactic resource used by the teaching staff as an initial guide to structure, enrich and contextualize content.
through instructions and the development of learning processes with individuals and in groups. The guides are organized by the following steps:

E = Experience with new knowledge

R = Reaffirming knowledge

A = Applying knowledge

In the first step, pupils obtain basic information and they are initiated into learning situations. In the second step, practicals and consultations are carried out, experiences are shared and the pupil’s knowledge is enriched by his/her group’s experiences. In the third step, everything that was previously learnt is applied in the community.

During the course of these three steps, the pupils bring a learning progress control notebook, which helps the teaching staff carry out evaluations on what is being learnt on a permanent, systematic and regular basis. This aids a flexible graduation through the educational system and enables pupils to pass on to the next grade at any time of the year once they have satisfactorily complied with the contents and steps of the self-teaching guides.

This new model allows children a more gradual educational progress, who, for different reasons are forced to abandon the educational system at specific times, particularly when they are involved in seasonal agricultural labor. Thus, if a child cannot attend school, he/she can reincorporate him/herself at another time and once again take up the unit which they were previously studying in, without having to go through the frustrating experience of repeating a school grade.
The Active Rural School adheres to the followings principles:

- **Participation-action:** the pupil and the learning process is the center of attention. Learning, -which is developed in small groups-, is significant, cooperative, analytical, creative, proactive and orientated towards the development of skills and abilities.

- **Flexibility:** each child’s rhythm of learning is respected and entering or exiting the school at any time of the year is allowed.

- **Contextualization:** each child’s learning is developed with elements from his/her own culture and environment, and emphasis is placed on personal value, cultural identity and social participation.

- **Relevance:** the needs, interests and limitations of the students are met and adaptations are made to the social and cultural environment.

- **Integration:** all of the curricular elements and learning contents are related and articulated.

- **Learning by processes:** the self-teaching guides, structured by processes and steps that follow the rhythm of the students, are used. Evaluation is permanent, systematic and continuous.

- **Facilitating role of teaching staff:** the teacher stops being the supreme authority of the classroom and becomes a creator, guide and mediator of learning.

- **Democratic organization:** democratic and civil training of each pupil is taken full advantage of by means of the school government, the creation of teacher circles and parent integration in school boards.
• **Equality and gender:** diversity is recognized without being unfair or discriminatory and gender equality is encouraged and understood as the process that seeks access for all people, independent of sex, to equal opportunities and the development of basic skills.

Another novel element of this methodology is the introduction of the “significant expressions” concept. Significant expressions are a method by which children from first grade develop communicational skills, interacting with elements from their own environment. Thus, pupils begin to learn basic skills - speech, reading, writing, listening - with elements, objects or expressions that form part of their close environment. Furthermore, in the active school, the concept of the classroom is not confined to the four walls of an educational establishment but rather any space that is used for the development of an activity proposed in the guides and is considered a “classroom”, for example, a forest, the town hall, a playground, etc.

A fundamental component for the success of the Active Rural School is the adequate training of teaching staff, which is perceived as a permanent process. Teachers are prepared to appropriately handle curricular elements from the model and they are taught
to adapt the self-teaching guides and the time-table to the study and work demands of children in rural areas. Also, they are trained to simultaneously give quality teaching to various grades of primary education. Additionally, in the permanent training workshops - facilitated by a technical team, fully experienced in the application of the model - the redefinition of teachers’ roles from simple knowledge transmitters to guides and orientators is encouraged so that they develop a positive attitude towards the new ways of working with children from rural areas. Finally, in the Teachers’ Circles, which are areas of reflection where teaching wisdom is united with pedagogical practice, the teachers exchange knowledge, experiences and curricular materials and they mutually advise each other on a permanent basis.
In summary, this model is defined by what is known as the Decalogue of the Active Rural School:

1. Significant Expressions
2. Self-teaching guides
3. Group work
4. School library
5. Pedagogical corners
6. School government
7. Cooperative activities
8. Flexible graduation of school levels
9. Permanent teachers’ circles
10. Community participation

The methodological proposal of the Active Rural School has favored enrolment and permanence in the school system, as well as grade completion and children’s final graduation from school in rural areas of Guatemala. With this model, a greater number of child laborers have been reached and higher levels of motivation and satisfaction in the educational system have been generated. Since the program was developed by IPEC and executed by FUNRURAL, 220 teachers have been trained and 10,000 children from 22 rural communities have been supported. The latter has contributed to a reduction in illiteracy indices and the future of child laborers has improved, due to the fact that they now attend school and make progress with their educational process, despite the adverse conditions faced by their families.

The Grants for Peace, provided by the Ministry of Education, proved a very positive contribution to this program. It meant the awarding of an annual stipend to each child’s family in order to help them buy clothes and school supplies. The administration of the aforementioned resources by the local parent
and teacher committees was an efficient form introduced by IPEC’s projects which allowed them to make important savings on shopping items and, therefore, to maximize the resources designed to promote primary education amongst the young population of the area. Another important contribution was the construction of the library for the mixed rural school in Chilasco. The resources were donated by the local electrical company and this proved the community’s confidence and support for this initiative.

Given the success of the model, demonstrated by repeated evaluations, the Ministry of Education in Guatemala has decided to implement almost 6,000 rural schools in order to offer children a more attractive, relevant and accessible education, considering the multi-lingualism and pluri-culturalism of the area.
Key steps in the implementation of the Active Rural School

- A sensitization process for teachers, parents and the community, in general, on the advantages of this new methodology and on the importance of guaranteeing and facilitating education for children that work in agricultural labor.

- The development of an educational model that favors learning by processes and continuous evaluation, within a flexible, democratic, self-teaching, cooperative framework and one that is respectful of each student’s rhythm, cultural condition and gender.

- A process of permanent and systematic training for teaching staff on the active teaching methodology that is being used.

- A redefinition of roles for all of the educational agents.

- The establishment of alliances and inter-institutional agreements, particularly with the Ministry of Education, in order to approve and legalize the execution of an active methodology.

- The validation of self-teaching guides and the acceptance of evaluation instruments on behalf of the relevant educational authorities, for a flexible graduation of educational levels.

- The management of government support for the publication of guides and didactic
materials which are needed to teach this methodology, as well as the awarding of Grants for Peace.

- The constant interaction between all members of the educational community, understood as parents, teachers, children and local authorities, in order to facilitate comprehensive learning.

- The active participation of the community in the school, particularly the close involvement of the School Boards, the educational authorities and the social and productive associations in the educational process.

- The development of a culture based on the planning and monitoring of the educational process so that the flexibility and liberalization of the system are not converted into a disorder that could affect the quality and relevance of the model.

Why is the Active Rural School a good practice?

Thousands of children from rural areas in Guatemala have been reinserted into the educational system and have remained in school thanks to this model. Also, repeat rates have notably decreased and along with them the frustration felt by many families concerning traditional educational methodologies. From this perspective, the flexible proposal of the Active Rural School represents an innovation that facilitates the access of rural child laborers to education, under more favorable conditions for them and for their families.

Moreover, this model has shown its relevance for connecting children to their town of origin and helping them to recognize their rural and
cultural context as a valuable space. This proposal also incites community organization in order to develop productive projects in schools by means of student governments and school boards. In other words, as well as favoring these children’s right to education, this model offers production alternatives for the families involved, which contributes to the prevention and eradication of child labor.

Numerous evaluations, and the fact that this model has already been applied to more than 200 schools, is sufficient to prove that this educational proposal is repeatable and can be easily adapted to cultural, social and distinct economic conditions, i.e. that the model can be adapted to other realities and contexts. The positive results obtained up until now have also lead the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labor and other national and international organisms, to
commit to supporting the application of this methodology in more rural schools. This commitment guarantees the sustainability of the model.

In line with this, the Active Rural School constitutes a good practice by elevating the quality and relevance of education and lowering the levels of absenteeism and exclusion from the school system in rural areas where child labor in agriculture is a reality. This model encourages children to stay in school and graduate up through the educational system from a flexible perspective while at the same time, respecting multi-lingualism, multi-culturalism and gender equality. All of the latter helps provide access for those children who work in agricultural labor to an education and, therefore, improving their options for the future.
Necessary conditions to achieve the success of the Active Rural School

• The existence of an organization or institution that is socially sensitive; has technical skills; and is committed to offering alternative quality educational solutions to children and adolescents who work in agriculture.

• The construction of a community organization and participation process in order to incorporate local authorities, social and trade union leaders and parents in the implementation process of the model.

• The support of the Ministries of Education and Labor with the aim of legalizing the educational process and offering support in terms of infrastructure, materials, resources and grants.

• The respect and attention given to the cultural differences and to the needs, expectations and demands of the children who work in agricultural labor.

• The effective and timely coordination between donors, local educational authorities and the organizations carrying out the process.

• Good organization, careful planning and constant evaluation of all activities that are developed as part of the educational model.
Contacts and references:

Erwing Roberto Jordán Ramírez  
Program Coordinator  
Program on Prevention and Elimination of Child Labor in Agriculture  
ILO-IPEC  
San Marcos, Guatemala

Juana Estela Leiva Sosa  
FUNCAFE  
Telephone: (502) 5561-2151  
E-mail: juana.els@funcafe.org  
Guatemala

ILO/IPEC Office in Guatemala  
Avenida Reforma 6-64  
Zona 9, Edificio Plaza Corporativa  
Piso 10, Oficina 1001  
Telephone: (502) 2339-1226 / 27 / 28  
Fax: (502) 2339-1230  
Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala
Activity rooms in the Dominican Republic

Level 3: Replicated good practice

Key Words: agricultural work, rural education, alternative educational methodologies, pedagogical support, educational reinforcement.

Description of good practice

The activity rooms in the Dominican Republic are an attempt, through the community, to provide child and adolescent laborers or those at risk of becoming involved in labor during their spare time, with a learning space that introduces changes in the perception of child labor, emphasizes the importance of education, helps maintain children and adolescents in the educational system and finally, improves the basic indicators of education (dropping-out, repeating and age).

The primordial objective is to keep children and adolescents occupied with educational and recreational activities so that they do not have the opportunity to incorporate themselves into the world of work.

In order to complete the tasks of sowing and harvesting, families of small producers are integrated into the working day, while
medium-size producers sub-contract families (including sons and daughters) to carry out these tasks. Frequently, the production cycles of various crops coincide with the school year, for which high rates of school absenteeism are recorded. For example, in the Dominican Republic, the rate of school absenteeism during the production cycle of tomatoes (October-March) coincides with the school year (September-June) and in the transplant stage (October-November), approximately a 45% absenteeism rate is recorded. Later, in January and February, a new drop-out wave is recorded of up to 50% coinciding with harvesting, the most important activity of the production cycle. The levels of absenteeism and the lack of knowledge on the minimum content needed to pass the school curriculum does not aid children to move up through schools grades. In fact these problems result in a 15% to 20% repeat rate in some schools and in 20% of students being over the age limit. The direct negative impact of this was translated, on a mid-term basis, to expulsion from the school system.

Furthermore, teachers and principals of educational centers do not pay much attention to absence because of work, as it
may be socially and culturally justified as part of the family survival process and the transfer of knowledge from parents to their sons and daughters. Additionally, on occasions teachers complained of the lack of parental involvement in the educational process of their sons and daughters and of insufficient participation in the school co-management groups such as the parent associations.

The activity room program was created in January 2003 with the aim of seeking new collective ways to face this situation and to offer educational and health services that guarantee the removal of children and adolescents from dangerous labor and their return and permanence in the educational system. It proposed the search for alternatives to the children’s spare-time so that children and adolescents could keep occupied and, therefore, would not return to work in the tomato industry. Also, this program encouraged children to stay in school and improve their opportunity of educational success. First, the program was executed by the Institute for Comprehensive Development and Health (INDESUI) and subsequently by World Vision-the Dominican Republic. As part of the process, 75 Activity Rooms were set-up and 1,405 children and adolescents were reached.
The Activity Rooms were created with the following objectives in mind:

- To facilitate the permanence of agricultural child and adolescent laborers in school by keeping them occupied with educational activities during their spare-time.
- To strengthen academic knowledge (especially in the areas of mathematics and the Spanish language).
- To ensure a closer companionship between these children and adolescents so as build up their self-esteem.
- To improve the basic indicators of dropping-out, absenteeism, age limitations and repeating.
- To promote a greater parental involvement in the learning process of their sons and daughters and in the school co-management structures (parent associations).
- To improve the teachers’ tasks of detecting and reporting child labor and to integrate them more into the community.
- To keep children and adolescents away from labor.

Each activity room may contain a total of 12 to 15 children and adolescents. Each one has a facilitator, a physical location (they are located in community centers, churches, family homes or under trees) and equipment (seats, chairs, desks, furniture provided by the community). The activity rooms are used for two (2) hours each day in two shifts, one in the morning (from 9 to 11) and the other in the afternoon (from 3 to 5) to guarantee that the children and adolescents are being kept occupied.

To initiate classes in the Activity Rooms, local support committees were created by means of an assembly with all the benefactors.
The committees consist of 9 people and their responsibilities include:

- The detection of children and adolescents that were not attending school or were absent on account of work.

- The location of places where a multi-grade education dynamic could be developed.

- Guaranteeing the cleaning and organization of the facility.

- Supervising the continuous use of the activity rooms.

- Organizing and participating in recreational activities.

- Controlling the snack breaks in the schools and bringing students to the Activity Rooms.

- Identifying potential facilitators for the Activity Rooms.

For their part, the School District and the schools had the following responsibilities:

- To design the topics for the content of the course.

- To evaluate, select and train the facilitators.

- To establish the supervision and coordination devices between the teaching staff and the facilitators.

- To provide text books and snacks.
• To ensure that the teaching staff identify and refer child workers to the activity rooms.

• To control the attendance of children at the educational centers in order to refer them to the Activity Rooms in case of absence without an acceptable justification.

The Action Program, executed by World Vision with the support of IPEC, must facilitate the following.

• Expendable materials.

• Incentive for facilitators.

• Support for supervision and training.

• Sensitization materials on child labor.

• Support for community coordination.

The supervision will be carried out in two ways:

• Through the community surveillance process, where a local support committee supervises the attendance of the facilitating staff as well as the class hours given and the daily use of the areas.
• A technical supervision provided by IPEC’s Action Program to verify the fulfillment of goals, content and the pedagogical techniques being used.

Finally, each facilitator keeps a record of each child where they indicate their academic weaknesses and their daily attendance. Also, a channel of communication is developed between community leaders, the support committee, the facilitating staff and the teaching staff in order to produce an absence “alert” in all of the educational centers (schools or activity rooms). When this occurs, the house of the child will be visited to check the situation, talk to the family and ensure that the absence was not due to child labor.

The impact of the implementation of Activity Rooms has been significant at all levels. Firstly, the teaching staff from the schools is now concerned about student absences; community organizations are more integrated into the school system; parents have improved their level of participation in all of their children’s educational activities; and children and adolescents have significantly improved their level of performance and permanence at school. Thus, a change has occurred in the perceptions about child labor held by all relevant social bodies in the community and the re-incorporation or re-entrance of hundreds of children into labor has been avoided.
Key steps for the implementation of Activity Rooms

- A sensitization process for the teachers, parents and the community in general on the advantages of this new educational strategy and on the importance of guaranteeing and facilitating the education of the children that work in agricultural labor.

- The development of an educational model that supports and reinforces learning during children’s spare-time, within a flexible, self-teaching, recreational and cooperative framework.

- A careful selection process and training for the facilitating staff in the support methodology being used.

- A permanent two-part supervision process: community surveillance (the local support committee supervises the daily functioning) and a technical supervision (the Attention Program verifies the fulfillment of goals, content and pedagogical techniques).

- The establishment of alliances and inter-institutional agreements, particularly with the State Secretary of Education, so that they may offer support to the strategies of pedagogical accompaniment for these students.

- The constant interaction between all members of the educational community (parents, teachers, facilitators and local authorities) in order to facilitate a comprehensive educational accompaniment and prevent reincorporation into child labor.
• The active participation of the community in the Activity Rooms, particularly the close involvement of the local committees, the educational authorities and the social and productive associations in the process.

• A permanent evaluation and supervision process to guarantee that children remain in the program.

Why do the Activity Rooms constitute a good practice?

Through this model, around one thousand five hundred (1,500) children and adolescents from the Azua province in the Dominican Republic, have remained and been successful in the educational system. Also, the phenomenon of repeating has notably decreased and along with it the frustration of children and families. The Activity Rooms
are an innovation that helps children in rural areas to stay in the educational system through pedagogical support and reinforcement in their spare-time. This favors academic success and avoids reincorporation into under-age labor. In fact, the participants in the process passed their school year with 75% and 80% averages, repeats were reduced from 14% to 10% and exclusion from the school system dropped from 15% to 10%.

Therefore, this proposal favors community organization and the involvement of other social agents, which increases the possibilities for duplication and sustainability. The positive results achieved have lead to a growing interest among the Secretary of State, Education and Labor, and other national and international organisms, to continue with the application of this methodology in other places. Additionally, it has inspired the development of policies and programs in institutions such as Plan International and the Southern Technological University (la Universidad Tecnológica del Sur). This university has expressed interest in continuing with this experience.

Evaluations indicate that the model is consistent with the needs of the children and adolescents and it has guaranteed them their right to education. It has been efficiently implemented as it has used human, financial and material resources to maximize its impact. The fact that 75 Activity Rooms have been organized shows that this educational proposal is repeatable and can be easily adapted to distinct cultural, social and economic contexts.

In this way, the Activity Rooms constitute a good practice by lowering levels of absenteeism and exclusion from the school system in areas where child labor in agriculture is a reality. This model encourages children to remain within the educational
system; it decreases repeating and helps to protect the right of vulnerable children, who are exposed to child labor in commercial agriculture, to an education.

**Necessary conditions for the implementation of Activity Rooms**

- The creation of local support committees in order to facilitate the detection of children and adolescents who are not attending school or who are absent due to work.
- The location of places where a multi-grade education dynamic can be developed.
- Identification and training of potential facilitators to work with this population.
- Design of course content, developed and supported by the local educational bodies.
- Establishment of supervision and evaluation devices.
- Supply of school text books, work materials and snacks.
- Design of a monitoring system to identify and permanently refer children and adolescents working in agriculture or at risk of doing the same to these activity rooms.
Contacts and references:

Carlos Féliz  
_Program Coordinator_  
Program on Prevention and Elimination of Child Labor in Agriculture. ILO-IPEC

Juana Díaz  
_Visión Mundial (World Vision)_  
_Program Coordinator_,  
Comprehensive Development of Children and Adolescents.  
_E-mail_: juana_diaz@wvi.org  
Santo Domingo, the Dominican Republic.

Reyna Quezada  
_Director of the Education Action Program_  
Azua, the Dominican Republic.  
_Telephone_: (809) 521-1230  
_E-mail_: visionmundialazua@yahoo.com  
visionmundialazua@hotmail.com

Libertad Quezada  
_State Secretary of Education_  
Regional Technician for Education 03, Azua, the Dominican Republic.  
_Telephone_: (809) 521-2464  
_E-mail_: libertad_quezada@hotmail.com

Justina Rivera  
_State Secretary of Education_  
School District 03-01  
Basic Education Technician  
Azua, the Dominican Republic.  
_Telephone_: (809) 521-2110 / (809) 521-4110  
_E-mail_: najusn01@yahoo.es

ILO/IPEC Office in Dominican Republic  
Avenida Bolivar 235, Edificio Libertad, 2da. Planta, Ensenada La Julia.  
_Telephone_: (1809) 532-4732  
_Fax_: (1809) 508-6797  
Santo Domingo, República Dominicana
Good Practices:
Production and income generating alternatives

The incomes of small producers and agricultural workers need to be improved in order to reduce the dependency on child labor which is prevalent in poor rural areas. For this reason, it is essential to increase the salaries of agricultural workers, diversify and improve plantations, offer better technical assistance options and grant access to innovative technologies. To achieve this goal, new models of production and diversification have to be developed; agricultural extension programs have to be created or extended; new lines and forms of credit have to be made available and the average wage of the agricultural worker must be increased. Also, the price incentive programs for small producers must be improved along with the access to markets, the strengthening of the organization of small producer and agricultural workers and the opening-up of technical training options.

With this vision, the projects on the Eradication of Child Labor in the Coffee Industry and Commercial Agriculture and subsequently, the Project on the Prevention and Gradual Elimination of Child Labor in Agriculture have developed a series of actions which will increase family incomes in the areas involved in the Projects, while also helping to prevent and contribute to the progressive elimination of child labor. To achieve this objective, programs directed at generating viable production alternatives to improve productivity for small farmers have been executed, as well as vocational training programs that are designed to increase family incomes.
Creation of greenhouses as a production alternative in the Dominican Republic

Level1: Innovative practice

Key words: production alternatives, income generation, greenhouse cultivation

Description of good practice

Greenhouses (vegetable production units) in the Dominican Republic form an initiative of the component: Production Alternatives for the Generation of Income, to compensate the families of the children and adolescents who have been removed from work. The Generation of Income program in the Dominican Republic surpassed the training goals (201%) and despite difficulties, also conceded 188 seed funds in-kind.

The coffee industry is very important for the Dominican economy. Its production represents 11% of the country’s GDP. Some 60,000 of Dominican families, distributed throughout the 45 municipalities in 18 provinces, have coffee plantations. The majority of these families (94%) have plantations that measure fewer than 6 hectares.

The province of San José de Ocoa has an approximate population of 89,000 inhabitants. According to information from the Town Hall, agriculture is the main economic activity in the district, with coffee as the main crop. This industry is distributed throughout 61 communities in the Nizao river basin and 47.9% of this territory is dedicated to coffee production. According to the study by the State Secretary for Agriculture (SSA), there are 1,793 coffee growers in the region, of which 80% have around two hectares per family.

To complement their income, many families with small coffee productions also work in bigger plantations during the harvesting season. During the peak months of this season (October to December), many season workers and their families arrive at the plantations. Children and adolescents are
considered indispensable by their families in order to increase their income. Often, under-age workers carry out diverse activities associated with coffee production (planting, picking, weeding, cleaning and grain selection, carrying heavy coffee bags or water containers, etc). All of this represents health and safety risks that hinder the full development of children and adolescents. Also, school attendance is low among those who work in the coffee sector and, consequently, the rate of illiteracy is high.

In response to this situation, the Projects on the Eradication of Child Labor in the Coffee Industry and Commercial Agriculture proposed the development of income generating actions through diverse production alternatives. One of these alternatives includes greenhouses for vegetable production. Each greenhouse measures 430 meters² and costs $6,000 to construct. Nineteen families participated in this project and it provided excellent opportunities for the development of economic alternatives (training and provision of seed funds in-kind), to the point that the adults of the families dedicated themselves to activities that generated alternative incomes to child labor. The greenhouses proved to be an important alternative in order to break away from the production traditions of families and they are good instruments for the transfer of technology. Due to this initiative, in one year, families were able to significantly increase their level of production which resulted in an important income generator that contributed to the prevention of child labor.

**Key steps for the implementation of the greenhouses**

- Carrying out feasibility studies on small, family micro-companies, where potential beneficiaries of the initiative, possible preferences, and the viability and sustainability of the activity were detected.
- Development of training activities on the establishment and management of production initiatives, product commercialization, and managerial and accounting management, among others, with the target families (joint analysis on different alternatives for the generation of income and its technical feasibility).
- Establishment of a solid loan system (seed funds in-kind) for participating families.
- Organization of Local Credit Administration Committees, which participated in the selection of beneficiary families and with the follow-up of production operations.
• Identification and selection of participating families.

• Drawing-up rules and procedures that guarantee the removal of children and adolescents from production activities and the correct management and use of the resources.

**Why is the creation of greenhouses a good practice?**

Greenhouses are a good practice because, within a short period of time, they compensate for the decrease in the family income (when children and adolescents stop working) in an efficient and relatively cheap manner, taking into account the speed at which the initial investment is recuperated. The greenhouse initiative also keeps children and adolescents out of the workplace as their families begin to earn enough money and, therefore, their participation in the world of work is no longer necessary for survival.

Furthermore, the construction of greenhouses represents the excellent initiative needed to break with production traditions of families and help to increase the productivity of the area through the transfer of technology. Also, families benefit from the training processes associated with the initiative and with the awarding of seed funds in-kind. All these positive outcomes draw the family out of its traditional production dynamic and allow it to generate higher incomes as there is no longer a need or dependency on child labor as a survival strategy.

The greenhouse initiative may be sustained if the initial investment is recuperated and used in the construction of more greenhouses by other participating families. Above all, greenhouses are sustainable because they are profitable and, therefore, they can access funds from other public or private sources (for example, the Agricultural Bank, PROMI-PYME - Small and Micro-Enterprise Support Program).

**Necessary conditions for the implementation of the greenhouses**

• The existence of an organization or institution that has a sense of social awareness, technical capacities and will commit itself to offering business training and the initial capital to begin the project.

• Consent and liberalization of organizations, private and public institutions at local and national level, as well as financial enterprises that are sensitive to the problem, in order to construct a program that makes the initiative feasible.
• Data from studies on feasibility and sustainability of small, viable family micro-companies in different communities.

• A detailed proposal on how to implement different options of alternative income, including the criteria for the selection of families that can receive seed funds in-kind.

• An entity that can provide permanent and systematic follow-up to families participating in the project.

• Loan management scheme (the criteria to participate, manage and monitor the credit must be determined at the planning meeting, with the participation of all the agencies involved);

• The effective and timely coordination between financing sources, donors, local authorities and organizations, which carry out the process.

• Good organization, careful planning and constant evaluation of all activities that are developed as part of the initiative.

Contacts and information:

Carlos Félix
Program Coordinator
Program on Prevention and Elimination of Child Labor in Agriculture
ILO-IPEC.

ILO/IPEC Office in Dominican Republic
Avenida Bolivar 235, Edificio Libertad, 2da. Planta, Ensenada La Julia.
Telephone: (1809) 532-4732
Fax: (1809) 5086797
Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic
Honduras is the second largest country in Central America, with 54% of its population consisting of children and adolescents (2000), high indexes of poverty - predominantly rural - and it is vulnerable to frequent natural disasters (tropical storms, floods, mudslides and hurricanes). In 1998, one of the most serious natural disasters in the history of the country occurred: Hurricane Mitch. This incident aggravated the economic situation of an already poverty-stricken population. It badly affected the majority of agricultural production and generated approximately US$3,800 million in economic loss. It also increased unemployment levels and this led to more families entering into informal contracts and sub-employment where they earned insufficient incomes.

In Honduras, 38.7% of all children between 10 and 17 years work and there is a direct relationship between child labor and the poverty situation of their families. Currently, around 11% of Honduran children and adolescents, which make-up the economically active population, are illiterate. In 1999, according to the Report on Human Development in Honduras, the average level of education was 4.8 years. In the rural areas of Honduras, where agriculture and crops are the main economic activities, children often miss school as they are incorporated from an early age into farming labor.

Besides poverty, other factors favor the incorporation of children and adolescents into labor. These factors include the view of the plantation owners that this labor encourages discipline, the undervaluing of education, the poor quality of education - which does
not satisfy the expectations of students or parents -, failure at school and the difficulties of getting to the educational centers. For generations, rural families were obliged to send children out to work. Even those families who have access to a means of production persist with the idea that each family is, independent of their age, a productive individual.

The General Diagnosis on the Situation of Child Labor in Honduras (IPEC/OIT and the Secretary of Labor and Social Security 2001) clearly declared that child and adolescent labor has a negative impact on school permanence and performance, which, in turn, generates high indices of absenteeism and repeating that normally results in a high drop-out rate.

The melon industry is a relatively new activity in Honduras, substituting cotton production in the south of the country. Before the seventies, melons were planted for internal consumption only. Given the anatomical characteristics of children and adolescents (small size, agile fingers), coupled with their subordinate position and the fact that they accept a lower salary, melon producers are prepared to hire them. These circumstances negatively affect educational possibilities for these children as the school cycle ends after the beginning of the melon production.

In response to this situation, the Project on the Eradication of Child Labor in Commercial Agriculture proposed the development of vocational training actions, aimed at young people and adults who have child laborers in their families, in one of the poorest zones in the country – the Marcovia municipality, in the Choluteca District (Honduras). Choluteca mostly depends on the income generated by melon, sugar cane and basic grain production; salt making; prawn fishing; and livestock.

The occupational and enterprise start-up training program was developed by CENET (The National Center for Education for Work) within the framework of the Program on the Eradication of the Worst Forms of Child Labor – IPEC – led by OIT, specifically in the Melon and Sugar Cane Plantations and the Fishing industry in Marcovia, Choluteca. Their actions were aimed at stimulating the generation of decent employment through technical and business training for young people and adults from homes containing child laborers.

The process includes various stages. Firstly, a study was carried out on the needs for occupational training, which implied the random selection of 140 families with the aim of identifying the needs, possibilities and opportunities of occupational education for the youth population (over 16 years) and
young adults (under 49), who are resident in different communities in the Marcovia municipality. Next, the organization and planning of the initiation platform was carried out for the occupational training processes (logistics, human resources, contact and coordination with key agents, identification and management of course locations, programming courses and general work planning). Subsequently, the offer of occupational training was promoted through a set of actions to raise awareness on the project and motivate the target population to participate in this occupational training.

The courses and workshops on occupational training were developed depending on the training interests of the young people and adults, the production vocations and the community’s services, in accordance with the diagnosis carried out. Finally, training and business advice was provided for those who had registered for the occupational training workshops and courses. This was designed to encourage and motivate business organization through an informative process, technical assistance and the donation of the initial capital needed to start an income generating production activity.

For those trained in classic areas of employment or with an expressed interest in finding a job, a specific training program was offered for the preparation of curriculum vitae and job interviews, desirable work behavior, information on the job market and other issues, i.e. training and skill orientation for jobs. Presently, as a result of this initiative, 10 production companies have been set up, which benefit a total of 85 people dedicated to diverse services (marine engine repairs; hairdressing; the manufacturing of rucksacks, clothes and other items; furniture making and repair; fast food outlets).
Key steps in the making of the occupational training program

- Technical and methodological design of the program, considering vocational criteria and interests of the population and business/employment opportunities in the area.

- Creation, validation and application of information gathering instruments used in interviews and surveys.

- Selection of families at base-line level, taking the established criteria as reference.

- Collection of information at level of families with support from community leaders and other key agents.

- Coordination with the Mayor of the municipality, Company Heads of Staff (melon and sugar cane enterprises), Headmasters/mistresses of schools and basic centers, the Office for the Defense of Children and other agents linked to the problem.

- Definition of a preliminary proposal offering courses of occupational training.

- Identification and selection of locations where courses may be taught depending on access, minimal pedagogical conditions (security, electric lighting and furniture), distance from participants, food services and transport for participants.

- Identification of human resources for teaching services.

- Agreement and letter of understanding with the National Vocational Training Institute – INFOP.

- Handing-in Project to Regional Technical Sub-council of Choluteca.
Why does occupational training constitute a good practice?

This activity constitutes a good practice because occupational training serves as a motivating incentive for participating adolescents faced with the lack of educational alternatives which are needed to favor their future inclusion in the workplace. This project signified hope to develop their production skills and to obtain the possibility of generating income in a more dignified manner. Moreover, adults with under 14 year old children linked to work in the areas mentioned, were offered alternative training and assistance for the generation of micro-enterprises that allowed them to improve their living conditions and, consequently, increase their awareness on the importance of their children’s school attendance.

The occupational training program helped participants to develop technical and business skills as a way to obtain a better qualified job and, thus, removing them from activities which place them at risk and which distance them from integrating into or continuing on in the educational system. Also, this program improved their levels of self-esteem and it promoted personal development opportunities. For many of these young people (under 18 years) participating in the courses, this project meant their withdrawal from some of the worst forms of child labor in agriculture.

The model was effective and it had a visible impact as 641 people from 15 communities participated in the study after being randomly selected through base-line extraction, facilitated by IPEC. This experience proves that occupational training interventions, accompanied by enterprise-generating processes, can be central to the eradication and prevention of child labor.

This is a sustainable proposal insofar as the participating companies continue to show
the openness achieved with the first melon and prawn companies that have strengthened their commitment to the eradication of child labor and host practicals for young people and adults participating and registered in the program. Also, systemization was carried out to help view the achievements.

**Necessary conditions for the implementation of the occupational training program**

- The existence of an institution or organization which is socially sensitive, has technical skills and is committed to offering occupational and business training to young people who work in agriculture.
- Consent and openness on behalf of the organizations, private and public institutions at a local and national level, as well as businessmen who are aware of this problem.
- The planned construction of a program that allows for the participation of multiple agents (local authorities, social and union leaders, parents and young people) in the implementation process of the model.
- The support of Ministries of Education and Labor and the Vocational Training institutes with the aim of facilitating the process and offering support in terms of infrastructure, materials and resources.
- The respect and prioritization of the vocations and interests of the population and business and employment opportunities in the area.
- Good organization, careful planning and constant evaluation of all activities that are carried out as part of the occupational training model.
- The effective and timely coordination among donors, local authorities and organizations that carry out the process.

**Contacts and information:**

Ruth Yanet Escoto
*Program Coordinator*
Program on Prevention and Elimination of Child Labor in Agriculture
ILO-IPEC.

**ILO/IPEC Office in Honduras**
Circuito Choluteca,
Frente a oficinas de CHF,
Contiguo a Ferretería Ucles,
Colonia Rubén Darío,
**Telephone:** (504) 2356070
**Fax:** (504) 2320157
Tegucigalpa, Honduras
Level 3: Replicated Practice

Key words: agricultural labor, alternative educational methodologies, vocational training, employment

Description of good practice

The coffee industry has been a fundamental activity in Costa Rica’s development since the end of the nineteenth century. According to the Costa Rican Coffee Institute (ICAFE), around 40% of the coffee produced in Costa Rica is grown by small farmers. Generally, the owners of small coffee plantations also work in the bigger plantations, as well as managing their small businesses.

Out of all the agricultural activities carried out by children, the coffee industry has the most visible participation of child workers. Previously, the national acknowledgement of the importance of the coffee industry for the economy, especially when estimating the need for workers during the harvesting season, led to an adjustment in the school calendar that allowed children to work during this period (November, December and January). Even though there are no exact figures, it is estimated that around 10,000 children and adolescents in the country work during the harvesting season.

As regards the educational situation in the country, 80% of adolescents have finished primary school yet a high percentage has dropped-out during high school. In addition, among those who study and work, more than half of the total (seven out of every ten students) are behind in their studies.

Out of all the under-age children who drop-out of the educational system, 36% do it because of the economic situation of their families. Children either have to work and contribute to the sustainability of their families, they must help out with domestic chores,
or their economic situation impedes them from paying the registration fee, text books, transport and a uniform, among others.

In the Turrialba and Jiménez cantons, families own small farms dedicated to the coffee, sugar cane, livestock, macadamia and coriander industries. Those children and adolescents who are involved in the coffee industry, work with their families without a contract and are paid according to the quantity of containers they fill with coffee. The harvesting of coffee is carried out during holidays or during the mornings or evenings according to the school time-table of the second semester. This means that children have a double working day (study and work). Given the economic crisis, children are often obliged to work in the fields of small producers doing other types of agricultural labor or agricultural-industrial production in order to help their families.

Even though Costa Rica has established an open and measured educational system that has an adapted curriculum and has succeeded in granting more access for children and adolescents to education, the hidden costs and the lack of relevant study plans are elements that promote the exclusion of large sectors of the population from the educational system. Theses factors provoke disappointment and frustration in children and in their parents, who regard education as
a non-viable alternative in their lives due to the lack of a quality and steadfast system, the inadequacy of traditional methodologies to respond to the needs of rural working families and the high repeat rate in schools. The majority of adolescents that enter high school and later drop-out of the educational system normally abandon their studies in seventh grade. When they leave school they either do not return to finish the course or they return and fail. These adolescents have no alternative but to prematurely enter the workplace and seek employment in jobs that do not require qualifications.

In response to this problem, the Project on the Prevention and Elimination of Child Labor in Agriculture proposed the implementation of actions for personal development and business training as an attempt to provide adolescent agricultural laborers with a learning space in order to provoke changes in the perception of adolescent labor and the importance of education. Also these actions are expected to help these adolescents to return to the educational system (through flexible forms of open education) and, subsequently, to improve the basic indicators of education (drop-out rates, repeats and age).

The workshops on personal development and business training are carried out by means of intensive activities over two days, twice a month. Each workshop is comprised of 12 hours of training. These twelve hours are split up into six days: each day consists of two hours of activities and group work, 1 hour of sport, 5 hours to share during mealtimes, 8 hours to rest and the time it takes to get from Turrialba to the Agricultural Training Center at the University of Costa Rica, where the workshops are held. The participants are provided with transport, food, accommodation, didactic materials, good instructors, facilitators, audiovisual equipment and other didactic resources, such as the sports hall.

In order to achieve the goals of these actions, two support networks were set up, one (the Institutional Support Network) comprised of representatives from institutions present in the area and which was in charge of accompanying various designed processes and actions and the other (the Local Support Network) comprised of people from the target communities.
As part of the process, a system based on personal development and business training was set up for over 15 year olds that a) combined study and work, or b) those who were at risk of doing so and, over all, c) for those who had withdrawn from work and were studying for the first time. The first group was made up of 120 adolescents of both sexes. The total target population was 222 adolescents. CEFEMINA (the Feminist Information and Action Center) was in charge of the project’s coordination. The process included:

- Workshops on personal development and vocational training;
- Workshops on business-technique training to strengthen leadership in a business sense, the drive for self-management, basic managerial skills and the development of a defined business vision, aimed at the target population. The business-technique training includes topics on business organization, financial planning and control of financial-accounting operations, among others;
- Workshops on specialized training in areas of interest (Agricultural Ecotourism, the Dairy Industry, Wood Treatment and Manufacturing of Wood Products, Computing and Auto Mechanics);
- Personalized managerial advice and technical assistance for the target population that succeeds in executing a production project;
- Workshops on information and training for decision-making, aimed at the target population and their families;
- Productive connections between companies in the region and the target population.

Those involved in the project include: the Ministry of Labor and Social Security (MLSS), the National Institute for Learning (NIL), the Center for Competitiveness of Ecoenterprises (CECOECO) of CATIE (OAS), the National Children’s Institute (PANI), the National Alcohol and Drug Dependency Institute (IAFA), the Cultural Radio of Turrialba, the University of Costa Rica (Experimental Center of Dairy Livestock) and the Cantonal Agricultural Center for Development in Turrialba.
Key steps for the creation of the personal development and business training program.

- Technical and methodological design of the program, considering criteria on vocations and interests of the population and business and employment opportunities.
- Carrying out base-line studies on families, taking the established criteria into account.
- Collecting information on families with support from community leaders, the Regional Support Platform and other key agents.
- Coordination with government entities and local and regional authorities, especially the Ministry of Education, the National Institute of Learning, the Ministry of Labor and Social Security and other agents linked to the problem.
- Definition of a preliminary proposal for offering courses on personal development and business training.
- Inclusion of a proposal to empower adolescents as a comprehensive part of the training process.
- Identification and selection of locations where courses will be held based on access, pedagogical conditions, distance from participants, food services and transport for participants.
- Identifying human resources to carry out workshops.
- Integration of a coordinating entity with the participation of all agents linked to the project.

Why does personal development and business training constitute a good practice?

The project constitutes a good practice as it contains the innovative element of centering itself on the adolescents who have often been “forgotten” by the system, due to the fact that their age and lack of education makes it difficult for them to return to the educational system. The combination of personal development and business training has been an important assertion. This project has been able to reinsert and maintain adolescent laborers in some of the alternative forms of education, given the interest raised by these adolescents and the commitment assumed by their parents. More than 50% of the target population has been reintroduced to formal education, specifically the open classroom system for those who did not finish their primary education and the adult education system for those who had not finished high-school. The drop-out rate has only been 10%.
Faced with the lack of educational alternatives that favor future insertion into the workplace, this Project brings hope by helping to develop production vocations and it proposes the possibility of generating income in a more efficient way.

The project on personal development and business training has helped participating adolescents to develop technical and business skills as a way to obtain a better job and to move away from activities that place them at risk and distance them from the educational process. Also, their self-esteem has improved and this experience has led them to consider other possibilities for their future. Furthermore, this project has offered adolescents instruments to understand their living conditions and to broaden their horizons instead of viewing exploitative agricultural labor as their only option in life. In this regard, this training process allows them to dream of a different future, which promotes changes in attitude and encourages self-appraisal from other reference points. Additionally, the strengthening of relationships between equals allows for the development of joint goals. For example, as an outcome of the process, the possibility of creating a youth cooperative is being investigated so that young people could develop agricultural-ecotourism projects in various communities involved in the process.

For many of the young people that participated in the courses and workshops, this Project has meant their removal from the worst forms of child labor in agriculture. This activity proves that interventions in personal development, accompanied by technical assistance to develop business and employment skills, are crucial for the eradication and prevention of child labor.

Regarding sustainability, this proposal is highly sustainable as it has worked towards and strengthened the consolidation of specific alliances with different components of the regional platform, stemming from the concrete needs of the personal development and business training process. Consequently, the project has not only strengthened the adolescents but also the public and private entities involved.
In addition, this process sparked interest among authorities and institutions linked to the Project. Also, the options for personal development and business training were extended to two more groups of adolescents in Turrialba (130 in total): training in technical areas (Agricultural Ecotourism, English, Computing, Organic Agriculture and Auto Mechanics) for the first group and managerial advice for the adolescents that were able to create their own enterprise ideas. The proposal is currently being replicated in Golfito, Corredores and Osa (cantons in the Southern Zone of Costa Rica, close to the Panamanian border) and it relies on the institutional support of NIL for its technical and vocational training.

**Necessary conditions for the implementation of the personal development and business training program**

- A sensitization process for parents and the community in general, on the importance of guaranteeing and facilitating education for children and adolescents that work in agricultural activities.
- The identification and location, by means of Local Support Networks and the educational centers, of adolescents that...
were never enrolled or dropped-out of the educational centers with the aim of reintegrating them into this system.

- The establishment of inter-institutional alliances and coordinations, particularly with Ministries of Education and Labor and the National Institute of Learning, in order to strengthen the comprehensive education of children and adolescents, technical training and the prevention and progressive eradication of child labor.

- The instruction of non-schooled adolescents on educational options and forms that the Ministry of Public Education offers and their integration or reintegration into some of them.

- Offering grants and didactic materials and other inputs to adolescents participating in the program.

- Continuity of sensitization campaigns, which are aimed particularly at teachers and students of seventh grade given the high drop-out rate at this level. This activity hopes to create an atmosphere that favors permanence within the school system by means of a process that covers the school year.

- Planning and monitoring the educational process and helping older participants, who have completed the program, to enter into employment, with the aim of guaranteeing a quality and relevant model for the sustainability of the program.
Contacts and information:

María Lourdes Xirinachs  
Program Officer and Program Coordinator  
Program on Prevention and Elimination of Child Labor in Agriculture  
ILO-IPEC.  
San José, Costa Rica

Norma Pereira  
Director of Action Program  
CEFEMINA  
Telephone: (506) 5564420  
E-mail: cefinaturrialba@costarricense.cr  
Turrialba, Costa Rica.
Agriculture is the predominant commercial activity in most Central American and Caribbean countries. For this reason, a high percentage of the work force is concentrated in this sector. Child labor in agriculture has important economic justifications as it represents an added increase in the income of a family. Generally, children start to work at very early ages (5-6 years) and they work long days (8-10 hours) in order to help their mothers and fathers in various agricultural activities. Coupled with this, children are often exposed to dangerous substances and instruments or are made carry out hazardous activities.

In Central America and the Dominican Republic, child and adolescent labor in agriculture is still a growing phenomenon that affects more than 1,142,000 minors between the ages of 5 and 17 years. Factors such as poverty, unemployment and the existence of weak educational systems, which are not suited to the needs of rural, isolated zones, favor the participation of children and adolescents in agricultural work. This work violates their right to safety, health, education and recreation, among others.

For these reasons, the Sub regional Program on the Eradication of Child Labor in Agriculture has promoted a series of actions concerned with sensitizing and spreading awareness on the problem of child labor in agriculture with the aim of incorporating it into the national and social agenda. The main objective of the program is to prevent and gradually eliminate child labor in this sector of the economy, promoting the return of children and adolescents to the educational system. The aforementioned program was developed on the basis of ILO Convention 138 concerning the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment and Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labor.
The analytical approach used to compile good practices arises from two perspectives: the rights-based approach and the criteria for the identification of ILO-IPEC good practices.

The rights-based approach implies a radical change in the traditional concept of children and adolescents centered on the irregular situation doctrine, which conceives this social group as a sector of society that must be protected in virtue of their social vulnerability. This approach enables us to recognize all children and adolescents, independent of gender, culture, nationality or personal condition, as titleholders to the array of human rights inherent to all, as well as those rights which are considered special or specific. In this context, we are hoping to eliminate the notions that underage children are not citizens or that they are legally incapable of making decisions. These outdated ideas make adolescents passive receivers of protection, who are only worthy of rights and duties depending on their particular condition of development. This approach also proposes that the State and society in general, must guarantee the spaces and the necessary opportunities for
children and adolescents to develop to their full potential. The acknowledgement and defense of all child and adolescent rights by the State, social institutions, their families, civil society and all other sectors is what ensures that attention is paid to this group, they are given universal protection and it opens opportunities for human development.

The guides for the identification, revision, structuring and publication of ILO-IPEC good practices were used to characterize the actions that constitute good practices. A good practice may be defined as “any experience that completely or partially works towards combating child labor and may have implications for the practice, at any level, in another context or situation”\(^1\). A key element in determining a good practice is something that has been experienced before and has been proven to work. The fundamental principle of a good practice is its ability to stimulate new ideas or to act as a guide on how to achieve greater effectiveness in some aspect related to the prevention or elimination of child labor.

Good practices may be classified on three different levels, depending on the verification efforts carried out and the number of different situations in which they have been experienced. The following are the levels defined by ILO/IPEC:

**Level 1:** Innovative practices

**Level 2:** Successfully demonstrated practices

**Level 3:** Replicated good practices

Seven key criteria also exist to determine a “good” practice. These criteria are:

- **Innovation/creativity:** What makes a practice special so that it converts into something potentially attractive for others?

- **Effectiveness/impact:** What evidence exists to prove that the practice really made a change in terms of the fight against child labor?

---

• **Possibility of repeating the practice:** Is it a practice that could be relevant in other situations or scenarios?

• **Sustainability:** Can this practice and/or its beneficiaries maintain itself and continue being effective on a mid-term or long-term basis?

• **Pertinence:** How did the practice directly or indirectly contribute to the prevention and elimination of child labor?

• **Sensitivity and ethical drive:** Is the practice consistent with the needs identified by the children? Has a consensus-building approach been included? Does it respect the interests and wishes of the participants and others? Is it consistent with principles of good social and professional behavior? Is it in accordance with the conventions and work standards established by ILO? Does it offer children the opportunity to increase their participation and therefore, guarantee that their interests and perspectives are taken into account?

• **Efficiency and implementation:** Were human, financial and material resources used to maximize impact?

This document contains a collection of good practices developed in the achievement of the program’s general objective which is to contribute to the prevention and gradual elimination of child labor in agriculture in the Central American region and in the Dominican Republic.

The methodological strategy for the collection of good practices was based, principally, on the revision of documents produced by the Project, such as action plans; progress reports for the donors; research reports; results of evaluations carried out and material for training and distribution. Likewise, semi-structured interviews were carried out with the program’s staff, consultants and program coordinators from the countries in the region.
The Sub regional Program on the Eradication of Child Labor in Agriculture was created as a reaction to the reality in Central America and the Dominican Republic where child and adolescent labor in agriculture is still a growing phenomenon that affects one million, one hundred and forty two thousand (1,142,000) minors between the ages of 5 and 17 years.

The program has sub regional and national components, it is directed in each country by a programe coordinator and the execution is carried out by previously selected, local NGOs. The goal of the program’s actions is to prevent child and adolescent agricultural labor, to remove them from this work and to promote their return to the educational system. The direct beneficiary population is, on one hand, the under-age children removed from work but also the adolescents who are removed from hazardous jobs and those who were at risk of beginning agricultural labor but were identified on time and motivated to continue on in the educational system (normally brothers and sisters of child workers).

From the basis of the sub regional program, a series of national projects are coordinated and affirmed, using the same model as in the intervention strategy and management practices. The national projects allow for the creation of base-line studies which seek to understand the reality of the terrain; the drawing-up of action programs; and the carrying out of additional technical studies. The sub regional program has covered two phases in the period between 1999 and 2006. For its part, each national project included various Action Programs that were

---

implemented by executing agencies, NGOs and non lucrative local organizations.

For the most part, children in Central America and the Dominican start work at very early ages (5-6 years old) and endure long working days (8-10 hours) to help their parents in their various agricultural tasks. These factors diminish school attendance and dissuade children from staying in the educational system or obtaining a good job given the fatigue caused by long working days and poor nutrition. This situation worsens in areas where there are no nearby schools or in cases where families constantly move their children from one area to another according to the crop calendar. A large number of these children live in poverty-stricken conditions, without access to basic hygiene or health services. Their families have little respect for education due, fundamentally, to the imperious need to increase their economic income for survival. Also, on many occasions, these children are exposed to hazardous activities, substances and instruments.

Phase I of the two sub regional projects were the coordination entities for ten projects on a national scale:


These projects were extended because some national components did not close until 2005.

In Phase II, only one project was coordinated in agriculture which was developed in Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Guatemala and the Dominican Republic, 2003- 2006.
The immediate objectives of the projects are:

1. To reduce child labor through:
   - The removal of minors under 14 or 15 years from child labor in agriculture or the prevention of such in the areas where the project is being implemented, and reintegrating them into the formal education system;
   - The removal of adolescents between 15 to 18 years from hazardous work and providing them with technical and vocational training;
   - The provision of economic alternatives to beneficiary families of children that have been removed from this work;

2. To set-up a monitoring system for child labor, to ensure that:
   - Child workers are removed from work and that they are provided with education and other support services;
   - No child starts working in the agricultural sector during the implementation of the project;
   - Both families and children benefit from the project;
   - Considerable progress is made in the prevention and eradication of child labor in the agricultural sector, specifically in the implementation stage of the project; and

3. To increase awareness among manufacturers in the region, their business partners, local authorities and the community itself concerning child labor, especially in the area of production included in the project. Also, one of the project’s goals is to increase the capacity of local organizations to deal with the problem of child labor.

The sub regional and national projects arise from a model that explains how the problem of child labor in agriculture is due to three

---

3 The minimum employment age of children in every country in the region is 14 years old, except Costa Rica whose legislation does not allow any child under 15 years of age to work.
causes: lack of schooling, inadequate socio-cultural attitudes and low family incomes. In reaction to these causes, the national projects developed the following components in Phase I: Institutional Strengthening, Direct Action and Monitoring of Child Labor\(^4\). The Institutional Strengthening component included programs on sensitization and mobilization, Direct Action included programs concerning Education, the Generation of Income and Health\(^5\) and the Monitoring of Child Labor component developed a surveillance system.

In Phase II, the components were: Capacity Development and Social Mobilization. These components included training and sensitization of workers from institutions and campaigns in order to sensitize key figures; the improvement of regulations and their fulfillment through the analysis of national legislation and the drawing-up of proposals to improve it; and the removal and prevention of child labor in selected areas and sectors through direct interventions in sensitization, education and the generation of alternative incomes for the families involved.

The sensitization and mobilization programs were the most successful and the final evaluation bore witness to the fact that the population and the local entities were made clearly aware of the need to eradicate child labor and to register and maintain child and adolescent laborers (or those at risk of entering this life) in the education system so as to improve their chances of creating better possibilities for their future. As indicated in the report\(^6\), the social figures that best responded to this component were families from the chosen communities. However, it also proved to have a positive effect on the authorities of the respective schools, on teachers, on some worker/teacher associations, on small manufacturing organizations and on business organizations.

\(^4\) ILO. Projects on the Eradication of Child Labor in Agriculture in Central America and the Dominican Republic. 2000-2004- Four years spreading hope.
The action programs from the Direct Action component were drawn up by the executing bodies, together with the national coordinators. The most effective action programs proved to be the education programs in Guatemala and the Dominican Republic, as they have been able to implement new appropriate educational methods for the withdrawal of children and adolescents from labor; they have prevented more children from entering the world of agricultural labor; and decreased the repeating indices in schools; as well as keeping their families satisfied.

These components have been implemented by means of action programs executed in collaboration with associated agencies (manufacturers, farm and plantation owners, plantation foremen and administrators, local authorities, community and religious leaders, educators, government institutions and non governmental organizations that work in this area).

The development of national projects has provided valuable experience as regards the eradication of child labor in agriculture. The confirmed causes that determine child labor in agriculture are poverty and extreme poverty, which are strongly associated with the low level of family incomes in rural areas.

Update of the Final Evaluation of the Project: Progressive Eradication of Child Labor in the Sector of Commercial Agriculture in Central America and the Dominican Republic (RLA/00/P54/USA).


ILO-IPEC. **2003.** Safety and health fact sheets on hazardous child labor in the following industries: tomatoes, the Dominican Republic; broccoli, Guatemala; melons, Honduras; Coffee, Costa Rica; flowers, Guatemala. ILO-IPEC, San José, Costa Rica.

ILO-IPEC. **Projects on the Eradication of Child Labor in Agriculture in Central America and the Dominican Republic. 2000-2004: Four years spreading hope.**

ILO-IPEC. **1999-2004.** *From the coffee plantation to school. Projects on Eradication of Child Labor in the Coffee Industry in Central America and the Dominican Republic.*


ILO-IPEC. **2002.** *Base-line study of the Program: Combating Child Labor in Commercial Agriculture in Central America and the Dominican Republic.* The Dominican Republic: Azua Province.

Piña, Jorge. **2005.** *Update of the Project’s Final Report: Progressive Eradication of Child Labor in the Commercial Agricultural Sector in Central America and the Dominican Republic.* (RLA/00/ P54/USA). ILO-IPEC.

Josip Margetic  
*Chief Technical Advisor*  
Program on Prevention and Elimination of Child Labor in Agriculture.

Tatiana San Millán  
*Program Officer*  
Program on Prevention and Elimination of Child Labor in Agriculture.

Erwing Roberto Jordán Ramírez  
*Program Coordinator*  
Program on Prevention and Elimination of Child Labor in Agriculture, Guatemala.

Carlos Féliz  
*Program Coordinator*  
Program on Prevention and Elimination of Child Labor in Agriculture, the Dominican Republic.

María Lourdes Xirinachs  
*Program Officer and Program Coordinator*  
Program on Prevention and Elimination of Child Labor in Agriculture, Costa Rica.

Carmen Pineda  
*Program Coordinator*  
Program on Prevention and Elimination of Child Labor in Agriculture, Nicaragua.

Norma Pereira  
*Director of Action Program, CEFEMINA, Costa Rica.*
Due to ignorance and openly accepted traditional practices, the different state and business sectors, as well as sectors from sub-regional civil society, have found it difficult and have experienced resistance to the incorporation of the problem of child labor in agriculture into their agendas. This represents a major challenge as this form of labor cannot be prevented or eradicated without the decided participation of key social agents. In other words, when community representatives and figures from social institutions are not aware of the problem and its potential risks, it becomes a factor which hinders progress towards the prevention and eradication of child labor in agriculture. This indicates that ignorance and indifference generally result in inadequate responses to the severity of the problem and to the needs of children and adolescents who are affected.

With the aim of counteracting the aforementioned situation, the Projects on the Eradication of Child Labor in the Coffee Industry and in Commercial Agriculture and subsequently, the Project on the Prevention and Gradual Elimination of Child Labor in Agriculture have developed an important quantity of sensitization activities aimed at community, church and trade union leaders, journalists, teachers, parents, professionals, manufacturers and representatives from governmental institutions, among other key groups. These actions have contributed to the sensitization of these sectors and they favor the integration of tasks which could help prevent and eradicate child labor in agriculture.
As well as these actions, inter-institutional coordination networks have been created in various countries participating in the projects. These networks have facilitated the preventative work carried out and have focused attention on child and adolescent laborers and their families. Along with this, they have encouraged the development of a more committed local and national response. This response is more in tune with the dimensions of the problem and the needs of the children and adolescents involved.
Sensitization on Gender and Child Labor in Guatemala

Level 1: Innovative practice

Key Words: gender sensitization, gender roles and stereotypes, empowerment, gender equality and equity.

Description of good practice

Traditional gender roles, constructed and perpetrated by an unjust system that overvalues masculinity and devalues femininity, led to the fact that women are currently excluded from many areas of life, particularly those concerning decision-making roles. To a greater or lesser extent, women have been excluded from ambits where their society’s future, their well being and that of their families are decided for them.

Many societies in the world, including Latin-America, form part of this phenomenon as they designate men as head of the household and the decision-makers for their children’s future, even to the point where they decide if their children will study or work. This sexual division of rights and obligations also results in women being confined to domestic duties, which complicates and retrains their participation in organized activities in a public context.

However, women constitute and sustain a large part of the scaffolding that supports the development of their societies and, for this reason, their participation in activities on sensitization and organization against child labor is fundamental. Also, the participation of women is regarded as indispensable
when, as a result of crisis and changing roles concerning gender, many men migrate to the cities and, therefore, women become ever more involved in agricultural activities. With the absence of accessible child care services, women are obliged to bring their children to work in the fields. This action not only exposes their children to hazards associated with agricultural labor - tools, pesticides, etc. - but they are also introducing them to labor conditions that will eventually encourage the incidence of child labor in agriculture. Furthermore, various studies carried out on a global scale have determined that when women possess a relatively greater control over family conditions and they have more resources (material, symbolic, emotional, etc.), it is more likely that their children will be sent to school instead of out to work.

Consequently, it is immensely important that women participate in all of the actions that seek to prevent and eradicate child labor.

In addition, beyond guaranteeing the participation of women in activities within a public context, particularly in the prevention of child labor, traditional gender roles that limit fields of action and male and female attitudes must also be modified. Subsequently, it is fundamental to favor empowerment processes for women so that they may become agents of their own development and that of their families. This situation also encourages processes of change in the construction of traditional masculinity which would lead to a better situation for both sexes.

During the execution of the Project on the Prevention and Elimination of Child Labor in the Coffee Industry in Guatemala, begun in 1999, the problem of achieving female participation in different organized activities was detected. For example, the female presence in the sensitization sessions or at school meetings was very low. As a result, the majority of the coordinating or presidential positions of the various committees were held
by men. Even the marital status of the women was a factor in determining the respect and legitimacy afforded to the Project’s activities by the other members of the community. In other words, there was a tendency to devalue activities if single women were involved in them. Given this problem, it became an underlying objective of the Project to break away from these stereotypes and incorporate a greater number of women into the meetings and local committees.

In 2002, with the aim of confronting these types of situations, the Project, through the non-governmental organization, HOPE, began a gender sensitization activity with parents and teachers. The main objective of this practice was to promote a debate on the problems associated with gender inequality in a relaxed, recreational and non-threatening environment. The exercise allowed people with diverging opinions on gender roles to agree on some topics. This activity was carried out in 22 rural coffee producing communities involved with the Project.
The methodology used in the development of the practice was the following:

- Discussion groups of around 30 people made up of both sexes were formed. It was determined that small groups made people feel more inhibited about sharing their opinions and visions.

- Facilitators welcomed the groups, explained the activities and established rules, particularly the rule that there were no winners or losers. In other words, it was settled that the objective was not to win the discussion but to express personal points of view and to respectfully listen to the opinions of others. For this reason, it was established that to talk you must raise your hand, respect those wishing to speak and wait until each person had finished before joining in on the debate.

- To begin the dynamic, the facilitator presented a statement that later served as a basis for debate. The sentences used were provocative, for example, "Men should make all the decisions in the home" or "Men can have sexual experiences before marriage". The sentences used were selected in accordance with the research carried out on common perceptions surrounding gender roles and mandates in the communities where the activity was carried out.

- Once the controversial sentence was given to the group, the participants were asked to separate up into different areas of the room according to whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement.

- When they were divided into different groups, the debate was begun according to the rules that had been established.

- During the debate, people were asked to change groups once they had been persuaded to modify their point of view due to the arguments presented, (at this point of the exercise, some people moved to the center of the room when they were unsure of their position. Nobody was made feel embarrassed or ashamed for changing their opinion).

- The discussion continued until a consensus was reached on the topic.
The exercise also served to persuade men of the importance of allowing their wives and partners to participate in prevention and organization activities on the theme of child labor.

**Key steps in the implementation of the sensitization process**

- The conviction of a social organization and an international organism to transform traditional gender roles and facilitate the empowerment of women and young girls as important elements in the tasks of preventing and combating child labor.

- The drawing-up of a proposal for pleasant, recreational and non-threatening work that permits both men and women to express their opinions freely and without censorship.

- The establishment of alliances with community bodies and with teaching and parent associations in order to facilitate the announcement and legitimization of the activity.

- The participation of a facilitating group with experience in gender sensitization, in child labor in agriculture and with sufficient sensitivity to deal with different cultures in a respectful manner.
Why is sensitization on topics of gender equality a good practice?

This activity constitutes a good practice because it favors changes in gender roles, perceptions and attitudes maintained by parents and teachers which contribute to processes of social change and lead to the construction of a fairer and more equitable society. With this exercise, prevalent gender inequalities in communities are revealed and it helps to deconstruct the traditional notions and perceptions that favor masculine control.

This practice also guaranteed that the Project’s activities were structured in a way that offered men and women better opportunities for equitable participation. Therefore, the participation of women was significantly increased, which meant that their level of involvement in the prevention of child labor in agriculture also grew, along with their participation in the safety and health courses and school committees. In fact, various community initiatives have been led by women, a phenomenon which has granted them a more valuable role in local development and was not previously foreseen in the Project’s original design. For teachers, participation in the process has been equally positive and, as a result, they have shown a greater sensitivity in their attitudes towards children in the classroom.

These sensitization actions were carried out without openly criticizing men which would have generated negative or defensive reactions. The facilitators led the activity and they introduced new concepts in a sensitive, respectful and self-restrained manner. They made important efforts to create a relaxed and fun atmosphere, where nobody felt ashamed or embarrassed but, which urged both men
and women to revise their attitudes and to rethink the practices that produced gender discrimination.

Furthermore, this sensitization exercise was repeated at a relatively low cost in many communities in the area. Once the initial investment was made, facilitators could reproduce the experience in other communities and with the same positive outcomes. From this perspective, this practice may be performed again in other contexts.

Thus, this sensitization process constitutes a good practice because it offers men and women the opportunity to express their opinions on topics concerning gender equality in a safe, relaxed and informal setting. When everybody feels that they can give their opinions and be listened to, greater opportunities open up so that a consensus can be reached on ways to progress towards the construction of a fairer society that is free of all kinds of discrimination. Therefore, the gender sensitization exercise became a vehicle to modify attitudes and empower both men and women.

Necessary conditions for a good gender sensitization process

- The conviction of the projects’ executing agents to confront child labor, and as part of a comprehensive understanding of the problem, it is also necessary to incorporate issues regarding gender inequality and discrimination against women and young girls.

- To rely on a team of facilitators that can implement the sensitization process in a fluid, respectful way, while taking the participants different perceptions and attitudes into account.

- A good ice-breaking strategy for communities so as to establish alliances with local organizations, trade unions, teachers and parents and to facilitate the announcement of the meetings and to help banish fears and resistance on the topic.
Contacts and References:

Erwing Roberto Jordán Ramírez  
Program Coordinator  
Program on Prevention and Elimination of Child Labor in Agriculture  
ILO-IPEC  
San Marcos, Guatemala

Project HOPE  
E-mail: aragonhope@itelgua.com or victorhope@itelgua.com  
Guatemala

ILO/IPEC Office in Guatemala  
Avenida Reforma 6-64  
Zona 9, Edificio Plaza Corporativa  
Piso 10, Oficina 1001  
Telephone: (502) 2339-1226/27/28  
Fax: (502) 2339-1230  
Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala
Social mobilization for the prevention and progressive elimination of child labor in commercial agriculture

Level 3: Replicated practice

Key Words: social mobilization, community networks, intersectoral organization, inter-institutional coordination, citizen participation, local committees.

Description of good practice

Until recently, child labor in agriculture in Central America and the Dominican Republic was not considered a problem due to the fact that it was concealed, minimized and accepted as a culturally appropriate practice for the socialization and training of children. With the objective of counteracting these tendencies, the projects on the Eradication of Child Labor in the Coffee industry and in Commercial Agriculture and subsequently, with the Project on the Prevention and Elimination of Child Labor in Agriculture, a series of sensitization actions have been carried out among which it is worth noting forums, workshops, the production and distribution of informative materials and broadcasting news through the local, national and international media. These projects have promoted a closer relationship with enterprises, trade unions, teaching associations, small producers, families, community leaders, authorities from the respective school districts and even high-level government authorities.

These sensitization actions lead to relevant processes of social mobilization in order to eradicate child labor and encourage processes of enrolment and permanence of children in the educational system. Among the
important efforts that were created as a result of the Projects, it is worth mentioning at least three: the parent and teacher committees (or surveillance committees), local delegations from government commissions to eradicate child labor and the active participation of enterprise groups in the tasks of preventing and combating child labor in commercial agriculture.

**Parents and teacher committees**

The creation of parent and teacher committees was an important element, not only for the mobilization of the communities in favor of the Projects’ objectives, but, also for their work in the surveillance committees that identified child laborers and sensitized their families to the need to remove their children from labor and send them to school. For example, in Cilasco, Guatemala, these community committees did not only help to sensitize families of child laborers but they contributed valuable elements which helped define a relevant and pertinent educational strategy that satisfied local needs. These aforementioned committees also served to carry out participatory analyses that indicated
the communities’ understanding of child labor within the family setting.

In Azua, the Dominican Republic, the local support committees were instrumental in the success of the Activity Rooms. These committees did not only take responsibility for locating the places for the development of the Activity Rooms and monitoring their adequate usage but they also helped to detect children that were absent from school. Thus, they collaborated in the sensitization of families and other sectors of the community.

In Chontales, Nicaragua, community networks were created which were made up of parents, adolescents and community leaders with the objective of monitoring child labor. The network members carried out house calls in order to detect irregular situations, sensitize families and to make a census on the sector of the population concerning children and adolescents and on the educational and work situation of these young people. These networks have reached such a level of legitimacy that the community reports cases of school absence or child labor to the monitors.

In Turrialba, Costa Rica, various committees were organized and comprised of teachers, students, parents and the youth population in general. These committees have been fundamental for the sensitization and monitoring tasks on child labor. As a result of these committees, activities that encourage reflection on the problem have been organized on the occasion of June 12th (the International Day against Child Labor) and they have facilitated a closer relationship and communication with the local media, which may enable a significant number of the population to receive information without
posing additional costs for the project. Also, these committees have been placed in charge of notifying the respective entities when a child is absent from school and to carry out house calls in order to monitor the situation and to motivate families on the importance of maintaining under-age children in the educational system.

Local delegations of the government commissions

The local delegations of the government commissions for the eradication of child labor also contributed to the processes of community sensitization and mobilization. Even though the members of these commissions and their operation are different in each country, their contribution has been fundamental to the achievement of the Projects’ objectives. For example, in the Dominican Republic, a dialogue session was set up with employers, trade unionists, community organizations, social communicators and government bodies every 45 days to define strategies on how to pay more attention to and prevent child labor in agriculture.

In Nicaragua, at the municipal and departmental level, there are technical committees which rely on the participation of the Ministries for Health, Labor, Education and the Family, as well as representatives from local government and community networks. The existence of these committees is essential given the fact that they grant institutional legitimacy and sustainability to the actions carried out to prevent and confront child labor.

In Guatemala, a Dialogue Table for the eradication of child labor was set up which is comprised of a network of institutions such as the Public Ministry, the Ministry for Labor, the Ministry of Education, the National Office for Women, the Office of the Human Rights Ombudsman and Centracap (The Domestic Workers Center). This network is officially recognized by the government and has promoted important inspection, sensitization and training actions for justices of the peace, social communicators, companies and staff from the different relevant public institutions in the area.
In Turrialba, Costa Rica, an institutional network was created in order to support the technical assistance and training supplied to families who will benefit from the income-generating component of IPEC’s Project. Also, some of these government agencies got involved in the tasks of prevention and sensitization on child labor. The network is composed of various decentralized institutions, such as INCOPEESA, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, the National Institute of Learning, the Institute of Agrarian Development, the National Council of Production and the local municipal government, among others. Also, the local government, composed of the Mayor’s office, the Municipal council and the District Councils, committed itself to the sensitization tasks against child labor, declared IPEC’s project to be of “municipal interest”; created a Child Labor Unit within the corporation; and assumed monitoring responsibilities and the task of managing of data-bases on child labor in agriculture. Also, 18 agricultural agents from the Ministry of Agriculture were trained and sensitized on the topic.

Coordination with enterprise groups

With these Projects, an important union has been achieved between agri-industrial companies of exporters and producer associations. Therefore, some agri-industrial and exporter companies, which employed children, have become involved in the actions on the prevention and progressive eradication of child labor. Though they may have initially felt threatened and distrustful, the sensitization and lobbying processes have
demonstrated that the Projects are benefiting them with their actions to prevent commercial risks and possible sanctions that allow the children to work for them on their plantations or industrial processing establishments.

The most successful processes in coordination with the enterprise sector have been in Honduras and the Dominican Republic. In Honduras, for example, the participation of the Honduran Council for Private Enterprise (COHEP) and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Choluteca was fundamental. The intervention of these entities, in coordination with staff from the Ministry of Labor and from the Projects, raised awareness on the need to eradicate child labor and the contracting of under-age children in the area was prohibited. Along with this, COHEP has developed a sensitization program for its associates all over the country and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry has become a permanent ally of the Projects in order to facilitate sensitization activities at a local level.

In the Dominican Republic, the enterprise groups dedicated to tomato growing and processing were involved in a positive way by prohibiting the employment of children and contributing to the sensitization activities, as well as providing training for the generation of income. Also, these groups have closely participated in inter-institutional committees that operate in the Project’s area for the prevention and eradication of child labor. An unquestionable success derived from the Project’s actions in this zone concerns the law approved by the Agricultural Bank to include a clause which states that the employment
of a child workforce will be considered grounds for rejection of a credit application. This bank possesses 37 offices throughout the Dominican Republic and more than 300 local credit agencies.

**Key steps in social mobilization actions**

- A sensitization and training process for local authorities, community leaders, parents, teachers, businessmen, trade unionists and other relevant agents in order to visualize the problem and its implications.

- A lobbying process with the local and national authorities, the enterprise sector and the trade unions so as to prioritize the problem in their work agendas and define their role and responsibilities in the strategies for the prevention and elimination of child labor in agriculture.

- The identification and involvement of highly credible and committed people that act as engines in the social mobilization processes.

- The writing-up of work plans that have been agreed upon in each sector (community, governmental and private) and that specify the responsibilities of each participating entity and their particular contributions to the tasks that are defined.

- The definition of an entity or organization with enough leadership and credibility to summon permanent meetings, grant follow-up to the work plans and mobilize committee members in emergency situations.
Why was the process successful?

The sensitization programs, as well as the social mobilization actions promoted by the Projects, achieved significant changes in the areas of intervention which has been confirmed by different evaluations. These actions have raised social and institutional awareness on the negative consequences of child labor in agriculture and on the need to establish concrete programs that help to eradicate it.

The social mobilization generated ensures that the communities and the different public and private entities that have participated will adopt a vigilant attitude so as to prevent and eradicate child labor, at least on a mid-term basis. These processes have also contributed to the strengthening of the capacity of community, governmental and private organizations, in order to actively and decidedly participate in the actions against child labor in agriculture.

The notable success of sensitization was due, partly, to the establishment of participatory and non-threatening processes in which the different agents could present their ideas, interests and convictions. At the same time, these aforementioned processes acted as feedback so that the projects could adjust their strategies to satisfy the expectations of the target population and, therefore, facilitate the achievement of its objectives.

The actions of social sensitization and mobilization constitute a good practice given the fact that they expose the problem of child labor, raise awareness on the negative consequences of this form of labor, facilitate the social organization of communities, allow for the creation of surveillance and monitoring devices and help many children to reintegrate or to stay within the educational system. Therefore, important changes were brought about in the business and banking culture concerning child labor, which had a substantial impact on the removal of children from agricultural labor and the agricultural industries.
Necessary conditions for a good social mobilization process

- A systematic process of sensitization and training on the realities and consequences of child labor in agriculture for all of the relevant sectors.

- A lobbying process and technical assistance for national and local government authorities, private enterprises and civil organizations in order to achieve the integration of this problem in their work agendas.

- Facilitating agreements between different individuals, agencies and organizations to generate an exchange of knowledge and joint actions.

- Complementary efforts among government sectors; trade union organizations and civil society; and the enterprise groups, in order to strengthen the response to the problem.

- Defining work plans and realistic goals for all participating individuals and organizations, as well as the designation of clear responsibilities so as not to discourage those involved or dismantle their efforts.

- The location and integration in the mobilization processes of institutional agents or individuals with legitimacy, prestige, or the capacity to include the topic in the public agenda and to influence local and national public opinion.

- The presence of an entity or organization that grants regular follow-up to the initiatives and summons periodic meetings so as to guarantee the continuity and sustainability of the committees and actions.
Contacts and references:

Josip Margetic  
*Chief Technical Advisor*  
Program on Prevention and Elimination of Child Labor in Agriculture  
ILO-IPEC  
San José, Costa Rica

Erwing Roberto Jordán Ramírez  
*Program Coordinator*  
Program on Prevention and Elimination of Child Labor in Agriculture  
ILO-IPEC  
San Marcos, Guatemala

Carlos Félix  
*Program Coordinator*  
Program on Prevention and Elimination of Child Labor in Agriculture  
ILO-IPEC: Santo Domingo, the Dominican Republic

María Lourdes Xirinachs  
*Program Coordinator*  
Program on Prevention and Elimination of Child Labor in Agriculture  
ILO-IPEC  
San José, Costa Rica

Carmen Pineda  
*Program Coordinator*  
Program on Prevention and Elimination of Child Labor in Agriculture  
ILO-IPEC  
Managua, Nicaragua
Popular theatre in Nicaragua as a sensitization tool

Level 2: Successfully demonstrated practice

Key words: popular theatre, communication techniques, alternative sensitization methodologies.

Description of good practice

In Nicaragua, child labor continues to be a serious problem due to factors such as recent internal conflict, the high rate of unemployment (14%, with a 36% rate of sub-employment), and the high percentage of the population that lives in poverty stricken conditions (70%). The National Household Survey (1996) identified 109,525 people between the ages of 10 and 19 years who were working in rural areas. Despite the Nicaraguan legislation establishing obligatory primary education and setting the minimum age of employment at 14 years, an important percentage of children and adolescents do not attend, or else abandon, the educational system. In the coffee industry, during the harvesting season (October–March), a large number of children accompany their mothers and fathers to work. This results in a very low attendance and continuity rate in the schools.

Though coffee is an important agricultural export product for Nicaragua, the majority of the country’s agricultural workers live in poverty. In some plantations, people live and work without basic services such as the availability of drinking water and sanitation amenities. The adult workers of these plantations are paid in accordance with the
quantity produced, resulting in their sons and daughters being used as a workforce to increase production and, therefore, generate a higher salary. The majority of the coffee produced (90%) in Nicaragua is grown in the areas of Matagalpa and Jinotega, and even though there is no precise information on the quantity of children that work in the coffee plantations, it is estimated that between 8,000 and 10,000 under-age children are involved in coffee production in these two areas alone.

In Nicaragua, the main causes of child labor are directly linked to the economic and social conditions of the majority of the population, mainly in rural areas. Among the many socio-economic conditions that affect the population and lead to an increase in child labor, it is important to mention the high rate of illiteracy, the lack of a relevant, equitable and quality education, insufficient social investment (health care, education and housing) and the high unemployment rates and poverty in rural areas.

The coffee industry in Nicaragua is a high employment generator during the harvesting season. Children and adolescents make up most of the unpaid workforce that is employed, a fact which limits their comprehensive development. Under-age children work in all of the stages of the process: harvesting, cleaning, weeding, fumigating and leaf-stripping, planting and transplanting and carrying water prepared with fungicides and pesticides for fumigation and leaf-stripping. Theses activities alter and change children’s habits and life styles as they work long days and this affects their physical and physiological development.

In order to respond to this problem, the Project on the Eradication of Child Labor in the Coffee Industry and in Commercial Agriculture and subsequently, the Project on the Prevention and Elimination of Child Labor
in Agriculture proposed the need to increase sensitization on the problem of child labor in the agricultural sector and to strengthen the ability of communities, organizations and institutions to confront the problem. The proposal was developed using popular theatre as a means to educate, inform and sensitize the population. Theatre, acting as a tool for communication and expression, offered the possibility to present a social dimension to child labor in the agricultural sector and thus, to sensitize the various sectors involved in the problem.

This initiative promotes dramatic arts as a medium for young people to explore their feelings, express themselves and transmit a message to a large community. With the direction and support of teachers and other members of the community, children and adolescents acquire the skills and the confidence necessary to create and perform their own plays, adapted to their cultural and social context.

The technique of popular theatre was implemented by the Center for Educational Services in Health and the Environment (CESESMA) in Jinotega and Matagalpa. The theatre play “The hidden face of coffee” was performed by children and adolescents between 10 and 18 years and it succeeded in reflecting the complex and difficult reality of child labor in the coffee industry. This practice probes and analyzes each one of the situations that children and adolescents live through in the coffee fields. The plays call all social agents (parents, foremen, supervisors, owners, and workers in general) to assume responsibility and to commit themselves to participate in the prevention and eradication of child labor. In the play, children and adolescents, who are ex-agricultural laborers, present the life of under-age laborers in the coffee plantations and other people involved in the process. At the end of the play, the actors and the public reflect on the lives of child and adolescent laborers and on the role that various social agents must play in the prevention and eradication of child labor.

This activity was also carried out in the Dominican Republic.
Key steps for the implementation of the project

- The conviction of a social organization and an international organism to transform the concept of child labor in agriculture and contribute to its eradication.

- The creation of a versatile, fun, creative and non-threatening tool to allow actors, as well as the audience, to reflect on child labor and on the role they play in its eradication.

- The participation of a team facilitator who not only has experience in the dramatic arts but also with child labor in agriculture.

- The establishment of collaboration devices and alliances with community associations and groups consisting of teachers, parents, producers and estate owners, in order to facilitate and promote the performances.
**Why is popular theatre a good practice?**

This activity constitutes a good practice because it approaches the problem of child labor in an innovative and creative way for a large audience. During the process, artistic abilities were discovered, expensive materials were not required and the play could be easily performed in many places and contexts. The theatre favors transformations in the attitudes and perceptions of those who come to the performances, which in turn contributes to social change orientated towards the construction of a just society, free from all forms of child and adolescent exploitation.

This practice had a positive impact as it strengthened child and adolescent participation in the project's activities, as well as sensitizing adults to the importance of eradicating and preventing child labor. In fact, the actors involved are children who had been working in the coffee plantations. The populations of 13 estates and 10 communities participated in this sensitization process, as a result of which they were offered the necessary tools to strengthen the fulfillment of child and adolescent rights, and finally, to facilitate the gradual eradication of child labor in agriculture.

The play was a constructive criticism of adults who involve children in agricultural labor and those who contract them, whilst trying not to generate negative or defensive reactions. The plays feature dramatizations of multi-tasking and the precarious working conditions faced...
by under-age workers in agricultural labor. These performances allowed for reflection and criticism of this form of exploitation.

In addition, the play contains elements of sustainability as it is inexpensive and it has already been shown in many communities in the region and even in other countries. Once the initial investment was made, the experience was repeated in other communities and it achieved the same results. From this perspective, this practice is repeatable in other contexts.

Thus, popular theatre, as an instrument of sensitization, constitutes a good practice as it offers opportunities for a large audience to express their feelings and reflect on child labor in agriculture from a creative perspective. At the same time, this activity promotes the construction of a fair society that is respectful of child and adolescent rights.
Necessary conditions for the implementation of theatre as a sensitization tool

- The conviction of project executors to confront child labor using creative and fun sensitization tools as a comprehensive approach to the problem.

- A team that can involve children in the creative process and produce an attractive, direct and convincing, but non-threatening, play so as to lower resistance on the topic.

- A good ice-breaking strategy for communities that will help establish alliances with local trade union, teaching and parent organizations in order to facilitate attendance at sensitization activities.

- Integration of the theme of child labor in the Municipal Commissions on Children and Adolescents in the municipalities and local communities, so as to count on the support of volunteers and local government and non-governmental institutions.

- The collaboration of government bodies from the central, departmental and municipal level on the definition and application of policies which pay comprehensive attention to children and adolescents.
Contact and references:

Carmen Pineda  
Program Coordinator  
Program on Prevention and Elimination of Child Labor in Agriculture  
ILO-IPEC

ILO/IPEC Office in Nicaragua  
De la Distribuidora Vicky 1 ½ cuadras al sur, Casa No. 293, Altamira D’Este,  
Telephone: (505) 2705212  
Fax: (505) 2770806  
Managua, Nicaragua