

23rd March 2006

International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour - SRI LANKA

Background:

The project aims at eliminating worst forms of child labour as a matter of priority in 3 prime sectors, namely trafficking, child domestic labour, child soldiers and has now extended support to children affected by the tsunami. The programme adopts a holistic approach to interventions, working with the direct target group of children through an inclusive preventive strategy within the framework of a vulnerable community. Hence the interventions are targeted to meet the needs of children within the compulsory school going age of 5–14 years, the older children of 15-17 years of age, older siblings of vulnerable families who may be inclined to send their children out to work and also through support to families i.e through empowering women with the objective of them keeping their children in schools. Life skills education is factored into most education interventions and on occasion adults have also received Non Formal Education (NFE).

Trafficking and Child Domestic Labour:

Strategy: Education proven to be the most cost-effective preventive measure, the project provides a cafeteria of educational interventions such as remedial classes for children already in school who need academic support beyond the classroom; catch-up education for those who have dropped out of school and NFE (through the Bridge school and Open school model) for those children who have never been to school. Vocational training is provided as centre-based as well as community-based interventions, all of which are supported by business development services such as career counseling, start your business courses, savings and credit education and at times where necessary micro-finance facilities. Those who desire job placements are placed in employment and closely monitored by implementing partners. IPEC has developed a tracing system which has been piloted in some project areas under the trafficking project and a beneficiary tracking database is presently being piloted under the tsunami project.

In addition to direct interventions in the form of education, vocational training, psycho-social support, more upstream work in the nature of policy development, formulation of codes of conduct, advocacy and behavioral change communication have been undertaken.

Project Management Structure and Implementing partners: The Projects work with the Ministry of Labour, the National Child Protection Authority, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Vocational Training amongst other Government agencies, in addition to working closely with trade unions such as the Ceylon Workers Congress, National Workers Congress, and the Lanka Jathika Estate Workers Union. UNICEF, UNAIDS and other ILO projects provide inputs to IPEC projects particularly those situated in the plantation sector. The Employers have been brought in through a network developed by IRRITECH (an NGO based in the North Central Province). The Employers Federation of Ceylon has played a catalytic role in harnessing the energy and commitment of the private sector on the plantations to support the Plantation Human Development Trust to implement a child labour project on the estates not without support from the trade unions.

23rd March 2006

Gender considerations: All the projects under the IPEC framework in Sri Lanka take into consideration the special needs of girls and boys within a sectoral context. Hence in the case of trafficking it was felt that special attention should be paid to the boy children who are victims of cyber-crimes whilst in the plantations and area of CSEC the emphasis was on meeting the special needs of the girl children who formed 70% of the target group.

OSH considerations: IPEC consciously takes care to ensure that vocational training is provided in a safe and healthy environment and the project factors in provision of preventive gear for the use by trainees. Tool kits are provided at the beginning of the course (where feasible) with a view to providing the girls and boys with practical experience that is sufficient to ensure that once on their own, they have the necessary expertise and confidence to use such equipment in a manner that will not jeopardize their health and safety. Service providers and partners are also provided with the necessary technical knowledge on OSH related issues and monitoring visits support the maintaining of the required standards during such interventions.

The Way Forward: Whilst both the Trafficking Project and Child Domestic Labour Project are drawing to a close, IPEC is presently supporting the implementation of the Action Plan for Children Affected by War and also providing tsunami responses in two focused areas, namely Trincomalee and Galle. IPEC is also undertaking some strategic work to assist its constituents to implement commitments made by the Government under ILO C 182. The Minimum Standards developed with IPEC technical support will be pilot tested and monitored through the Government run mobile unit and a rolling plan for constant capacity building has been developed. Plans are underway to reinforce the knowledge base on child labour and related issues with technical and financial support from IPEC. This will contribute to preparatory work to take on a national time bound programme based on the National Plan of Action to eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labour.

Vocational Training and Skills Development for Children in the North-Eastern Province Affected by War (CAW)

The IPEC programme implements a number of activities in the severely war affected 8 districts - Amparai, Mullaitivu, Jaffna, Kilinochchi, Mannar, Mullaitivu, Trincomalee, and Vavuniya - of the NorthEast of Sri Lanka, four of these districts have coastal areas that have also been devastated by the Tsunami. The particular vulnerability of children in the current crisis situation at risk of child labour is critical. In this challenging context, the specific IPEC responses are delivered within two inter-UN agency projects: The *Action Plan for Children affected by War* and the project on *Repatriation, Reintegration, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction (4Rs) in North East Sri Lanka*. The target group of beneficiaries are vulnerable children, including child soldiers from female headed households and internally displaced families and adult family members.

23rd March 2006

In both projects, IPEC has taken the lead in the area of vocational skills training. The development objective of IPEC's NorthEast programme is to contribute to the withdrawal of child labour, specifically children soldiers from the Worst Forms of Child Labour (WFCL) through reintegration training programmes and the prevention of entry of children into child labour through employment linked training programmes.

In particular the vocational training process supported by IPEC since 2003, has contributed to the revival and strengthening of the severely weakened NorthEast vocational training system to promote employment, particularly self-employment, for the target group and contributed to increasing the quality and capacity of training providers. Training has been undertaken in variety of ways: formal centre-based training, informal rural skills training at the community level, mobile training, placement in apprenticeships and on-the-job-training. Simultaneously children were also exposed to life skills training, provided with vocational and career guidance, and business start up knowledge to enable them to explore their potential for self-employment and entrepreneurial business opportunities. IPEC has also assisted more than 20 training providing organizations to upgrade their technical capacities and training equipment to deliver quality programs. Trainers and staff of implementing agencies have also been provided with information on issues of Child Labour and the necessity for basic occupational and safety standards in their training delivery.

The achievements of the project are note worthy: As of December 2005, 1368 children, including 152 child soldiers have already benefited from the project, and more than 167 are in ongoing training programmes.¹ One hundred and twenty (120) adult family members have also been given training. The types of training supported range from sewing, and the construction trades to home gardening and bakery products. All trainees completing the programme were issued with appropriate tool kits to enable them to obtain some form of decent work.

¹ The dropouts from the training have not been included