

Evaluation Summary: Brighter Futures Program, Phase I (BFI) - Combating Child Labor through Education in Nepal

Project and Evaluation Facts

Region/Country: ASIA/Nepal

Grantee: World Education (WE)

Project Duration: April 3, 2002 – May 31, 2006

Fiscal Year and Funding Level:

FY 2002 USD 4,000,000

Grantee Matching Funds: USD 1,230,327

Type of Evaluation: Final

Date of Evaluation: April 2006

Mode of Evaluation: Independent

Evaluation Management: Macro International

Evaluator(s): Keith Jeddre-Fisher (team leader) and Narad Sharma

- Reduction of barriers to the success in the formal education system of children removed from or at risk of entering into WFCL;
- National education policy dialogue reflects the needs of child workers and children at risk of becoming child workers.

The project was designed to work closely with government actors, NGO's, and community-based organizations, including the Ministry of Labor, Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training, Ministry of Education, and the International Labor Organization's International Program for the Elimination of Child Labor.

Background and Context

Summary of Project Objectives and Focus

The Brighter Futures Program was a four-year project that aimed to reduce the incidence of the worst forms of child labor (WFCL) in Nepal through the provision of educational services. The project was designed in the context of the Ministry of Labor and Transport Management's National Master Plan on Child Labor – the Time Bound Program for the elimination of the WFCL – as well as the 10th National Development Plan.

The project operated in 22 districts and was focused on children engaged in or at risk of engaging in the following WFCL: portering, domestic servitude, rag-picking, mining, and carpet production, as well as victims of child trafficking and children at risk of being trafficked.

The project was guided by the following Immediate Objectives:

- Greater parental and community participation in formal and out-of-school education of children removed from or at risk of entering into WFCL;
- Quality and relevance of, and access to non-formal education (NFE) programs improved for children removed from or at risk of entering into WFCL;

Purpose and Scope of Evaluation

The final evaluation examined project performance during the cooperative agreement in relation to stated objectives. Specifically, the evaluation reviewed and assessed activities with respect to their relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. The evaluation was intended to provide USDOL, WE, other project stakeholders and stakeholders working to combat child labor more broadly, documented lessons learned, potential good practices, and models of intervention that would serve to inform future child labor projects and policies in Nepal and elsewhere, as appropriate. It would also serve as an important accountability function for USDOL and WE.

Methodology of Evaluation

The evaluation was based on a desk review of relevant documentation, followed by a field mission to four provinces conducted by the evaluation team from the 19th of February 2006 to the 3rd of March 2006. The field work consisted of interviews, focus groups and other information collection techniques with stakeholders including government representatives, NGO's at the national, provincial, and district level, children, parents of beneficiaries, teachers, project staff, and USDOL representatives. The evaluation was affected in accordance with the terms of reference (TOR), as prepared by Macro International with input from USDOL and other key stakeholders.

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Evaluation's Main Findings & Conclusions

Performance Summary

Despite challenges such as internal conflict and changes in governmental and institutional support, the Brighter Futures Program has provided educational services to nearly 24,000 children engaged in WFCL. The project has also provided educational services to nearly 42,000 children at risk of engaging in WFCL. In addition, the project has served to affect the enabling environment through engagement in select national forums, as well as through support for key initiatives such as Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) and Quality Education Resource Packages (QERP).

Nonetheless, the evaluation notes challenges in the project's ability and capacity to monitor children, specifically in regard to ensuring beneficiaries are withdrawn and stay withdrawn from the WFCL. Although the evaluator contends that working conditions of nearly all participating children have improved, the evaluation notes that "there is no objective information on the impact on the children in terms of moving out of the defined areas of WFCL."

Lessons Learned & Recommendations

Lessons Learned

- Given that the project design required coordination amongst several organizations, clarity in regard to the expected contributions and responsibilities of each organization is advantageous;
- Security concerns should be recognized during project preparation and consideration should be given to potential alternative strategies;
- Implementation, participation, and ownership of project activities by local stakeholders contributes significantly to the continuation of project activities in a conflict situation;
- If performance indicators require data to be analyzed at the level of the individual child, an electronic database is needed;

- The intake form should be less complex, giving priority to child labor and education-related issues; and
- It is important for child identification and child enrollment to occur simultaneously or as close as possible.

Key Recommendations

- Post-intervention monitoring, coupled with counseling and support, should be used in conjunction with key initiatives, such as Self Employment Education Package (SEEP), Vocational Training, and Apprenticeships;
- Information on changes in children's work status should be collected and monitored;
- Further planning is required to determine how education can be used to withdraw children from WFCL;
- As transitions serve as an important indicator, greater monitoring and reporting should be provided for the following transitions:
 - from NFE to formal school,
 - from NFE to vocational training,
 - from vocation training to employment.
- The most important outcome for vocational training is employment and the level of income achieved – indicators for these outcomes need to be developed;
- Thought needs to be given to how these interventions can lead to a more rapid withdrawal of children from WFCL;
- Support for institutional development should be provided to both PTAs as well as School Management Committees to ensure clear delineation of roles and to ensure they serve to complement each other;
- Contracts with partners need to include specific responsibilities for subsequent follow up and monitoring of participants;
- A study of the 2004/2005 SEEP graduates needs to be conducted to determine intervention outcomes, as well as to review successes and challenges.