



International
Labour
Organization

**FINAL EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT
COMBATING CHILD LABOR IN CENTRAL AMERICA
CAM/95/05/060**

SYNTHESIS REPORT

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This document has not been professionally edited

**International
Programme on the
Elimination of
Child Labour
(IPEC)**

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1. INTRODUCTION

The project “Combating child labor in Central America”, financed by the United States Department of Labor (USDOL), included five action programs (AP) in different countries and a sub-regional component (systematic documentation of the processes and information).¹ The project was executed between December 1998 and December 2000. Although it has not yet been financially closed, all the project activities have been completed.

The following table shows details of the APs implemented in the context of this project.

AP Code	AP title	Country	Implementation
CAM/95/05/061	Children breaking stones in Retalhuleu	Guatemala	June 1998 – Jan. 2000
CAM/95/05/062	Elimination of child prostitution in San José, Costa Rica	Costa Rica	Dec. 1998 – Dec. 2000
CAM/95/05/063	Elimination and prevention of child labor in hazardous commercial agriculture in Constanza	Dominican Republic	Dec. 1998 – Dec. 2000
CAM/95/05/064	Elimination of child prostitution in Leon Bus Station	Nicaragua	Dec. 1998 – Dec. 2000
CAM/95/05/065	Combating child labor in shellfish harvesting in El Salvador	El Salvador	July 1999 – Dec. 2000

The APs have been executed by different implementing agencies, including governmental and non-governmental organizations. The ministries of labor and education participated in all of them as partners, as well as many other community-based organizations, local institutions and national agencies. The strategy followed in the APs combined multiple actions in different components, as can be seen in table 2. Further details can be found in the full evaluation reports.

In synthesis, the APs executed activities to obtain more information on the target groups (mostly baseline studies) and developed strategies of *prevention* (mostly through awareness raising and social mobilization), *withdrawal* (through the provision of economic alternatives to the families) and *rehabilitation* (mainstreaming children into formal school or non-formal education and providing them with social assistance). In specific cases, protection activities have been developed as a transitional measure towards the elimination of child labor.

The sub-regional component intended to develop a monitoring and information system for the APs, accessible through the Internet. The activities have been coordinated by IPEC’s Sub-regional office in San Jose, and executed by several partners, including consultants specialized in documentation and firms dealing with the development of information packages and databases. The main outcomes of this component—which will be internally reviewed once the system becomes fully operational—can be found in the box 3 of this synthesis report.

¹ There was one single project document with five annexes, which later were developed into action programs, using as design format the “Action Program Summary Outline.”

Table 2. Main components of APs

	Children breaking stones in Retalhuleu, Guatemala	Hazardous commercial agriculture in Constanza, Dom. Rep.	Shellfish harvesting in El Salvador	Child prostitution in San José de Costa Rica	Child prostitution in Leon Bus Station, Nicaragua
Situation analysis	Baseline study	Baseline study	Baseline study	Mapping	Baseline study
Education	Development of appropriate curriculum Mainstreaming into formal school Transitional education measures Teacher training	Mainstreaming into formal school Provision of school supplies	Mainstreaming into formal school Vocational training for adolescents Center for Development of the Child	Socio-educational workshops (non formal education) Mainstreaming into formal school	Mainstreaming into formal school School leveling courses and after school tutoring Literacy programs Provision of school supplies
Social protection	Improvement of working conditions in quarries and legal assistance for adult workers Establishment of community pharmacies and sanitation facilities for families Training on health and sanitation and meal program for working children	Psychological assistance and counseling School breakfasts	Health check ups and nutrition campaigns	Health care Workshops on human and child rights	Training in personal hygiene, responsible sexuality, social skills, etc. Family counseling Recreational visits and sport activities Psychological assistance and self-help groups
Income generation	Feasibility study Revolving fund, training and technical assistance	Revolving fund, training and technical assistance	Revolving fund, training and technical assistance		Market analysis Revolving fund, training and technical assistance
Awareness raising and social mobilization	Local awareness raising campaign	Creation of local network for the elimination of child labor. Local awareness raising campaign	Creation of an institutional committee on child labor issues Local awareness raising campaign	Specific campaigns and workshops with key stakeholders Networking with protection institutions and mobilization of social actors	Networking with key stakeholders in the area Awareness raising sessions with teachers
Monitoring, systematic documentation and data base	Database with information on children	Documentation of process and results Monitoring system based on school records	Documentation of process and results	Documentation of process and results. Production and publication of material	Documentation of process and results Production and publication of material

1.1 Methodology of the evaluation

The action programs have been independently conceived and executed. The only link between them was the backstopping office (IPEC Sub-regional coordination in San Jose, Costa Rica). The project document and the AP summary outlines did not include details or funds linked to an evaluation.² In this context, IPEC managers decided, in consultation with the donor, to implement separate final evaluations (external and independent) for each of the components of the project. The evaluations were done at different times in the period September 2000 – July 2001 (table 3).

AP	Date	Evaluation team
Stone Quarries in Guatemala	September / December 2000	M. Benito
Sexual Exploitation in Costa Rica	January / June 2001	J. Kane, L. Agustin (part of thematic evaluation)
Sexual Exploitation in Nicaragua	January / June 2001	
Shellfish harvesting in El Salvador	April / July 2001	W. Palacios, J. Morales, M. Aparicio
Agriculture in Dominican Republic	April / July 2001	L. Balbuena, J. Suriel

The two APs focusing on children forced into prostitution have been included in a thematic evaluation on trafficking and sexual exploitation (TSE). It was agreed that this study would be used as the final evaluation of the project. IPEC and USDOL will analyze the thematic evaluation report to determine whether another assessment is needed. Although it is evident that a thematic evaluation is different than a project evaluation—both in the focus and in the complexity of the analysis—this was considered as the best option in order not to overburden the project managers and because of the planning of a sub-regional program—much wider in scope and resources—for 2002. The Design, Evaluation and Database (DED) team and the technical team on vulnerable groups in IPEC Headquarters backstopped this thematic evaluation.

The rest of the APs targeted children working in hazardous occupations in rural environments. These programs have been evaluated with a common, project-oriented, methodology. Independent, local consultants (an individual consultant in one case and teams of consultants in the others) carried out the evaluations. Even though the terms of reference were similar, reports vary significantly due to the independent nature of these exercises. IPEC Sub-regional Office in San Jose, Costa Rica, did the backstopping of the evaluations, with the methodological and technical assistance of DED.

² The project document only stated that a final evaluation would be carried out upon completion of the program (section 8 “Organizational Arrangements”).

1.2 Structure of the synthesis report

This synthesis report, prepared by the DED Team, includes the main findings, conclusions and recommendations emerging from the four evaluation reports, as well as from other documents.³ Section 2 presents quantitative and qualitative outputs and results, while section 3 describes the main problems encountered by the evaluation teams. The last part of this report takes account of some of the practical consequences derived from the evaluation on the new planned interventions in Central America, in these particular sectors.

This summary will try to extract common patterns emerging from the evaluations, as well as the most remarkable specific issues, in order to draw the overall picture of the USDOL contribution to IPEC's efforts in Central America to prevent and progressively eliminate child labor in the region.

The full evaluation reports are included as annexes.

2. ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE ACTION PROGRAMS

Overall, the action programs have been considered as successful. Box 1 shows the exact sentences used in the evaluation reports to describe the general performance of the three projects dealing with hazardous work in the rural sector.

The case of the APs related to children involved in commercial sexual exploitation is different. These projects consisted largely of provision of direct services to children who have been exploited. This approach belongs to a "rescue"-based tradition, which aims to withdraw children from work and reinsert them into society, and rely on public homes / institutions and psychotherapeutic services. In general, only a small number of beneficiaries can be reached with such a strategy. Nevertheless, the thematic evaluation found elements worth replicating in the future, that will be briefly discussed below and that can be found in Chapter 3 of the full report (section "Programming elements that might be replicated.")

BOX 1

OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF THREE APs

"The project, as a whole, may be assessed as effective, in spite of the fact that some of the outputs initially expected were not fully reached" (*Stone quarries in Guatemala, paragraph 1 in section D – Conclusions*)

"The Constanza Action Program is a successful pilot project given that it has done all programmed activities and fulfilled its objectives" (*Hazardous agriculture in Dominican Republic; paragraph 1 of the executive summary.*)

"The program has generated awareness and involvement of the population in the progressive elimination of child labor, by improving health conditions, promoting schooling and providing economic alternatives to the families. Child labor in the Island has been almost completely eradicated: 95% of the target group no longer work in shellfish harvesting and, to date, attend school regularly" (*Shellfish harvesting in El Salvador, executive summary, section "Effects"*)

³ Since the thematic evaluation did not include a detailed analysis of the quantitative achievements of the APs dealing with children forced into prostitution, the information was extracted from the projects' final reports.

2.1. Effectiveness

Reaching the beneficiaries

The APs have reached a total of 1,266 children who have been either prevented from being engaged in work or withdrawn from hazardous occupations. The mechanisms designed to improve the family income have not been as successful. Roughly, only half of the targeted families have benefited from micro-credit schemes and other income generation activities. Some of the reasons for this are included in section 3. Table 4 shows the number of beneficiaries expected and reached in each of the programs.

Table 4. Expected and reached direct beneficiaries

	Expected direct beneficiaries	Direct beneficiaries reached	%
Sexual Exploitation in Nicaragua	100 children 70 families	123 children 73 families	123% 104%
Sexual Exploitation in Costa Rica	150 children	212 children	141%
Stone Quarries in Guatemala	258 children 189 families	288 children 51 families	112% 27%
Agriculture in Dominican Republic	250 children 150 families	468 children 73 families	187% 49%
Shellfish harvesting in El Salvador	175 children 20 families	175 children 15 families	100% 75%
TOTAL	933 children 429 families	1,266 children 212 families	136% 49%

Not all these children have benefited in the same way or proportion. Considering that the main objective of all the APs was to reduce the incidence of child labor, the evaluation reports show that:

- On the island of Espíritu Santo, Department of Usulután, El Salvador, where the shellfish-harvesting project was executed, 95% of the target group has completely abandoned work and is now in school.
- In Constanza, Dominican Republic, where IPEC implemented the AP on hazardous agriculture, 468 children have been (re-) inserted in school, almost doubling the expected figure of 250. Their school performance is, according to teachers' testimonies, either equal or superior to average students. Most of them have been completely separated from work (the evaluation report does not provide the exact figure.)
- In Retalhuleu, Guatemala, where the stone quarries project was operating, 240 of the 288 benefited children were enrolled in formal school. Of them, 121 had abandoned work in the quarries and were in school at the moment of the evaluation, while 119 kept working part-time.
- In the four districts of San José, Costa Rica, where the project to combat sexual exploitation was executed, 25 of the 212 girls helped by the program accepted to be integrated in public residences, expecting to be rescued from prostitution.

- In the city of León, Nicaragua, where another AP dealing with sexual exploitation was carried out, 49 girls of the 123 who benefited from the project services have been withdrawn from prostitution.

In brief, the APs focusing on hazardous child labor in the rural sector exceeded their quantitative goals in terms of children benefiting from the projects. The comparatively weaker figures for the interventions dealing with children forced into prostitution show clearly how difficult it is to work with this specific target group, especially for withdrawal. In general, the projects have not been effective in providing income generation opportunities to all the targeted families.

Other quantitative achievements

The APs have also achieved other objectives and produced specific outputs that can be expressed with figures (table 5).

Table 5. Other quantitative achievements of the APs	
Sexual Exploitation in Nicaragua	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 59 girls have been (re-) inserted in school. - During the school period 2000, 87 girls (76% of those benefiting from the education component of the AP) were promoted to the following level. - 13 illiterate girls were integrated into literacy programs and later enrolled in formal school. - 127 girls received training in personal hygiene. - The repayment rate of the micro-credit scheme has been of 78%, considering the number of loans, and of 95% considering the total amount of money. - 30 new businesses started by families benefiting from micro-credits and 43 existing businesses strengthened.
Sexual Exploitation in Costa Rica	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 10 adolescents graduated from a 10-month course of the Technological Institute of Costa Rica - At the end of the project, 127 children and adolescents were attending public schools regularly. - 18 workshops on sexuality, HIV/AIDS, interpersonal relations, etc. were carried out with an average participation of 20 children and adolescents per workshop.
Stone Quarries in Guatemala	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 558 teachers (104 in Retahuleu and the rest in other areas of the Department) trained in techniques to improve children's reading and writing skills, as well as self-esteem. - 50% of the trained teachers in Retahuleu apply the newly acquired teaching techniques. - 3 community pharmacies set up and 12 community facilitators trained in health education. - 350 people in the community participated in workshops on sanitation measures, sewage and garbage disposal. - Out of the 962 adult quarry workers identified, 605 (63%) were trained in nutrition topics. - 80 adults were trained in basic business administration.
Agriculture in Dominican Republic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 98% of the students benefiting from the AP have been promoted to the next level. - 40 voluntary workers mobilized. - 54 teachers and 66 community leaders involved in the AP. - 462 out of 468 children reinserted in school remained attending classes at the time of the evaluation (retention rate of 98.7%) - 49 children obtained birth certificates with the help of the project. - 43 siblings of identified working children were removed from work and inserted in school.
Shellfish harvesting in El Salvador	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 50 adults trained in basic business administration. - 12 micro-business initiatives started. - 80% of the children covered by the program have shown improvements in weight and height. - 132 of the 135 children reinserted in school remained attending classes at the time of the evaluation (retention rate of 96%)

Effectiveness by component

The analysis of the APs shows different levels of effectiveness depending on the components. This section presents a brief overview of the main achievements reached by the projects, as assessed by the independent evaluators.

Baselines

Although, in general, baselines have been useful for programming and implementation, several methodological shortcomings have been detected. In the case of the project in Constanza, Dominican Republic, the baseline was a useful tool to update the selection of the communities, and identify community leaders and potential members of a local network against child labor. It did not include, though, the measurement of indicators linked to the target groups that could be used for project monitoring and evaluation. Some inaccuracies have also been found in the baseline used for the shellfish-harvesting project in El Salvador.

Education

The objectives and outputs included in the education component of the APs have been reached in most cases. The strategy of mainstreaming children in school has been, in general, successful, as shown by the low dropout rates registered in El Salvador (4.4%) and Dominican Republic (1.3%) and by the high rates of promotion (83% of mainstreamed children in the Guatemala AP and 76% of mainstreamed girls in the project to combat sexual exploitation in Nicaragua have been promoted to the following level; 98% of first grade students in the agriculture project of Constanza, Dominican Republic, were promoted to second grade). “Transitional” measures—literacy courses, leveling courses or special rooms made available for these children—and the “school packages” (uniforms, books, writing materials) have contributed to these achievements.

Alternatives of non-formal education for children forced into prostitution have proved relatively successful in Costa Rica, although the number of beneficiaries was small. The skills training workshops planned in the AP on shellfish harvesting in El Salvador were not carried out because of problems with the national institute on vocational training, identified as the key partner in this activity.

Social protection

The measures set to provide social protection—especially health care and nutrition support—to children and families have been effective as complementary tools in the general strategy of prevention and rehabilitation. In Guatemala, workshops, provision of first-aid kits and the establishment of pharmacies increased the incentives for participating in the project and contributed to the improvement of the health conditions in the community. Social protection measures have also been very important in the APs dealing with children forced into prostitution, especially psychological assistance and counseling. This model of intervention, however, demands massive investments to reach a small number of beneficiaries.

Income generation

Four of the APs included an income generation component, in every case in the form of a revolving fund for the provision of micro-credits to families of working children. Since poverty was perceived as one of the main causes of child labor, income generation was designed as the key element of the withdrawal strategy.

As mentioned before, the revolving funds have failed to reach all the intended beneficiaries, except in the project to combat sexual exploitation in Nicaragua.⁴ The fact that the actions programs were developed in areas of extreme poverty, plus the low literacy skills of many adults, adversely affected this component.

The necessary training on business administration was in some cases not provided to the credit beneficiaries, as is the case of the project in Dominican Republic. In El Salvador, evaluators considered the training provided as “minimalist”.

Additionally, the evaluations have identified some common structural management shortcomings, summarized in box 2.

BOX 2

SHORTCOMINGS IN THE MANAGEMENT OF REVOLVING FUNDS

- No projections of credit demand and placement.
- No estimate of cash flow needed to meet demand.
- Lack of feasibility and market studies to determine possible income generation alternatives in the area.
- Lack of monitoring and technical assistance to funded initiatives.
- Low capacity for credit recovery on the part of the implementing agencies.
- The revolving funds do not generate own resources to finance recurring costs (personnel, administration, etc.)

Awareness raising and social mobilization

IPEC has been in general effective to raise awareness and mobilize local communities in the efforts to eradicate child labor. A clear example is the case of the Municipality of Constanza, Dominican Republic, where a “Local Network for the Elimination and Prevention of Child Labor” in agricultural activities was created, including 27 public and private organizations working in the Municipality. As stated in the evaluation report “the Local Network has kept a high level of activity throughout the project and during its sustainability phase. The Local Network’s organizations constantly develop actions that help raise public awareness, encourage social action, and monitor the process to eliminate child labor” (section 5.2. “Effectiveness”.) The key for this successful social mobilization was, according to the evaluation, the high degree of participation in the preparation of agendas and the decision making process.

In El Salvador, sensitization was done on a personal basis, ensuring the involvement of community leaders. This strategy was effective in the context of the limited geographical coverage of the project.

Training and sensitization of key actors have ensured the effectiveness of awareness raising. Some successful experiences include:

- Training workshops for teachers in Guatemala on psychomotor techniques for improving children’s reading, writing and self-esteem, as well as on the importance of teaching and the specific problems of working children. In the same project, a media network of 14 journalists has been set up.

⁴ The information on the development of the revolving fund comes from the final report, prepared by the implementing agency. The thematic evaluation did not include an assessment of this income generation tool.

- A two-day activity for 200 municipal police officers in Costa Rica, which focused on changing their perception of girls from ‘criminals’ to victims. Although impact of the training cannot be determined at this time, police abuse of power over adult prostitutes and sexually exploited children is well known in the region.

Monitoring, systematic documentation and database

The systematic documentation of AP’s experiences and processes was one of the key elements to ensure the replication of the successful approaches and good practices in the future. As mentioned in the description of the project, the implementation of this approach included some common, sub-regional activities, briefly described and assessed in box 3.

In general, the evaluation reports highlight the difficulties faced by the APs while trying to document in a systematic way their experiences. All the projects show poor results in this component. In Guatemala, where a database was prepared, no systematic analysis of the process was done. In Dominican Republic, the experience of the AP was not summarized and gathered in a document, mostly because the “project implementation unit doesn’t have enough time to process and analyze information generated, unless there’s extra personnel” (section 5.2 of the evaluation report.). In El Salvador, the evaluation found several “empty spots” in the information and documentation of the AP, due to the lack of standardized procedures. The APs on sexual exploitation in Costa Rica and Nicaragua produced valuable information in the form of brochures and training materials, but the experience was not analyzed systematically to facilitate replication.

BOX 3

SYSTEMATIC PROCESS DOCUMENTATION

The original design of the project “Combating child labor in Central America” included a sub-regional component aimed at systematizing the experiences of the five action programs to facilitate the organizational learning process. Later, the systematic documentation process received additional funding. The main outcomes of this effort are:

- The “Handbook for Monitoring and Systematization” (in Spanish), prepared after consultations with IPEC staff and the main implementing agencies in the region. Six national training workshops have been conducted to disseminate the handbook (in Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, El Salvador and Dominican Republic.)
- Good practices identified in the five APs of this project have been included in the publication “*IPEC Initiatives against the Worst Forms of Child Labor in Central America*” (in English and Spanish), widely disseminated in the region and in other Latin American countries.
- A database including documents and other important information on child labor has been prepared and will be made available through the Internet to a wide range of users: governments, ILO constituents, implementing agencies, other partners and the public in general. The public version of the database will soon be available.

2.2. Efficiency

There is no specific information on the efficiency of the action programs dealing with commercial sexual exploitation in Costa Rica and Nicaragua. The only reference to the relationships between cost and benefits is the general assessment of the high investments needed to reach a small number of beneficiaries. This is one of the consequences of IPEC’s

model of intervention in the region, focused on the rehabilitation of commercially sexually exploited children.⁵

In the three action programs dealing with children working in hazardous conditions in the rural sector, the cost-benefit relationship seems to be more efficient. According to calculations done in Constanza, Dominican Republic, the direct investment per child was of US\$ 68, while the total expenditure per child was of US\$ 260. This figure represents a 40% of what was initially planned.

In general, budgets have been respected, despite minor changes in budget lines. Human resources have been well managed. The weak point concerning efficiency has been in adherence to timelines and planned starting and ending dates for certain activities. In this respect, none of the action programs has been executed as planned. In the future, work plans should be developed more carefully.

3. MAIN PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED

3.1. Design

The design of the project as a whole can be assessed as weak. The logical framework is missing. No indicators of achievement or assumptions have been identified. This general problem was found in all the APs, making evaluations more difficult than expected.

There was no logical link between the five action programs in terms of planning, since no common immediate objectives have been identified. The existence of a single project document with five annexes (that later were developed into action programs) simplified the bureaucratic procedures of approval, but there was no real or logical link between the five planned interventions.

The definition of the logical frameworks of the APs, as assessed by the independent evaluations, was also weak. Some of the problems identified in the documents of Dominican Republic, El Salvador and Guatemala have been the following:⁶

- No logical relationship between immediate objectives and expected outputs;
- No correspondence between indicators and immediate objectives; and
- No risk analysis or definition of external factors / assumptions.

In general, these problems have affected the implementation and the evaluation. It is important to note, however, that the interventions have been designed as “action programs.” APs design require less elements and details than the formulation of full-scale projects, and that in 1998 the identification of indicators and assumptions was not mandatory for this kind of intervention.

⁵ The thematic evaluation report states that “Rehabilitation is expensive because it proposes to house and feed people, bring them to sites other than their own, provide them with one-to-one and group services such as psychotherapy, keep a close watch on their progress and attempt to bring about profound kinds of cultural and personal change. A variety of professional workers is needed to carry out these projects, which, as all current funded projects admit, are expensive and slow. Very few of the total potential participants can be attended to.” (Section “Measuring the cost-effectiveness of projects”, Chapter 4: Conclusions.)

⁶ The logical structure of the APs dealing with sexual exploitation was not part of the thematic evaluation, but the general problems outlined in this summary can also be found in the documents of Costa Rica and Nicaragua.

3.2. Implementation

The general performance of the implementing partners has been assessed positively. In Dominican Republic, a high percentage of the planned activities were carried out as planned. In Costa Rica and Nicaragua, the strong capacity of the outreach staff to work with victims of sexual exploitation was highlighted by the evaluation.

Nevertheless, the evaluation reports highlight some problems in implementation. In El Salvador, the lack of facilities in the area where the AP was executed made management difficult. Most of the activities involving the population (meetings, workshops) had to be carried out at night, and the lack of basic services (water, electricity) caused delays in the progress of the activities. The implementing agency had difficulties in adapting to these conditions.

In Dominican Republic, some activities could not be carried out, especially the training and technical assistance to the beneficiaries of credits and the systematic documentation of the experience. According to the implementing agency, the training as it was conceived was useless considering the conditions of poverty and the literacy levels of the beneficiaries. The amount of time required by the fieldwork and the limited number of personnel made systematic documentation impossible.

The project in Guatemala also faced problems in the administration of the micro-credit scheme. The evaluation report states that only 2% of the credits granted had been recovered, and credit recipients had expressed their refusal to continue repayment.⁷ The implementing agency had no capacity of enforcement because of the lack of human resources, but also because it would threaten the achievements in other components.

In the programs dealing with sexual exploitation, the evaluation points out that, judging by the traditional victim-rescue strategy adopted in the region, it is essential for IPEC to consider the experience and capacities of the selected partners. NGOs and government employees projected a certain doubt about being able to branch out into prevention via innovative strategies, and particularly those that would work with clients, exploiters and business people in the sex industry. It is possible that these agencies should continue to work within this paradigm, which serves a valid purpose, but it is also possible that they could be interested in or be helped to achieve change within innovative programming of trafficking and sexual exploitation interventions. In this case, specific training would be needed.

3.3. Sustainability

Sustainability is an integral part of IPEC programming and strategy. But it is not clear how this concept is to be understood when projects provide basic services to victims of sexual exploitation that national institutions, public or private, should assume. According to the thematic evaluation report, the transfer of such responsibilities where this seems possible should be included in agreed proposals, or dependencies will be created that are inappropriate to development goals. An example of this is Costa Rica, where a widely lauded project receiving logistical support from a government agency has not been taken up for direct funding from that agency now that IPEC support has ended.

⁷ After the evaluation this figure raised to 16%, and it would be above 50% if one large loan that was defaulted on is not considered. The rest of the revolving funds performed better in terms of recovery of the credit.

The sustainability of the AP executed in the stone quarries, in Guatemala, was threatened by the time passed between the end of phase I and the start of phase II, meaning that the strategy of the first project was not appropriate to guarantee the duration of the positive effects. According to the evaluation report, the situation generated indifference in the population and serious problems in some components, notably income generating activities.

The analysis of the sustainability of the AP in Dominican Republic was done per component. Social mobilization (especially the work of the Local Network) proved to be sustainable, although the role of this body was questioned by some of its members. The education efforts appeared to be sustainable because of the awareness raised and the mobilization of relevant institutions to monitor the enrollment of children in school. Low dropout rates were considered as an indicator of the sustainability of the education component. Nevertheless, as in the case of Guatemala, the sustainability of income generating activities, especially the micro-credits, was doubtful, since the management of the revolving fund (salaries, rent, services) has been subsidized by the project. According to the evaluation report, the structure of the program is weak, making the maintenance of a healthy loan institution very difficult.

Finally, in El Salvador, the lack of participation of some key government institutions threatened the sustainability of the positive effects of the AP in shellfish harvesting. No specific plans or budget provisions to ensure public assistance in health and education existed at the time of the evaluation.

In brief, the APs could not, in general, generate the conditions to sustain the positive situation created in the five areas. In some cases, the political support and the capacities / commitments of the local institutions was not sufficient. In other cases, specifically in the income generation components, the financial conditions were very unstable, making the continuance of the revolving funds unfeasible.

3.4. Gender issues

There has been a weak integration of gender consideration in the planning of the APs. During implementation, most of IPEC's partners have considered gender issues, but not in a systematic way. In Dominican Republic the evaluation assesses that there was a breakdown of information by gender in all the reports, and that in meetings and events the participation of women (or men, in the case of school meetings) was emphasized. Activities have been scheduled considering the availability of men and women alike.

In El Salvador, there was an imbalanced access to income generation opportunities, with a negative bias towards women. This situation was partly due to the lack of follow up and technical assistance to the beneficiaries of the credits. In Guatemala there is no information about the effects of the project on gender relations and on the access of men and women to resources and / or power.

The evaluation of the programs dealing with sexual exploitation highlights that this problem affects girls and boys, although the former are usually more numerous than the latter. Despite the fact that the prostitution of boys is well known in Costa Rica and Nicaragua, specific measures for boys have not been included in IPEC's intervention, or this has been done only as an afterthought. The report points out that "in TSE both girls and boys need protection and intervention, with the specific nature of the action depending more on the circumstances of the abuse / exploitation rather than on the gender of the child. On the demand side, the role of women needs to be taken into account as much as the role of men, again with the specific intervention depending on the circumstances of their involvement and not solely on their gender" (section "Refining understanding of gender analysis", chapter 4: Conclusion.)

4. PERSPECTIVES FOR NEW INTERVENTIONS IN THE AREA

As a general principle, new projects or follow up activities are foreseen for all the sectors where the APs have been implemented (see box 4.) Considering the problems to ensure sustainability and the need to consolidate some important achievements, most of the evaluation reports produce specific recommendations to be applied to the design and implementation of new projects. The evaluation reports and the recommendations have been taken into consideration in the design of the projects presented to USDOL for funding in fiscal years (FY) 2001 and 2002.

BOX 4	
LINK OF EVALUATED APs WITH NEW INTERVENTIONS	
Agriculture in Dominican Republic	{ Constanza is one of the target areas in the project “Preparatory activities for the elimination of the worst forms of child labor in the Dominican Republic” (presented for funding to USDOL in FY 2001)
Shellfish harvesting in El Salvador	{ Fishing is one of the targeted sectors of the Time Bound Program in El Salvador (presented for funding to USDOL in FY 2001.) Usulután was included as one of the areas where the project will be developed.
Stone quarries in Guatemala	{ A second phase has been designed (“Progressive Eradication of Child Labor in Gravel Production in Retalhuleu, Guatemala”, and presented for funding to USDOL, FY 2001).
Sexual exploitation and Costa Rica Sexual exploitation in Nicaragua	{ A sub-regional project on trafficking and sexual exploitation covering several Central American countries will be developed and presented to USDOL for funding in FY 2002.

4.1. Relevance of the interventions

Addressing the issue of trafficking and sexual exploitation of children in Central America is considered of uttermost importance. According to the thematic evaluation, it is important to take into account that not only IPEC but Latin American countries themselves are only now critically looking at these issues and, to a great extent, the topic is still taboo.

The Stockholm Declaration and the Agenda for Action call for national plans of action to be drawn up to combat TSE, focal points to be established in each country, and disaggregated data to be compiled on vulnerability. As of August 2000, Costa Rica had already a national plan and Nicaragua was in the process of developing one. International technical cooperation agencies should develop strategies to support the national efforts.

According to the evaluation of the AP in stone quarries of Guatemala, this project should be considered as the first attempt to address a very complex problem, with a limited budget and timeframe and working with institutions with little or no experience in child labor. Further

efforts are needed to expand the scope of the intervention (conclusion 1 of the evaluation report.)

In El Salvador, the evaluators consider that despite the progress made so far, it is important to strengthen the monitoring and to sustain the processes initiated in the first phase. The main objectives of the AP are still valid, and several activities should be emphasized in subsequent phases to completely eliminate the incidence of child labor in shellfish harvesting in the area (school participation, income generation, etc.) The elimination of child labor is also relevant considering the national policies towards children, as shown by the will of the Salvadorian government to develop a Time-bound Program with this purpose.

In Dominican Republic, national legislation compels the government and civil society organizations to develop policies and actions to eliminate child labor, especially in its worst forms. While this is still a problem in the country, the achievements in Constanza have been important. The Local Network has produced an analysis of the community's needs to achieve the status of "Municipality Free of Child Labor."

4.2. Lessons learned from projects to address hazardous child labor in rural environments

According to the evaluation of the AP in Constanza, Dominican Republic, it does not seem that the option of accepting a micro-credit has led to the withdrawal of children from work and their integration in school. **The "social pressure" and the awareness of the benefits of schooling seem to be more relevant.** This pressure is enhanced when a large number of important local actors get involved and assume the elimination of child labor as a common goal. Income generation activities are important as "compensation" measures and to help providing a better environment for the development of the children, as well as for the sustainability of the process.

Granting credits should not be considered as the only possible measure to provide income generation alternatives. The organization of the community, the promotion of employment, the study of feasible alternatives adapted to the local context, the provision of loan guarantees, are also useful tools to foster the improvement of the livelihoods and the living standards of the families and communities.

These projects have shown that, in many cases, the main limitations of NGOs and public institutions working in social assistance is not related to their financial and human resources, but to a limited vision and little attention to multi-institutional coordination and community participation. **Social mobilization efforts are key for the success of interventions dealing with child labor in these circumstances.** To ensure coordination and participation means establishing common goals and targets and getting the necessary commitments to achieve them. Institutional declarations of intentions are never enough.

In projects dealing with multiple components, it would be necessary to select several specialized implementing agencies. The project as a whole can be directed by a person or institution capable of integrating the different components, but the management of certain elements, such as income generation or vocational training, should be trusted to experienced and reliable institutions.

Implementing agencies should be provided with the necessary tools and training as to ensure the systematic documentation of the processes and the continuous monitoring of the beneficiaries. The identification of good practices and replicable interventions would then be easier.

The design of project documents should include mainstreaming gender issues and defining IPEC's strategy for sustainability and phasing out.

4.3. Experiences worth replicating in projects to combat sexual exploitation

The AP done in the bus station of León, Nicaragua uses the concept of **intervention at points of travel and commerce**. The implementing agency of this project is the association "Mary Barreda", which basically applies a traditional approach targeted at identifying and aiding girls at risk of sexual exploitation. These girls are offered psychotherapy and vocational training, and their mothers receive counseling in an attempt at family reunification. The aspect of the project that IPEC could replicate relates to the work carried out within the bus station, one of many important commercial and social travel junctions within Nicaragua. The implementing agency uses the concept of 'social network', promoted among all interested parties in the bus station: terminal authorities, security personnel, vendors, drivers and mothers, with the aim of raising awareness about the sexual exploitation of girls and acting to prevent it. Mothers who are vendors in the station report that where in the past they felt passive about the exploitation of girls in the station, now they actively watch out for and feel empowered to report cases of exploitation to the NGO and local authorities. The social network concept is clearly replicable, including to other parts of Central America. Including more members of the community and moving the denunciation of exploitation away from an NGO to other social and municipal leaders could improve it.

In San José, Costa Rica, FUNDESIDA, an NGO with experience in AIDS prevention among prostitutes, was the lead agency of the ILO-IPEC-funded AP, with support from the state agency *Patronato Nacional de la Infancia* (PANI). The FUNDESIDA project focused specifically on children found in the street in San José, offering outreach and direct services. The outreach workers are excellent and dedicated, but the problem is the lack of anywhere to send girls after finding them, as PANI's institutional 'homes' are the only present alternative. **Perhaps the most significant element of the FUNDESIDA project has been the demonstration to institutions that something outside the "rescue-based" tradition can be achieved**, and that PANI could be involved. IPEC could attempt to follow up on this instance of cultural transformation by supporting PANI's outreach workers to **expand into working on prevention and demand rather than direct services to victims**.

One aspect of the AP in Nicaragua with important possibilities involves outreach to places where sexual exploitation takes place. **Whatever the particular modalities chosen, the most effective outreach programs are likely to be those that are willing to go wherever sexual exploitation is taking place or where children are particularly at risk**. Projects should not be limited to traditional sites of street prostitution but should enter workplaces, neighborhoods and bars, combating the hidden nature of the problem by making it visible. This should be complemented with other measures to ensure the security of the personnel working in the outreach organizations and to help developing and enforcing relevant regulations.

4.4. Specific recommendations for TSE projects

The specific recommendations for the APs in El Salvador, Guatemala and Dominican Republic can be found in the evaluation reports. This section only extracts some recommendations for the design of the project to deal with sexual exploitation of children in Central America, included in the thematic evaluation.

- The role of tourism in TSE is multi-faceted and prominent. For reasons too diverse to consider in the context of this report, some visitors to Latin America regularly include the purchase of sex as part of their ‘holiday package’. For some specific groups, this includes sex with children. As a general pattern, tourist development means new businesses such as massage parlors or nightclubs spring up, and so also become available to locals. In this regard, the longer experience of Asia—and Thailand in particular—in balancing the need to develop the tourism sector while protecting children from exploitation and pursuing exploiters can inform strategic planning in Latin America. **Because tourism development is likely to become more important in all parts of Latin America, and because tourism and, more generally, the entertainment and tourism sectors continue to be prominent risk factors, IPEC TSE programming should pay particular attention to all children working in entertainment and tourism-related industries known to provide multiple situations of vulnerability.** Costa Rica demonstrates what can happen when tourism development is given precedence over tourism’s social impacts. As Nicaragua looks toward the possibility of developing tourism, it is possible the same could happen. All countries taking the tourism path are vulnerable.
- IPEC needs to consider ways to **improve working alliances** with UNICEF, Save the Children and the international NGO “End Child Prostitution, Pornography and Trafficking” (ECPAT) to take advantage of different strengths, avoid duplicating efforts, coordinate programming, avoid projecting conflicting messages to participating countries and take advantage of scarce funds. For example, since UNICEF has been funding research in Latin America, maybe IPEC should concentrate on funding more innovative prevention projects. In this same vein, IPEC might wish to consider the need to encourage state governments to fund direct services such as emergency housing or trauma therapy, which are properly the job of social services, not NGOs.
- There have been some **nascent efforts (both mini-programs) to do more innovative work in TSE that should be examined and built upon**: one carried out on the Guatemala-Mexico border that shows insight and understanding on the migration and border issues (*Prevention and eradication of child prostitution in the border zone with Mexico*) and the other an attempt by a small NGO in Nicaragua to promote networking and sharing of information (*A space for reflection and action against sexual exploitation and trafficking of children*).
- IPEC should **expand awareness raising to reach the national police force in the countries where it works** using peer education principles rather than attempting to send everyone to workshops, and should work on integrating such awareness-raising into normal police training. In other words, police should be fully engaged as active partners in this field rather than subjected to passive programming. As this is a clear labor issue—the labor of the police in dealing with sexual exploitation—ILO-IPEC has the mandate and the opportunity to develop this area.

5. FINAL REMARKS

The evaluation process has provided valuable information for refining strategies and developing new project proposals in hazardous child labor and commercial sexual exploitation of children in Central America. The evaluation reports and the interaction between independent consultants and IPEC staff have been tools for institutional learning and improvement.

Several steps are being taken to improve the effectiveness of the income generation component in IPEC's interventions. Specialized implementing agencies, with experience in the field, will be selected to manage revolving funds. In certain cases, this might mean splitting action programs according to the components. Other modalities of income generation will be included for those not willing to take credits (training for employment, provision of employment opportunities, etc.)

Concerning revolving funds management, two important lessons have been learned: 1) that the funds should be given sufficient time to be implemented; and 2) to avoid making high-value loans to a small groups of people because it can jeopardize the entire fund's sustainability.

There will be a new push on the efforts to systematically document the child labor activities. This project has developed some basic tools (a training handbook, different forms, a database) available at the Sub-regional coordination in San José, which will be used as the basis for ensuring a better monitoring of the financed activities in the future.

Finally, in the new APS the sustainability strategy is designed including not only the need of financial resources to cover recurrent costs, but also the political and institutional commitments needed to guarantee the duration of the positive effects generated by IPEC projects and programs in the region.