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IPEC Evaluation

**Prevention and Eradication of Domestic Child
Labor and Commercial Sexual Exploitation in
Chile, Colombia, Paraguay and Peru**

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An independent final evaluation by an external consultant

September 2007

This document has not been professionally edited.

NOTE ON THE EVALUATION PROCESS AND REPORT

This independent evaluation was managed by ILO-IPEC's Design, Evaluation and Documentation Section (DED) following a consultative and participatory approach. DED has ensured that all major stakeholders were consulted and informed throughout the evaluation and that the evaluation was carried out to highest degree of credibility and independence and in line with established evaluation standards.

The evaluation was carried out a team of external consultants¹. The field mission took place in September 2007. The opinions and recommendations included in this report are those of the authors and as such serve as an important contribution to learning and planning without necessarily constituting the perspective of the ILO or any other organization involved in the project.

Funding for this project evaluation was provided by the United States Department of Labor. This report does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the United States Department of Labor nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the United States Government.

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See Annexes and Terms of References in Spanish Report.

Executive Summary

The final evaluation of the regional “Weaving Nets” project against domestic child labor and sexual exploitation in Paraguay, Chile, Colombia and Peru was completed by an independent evaluator at the request of the Design, Evaluation and Documentation Section (DED) of the ILO-IPEC, headquartered in Geneva. It was completed a little more than three months before the project’s end in December 2007. This evaluation has been realized over the course of five weeks and has been informed by all the relevant documentary information drawn from the four countries in question as well as from the office of the DED in Geneva. In addition to the documentary information, the Evaluator was in contact with representatives from the four countries during the Regional workshop held in August 2007 in Santiago, Chile. There, the Evaluator presented an Evaluation Workshop, conducted in-depth interviews with some key actors in the project, and administered a survey to 26 people.

This final evaluation concludes that “Weaving Nets” has been a regional project relevant to the issues at hand; efficient; partially effective overall; and considerably more effective in the cases of Chile and Colombia than in those of Peru and Paraguay. In accordance with the way in which the regional character of the study was originally designed, the project promoted horizontal cooperation among the four countries. However, this horizontal cooperation lacked a strategic vision articulating this project to initiatives of with greater influence. It did not secure the commitment of the national governments in regions where, had this commitment existed, they would have been able to assure the sustainability of these interventions. Even so, we believe that some limitations residing beyond the influence of the OIT have contributed to the program’s failure to achieve significant efficiency and sustainability in the four countries. Such factors include insufficient cooperation between organizations within the very United Nations system (such as UNICEF, OIM, UNIFEM); the project’s limited term of execution (39 months); insufficient human resources; and the demanding goals established with regard to rescue and withdrawal from exploitative work, constitute some of the most important obstacles that the project faced.

Among the most relevant findings of the report are:

- a) That the nature of the project is restrictive by its definition, since it refers to horizontal cooperation among the involved countries. In reality these countries are at different levels of institutional development, as well in terms of familiarity with the project’s core issues.
- b) That the project, despite having at its disposal a team of coordinators who share a clarity of key concepts, did not successfully extend this conceptual clarity or promote conceptual debate to other key actors within the project. Such actors include representatives of the state, of workers, and of businesses. This insufficient homogeneity of conceptual knowledge was aggravated by a lack of focus on gender and on the restitution of children’s rights in the project implementation. There was also a lack of conceptual clarity regarding the links between domestic child labor and commercial sexual exploitation, since the latter received much more focus.
- c) That among the strongest achievements of the project was the validation of intervention models. This was apparent in positive practices on regional and national levels, as well as in the lessons learned. However, these positive practices were not supported by the strategic institutional articulations needed to assure their sustainability. Weak connections with the State did not permit either topic to intersect with national political agendas.
- d) Several factors – external and internal to the project – have determined the sustainability of the project to a greater or lesser degree, such as: the articulation of a public agenda (at the national and regional level); institutional limitations and political will on the part of the authorities; the adequate selection of key actors and the establishment of strategic alliances; and the weakness of tripartite participation. The final challenge is common to all four of the countries involved;

in spite of the influence and capacity of the ILO to mobilize, a greater commitment will not been achieved on the part of companies and workers without defining concrete targets and providing for the allotment of resources to achieve these targets.

- e) The communication strategies, due to the resources available to the project and the time required to complete the investigation, have acted in an innovative manner, but have not achieved a complete articulation of the other components of the project and/or have not taken advantage of the wealth of evidence generated by the studies which constitute one of the most notable achievements of Weaving Networks.

Among the recommendations emphasized in the evaluation, we should mention:

- a. The need to develop a strategic approach to any intervention, taking into consideration that the character of the region should constitute an opportunity for learning among countries, in which the strategic approach is reflected in an ability to obtain a commitment from the actors with the greatest influence, decision making capabilities and resources from the countries in question, so that issues (such as DCL and CSE) that normally do not occupy a central space in the public agenda, gain a greater space in the concerns and agenda of the authorities over the long term.
- b. Tackling issues which are not present in mainstream debates and the public consciousness requires a balance between activism and the creation of spaces for conceptual debate as well as a focus on establishing common foundations that provide greater certainty and rigor to those involved in the project. Both elements will provide a greater vision of the opportunities for the intervention.
- c. Despite the institutional weakness that characterizes the countries of the region, the state constitutes a key actor that must be committed to ensuring the sustainability of the interventions. State involvement should be present at various levels (establishing fora for exchange and institutional alliances), but should take into consideration strategic actors within the state, such as the Ministry of the Economy (Finance or Treasury, according to the country) with the competency to designate available public resources and budgets that will support the political will of the authorities.
- d. Issues related to the well being and protection of children occupy a subaltern position in the public agenda, due to the subordination of social issues in developing countries. In this way, it is essential to seek strategic alliances with key actors and establish ways to articulate these issues to place them within the central issues of the public agenda of the countries, in order to increase the likelihood that there will be sustained accountability on the part of the authorities.
- e. The efficacy of an intervention is partly linked to the capacity of its implementers to be able to rely on an accurate reading and interpretation of the political context in which the intervention occurs. A sound knowledge of the political context allows for the identification of windows of opportunity and the visualization of strategic alliances that could amplify the effects of the intervention.

Antecedents of the Evaluation and Description of the Methodology:

This report represents the final evaluation of the regional project “Weaving Networks” for the Prevention and Eradication of Domestic Child Labor and Sexual Exploitation for Commercial Ends in Chile, Colombia, Paraguay, and Peru, financed by the Department of Labor of the United States (USDOL) and implemented by a Regional Coordination office of the International Labor Organization and national offices for coordination in each of the selected countries. This evaluation has been

requested by the Design, Evaluation and Documentation (DED) section, the ILO International Programme on Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) International Labour Office located in Geneva, Switzerland. This is an external final evaluation conducted by an independent consultant without previous links with the ILO office or with any of its projects.

This final evaluation has been structured in accordance with the terms included in the contract as well as in accordance with good practices as elaborated by the OECD/DAC Quality Evaluation Criteria approved by the Network on the Development of the Evaluation of the OECD/DAC in March 2006. It is crucial to indicate the limitations under which this evaluation has been realized, among which we should specify the following:

- a. The final evaluation was realized by one person, not by a team of people and did not include a field visit to any of the countries involved.
- b. The final evaluation was conducted in 25 days for the realization of the evaluation process, including revising the document, coordinating and conducting interviews, and conducting an evaluation workshop (which included attending a Regional Forum in Santiago, Chile) and organizing and analyzing the information.
- c. Recently (September 2006), a mid-term evaluation had been conducted whose conclusions and recommendations significantly reduced morale in both the executing teams in each country as well as their partners.

The first two limitations were conditions which were known and accepted by the consultant prior to the independent evaluation and any defects in the final report due to these limitations are the consultant's responsibility. I should add that, despite these limitations, the cooperative disposition and support received from the teams in each country made it possible to have access to all the relevant information in a very short period of time. To this end, the consultant utilized a range of resources in order to make contact with the teams² and with the DED (Senior official Craig Russon) who supplied assistance from Geneva and in Santiago, Chile during both the week of the Regional Forum as well as during the Evaluation Workshop.

It is important to indicate the impact of the conclusions of the Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) on the development of the final evaluation. A large part of the initial efforts of the consultant to initiate this evaluation were related to familiarizing herself with the reactions of the teams in each of the countries to the MTE conclusions, several of which were perceived as unjust and without proper foundations (particularly the conclusion that this was not a regional project, but rather the sum of national projects which were executed simultaneously in four countries) and that "as a result of the mid-term evaluation report, the team members have felt underappreciated and incorrectly cited in the text given that the [mid-term] evaluators did not tape the interviews."³ Unfortunately, this previous process affected to some degree the conditions for the final evaluation, on the one hand, by diminishing the space to realize the final evaluation (which was not in reaction to the mid-term evaluation) and, on the other hand, resulted a defensive attitude on the part of the executing team, and, specifically, the Regional Coordinator.⁴

Although it was understood that one of the goals of the final evaluation is to verify aspects of the MTE, as the reader will appreciate in the following text, the evaluation is fundamentally focused on

² The first round of interviews with the Coordinators in Paraguay, Colombia and Chile was conducted August 10 and 14 via skype with each interview lasting approximately one hour. In Lima, the consultant met with the Regional Coordinator and the Coordinator for Peru personally in separate interviews.

³ Interview with one of the Coordinators of the project via skype by the Evaluator.

⁴ In the final minutes of the evaluation workshop, the Regional Coordinator took the microphone to state that "no evaluation is going to detract from the advances that the national institutions, local institutions and our network recognizes (...) I believe that what we are feeling [having had expectations to participate rather than merely do the exercises of the final evaluation] absolutely will not have any interference in what has been advanced and what will continue to advance."

the original objectives of the project as established by the consultant with respect to the achievements and limitations of the project. We will attempt to judge the project based on the information gathered and evaluate it in relation to the resources that were used to develop a project within the ILO framework (and the guidelines and established standards, both the gender and rights approach, and the opportunity to place issues related to children in the framework of a greater context which will allow these issues to enter the political agendas of the states involved). This decision is attributed to, among other factors, the fact that, on the one hand, the conclusions and recommendations of this document do not intend to suggest modifications to the execution of the project, given that the project is three months from completion, and, on the other hand, the evaluator has not had, nor will have, the opportunity to visit each of the countries and directly verify the intervention activities of the project.

The methodology utilized rests principally on reviewing the project's documentation, which has been contrasted and triangulated with data from interviews. We have conducted semi-structured interviews with key informants (established based on the criteria designed by the consultant in her observation of the development of interventions in the regional forum and in some cases following the recommendations of the project Coordinators in the four countries⁵) as well as a survey sent to participants in the Regional Forum and a Final Evaluation Workshop in which a guide for working in groups was elaborated (by interests in the first block and by country in the second, these results are integrated as supporting information for the findings, conclusions and recommendations). As part of the final evaluation process, 42 participants were present for a workshop in Santiago, Chile on August 24.⁶

Context, Goals and Approach of the Evaluation

The current final evaluation process of the Weaving Networks project has taken into consideration reference points deemed significant by the relevant parties, the same parties which determined the goals of the evaluation. The evaluation seeks to: a) construct an account of what was realized since the mid-term evaluation for the relevant parties, including government agencies and social interlocutors in various countries, and the donor; b) analyze the good practices and lessons learned through the implementation of the project which could contribute to institutional learning on the part of the donor, the ILO, national institutions, and others; c) receive and give feedback on the project to interested parties; and d) verify aspects of the MTE (mid-term evaluation). This final report has been elaborated in order to contribute to the institutional learning of the IPEC/ILO as well as their partners, and we hope that the report will be shared with the executing organs of the project as well as the donor, state representatives, private businesses and unions.

The independent consultant chosen for the final evaluation was identified by the DED, taking into consideration her academic formation in the social sciences and the politics of development as well as her extensive experience in research, evaluations, and interventions focusing on gender and rights restitution. In particular, it is important to indicate the knowledge of the evaluator in interventions related to the protection of children, public policy, and strategies with political importance. In this way, this document reflects the experience and knowledge of the evaluator in project implementation for the most vulnerable children as well as an understanding of the existing limitations and possibilities of developing an intervention on behalf of children in the context of the countries in the region.

The goal of this final evaluation of Weaving Networks is to create a systematic balance of the efforts of the IPEC/ILO and its contribution to the prevention and elimination of domestic child labor in Paraguay, Peru and Colombia and to the prevention and elimination of the commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents in Paraguay, Peru, Colombia and Chile. Given the standards

⁵ See annex regarding interviewees.

⁶ See attached annex regarding the systematization of the survey and the report on the workshop.

advanced in the incorporation of a gender and rights approach in ILO interventions, which in and of itself constitutes a challenge for countries with high levels of poverty and exclusion/alienation, with serious structural problems and problems of efficiency in state action and with institutional weakness (in both the public and private sectors), the evaluation considers that it was appropriate to realize an evaluation which reminds the reader of the specific conditions of the countries in which the evaluation is taking place, in order to indicate both the obstacles and opportunities that a project of this nature represents. At the same time, given that the ILO is an agency of the UN system which seeks to promote and protect decent work, Weaving Networks has represented an enormous challenge for the IPEC, given that it has intervened in an area of promotion and protection of child rights – a field which is usually the responsibility of UNICEF – which fights the worst forms of child labor.⁷

The final goal of this evaluation is the formulation of recommendations which support the work of the IPEC/ILO in order to revise its strategy and plan of action in order to strengthen its contribution to the prevention and eradication of the worst forms of child labor. This project in particular, due to its regional character, constitutes an opportunity to reflect on and learn from the most effective ways to promote learning between countries of the region with diverse institutional cultures, political contexts, and public agendas. The evaluation process also constitutes a valuable window of opportunity to contribute to the current debates regarding the importance of reaching a greater strategic consistency in the actions taken by UN agencies. In order to tackle the goals of the evaluation, the methodological focus has been based on broadly accepted principles of effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability and relevance as elaborated by DAC, as well as evaluation methodologies oriented toward participation and learning. Among the principles which have guided the evaluation process, we should mention:

The importance of the political and cultural context: We have clearly established that it is inadequate to compare countries with distinct realities in particular areas so we have sought to specify the distinct conditions which this project has found in the four countries, from the perspective of political support, level of tolerance of DCL and CSEC, as well as the level of institutional development and stability; all of which represent conditions under which the Weaving Networks project has had to perform.

Taking into consideration dynamics of power: All interventions with a human rights focus seek to change underlying power relations and, in this case, the condition of special vulnerability of CA at risk of entering into DCL and CSEC. These power relations also extend to family relations between adults and children, as well as those who have the obligation to ensure the protection of rights. The condition of poverty which many CA find themselves puts them at risk of or currently in DCL and CSEC, making them part of a particularly vulnerable segment of the population, because they depend on the protection of adults and institutions for the protection of children.

Institutionalize accountability: That those who are responsible for providing protection to vulnerable children should be accountable for the actions taken is an essential pillar of the rights approach. However, this task is made more difficult when the countries in question do not have disaggregated information for the age groups of beneficiaries of policies and programs, or when there the assigned budget is not disaggregated, where there are no specific incentives to reach efficiency in the childhood protection programs or, when the transparency and accountability is not a consolidated practice in the state, particularly for those issues which do not occupy a central place in the public agenda.

Using knowledge to improve practice: It is necessary to develop a cross-cutting rights and gender approach in IPEC/ILO interventions and demand that the knowledge generated is translated into

⁷ The goal of the IPEC is the prevention and eradication of all forms of child labor, the priority goal is to take immediate action against the worst forms of child labor, defined by Convention number 182, among those: all forms of slavery or practices analogous to slavery, such as the sale and trade of children, debt bondage and serfdom, and forced or compulsory labor, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict; work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children. <http://www.ilo.org/ipec/programme/lang--en/index.htm>

systematic practice inspired by and backed up by said knowledge. In this way, a strategic management of the knowledge, lessons learned and best practices is necessary, in addition to an approach that takes into consideration the errors/weaknesses and the relevant cultural considerations, so that they may be internalized by personnel, partners and interest groups. This includes the case of Weaving Networks, its communicational component and the information flows and learning between the micro (community/neighborhood level) and macro (national and regional).

Monitoring impact: It is difficult to attribute direct or indirect impacts to a particular intervention, especially when the organization is one operating between various other actors and a complex political and social context. This is due to the fact that the formulation and implementation of policy is not a linear process, but rather follows a dynamic route, strongly influenced by local social and political factors. Because of this, it is very important to systematize the mode of intervention, not only at the quantitative level (for example, count of withdrawals) but rather also qualitative (for example, in the change in attitudes and in the modification of opinion trends and levels of tolerance).

The methodologies utilized throughout the evaluation process have been:

Review and analysis of documents: The coordination offices of the four countries, the regional coordination office, the donor and the DED have provided us with all the necessary documentation in order to familiarize ourselves with the reports, materials disseminated, research, etc. available about the project over the past three years. This information has been incredibly useful in triangulating information from interviews and from the survey and was complemented by a review of the mid-term evaluation report.

Survey: During the Regional Workshop in Santiago, Chile, a three question survey was conducted and 26 participants responded. The respondents could maintain anonymity if they so desired. The survey inquired about three issues: the personal characteristics of the respondents, which might reinforce or affect preferences regarding modifications to the project design of a future intervention; the description of an emblematic case that would illustrate what the project has allowed in terms of achievements; and asking the respondent to indicate the duration of the project and expectations for the future of the institution (in order to include a criteria to estimate the respondent's knowledge of the project as well as its sustainability over time).

Semi-structured interviews: The evaluator conducted semi-structured interviews with 20 representatives: five project coordinators, two representatives of the donor, five representatives of partner NGOs, two representatives of companies and/or unions, and six representatives of the state. In 90% of the cases, the interviews were recorded with the authorization of the interviewee and were subsequently transcribed.

Discussion groups: During both the Regional Workshop and the Evaluation Workshop, the evaluator rotated between the various discussion groups while taking notes and recording the arguments and issues which emerged in the debate. In addition, the evaluator identified the source of the contributions, in order to begin to understand the perception and position of the representatives with regard to the challenges of the project. During the Evaluation Workshop, participants were assigned to groups by organization (NGOs, state, companies and unions) and by country (Colombia, Paraguay, Peru and Chile) with specific tasks from which extremely useful pieces of information emerged and contributed to the evaluation.

Informal interviews: The evaluator conducted informal conversations with some of the attendants of the Workshops during breaks and lunches. These conversations tackled some of the themes of the project and were recorded in the consultant's notes at the end of each day.

DESCRIPTIVE SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT

The regional project, Weaving Networks, against the exploitation of children and adolescents in Chile, Colombia, Paraguay and Peru worked with financial support from the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) and through the ILO-IPEC in order to contribute to the prevention and eradication of domestic child labor (DCL) in homes of third parties and commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) during a period of 39 months (between September 2004 and December 2007). The project established three immediate goals:

- Collect comparable and reliable information regarding the characteristics and prevalence of DCL and CSEC in the selected countries, which would be available and utilized by key actors.
- Create a legal, institutional and cultural framework which would encourage the implementation of effective action against DCL and CSEC.
- Develop effective pilot models for the prevention and withdrawal of children from DCL and CSEC.

It is fundamental to emphasize the antecedents and previous experience of the ILO-IPEC in the implementation of projects addressing DCL and CSEC in the region, including projects addressing DCL in Brazil, Colombia, Paraguay and Peru and addressing CSEC through a project of “Three Borders” in Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay and which has served to accumulate experience with this issues as well as with the institutional frameworks required for project implementation and the validation of good practices in the intervention in said issues. In this way, the Weaving Networks project was proposed and implemented in a context that presented interesting opportunities, given the political context of the region, the new administrations governing the participating countries and the existence of a set of supranational spaces and regional tools which made possible an opening to include both issues on the public agenda both at the national and regional level.

In October 2006, a mid-term evaluation was realized, according to plan, and made the following conclusions:

- The project had succeeded in developing, in all of the countries, the majority of the studies and proposals for the harmonization of legal frameworks, as well as the establishment of the necessary coordination between public and private institutions for the development of activities for training and prevention as well as awareness campaigns.
- Regarding the carrying out of the goals of the project, it was ascertained that there were greater levels of success in Colombia and Chile than in Paraguay and Peru. At the same time, it was concluded that there is a greater degree of capitalization (experience, knowledge, results and management capacity) in the CSEC area than in DCL.
- The project has contributed to the development of a model for intervention for the eradication of the worst forms, in some countries, which has a potential relevant impact if it succeeds in achieving a cross-sector support policy.
- The proposals which were elaborated have the potential to contribute to the establishment of a legal and institutional context which would allow effective action against CSEC and DCL, especially in the case of CSEC given the opportunity which has arisen – in some countries – for a discussion about trade and trafficking.
- The number of institutions that implement good practices in relation to CSEC and DCL and are generally sustained by the Plans of Action for Children and Adolescents has increased progressively.
- The studies developed provide relevant elements in order to fuel models of intervention and policy for children.
- There has been success in generating and/or strengthening the capacity of key actors such as the police, educators, and, in some cases, the judiciary.
- In the case of educators, the Scream method constitutes a relevant tool in capacity generation for prevention and as an educational complement.
- The awareness campaigns have succeeded in articulating the issues related to DCL and CSE in the framework of the Worst Forms of Labor in a compelling and adequate manner, and the development of a multi-pronged strategy seems the most effective.

- The construction of a proposal for active participation on the part of CA and the configuration of their rehabilitation process and the exercise of social control in decision making regarding public policy, in some countries.
- The construction of effective models, especially against CSE in Colombia and Chile on the part of the private sector (NGOs and partners).
- The data base constructed by the project is a tool with the potential to produce relevant information and support decision making.
- The registry system of the WFCL establishes a good model for the standardization of processes and consensus regarding the production of valid information with a great potential for the development of actions for prevention.
- The results of activities to transfer training and functionaries indicate advances in the case of tourism operators and school teachers.

Among the weaknesses of the project, the mid-term evaluation affirms that:

- The project seemed more like the sum of four national projects rather than a regional initiative/
- Despite efforts realized in this regard, in each country, the project did not succeed in generating the necessary synergies regarding DCL and CSE.
- The current scale of the project exceeds the capacity and resources of the human resources available to the ILO-IPEC (NPOs).
- There was a weakness in the measurement of withdrawals based on the definitions of withdrawal and the criteria for “success.”
- The justice operators still approach activities on a case-by-case basis, insofar as the activities are not considered to be a permanent and systematic program.
- The advances in terms of the withdrawal of DCL is deficient; there exists confusion regarding the concepts and in the proposed solutions for the model.
- Regarding the CSE intervention, the withdrawal goal of CA in CSE has been partially reached. The majority of CA reported that they were “in the process of withdrawal.”
- Finally, there exist certain structural weaknesses in all of the countries that minimize the efficacy of components 2 and 5.

Findings and Conclusions

Based on the methodology as detailed above, **the final evaluation considers that the regional project Weaving Networks against DCL and CSEC has been a relevant, efficient, partially effective project and more sustainable in the cases of Chile and Colombia, than in Peru and Paraguay.**

The nature of the issues demands an evaluation that captures the qualitative changes that occurred (in both the actors/authorities/stakeholders and the public policy agenda and public opinion of the countries in question) and, in this way, the achievements and conclusions of this final evaluation seek to tackle key aspects in fulfilling the objectives of the project and presenting a balanced and just perspective, that is, a perspective that also indicates the obstacles or conditions which evaded the control or influence of the ILO/IPEC or the characteristics of the countries that are beyond the reach of any intervention (such as institutional weakness or a lack of political will to support child protection programs). However, in the opinion of the evaluator, some actions and considerations could have been taken due to these limitations, some examples will be provided that will serve as a basis for recommendations for future interventions.

According to the evaluation norms of the United Nations, we have attempted – as far as possible given the time and resources available – to include the perspective not only of the executors of the intervention but also of all the involved actors: we have interviewed representatives of the state, of

NGOs, of the companies and of the workers as well as representatives of the donor institution. We hope that the achievements, conclusions and recommendations of this evaluation contribute to the development of knowledge and to institutional learning. But in particular, we hope that this evaluation will be useful and will help to improve transparency and accountability in all sectors and particularly in the very organs of the United Nations system, whose members should be enthusiastic promoters of the evaluation as an essential component in the implementation process of any intervention.

Here we present the findings and conclusions:

I. How to Define the Regional Character of the Project

According to the project's own documentation (Justification of a regional and multi-sector focus against DCL and CSEC, page 23), the regional focus consists fundamentally of the ability to promote horizontal cooperation between countries which share the same problems, promoting an exchange of experiences, learning and replication of good practices. This horizontal cooperation has taken the form of a cooperation project at the regional level that relies on a shared research agenda and institutional exchange activities.

As previously mentioned, one of the conclusions of the mid-term evaluation that was most strongly rejected by the project Coordinators was the statement that Weaving Networks was not a regional project but rather the sum of four national projects. It is important to note that this statement was in a context in which Weaving Networks constitutes the latest experience of regional intervention on the part of the ILO/IPEC which has only reinforced the idea that there is no "value added" to regional intervention, or that it is not qualitatively superior to the sum of national projects. According to the USDOL: "If we are talking about regional projects, it should be clear what the value added of a regional project is as compared to a country project. In this way, legislative harmonization is key, but is not sufficient to justify a regional project. For example, if we are concerned with a regional project, what is being done on the borders of those countries? In sum, a regional project will only be approved if there exists a clear comparative advantage due to its regional character."⁸

This issue in particular was discussed in all of the interviews with the Coordinators who believed that: "The regional focus provides evidence in favor of sharing the same approach, the same strategy for intervention, for those that have both unique and common starting points. The studies are of regional character illustrated by case studies. There has been an effort to share both the results of the studies as well as the experiences; for example, when the policy training module for Peru was used in Paraguay; when the tourism industry training module for Peru was adopted in Chile, etc.; also when adaptations were made in the DCL focus, previously the focus was as a cultural problem that affected children, but this was shifted to place DCL on the list of dangerous labor; or when it is observed how the different legislative tools are used to see how to inspire other changes" (Interview with the Coordinator in Peru, August 14, 2007); "The [mid-term] evaluators made unjust comparisons between countries. They are not comparable countries and it is essential to take the context into consideration. There is an important exchange of learning between the countries and these were selected based on the existing social capital due to previous interventions" (Interview with the Regional Coordinator, August 9, 2007); "The statement that it is not a regional project is biased, as is evident due to, for example, the adoption of methodologies from one country in another (e.g. SCREAM method). The evaluators divided the countries without examining them from a regional perspective, they committed the mistake of comparing countries that are not comparable despite sharing some common characteristics (for example the institutional weakness in Peru and Paraguay); another example is that the shelter method has been used in Colombia in order to provide technical assistance in Paraguay. (Interview with the

⁸ Eileen Muirragui, Division Chief, Latin America and the Caribbean Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor and Human Trafficking Bureau of International Labor Affairs. ILAB, USDOL. In a telephone interview on August 28, 2007.

Coordinator in Paraguay, August 13, 2007); “The regional nature of the project has been demonstrated in the strategies that have been thought of not in a unilateral form. One example of this is that the knowledge that the Coordinators have of the legislative changes in each country became input that has served to inspire the strategy of the country, much like the utility of learning from the materials of another country that were adequate and served as a starting point to make our own.” (Interview with project Coordinator, August 13, 2007); “[the regional focus of the project is demonstrated by] the issue of the awareness campaigns, the issue of being able to share a little of the experiences that each of us has been having, the experiences of countries dealing with withdrawal, prevention, exchange, with Paraguay we have had a more permanent exchange, the issue of the police, also “Southern Child.” There are instances, in the issue of the Registry System, rather it was not with these four countries but was at the regional level, with Uruguay we had an experience to exchange training techniques, with Bolivia, therefore we have been integrating, and there has been emerging coordination between countries to strengthen these as well.” (Interview with the Coordinator in Chile, August 20, 2007) A couple of additional examples of the synergy between the countries, in the opinion of the Coordinators: “in the case of Peru [a country in which] there was a training with all the partners (NGO and state) with the focus of Personal Development in order to tackle the issue of CAs involved in commercial sexual exploitation. This one-week training was provided by the Colombian specialist Mónica Tobón, who developed a shelter model for her country for the project. Furthermore, an intermediate and favored coordination was realized for the project, between SENAME of Chile and the Ministry of Labor in Peru in order to establish the Registry System of the Worst Forms of child labor. There will be a workshop directed at functionaries of the National Committee for the prevention and eradication of child labor to present the system and debate its potential in Peruvian institutions.”

As can be seen, there seems to be agreement between the project’s intended regional character as originally defined and the perceptions of the Coordinators with respect to the way in which this regional character was expressed in each of the countries through the exchange of experiences and horizontal learning. However, it is clear that even though exchange can be facilitated by regional links, this is not an indispensable condition so that this exchange may occur. The value added of a regional project is not the result of the sum of the learning in each of the countries, but rather constitutes a qualitative jump that takes advantage of the experiences and knowledge of each one of the intervening countries in order to strengthen the final result, and requires a strategic vision and an appropriate analysis of the comparative advantage of each country. If the project established clear common objectives, the way to reach them and the relative weight of each of the components should be defined based on the specific conditions of each country in order to, for example, establish adequate goals from the initial conditions. Each country involved in the project has a series of specificities and diverse advances in both issues, without even mentioning the distinct political, social and cultural contexts. In what way did the project begin to establish these differences, the kind of state of the issue at the level of institutional framework, emblematic cases or the prior existence of more or less favorable conditions for an intervention from the private sector in these issues? How were these actions realized in order to put the starting point of each country with respect to both issues on the table, such that afterward one could evaluate the advances as compared to the initial conditions or a base line? This relative advance compared to the starting conditions includes the capacity of the countries to identify their own achievements, not so much as in comparison to other countries in the region – in this sense the evaluator shares the opinion of the Coordinators that comparing countries was neither reasonable nor pertinent, if the comparison is not from the perspective of each country’s own conditions.

In the design of regional strategy – which, as we have said, is distinct and qualitatively superior to horizontal cooperation – it is indispensable to include the executing agencies (NGO partners) as well as the key state actors with the most influence and competencies regarding both issues, in order to look for those that take responsibility of the project, which constitutes one step toward sustainability. Finally, this value added that can facilitate a regional character of the project, necessarily involves the institutionalization of achievements, which is a fundamental element to work towards sustainability.

Regional cooperation between peers

In effect, the expectations of horizontal cooperation cannot be limited to the executing teams of each country, but rather should include the other key actors of the project, principally those which are most clearly in a position to assume responsibility for intervention models, replicate good practices and guarantee sustainability, that is, the states. In this respect, the evaluation received various testimonies and evidence of the difficulties faced in involving the relevant public organs (perhaps the most extreme case was that of working with INABIF, an executing organ without decision making capacities and dependent on the MIMDES and not on the Direction of Children and Adolescents of the Ministry of Women and Social Development MIMDES in Peru, despite having counted on their support at the beginning of the project⁹). But nor is this an isolated case. During the group work in the Regional Forum and in the informal conversations, the government representatives indicated more than once that they did not recognize each other (at least not because of the project) and that they had wanted to develop regional exchange channels and horizontal cooperation between them and their peers in other participating countries: “We should have a detailed directory of who is who and the issues that they work on. The ILO has already obtained information about the lines of action of the institutions (profiles, lines of intervention)” however, it seems that there is a certain centralism and/or disorder in the management of available resources or unequal access to those resources. The available information considers the important advances achieved when channels of coordination and communication have been established between the Coordinators of the project and key public organs in each country (the SENAME in Chile as perhaps the best example, as well as the case of Colombia with the education sector and Paraguay) and of the limitations faced when they have not been involved in a sustained way (the MIMDES in Peru). In addition, the inexistence of channels of communication prevented these groups from being in regular contact at the regional level. This was what government representatives of the various countries expressed when they said that they had not had the opportunity to regularly exchange knowledge and experience with their counterparts in other countries through Weaving Networks, except for when they were invited to international meetings. In this vein, a representative of the public sector in Colombia stated “we do not know each other enough to be able to mutually take advantage of one another.”

Regional spaces

It is necessary to indicate that after three years of project execution, those who led its implementation are clearly convinced that there exist specific regional channels although I did not find evidence that there has been a strategic discussion of the best way to utilize said spaces and windows of opportunity: “There are other camps in which this is not possible [the communication between countries] and there it is accepted but they also take into consideration other countries: Chile and Paraguay are part of Mercosur while Colombia and Peru belong to the Andean Community. Factors of regional cohesion exist just like the prevention commissions, and the agreements [to which the countries have] subscribed” (Project Coordinator). Among the advantages of engaging in a regional project is precisely its capacity to detect opportunities and supranational spaces in order to insert or position DCL and CSEC as issues on the agenda, and penetrate spaces that currently exist such as the Iberoamerican Summit for International Cooperation and Monitoring, or the recently created

⁹ It is important to note that in this case in particular, the difficulties in coordination between the UN systems – UNICEF and ILO – as well as a certain competency by similar actions (another project on CSEC with Belgian funds by UNICEF), explain the evolution of the relationship. According to the interpretation of the Coordinator: “The coordinations were initiated and sustained with the Direction of CA of the MIMDES and the advisement of the Minister, a draft letter of understanding was prepared with the MIMDES and it was the DINNA that finally derived the coordination with the INABIF, due to its executive character. After the signing of the letter, the follow through of the agreements were permanently coordinated with the Chief Office of the INABIF, the Direction of the DINNA and the Vice Minister of MIMDES. The results of this management indicate that the issues are clearly not on the agenda and that the MIMDES does not have an effective decisive character in the actions of the INABIF, organ which is legally subordinate to it.”

International Observatory for Human Rights in Chile, platforms from which it is possible to give these issues greater reach and perspective. The information gathered indicates that effectively there has been a presence of the project in some fora linked to children's rights (a good example is the strategic alliance with the ECPAT Network) but the project does not seem to have had sufficient time and maturity to develop a strategic regional vision that brings it to organically and internationally create links as a regional project, with more influential spaces such as MERCOSUR, the Pucón Declaration (obtained by the IX Iberoamerican Conference of Ministers and High Level Authorities Responsible for Policies on Children and Youth, May 27-29, 2007) or the spaces for negotiation in the Free Trade Agreements with the U.S.

One representative of the Public Ministry indicated that "there is no macro entity that has connected them through virtual media" to which another state representative added that "at the institutional level peers also do not know who our counterparts are in other countries. The connection that we have with SENAME is due to other reasons, it has not been developed because of the project." At the level of other state authorities, a representative of the police force stated that: "Never [have I been in contact with the police in Peru o Colombia], in this way, perhaps I was speaking with a person from Paraguay that had worked together with the police and she demonstrated that, from that experience with the police in Paraguay, that police can transmit the experience to the police in Chile, but until now this phenomenon has not occurred, as far as I know. In other levels of authority, yes, the police of other countries have worked together. No, never [in the framework] of this project, of other situations, of other seminars that have been realized, but not for that, regarding the sexual exploitation of minors."

When the interviewees indicated that comparing the different countries involved in the project has little use, they were completely correct. Despite being geographically located on the same continent, each country has specific conditions that determine how to apply the regional objectives and how the implementation of the project must be adapted to the political, institutional, and cultural conditions of each nation. From a regional point of view, we consider that the brief time for implementation and the necessity to achieve various objectives simultaneously did not create conditions for the key actors in the process to have sufficient access to the findings and conclusions of the studies realized (we are distinguishing access from availability given that the studies were completed). Moreover, a more sustained and even participation of the key actors in the four countries probably would have enriched a political strategy based on an indispensable understanding of the political contexts that they were facing in these four countries, in order to identify opportunities and tools from a group regional perspective that could define proposals both at the supranational and national level. We are referring in particular to the political regimes that have risen to power in these four countries and the spaces that been created in past five years, that could have been utilized in order to more aggressively introduce DCL and CSEC among the priorities on the political agenda. For example, a more ambitious use of the research findings could have been possible in order to articulate the commitments of the state with regard to compliance with the Millennium Development Goals,¹⁰ the negotiations for the signing of Free Trade Agreements¹¹ and the decent work country programs (DWCP) that constitute the operating framework for ILO activities in these four countries. The following comment synthesizes this issue perfectly: "A systematic perspective is required, when there is a crisis in the countries, the agenda changes toward another issue. It is necessary to be able to rely on a holistic perspective and connect the dots. It is necessary to develop empathy with the interests of the decision makers."¹² In this way, an analysis of the political situation or at least the public policy agenda or a characterization of what moves the public agenda in these countries (beyond our mere wishes) would be incredibly useful, thereby creating possible scenarios in which a strategy of sustainability could take off. For example, one could develop a strategy for a scenario such as the current one and another strategy for when an

¹⁰ In Goal 8, Target 16: "In cooperation with developing countries, develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth"

¹¹ Particularly, when the elimination of child labor is proposed as a basic and inalienable requisite to sign a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and there exists an explicit declaration indicating that the persistence of child labor could become an insuperable obstacle for the completion of negotiations.

¹² Comments in the institutional development group of the Regional Forum, August 21-23.

unfavorable political context prevails (for example, other issues take priority replacing children's issues on the public agenda). It is difficult for children as an issue of concern for the state (or of political investment) to occupy a central place in the public agenda unless we opt for a focus which compels governments to take the issue seriously, articulating issues on the agenda that have a place in the political scene and issues where it is more probable that accountability at the domestic and international level will work in our favor: for example, inserting DCL and CSEC in the strategy to combat poverty, in the MDG, in the FTA, in Mercosur, in a framework of social responsibility, or articulate it in a more specific form in the priorities of the Hemispheric Agenda,¹³ Global Pact,¹⁴ etc.

One of the more explicit efforts at the regional level that shows tangible progress is the clear development of a regional monitoring system that by the end of the execution period includes: a) Six data bases; b) Direct beneficiaries in withdrawal and prevention of DCL; c) Direct beneficiaries in withdrawal and prevention of CSEC; d) Direct family beneficiaries; e) Institutional follow up; f) Legal processing of aggressors (CSE); g) Follow up of the national budgetary compensation; h) A manual for the use of the data base.¹⁵ However, in the evaluator's opinion, this information has not been utilized strategically, for example, when the follow up of the budgetary compensation consisted of simply a registry of public budgets assigned by the state to intervention issues (whether or not these effectively took an active part in the project) and that for the effects of the project are considered contributions by the state. One strategic way to deal with this would have been the use of information with political ends, as part of a communications strategy and as evidence on which to make recommendations for assigning greater budgetary funds and/or more effective use of existing public resources. Several of our interviewees indicated that regional meetings held by the ILO (for example, the meeting in Quito, Ecuador) where key state representatives attended and assumed commitments that unfortunately did not have a follow up mechanism for the agreements adopted.¹⁶ Who was in charge of follow up and were responsibilities clearly assigned regarding what process to follow?

Finally, it is important to note that we have found some evidence of insufficient cooperation and coordination between organs in the United Nations system, in the issues tackled by the project, particularly between UNICEF and ILO,¹⁷ particularly when one is counting on resources to advance achievements in a particular issue as in the case of CSEC in Peru. Taking into consideration the fields of each competency, it would be expected that at the level of the four countries in Weaving Networks, not only would synergies with UNICEF be created, but also with the International Organization for Migration (IOM)¹⁸ in a regular and systematic way, given the close relationship between migration and trade, as well as UNIFEM due to its long experience with issues of sexual exploitation and its extensive knowledge about how to apply a gender approach when dealing with human rights violations that primarily affect women and children. However, we believe that this constitutes one of those problems that goes beyond the project itself and that surely is on the agenda of the United

¹³ There is a set of four policy proposals for child labor in the Hemispheric Agenda that constitute an opportunity to place specifically DCL and CSEC. See *Decent Work in the Americas: a hemispheric agenda 2006-2010*.

¹⁴ Principle V of the Labor Rights of the Global Pact discusses the necessity to "abolish all forms of child labor"

¹⁵ Weaving Networks. "Systematization of Good Practices and Lessons Learned." August, 2007.

¹⁶ We will return to this point later.

¹⁷ According to a country Coordinator, "the coordination between the ILO and UNICEF were fluid from the beginning, but not only between them also with IOM, Save the Children and diverse ministries. However, clearly, initially, MIMDES felt that it could rely on a project to deal with CSE, of 2.5 mn euros that the other sectors were working with. Through the process of negotiations with the Belgian government, UNICEF ended up leading the project and having seven ministries as partners, which generated bad feelings in the MIMDES and the other ministries. Therefore, there occurred a perverse logic: they did not want to commit to actions with other projects but had a great internal trap in order to execute their own actions. This issue effectively made actions very difficult insofar as both projects were simultaneous and had similar components and products. Finally, in order to avoid deepening the conflict, the project opted to develop actions and products with the ministries that attempted to not duplicate what had been expected from them. In other cases, we got ahead of ourselves and advanced, as in the case of the legal study, base lines, bookkeeping, etc."

¹⁸ We should mention that the case of IOM as an ally of the "There is no EXCUSE" campaign, for the training provided to the functionaries of SENAME and police officers.

Nations system, in order to, in the short term, create mechanisms that favor greater efficiency and cooperation.

But the lack of cooperation between organs of the system was exacerbated by different conceptualizations and approaches. For example, regarding CSEC, UNICEF considers CSEC to be a crime, while the ILO categorizes it as a crime and a violation of rights and one of the worst forms of child labor “we have to evolve from this petty debate and byzantine discussion, as Isa called it, that CSEC is considered one of the worst forms of child labor, and there was from the beginning a very clear position from the ILO that was clear from the discussion spaces of the CEPETI, insofar as by being included in one of these conventions, the issues of commercial sexual exploitation, as it should be conceived of as one of the worst forms of child labor, however, with the position of UNICEF that it should be considered, always as a crime, for the ministry [referring to the governing body regarding children], as a governing entity is a crime, always, from the beginning, the intervention, when law 28251 was created in June 2004 it also considered that CSEC should be considered as a crime and not as one of the worst forms of child labor, I think that that petty debate, that discussion should be settled already, since it has become clear that it is a crime, that it is considered so in one of the international conventions, in an international document, but, in practice, the concept has been evolving in order to determine that it should be considered a crime” according to one representative of the public sector.

II. Effects of Insufficient Conceptual Debate

When there is so much to do in so little time in various countries, it is tremendously difficult to create the necessary space to discuss concepts that create a foundation from which we may have the security that we are speaking the same language and that we share the same guide for action.

The research carried out (regional and case studies) constitutes without a doubt one of the most notable achievements of Weaving Networks. The identification of adequate researchers and institutions, the selection of areas of study, and finally, the production of knowledge regarding DCL and CSEC is a tremendously significant achievement, of great utility for this project and beyond. However, the reality is that this is a continuous process for which it is necessary to create a permanent platform for discussion, debate and the revision of these investigations based on experience. In this way, the concepts could constitute living resources for the people and institutions that participate in the project, as well as allowing the appropriation of this knowledge beyond the academic sphere. One of the most evident deficiencies in the project in general is the absence of a conceptual debate with the goal of homogenizing some of the fundamental concepts that serve as a common foundation for the team’s work, which is particularly important given the complexity of intervention in these issues and because in and of itself this debate could have constituted a factor to contribute to sustainability in the transfer of knowledge that could have given greater rigor to the focus and the intervention. Observing these deficiencies regarding the conceptual debate with the direct intervention teams in particular (as well as with the key actors of the project, both state representatives as well as companies and workers), we have identified one of the consequences of this lack of debate as a lack of clarity or a common language about the differences between trade, CSEC, DCL that provide a basic conceptual framework of what is included or excluded in these concepts. Furthermore, opening a conceptual debate constitutes a fundamental part of the technical assistance that the team should provide to those who realize direct interventions and prevention, and to give them greater certainty and support in their daily work.

It should be understood that when we refer to the necessity of a conceptual debate, we are not referring to something as restricted as the distribution of a basic trade dictionary. We are referring to the capacity of the team to internalize the concepts based on a more comprehensive understanding that includes a regular discussion about the processes in which certain factors of vulnerability are inserted (such as poverty or sex) and the political and social processes that place some children in the position of a member of an at risk population (for example, migration, domestic violence and armed conflict). That is to say, the Coordinators should have a clear and comprehensive understanding of the concepts

(in particular regarding the cross-cutting character of childhood vulnerability), rather than focus on inter-sector¹⁹ issues perhaps in response to the difficulties in the countries to succeed in taking into consideration institutional limitations. The recognition of a conceptual vacuum – in particular from representatives of the state, companies, workers and to a lesser degree the partners – resulted in the proposal, during the Regional Forum, to continue training exercises and the creation of on-line study groups after the project has ended. With the existing demand, it would be useful to be able to link demand with the necessity to strengthen a conceptual discussion in specific cases (such as which is the best way to work with men, transgender, migration and DCL, feminization of migration, etc.)

The explanation formulated by the Coordinators indicated that: “In Colombia one of the processes that provided a conceptual and practical direction to discover and analyze risk factors, vulnerabilities, etc. was that of the “Risk Maps” and all the construction of an integrated strategy of prevention of WFCL that included aspects of strengthening local politics, training, strengthening programs, direct attention to CA and their families in an inter-sector manner, etc. Furthermore, with all the participating actors that did training in various moments in the process, there is still turnover of functionaries, personal characteristics and other factors that make it difficult to incorporate the language and the concepts. Moreover, in the workshop [in Santiago, Chile] there were entities that sent people for whom it was their first experience with the issue.” These constitute examples of the institutional fragility of our states (which we will discuss later on) and that there should be a permanent action and involvement of personnel of the GOs.

Predominance of CSEC, making DCL invisible

This lack of a conceptual debate had a concrete impact on the gap that several interviewees and survey respondents indicated regarding the imbalance between CDL and CSEC in the project: without knowing the boundaries of each, there was the sensation of working on two fronts that do not connect and that, in the worst cases, compete against each other. The Coordinator from Colombia indicated: “Regarding the existence of communication gaps between DCL and CSEC, it was attempted from the beginning, however, not in the conceptualization (both can become forms of trade or be dealt with as such for strategic reasons) but in the implementation and operationalization should be separated because in Colombia the authorities that deal with these issues are completely different, they tackle these issues from distinct programs and institutions; reality cannot be forced. Although a good example of the compatibility between these issues is the evidence of an integrated strategy when dealing with DCL/CSEC/Armed conflict. The common foundation [at the beginning of the project] consisted of the issue of prevention and the vulnerability factors that are the same in all countries, for example, domestic violence, thus the demand (that is whether the child goes to the guerrillas, CSE or goes to domestic labor), will depend on the zone in which he/she lives.”

“At the culmination of the project (in December 2007) there will be expertise in both issues, sufficient knowledge accumulated and, despite the particulars, to link the two issues, and strengthen the capacity for a more integrated intervention in the framework of trade, understanding trade as a recruitment mechanism. There are complex and diffuse frontiers between trade and other forms of exploitation.” (Regional Coordinator) “The studies provide evidence that there are transmission belts between both [forms of exploitation]. If DCL is listed among the worst forms of child labor, then a greater impact has not been achieved because it has not been linked to trade, which would be key, and neither has it been linked to the feminist fight.” (Coordinator from Paraguay) In particular, those who realize interventions in DCL believe that this issue has been relegated to a less important position vis-à-vis CSE which appears to be dominant in the project and, judging by the testimonies, several of the executing institutions have the impression that they have opted for a project which proposes to work jointly on CSEC and DCL, responding solely to a demand from the donor. This disconnect is also a consequence of a lack of consensus between those who work on DCL without knowing (or

¹⁹ We will return to this issue of actors and institutions later on.

disagreeing with) the reasons to work on the two issues jointly. Several interviewees indicated the virtual abandonment of DCL in favor of CSEC; this imbalance seems to be a product of the scarce dissemination of the conceptual underpinnings behind the focus of the project.

“It is not a criticism, it is a description, (...) they say yes they should go together, because many domestic child laborers can end up in sexual exploitation, that is the explanation. Both issues are linked because it is this way, but at the end of the day, I don’t know where they get that, where are the statistics? I have been working with housekeepers for a long time, and it doesn’t seem that clear to me that that is where they end up because (...) sometimes one issue ends up being more attractive than another, or ends up that it mobilizes you more, or moves you more. (...) I was in a meeting with the ILO and there I complained, I complained because I felt that the majority of people that were there were working on CSEC, almost all of the interventions were about CSEC, and until the mid-term evaluation, (...) domestic child labor, was relegated [to second place] and only now at in this meeting [the Regional Forum] has it been treated equally, and, moreover, (...) it has been placed on the **ECPAT** web site, (...) that is a web site for sexual exploitation and it seems to me that they are not the same.” (representative of an executing NGO) At the state level, one representative added: “perhaps if we had started with the same energy for the three issues it would have been much more balanced, I feel that since we have found the vertex between the three issues, trade, CSEC and domestic child labor, that could have been ideal from the start, since the project began.”

Gender approach

Regarding the gender approach of the project, a cross-cutting axis of ILO interventions, we observed that, much like in the cases of concepts of poverty and inequality (underlying conditions that favor greater vulnerability for children) in order to tackle DCL and CSEC, there has been a limited use of a gender approach (for example, there is a registry of withdrawals by sex), but there has not been sufficient emphasis given on gender in order to implement the guidelines of the ILO regarding a gender analysis of projects (see gender analysis in child labor) where the need to link the situation and the subordination of women with a greater propensity for female child labor (DCL) is emphasized. In this way, the conceptual framework of the project has not been incorporated in the plans of action in an intentional way, relevant issues include the condition of vulnerability of the ethnic minorities and the CA with other sexual options (these references however are repeatedly mentioned in the case of Paraguay for indigenous and transgender children,²⁰ respectively). As an effect of this inclusive exercise in prevention and withdrawal actions, there was important learning that it is necessary to systematize and incorporate these conditions in future interventions.

In line with the limitations of the approach, we consider that the inclusion of a gender focus to characterize families and communities that are exposed to risky conditions (that is, where it is most probable that CA could be expelled to a life of DCL or be recruited for CSE), could allow us to place more weight on the issue of domestic power relations and in particular domestic violence as a manifestation of an abusive exercise of that power. This would, in turn, allow in order to incorporate awareness and prevention actions, oriented toward the questioning of the high public and private tolerance related to violence, which reinforces discrimination against women and the lesser “value” of the woman and child in society and in the family, and in a context where the state does very little to discourage domestic violence (violence in which women and children are the principal victims), violence that promote the expulsion of CA from the home and makes girls most vulnerable to DCL, CSE and trade.

²⁰ See in particular the work realized by the NGO CEAPRA in Paraguay with transgender girls, included as good practice at the country level under principle of non-discrimination as mentioned by the Coordinator from Paraguay.

Finally, we find three conditions under which there is evidence of opportunities (detected by some executing institutions of the project although they do not seem to have been implemented systematically or debated as explicit strategies for the project) to incorporate a gender approach in the intervention: in actions dealing with political authority, given that these actions require working with decision makers, being the large majority of them men; the same occurs in the case of training actions and awareness actions with unions whose leaders are often also men that very possibly have worked during their childhood and; finally, training men to realize prevention between peers (such as the case of bus drivers as consumers of CSEC).

Rights approach

Another of the aspects in which of Weaving Networks has obtained important advances in all countries is legislative harmonization: an increase in the minimum working age, inclusion of DCL on the list of the worst forms of child labor, characterization of CSEC as a crime, etc. We consider that this is the foundation on which to construct a discourse and action that will promote the restitution of rights for children as a central issue on the public agenda for the four countries. It is right to indicate that there are enormous difficulties that exist working with concepts that often do not correlate with the daily life of the population, particularly the most impoverished and excluded segments of the population. In this way, speaking of citizenry and the exercise of rights is difficult in contexts such as Paraguay, Peru, Colombia and, to a lesser degree, Chile, but continues to be necessary, particularly insofar as it calls attention to the few references to the focus of rights restitution in the materials for dissemination.

According to the UN guidelines,²¹ “The human rights approach may be regarded as a programming methodology that derives from the Sustainable Human Development paradigm... The approach proposes the use of human rights concepts and standards in the analysis of development problems and in the design of projects and programs, including mechanisms to assess the impact of these programs and the process by which they are developed and implemented. The human rights approach proposes that our understanding of development and our strategies to achieve it, are considerably enhanced by the use of rights-based programming tools and methodologies.” In this respect and despite the fact that the restitution of children’s rights has been present at the rhetorical level, we consider that it is necessary to incorporate the rights approach more vigorously both in training actions as well as in campaigns and plans of action. Advocating for rights restitution, however, is not a simple task in our countries, given the adverse conditions in the political and public space where the exercise of rights, accountability and transparency are not usual practices. It should also be mentioned in particular that the issue of the quality of public services and social programs for the poorest segments of the population; DCL, as the Coordinator from Colombia indicates, do not have not sufficient coverage. The quality of education and their capacity of implementers to adapt to the needs of the population that they should serve should also be attended to: “This [that the level of schooling cannot be the only quantitative indicator of advances in DCL] refers to that at least in Colombia there are many children who attend school that work part-time and little by little leave school because they prefer the money and because their scholastic achievements begin to diminish because of the work, therefore the mere fact of being in school does not guarantee that they do not work. On the other hand, there are many children [that are] behind, that need alternatives for flexible education and although there are some such as accelerated learning and others, they are not available in all areas and do not have sufficient slots.”

According to the Coordinators: “we have a clear rights approach and we work from the perspective of restitution and demand from the empowerment of the beneficiaries, from the promotion of vigilance in the citizenry and political authority. We assume that rights are a matter of public policy and we

²¹ Workshop on the Implementation of Rights based Approach to Development: Training Manual” UN Office of the Resident Coordinator, Philippines. 2002.

emphasize that there need to be social policies that reach everyone, precisely so that “band-aid” policies do not need to occur that leave the root of problems untouched, and, in any case, that these have been complementary with those. We assume that the situation of the CA in DCL and CSEC is not centrally attributable to the children nor to the families but basically is an issue of societal responsibility. (...) This approach impregnates the set of our activities, trainings and awareness campaigns.” As one can appreciate from these comments, the rights approach is effectively present in discourse and at the declarative level in the implementation team. However, this rights approach needs to pass from discourse to imbue the messages and products from the perspective of the audience that receives the messages, which is incredibly difficult given that we act in a context in which children are not perceived as subjects of rights.

As a union representative indicated: “the issue of guaranteeing rights when the conditions are not appropriate, I think, can also complicate our work, because if we include children in the school system, in health actions and all of these things, in many of the cities and in many of the counties, in the educational system, in the health system for example, do not provide quality services, therefore we are covering the population, but we are not guaranteeing rights.”

III. On the Sustainability of the Interventions (Not of the Project)

The sustainability of the interventions for the prevention and eradication of DCL and CSEC will depend on, on the one hand, the capacities created by Weaving Networks in each of the countries involved, and the previously existing capacities that the project was able to support and strengthen. Once the project has officially ended in December, 2007, there will still be Sustainability Plans (2007 to 2010, in the case of Colombia to 2011) and the commitment acts written by the four countries in which the executing partners (NGOs and state entities) expressed their will to continue the work initiated. Given that the NGOs sustain their interventions based on their ability to rely on the funds which finance them, it is clear that sustainability in each country depends fundamentally on the degree of involvement of the key entities of the state (at the central, regional, and local levels, according to the case) and on the effectiveness that Weaving Networks has had in the transfer of technical ability in both issues. The existence of a previous history of collaboration between the state and NGOs or tensions between the two (that compete for the same resources for cooperation when the state does not outsource), should be taken into consideration. In this respect, a representative of the Public Ministry of one of the countries indicated that “the NGO system only works as long as there are resources, then they disperse, so that the [actor] to whom sustainability corresponds is the stable and permanent one, the state” and a representative of the state indicated: “the UN organisms are not one more NGO, they are international institutions for cooperation but they should not act like an NGO, they have a fundamental role that is not only to work with civil society, but their fundamental task is to be a technical consulting organ that the state institutions may incorporate, that is, the work with these institutions is extremely important so that the state may assume responsibility for some issues and place them on the agenda.” As a result, the evaluation considers that both Colombia (both at the level of the governing body of the ICBF and in strategic sectors like education) and Chile (with the clear commitment of SENAME), have better conditions for sustainability than Paraguay and Peru. In both cases – Chile and Colombia – the institutional conditions, the adequate selection of strategic allies, the political will of the state (especially in the case of Chile) and the implementation of an adequate national strategy, have played a decisive role in an improved position for both issues on the political agenda.

The time frame under which the NGOs work, determined by the duration of projects and their financing, creates a sense of immediacy and a need to demonstrate achievements in time periods that normally do not exceed four or five years. At the same time, the learning about the way to develop actions in the political sphere to have an impact on public institutions and proposals for normative changes as well as the transfer of abilities are relatively recent phenomena given the traditional tension between NGOs and the state, and the competition for resources of cooperation and the reach of each.

One central factor for the sustainability of withdrawals is constituted by the possibility of generating strategies to generate alternate sources of income for children that withdraw from CSEC, or for their families. In this respect, and in little more than three years of implementation and with the human resources available, it was highly improbable that the project would be able to establish strategic alliances which could end the cycle of poverty and lack of opportunities that is the root of DCL and CSEC. Despite this, there is clear evidence that, in the cases of Paraguay and Peru, the project has been able to support initiatives at the micro level that have the potential to validate intervention models at the local level, in the case of Cusco where the Ombudsman (**Defensoría del Pueblo**) and the Labor Ministry has assumed CDL as part of their agenda and are willing to work together, although they still need to involve the labor authorities in order to resolve the practical obstacle of how to realize inspections when the authorization of the head of the family is required. In this same example, there has been training for teachers and, as the Coordinator from Peru indicated: “the advances are measured not only by matriculation indicators, but also we offer complementary scholastic reinforcement, the creation of spaces to reinforce self-esteem and the effect of the reinforcement can be noted in scholarly achievement, the girls manage to express themselves better and develop skills to negotiate given that they find themselves in a situation of real sequester on the part of their patrons.” In the issue of CSE, the Peruvian NGO **La Restinga** in Iquitos got involved with the CSE issue with Weaving Networks and has become experts in the issue. They had the foresight to call a meeting with the manager of Social Development in the Regional Government.²² However, these efforts on the part of small, local NGOs can be frustrated given that there are no realistic alternatives to offer to children.

Regarding the crucial role that inter-sector coordination plays, the project design envisioned the support of local committees: “Specifically, the project will promote the strengthening of ‘local committees’ (against DCL and/or CSEC) in the principal communities and cities where they operate. These committees, in which the GOs, the worker and employer organizations, the NGOs, and the OSCs will coordinate their efforts at the local level and will become key actors in the sustainable development of the project.” (page 62 of the project) We have mentioned in the above paragraph two cases that illustrate this modality to involve and commit local actors in the fight against DCL and CSEC. Despite the fact that the local committees constitute strategies which require patient work in order to weave alliances, it is clear that many times it is difficult to implement in practice, although it is particularly essential in countries that are in the process of decentralization in the administration of resources and competencies, just as it is essential to achieve sustainability of successes.

According to the previously indicated remarks regarding the strategic role of the state in the interventions, being able to rely on a strategy that is intended to influence the public budget assigned to DCL and CSEC could have been decisive and, as we noted, the Ministry of the Economy was not included among the strategic allies at the national level.²³ In this respect, a state representative indicated that “what is not in the operating plans, does not exist.” Thus, the evaluation wonders to what extent did Weaving Networks rely on a regional strategy oriented to influence the Operating Plans and the budgets of the key governing institutions in the countries involved? With the exception of Chile (a country with important available resources), all the other countries could have benefited enormously in the long term if the strategy had taken this direction.

Due to the micro reach of the NGOs, these had to rely on greater flexibility in order to innovate and validate intervention models that could influence state action. Simultaneously, it is important to consider that one strategy for sustainability could come from the institutions and project that, from civil society, work on issues related to children (not necessarily CSE and DCL): such as

²² The Regional Governments in Peru are in the process of receiving more and more public competencies and higher budgets and have as part of their mandate to rely on a budget elaborated in a participatory form by representatives accredited by the population. This constitutes a concrete example of taking into consideration the political context and the strategic selection of allies.

²³ We will elaborate on this point when discussing the elaboration of the project with the public agenda and beyond the central level of government.

mainstreaming DCL and CSEC within institutions which work on children, or human rights, or poverty, exclusion or discrimination. To what degree has there been a strategy that stimulates interest in NGOs that work on children's issues to assume specific actions related to DCL and CSEC?

Validated models of intervention

One of the most positive aspects of the project is related to the capacities installed and possibilities that have opened up in order to validate intervention models for prevention and withdrawal of DCL and CSE in the four countries as well as the strengthening of exchange of experiences and institutional processes between peers. The information collected in the testimonials regarding the importance of support and technical assistance received by non-governmental executing institutions. In the opinion of the evaluator, the project's greatest achievement has been the generation and validation of intervention models for the prevention and withdrawal that have benefited from the experiences of executing organizations and technical assistance from the team from the IPEC-ILO, despite the time restrictions and the pressures exerted to achieve certain targets. One of the project Coordinators stated: "Regarding the modification of the current project, (as relates to objectives three and five) that deal with the creation of models of attention, in practice, the time required for formulation can be very long (more than the duration of the this project) therefore I suggest that for this we allocate a longer time period, this would be more realistic." Regarding suggestions on how to change the design, the Coordinator from Peru mentioned that "the action programs should propose to define intervention models with more realistic targets, given that the pressure to complete the targets has been substantial. Given that the action programs include prevention as well as attention, not much has been effectively achieved. It would be desirable to be able to control some of the variables better and have the space to systematize."

On the other hand, Weaving Networks is leaving a "good practices benchmark" which is extremely valuable for any future action. Our impression is that, in spite of this, they have not had the sufficient time for the country teams to adopt the concept and be capable of extracting lessons from their daily work themselves, which is linked to a statement from one of the Coordinators who indicated a lack of space to systematize. What constitutes "good practice" has been defined by the ILO but to what degree has this been recreated and appropriated by the institutions of each country? As the Regional Coordinator indicated:²⁴ "in the fora by country, the national participants were not previously prepared to identify good practices and lessons learned, the continuity plan, develop a regional capability that is indicative of common guidelines for the future, an agenda. In the Regional Forum in Santiago (Chile) we intend to elaborate a letter of commitment."

Articulation of national policy

As we previously stated in relation to the sustainability of the project and its capacity to identify adequate allies, it is indispensable that the intervention projects concerned with children give space and consideration to the specific political processes beyond the central government and include a local strategy: "It is crucial to look beyond national level policy processes and focus on local level institutions in order to be able to assess real impacts and potential problems in policy implementation. First, budget and spending commitments by local governments at the local level are essential. As such, it is important to promote transparency and accessibility of local level budgetary data to verify progress in policy commitment towards children. Second, the participation of grassroots civil society / organizations in service delivery has the potential to improve access and reach, but it requires capacity building, adequate funding and deliberate intent to reduce childhood poverty to have desired outcomes

²⁴ Meeting on August 9, 2007 in the ILO office in Lima, Peru.

for children.”²⁵ A good example of the benefits of flowing between national and local strategies can be found in Colombia where each Mayor’s office where the project was implemented signed a letter of intention and committed the local administrative offices to specific actions and resources that even went beyond the end of the project.

In a similar vein, a union representative said: “the ILO is tripartite, is it not? There are the workers, the employers and the state and putting these three actors into play in the development of this type of project, I think that there should be then a greater responsibility on the part of the governments regarding the issue, [that they should] commit themselves more to develop actions of a structural type, that deal with poverty, I think that when the governments excuse themselves based on the claim that there is no money, that there are no resources to guarantee access to rights and the elimination of poverty but in our city, I was counting yesterday, comrades, we are doing actions and have a very concrete proposal for the elimination of poverty in order to guarantee four basic rights for children: nutrition, health, education and freedom from child labor. We did it with economists, with the Bank of the Republic we did the estimate, how much it would cost the state, to guarantee these four rights to the entire population from 0 to 17 years old in a situation of poverty, rather it is a universal issue not just for the most impoverished and the poor. No. For the poor. And it cost that much and it was viable, totally viable for the city’s income, rather the Bank of the Republic that it the entity that knows how much income the city will have each year, told us: ‘it is totally viable.’ We are now in the process of management with the councilmen, the new councilmen that are going to enter into the city and with the new mayor and with new candidate to the mayor’s office, so that we can integrate this plan with the government and afterwards the development plan because we want to demonstrate that yes, you can.”

It is indispensable to observe the specifics of each country in terms of the feasibility of relying on a fundamental ally and at the same time trust in the capacity of the state to create synergies through inter-sector links, which is often quite difficult to achieve given the intrinsic problems of the state that go beyond the will of the authorities: “in the case of Colombia if you can talk about a national policy, not in our case [the case of Peru] where each sector has contradictory conduct within itself. The national commissions have given unity, the ministries of development have worked on national plans of action for children; the most important ally in this issue has been MIMDES. Regarding national policies: DCL has been included as a priority and is listed in the worst forms, proposing its eradication [but the] MIMDES has not given priority to DCL and its institutional contribution is not clear,²⁶ the ILO managed to introduce it for the attention of the CEM (Women’s Emergency Center) that traditionally only deals with cases involving women and children, but not DCL, at least in this case, it worked on the issue as one of the partners of the ILO” stated one of the Coordinators.

It is fair to mention that the scarce involvement of the MIMDES is an extreme case of a lack of consensus between the project and the governing agency, given that this was not the case in Paraguay, Chile and Colombia. However, the most successful results in terms of the ability of Weaving Networks to influence the state apparatus appears to have occurred in the tourist sectors (in order to prevent so-called sexual tourism) and in the education sector for those who have raised awareness among teachers for the detection of DCL. In this way, the project has demonstrated better efficacy when dealing with a specific goal. Why has there not been a clear articulation of sectoral strategies and a greater strategy that positions the issues of DCL and CSEC in the Plans for Children in a more central way? Given the existence of a National Plan of Action for Children (NPAC, 2001-2010)

²⁵ Paola Perezniето and Nicola Jones. Rethinking Poverty and Children in the New Millennium: Linking Research and Policy. 17 September 2007 - 19 September 2007. Oslo, Norway. Organized by CROP and Childwatch International Research Network.

²⁶ This statement is shared by the governing entity, however, despite its low profile in the issue, MIMDES prepared a project to increase the minimum age for DCL to 16 and they have prepared an ordinance for the municipalities. These actions were part of a set of proposals that the project achieved with the DINNA, of which they chose these two and then, according to the Coordinator, only pushed one forward, the proposal regarding the law to increase the minimum age. The proposals mentioned were put forward the previous year.

several years prior to the start of Weaving Networks, in what way did the project push forward the fulfillment of the DCL and CSEC targets or advocate for greater budgetary allocations for these issues? Although the project claimed to be regional (we have already established at the beginning that according how the project was defined, it was regional), we think that what was lacking was a strategic approach at both the regional and national level, an approach that would make possible a clear articulation of the specific interventions and the national policies on the one hand and the project mission and regional agenda (consisting of spaces, fora and existing commitments in the region) on the other hand.

One state representative from Paraguay indicated: “if I had to launch [the project] all over again, it would be to do something more, I would think, surely to advance beyond what was visualized, in strategies that go from an incorporation with public agendas, from the elaboration of plans, and work towards the application of the plans in a dimension, as we spoke about before, political, a dimension of politics, and policy of this problem with attention to children before this problematic, therefore point to the application of everything that was visualized, of everything that we are aware of, and toward the institutionalization of these actions, and possibly in the institutionalization of these actions (...) I believe that we need to make it transversal and link it to other issues, because the issue of children, is not children that are out there on an island and it is a children’s issue, the children’s issue is an issue of the society, and issue of the citizenry, it is the citizenry that constructs from childhood that is where the true construction of the citizen begins. Therefore, if we think about how to acquire a political dimension, we have to think about understanding what is a construction that involves the very construction of citizenship and therefore link children-poverty, children-work, children-anticorruption, children-anti-impunity. (...) many times, in the search for that specificity we have forgotten the context of childhood, its familial context, its societal context, its national context, its regional context and children end up almost as an isolated thing that needs actions toward it almost for a question of social commitment and not as part of the very same necessary and fundamental actions of the state and society.”

IV. Articulation with National Strategies

Articulation of the project for the public agenda

There are isolated successful examples of an articulation of the project for a greater agenda: in Colombia the issue of CL was included in families in action, which is the largest national strategy to combat poverty; the Attorney General of the Nation, with technical support from IPEC and the Weaving Networks project is asking for the accounts from governors and mayors of capital cities each year about their programs, resources and implementations regarding CL; the Colombian state has to be accountable in its advances on in the issue of CL to the ILO every two years, according to the ratification of C.182. In the opinion of the evaluator, it would have been fundamental to the strategic vision to connect DCL and CSEC with the public agenda (both at the national and regional level) of the state involved. For example, they could seek to explicitly articulate these issues as internal commitments (like the strategies and plans to combat poverty) and external commitments (MDGs and accountability of the state regarding the fulfillment of the Convention on the Rights of the Child). Specifically, we could perceive a preference to attribute DCL and CSE as forms of labor and crimes intimately linked to social and cultural practices more than to the condition of poverty²⁷ of the four

²⁷ This tendency was noted since the formation of the project in which it was stated that: “The magnitude of domestic child labor (DCL) in many countries in South America is link no just to the persistence of extensive poverty in the region but also to the persistence of traditional social practices and traditional economic relations between rural and urban sectors of society.”

countries.²⁸ As a labor representative indicated: “I think [that this project] is leaving aside the issue of poverty which is one of the principal causes of child labor, according to all the studies and as it is said in the world and in all the research done on the topic, demonstrate that the principal causes, aside from cultural patterns, from jurisprudence, and political issues, the economic issue of poverty is one of the principal issues that causes child labor. Therefore, I feel that there is a vacuum here in this issue, in other words, it does not begin from a larger structural framework that is a situation of poverty rather it seems to attack some issues of cultural patterns that are very important but it leaves aside those other issues. Therefore, I believe that the framework of poverty is being abandoned and I think that we should pick up that trail again, certainly. And that those projects that include actions of that kind that seek to eliminate poverty that is one of the goals of the millennium as I said yesterday, and that is one of the important paths to contribute to the eradication of child labor. I believe that if this project had very good results, if it were put in a larger framework, I think that results would be much better and more for the long term, because suddenly this type of action is more in depth if they attack the issue of poverty and I believe that the actions are going to be much more for the long term and we are going to see not only withdrawal actions but also prevention actions for the long term for these children and their younger siblings. During the national forum in Colombia I also mentioned this but after my comment, I was like ice, no one wanted to touch it.”

The ice (or the resistance to debating from a perspective of fighting poverty) to which the interviewee refers responds to the project approach as synthesized by the Regional Coordinator during the Evaluation Workshop in which poverty was discussed almost as if it were a distraction from the focus of the intervention: “a project [Weaving Networks] of this type, obviously, has no impact, nor was it designed to reduce poverty, therefore, when they bring up issues of poverty in our minds emerge a whole world of difficulties, social exclusion which is the principal characteristic of our countries, does not mean that by emphasizing certain points and working from there, that we are detaching ourselves from the situation of social exclusion and poverty and exactly because of this we are working.”

It is evident that included in this greater framework and in the capacity of the project to break the isolation of children’s issues, there are issues that in each country represent particularities that have to be taken into consideration at the moment of defining which is the greater agenda that it is important to articulate. One clear example is the forced displacement and the armed conflict in Colombia; impossible conditions to avoid at the moment of defining a strategy for intervention in DCL and CSEC given the special conditions of vulnerability for children that live in conditions of poverty. At the same time, the poverty indices and exclusion as well as the profound inequalities that characterize the countries of the region, are unavoidable at the moment of designing an intervention strategy linked to the most vulnerable children.²⁹

Precisely regarding the strategic need to institutionalize the advances indicated by the public sector representative from Paraguay, another public functionary from Chile added: “the principal difficulties (...) is that you have to raise awareness person by person visualizing which are the technical partners in the distinct institutions that can get on board and commit to make a lobby and awareness building work within each of these institutions, many times the institutions have on their agenda issues that are institutional priorities which are distinct from the worst forms and sexual exploitation and from the registry system, but if you have a technical partner who is aware little by little you will be able to insert the issue in the institutions. (...) Therefore, for the registry system, the difficulties that we are having is that we even have to deal with turnover in the authorities, that means that we do not start from zero but obviously we can go more slowly, because the technical partner has to wait for the ratification of the issues on the part of the authorities, the availability of resources.”

²⁸ DWCPs provide a means to integrate different technical areas. Many domains in which constituents seek ILO cooperation require complex policy responses based on a comprehensive decent work approach drawing on more than one of its dimensions – for example, eliminating the worst forms of child labour (Source: DWCP guide...)

²⁹ In Colombia and Peru, 64% and 49% of the population respectively lives below the poverty line. Paraguay is rated 91 in the Human Development Index of 177 countries.

Finally, taking into consideration the scarce human resources available to the project and the short time for implementation, the monitoring system should register a follow up on the agreements in particular when these commit authorities of a higher level and international spaces in which it is more feasible to pressure for accountability. One state representative added that: “in the issue of trade, look at the issue as crossing boundaries and we are paying for the greater problem of trafficking children, therefore, for that we need to establish alliances and connections in those international spaces, therefore, I think that that is something that has not been worked on either we have been very concerned with the internal situation in our countries and there has not been much progress in the spaces as a region. Here was a small effort also, I don’t know if as part of the ILO project to realize a meeting that was realized last year in Ecuador, in Quito of those that participated, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. Ecuador is not part of the project but Colombia and Peru are and the issue was trade, the situation of trade and they made agreements, for example, to create a web page, to look at the issue of legislation between our countries and identify criteria, (...) they reached important agreements but a big problem is that no one was concerned with the follow up to fulfill these accords, therefore, I asked the Coordinator from Colombia and the Coordinator from Colombia replied, and did you receive something?, because the Coordinator was in my work commission, and I told her: but I was in Quito, do you remember there was that commitment? Well, did you receive something? Because I didn’t get anything. (...) With this I felt that my trip to Quito was a total waste of time, that it was, simply, an exchange of experiences, we got to get to know what’s going on in Peru, in Ecuador, in Colombia and that’s it (...) no registry, no way to do follow up, something that could have been interesting in a space were people from the police, the public ministry and the governing bodies all participated.” The fact that the state representative, after three and a half years of implementation of the project, is not clear that the project is not one about trade reveals the failure to establish a common foundation and position the objectives of the project although the basis of the testimony here is alluding to the need to take advantage of the regional character in order to intervene in critical zones such as border regions.

Institutional limitations

Regarding the objective to rely on an adequate legal, institutional and cultural framework for the effective incorporation of DCL and CSE, the evaluation concludes that there have been very important advances in the legal framework in general (with some differences between countries) that allow for tools to support actions to protect children; some important advances in the institutional framework, in particular regarding the transfer of capabilities through technical assistance offered to key organisms; but the least profound advances were in the cultural framework due to reasons linked to the conditions in which the strategies for communication were launched (we will discuss this point later) and because the changes in this issue always require a much slower and sustained process. It is relevant to specify that the institutional fragility, however, weakens the effectiveness of the work realized by the people who implemented the project, very committed people that could not rely on an institutional structure which was sufficiently consolidated that could not only support their efforts but also was able to capitalize off this effort and for this the knowledge of the fundamental traits of the organizations in order to project their strengths and limitations proved to be very important.³⁰

Many studies have documented the institutional weakness in the entities in charge of implementing policy and social programs in Latin America, as one of the obstacles to surmount in order to obtain a more effective functioning of the state in public policy in the social areas, traditionally, the weakest links of the public sector. If we add to this the need to articulate actions in a cross-sector approach, things become even more complicated. One of the members of the implementation team described a concrete case where these limitations had an impact on the quality of service that could be offered: “Working with the state is to know its limitations: in the case of Peru they tend to make promises and

³⁰ The testimony of a public functionary illustrates this point in an interview: “I have worked for the state in various administrations and also before for NGOs so now I understand that the NGOs have to understand the organizational culture of the state in order to be able to speak a common language.”

agreements and then not do anything. For example, a letter of understanding was signed in order to provide technical assistance to INABIF, there were funds for the partners, there were accommodations but these do not have the level of specialization and despite the technical assistance offered by the ILO (which gives attention in an open space) at times gives the impression that the public functionaries are more preoccupied with conserving their positions (establishing closed accommodations where the girls cannot leave) than with the effectiveness and sustainability of the intervention.”

The experience of working with the state can be tremendously frustrating, in particular when efforts are not directed at the correct authority in the state structure: “the project spend a lot of effort in coordination with the authorities in order to support the improvement of the institutional offer of the state, a concrete case is the closed accommodations of INABIF-MIMDES, to attend to the victims of CSE. A letter of understanding was signed and then the commitments of the INABIF were not fulfilled, when faced with this the project did a follow up which, for a time, faced persecution because the authorities delayed their responses. Those were times of change in the direction of INABIF and the concerns of those functionaries were not exactly on the side of their commitments. Even so, locally, the accommodations personnel had been strengthened locally. The problem continues to be that the changes have not become models from the highest levels, they stay at the local [level] and only as long as capable personnel implements the project.”

The open accommodations model that the ILO promotes collided with the state practice insofar as the children in CSE are detained in Iquitos through police operatives and from there placed in closed INABIF accommodations and not by voluntary admission. One debate regarding the sustainability of the accommodations model (which implies a diversified offer on the part of the state) and agreements at the highest level that allow for trained personnel to be in charge of new accommodations as well as to make explicit the costs and benefits of the new model, there would be issue to incorporate in the agenda for future work with the state. This revision of the institutional practice should include a characterization of local institutions that could facilitate or distort this changes (we are referring to perverse alliances which exist between the police and the authorities, the corruption of functionaries, for example).

Importance of the availability of a map of actors

Several of the participants – particularly those who were directly involved in prevention and attention – recognized the formation of new alliances through Weaving Networks. Regarding the participation of diverse actors and their degree of involvement with the project to guarantee greater efficacy and sustainability, it should be stated that in the case of some countries with weak institutional structures (in particular Paraguay and Peru) there was greater difficulty for the project in incorporating the state as a strategic ally in the objectives of the project. In this way, the availability of a map and a characterization of actors³¹ (public and private) as well as key authorities and a characterization of the challenges that said incorporation may present, such as fragmentation, regarding the position of functions, scarce resources, little political support, the mobility of strategic functionaries, etc. proved indispensable for the project. This is valid both at the national level as well as the regional and local levels depending on the order of the public sector and their competencies.

As we indicated at the beginning of the document, working with a cross-sector approach requires a prior exercise in which all the macro and micro level actors (governing entity and local government, for example) need to be identified and convened to establish alliances and agreements that sustain the

³¹ What I asked exactly them to do as one of the exercises of the evaluation workshop was in four groups by country I asked one person at random if they had already done this, and in all cases they stated that, no, and that it had been very useful to design a consensual strategy of potential allies. According to the Coordinators, “this exercise was realized in workshops for the formulation of the project in each one of the country nearly four years ago. Based on the **TPR** reports of each country one can make a map of actors with which one can execute the project in each place.” We will return to this point later.

intervention. Constructing a map of actors (public and private) and potential allies should be the product of consensus between the executing entities and the demands of the strategic plan and an advocacy work to find common interests and objectives; it also requires the will to decentralize the formulation of proposals. Based on the interviews realized and the interventions we could record in the Regional Forum, we perceived an enormous creativity on the part of the local implementers to persuade local actors of the need to construct a common agenda, especially in CSE, despite the widespread social tolerance that exists around this crime. One example of this is how the Wayra Association of Urcos (Cusco, Peru) determined the need to intervene in the district of Ccatca due to the construction of the inter-oceanic highway and with whom they managed to realize joint actions. At the same time, we considered particularly successful the alliance and the joint work realized with the tourist sector for the prevention of sexual tourism with minors and the training of teachers for the prevention of domestic child labor (despite the fact that they themselves are often patrons of DCL). But these alliances are not just a static process, so they require the availability of a map of potential allies depending on the situation.

One strategic ally articulated by the studies and the research realized at the regional level are the academic institutions and universities. When we discussed with our interviewees the link between the production of knowledge (regional and case studies) and the communications strategy that we could detect some gaps due to an underestimation of the time that it would take to complete the research and extract from there the input that could fuel the diffusion campaigns (we discuss the communicational component later). We wondered to what degree has it been possible – given the scarcity of personnel, resources and time of the project – to decentralize the relationships between the diverse actors? That is, to create the conditions so that horizontal dialogues may be established between investigators and those responsible for the communication campaigns so that, although the studies have not been completed, the communicators could have been able to accompany the investigation process in order to incorporate as many findings as possible in their own communicational strategy. This same logic applies for the case of relations between the GOs of the distinct states, an issue which has already been discussed.

Weak tripartite participation

The tripartite mandate of the composition of the ILO indicates the need to involve representatives of the state, the workers and the companies in projects. It was rather evident that the lack of knowledge of the issues, particularly on the part of the representatives of workers and companies. The evaluation considers that a space for consulting has not been opened – particularly with the workers and companies – capable of giving them content and indicating a road map so that these social actors may establish their own targets to contribute to the project from their spheres of influence.

When we speak of giving content to the tripartite participation we are referring to not limiting ourselves to merely ensuring the presence of representatives of companies and unions at events such as the Regional Forum, but rather to define the consensual way in a concrete way in which the workers and companies can get involved with specific targets to reach. A concrete example regarding the strategic approach, an approach which provides content for tripartite participation would be the establishment of articulations between the DCL and a greater framework of domestic work conditions in our countries, an issue which is taboo now and that has the potential to create jurisprudence (in other words, to create precedent for the judgment of future cases) in cases of DCL, for example, categorizing it as trade. This situation is aggravated by the lack of conventions – operating and linking for countries – regarding domestic labor, convention that – because of the tripartite composition of the ILO – has to be proposed as one of the parts that comprise the ILO, probably one of the central unions given that the issue is much closer to the interests that they have rather than the mandate to defend, however for them DCL proves to be an invisible issue.

Regarding the difficulties in working with unions, a representative of an implementer NGO indicated: “there is no representation of the workers in the unions, they have been suppressed since the dictatorship [in Chile], since then they have not managed to arm themselves and the participation of unions is rather weak for my taste, (...) one doesn’t see them appear much, the voice of the unions is not there, the voice of civil society represented by the NGOs appears more often than that of the unions. Therefore, that tripartite thing (...) I feel that the weakest actor there is the unions but not because it is weaker because it has less power than the companies, but rather because it also has less representative capacity.”

On the side of the companies, the compulsory participation is related to the use of their goals for social responsibility. It is relevant to note the perception that some interviewees had regarding the role of the representatives of the companies present³² (the most visible of them was the Telefónica/Movistar Foundation) to whom was attributed simply an interest in being represented, this despite the labor that they realize and evidently is not known by the other representatives. During 2005 and in close coordination with the ILO and the project (Pro-child of Movistar) there have been several relevant actions developed. Since 2006 they formed an active part of the national committee for the eradication of child labor, thanks to the link generated by the ILO between both institutions since the campaign for a world-wide day without child labor. This contributed to – in the case of Chile – in March 2007, the Minister of Labor and Social Provisions signed an agreement of joint action with Pro-child of Movistar in order to develop policies to eradicate child labor and its worst forms. In this agreement, Pro-child commits to increase the target of children and adolescents attended, going from one thousand beneficiaries in 2007 to eight thousand in 2010, supporting this form of governmental commitment to eradicate child labor in 2010, they incorporated the worst forms of child labor as an issue of interest for the Telefónica Foundation, and they joined the “There are no excuses” campaign, jointly publishing awareness material and have adopted the Scream methodology in schools that form part of the project.

There is consensus regarding the enormous limitations of the work with workers unions and employer organizations, given their irregularity in participation and the impossibility to obtain a more organic involvement and commitment on their part. It is important to add that – and for the gender approach of the project – almost all the representatives of companies and unions (with one exception, a representative of the CAT in Chile) that attended the Regional Forum in Santiago were women.

It is important to emphasize that this is not a particular weakness of this project but rather a general deficiency, that exists despite the influence of the ILO in these organizations, and that can be attributed to the fact that – especially in the unions – there are no resources dedicated to these issues unless they receive financing for them. We wonder then, to what degree is it possible to think about adopting measures, creating incentives that can effectively mobilize employers and unions? Regarding this issue, one of the Coordinators of the project said: “this occurs despite the prestige and influence that the ILO has with them, but it does not work because of a lack of political will in the unions, they only work when they receive resources.” The Coordinator from Paraguay admitted the difficulty of involving the employer organizations, in Paraguay, it has only been achieved tangentially while state has gotten involved with the issue of CSE, but not as much with DCL. One of the Coordinators: “The lack of involvement on the part of employers and workers is because the issues do not touch the center of their interests although we have tried from the point of view of company social responsibility. The AFED of female tourism entrepreneurs was particularly interested because they have the weakness of not belonging to the CONFIEP. In the case of the workers, we tried through a work plan, study circles in which the secretaries participated in female issues but they are not put on the agendas of the unions despite the fact that the plans were ratified, they could not become a concrete plan of action, that is, their commitment was more symbolic than organic.”

³² It is necessary to further specify that to this we add a smaller numeric representation. During the Evaluation Workshop, 12 state representatives, 18 from NGOs, 5 from companies, and 7 from the workers were counted.

V. Communications Strategy Based on Evidence

Communication campaigns based on evidence from research

The project has reached, to an impressive degree, its immediate objective of producing quality information about the magnitude and characteristics of DCL and CSEC in the selected countries. However, this information has not been utilized to its full capacity regarding availability and use for key actors due to various factors stemming from the strategies of the project as well as limitations in terms of the human resources dedicated and the time frame of the project. The restrictions in availability and use on the part of the key actors involved is due to the design and implementation of a strategy to deal with political authority that, in the opinion of the evaluator, is one of the issues that required a longer time period for its development as well as a regional and national strategy that would privilege the state of these four countries, in order to guarantee the sustainability of the project after December 2007 and a greater positioning and articulation of both issues on the internal political agenda of the four countries. This process has not been at all homogenous in the four countries, and it is important to emphasize that the greatest gains were obtained in Chile (country in which there is a strategic institution like the SENAME which became a key ally but also the project took advantage of greater opening to the highest authority, including President Michelle Bachelet) and Colombia whose previous experience (in particular with DCL with the support of the ILO) and institutional strength provided favorable conditions that the project team in both countries knew to exploit.

Those who worked on communications indicated the gap between the distinct components of the project, for example between the research and the findings with legislative initiatives or with awareness campaigns: “in our case, the study of the demand confirms absolutely the hypothesis of the campaign, that there is a cultural support that allows exploiters to act with an apparently clean conscience, that are not necessarily pedophiles, rather they are regular people that grab on to a series of arguments, that are culturally accepted and that against those excuses we say that there are no excuses, in this way we fulfill our goal and now that the study is there and it serves to say, ‘a study from the ILO demonstrates,’ but anyway this is something that everyone already knew in one way or another, the people that work on this issue knew it and it’s great that it’s formalized now (...) I would suggest in a future intervention in the issue of communications for this project, a greater coordination between the distinct organizations, or really plan, I see that in other countries the materials have been validated by the organizations and have been appropriated, here we talk about appropriation but basically it’s the NGOs but sometimes the state as not appropriated [the information], therefore, really a more potent coordination that could be ‘tête à tête,’ that direct between the institutions, this has been one of the few countries in which an NGO responsible for communications and not a communications company.”

Regarding the way in which research served as evidence on which to base the content of communication campaigns, one of the country coordinators indicated that one cannot speak of communicational strategy, but rather campaigns; thus, for example, May 18 was declared a day of fighting against CSE in one of the countries and advertising spots were published. Given that the studies were realized in parallel with the communication, again, due to the time constraints, these are slow processes, which do not have the immediate impact envisioned by the project; therefore we could not appreciate the results.

Efficiency and efficacy of the communication campaigns

During the development of the Regional Forum, we could all appreciate the significant quantity of materials for dissemination exhibited by each country, in particular the quality of presentation of the materials published in Chile and the management of a common project identity in the use of logos and designs. During the debate in the communications group, we heard, however, the observation that in

some moments the communications axis had been functioning as an independent component from the rest of the project due to insufficient coordination but also did not have sufficient resources throughout the implementation of the project. As was said in the Forum, the diffusion component seems to have run in parallel as an autonomous branch, which has the effect of the other team members not learning how to translate their findings for the benefit of the public profile of the project. This observation is based on the following evidence: not only the testimonies of those responsible for communication in the project, but also through the gaps and mistakes in content rigor of the diffusion materials as well as in the fact that the communication personnel in several interviews told us that they were contracted for the elaboration of concrete communications products, that is, they did not participate in the development of the project from its beginnings.

In this vein, a representative of an executing NGO indicated: “the challenge was how to present an issue that requires a complex conversation through a campaign (...) many times a campaign, only gives you the push, but does not generate a solution. One important difficulty or challenge in this sense because that presupposes work with ally institutions and there are institutions that are certain that they are going to do it and these are basically the NGOs that know the issue, have the direct commitment and know that it is incredibly important because they have seen that when they take the child to court and the judge looks at him/her badly and they see the problem of stigmatization, blame, etc. On a daily basis. But to go to other institutions that do not have that direct experience and to make them aware of the importance of a campaign is much more difficult, for example, the state, for example, the companies, including the universities, therefore those have been the most difficult sectors to reach and where we have achieved less of a commitment. From there, the help is supported by the ILO because you have another way to reach them, now it helps so that the director will sign the commitment letter but not necessarily helps so that they really realize actions and commit to actions.”

Another fundamental issue in the evaluation is that the efficacy achieved by the campaigns has to do with the fact that the project has not been able to measure the impact of its actions in the communications component in a systematic way: “The mobilization is what can be measured, much more than the change in attitudes but that we know that a campaign cannot achieve that (...) I believe that in this campaign [There are no excuses] we have been learning along the way. I believe that we did not clearly understand what the ILO was for, or at least, we did not understand what the ILO wanted with our campaign and along the way we realized, this is why the evaluation is a pending issue, if we had been completely clear about where we were going we could have put the indicators in from the beginning that would have allowed us to measure. That clarity was not there, we know more or less what the basis was that we were moving on, we knew that it was a base of social mobilization, change attitudes, but what was the role of the state, and with these other institutions, this business of being a unifier of the image, etc. of all the networks that have been mobilized, I think that it has been happening. My feeling is that at least to us that was clearly transmitted to us from the beginning, which one also learns along the way, now it would be good to have the systematization of that, in that sense there are time frames and information that sometimes we don’t control.”

In this respect, however, one can observe the reaffirmation of stereotypical users of CSE in the content of messages related to CSEC on the part of the project³³ that to some degree may have their origin in the absence of a conceptual debate and in the insufficient articulation of the research findings as well as the fissures between this component and the rest of the project in order to guarantee that the communicational products were designed and conceived from a rights approach and a gender approach. At the same time, the evaluator has been able to confirm that the registry of

³³ Examples of these inconsistencies include the content of radio spots in Peru (where a series attributed the use of CSE to alcohol and in the case of taxi drivers they refer to “sir” only in the case of the tourist patron (white); or in television spots in Colombia, in which there are inconsistencies in the terms used to condemn CSE (during the dialogue the girls refer to the issue of “doing dirty things” with which I wonder if the understanding of the audience could be that “doing dirty things” is equivalent to sex, to paid sex, to paid sex with children? I asked this question to the communicators who justified the choice of the expression in the dialogue by saying that it had been proposed by the very girls in refuge from CSEC).

communicational products from each country that despite lacking a follow up and evaluation one can appreciate the efficacy of each of these instruments. At the end of each radio or television spot do people know what should be done regarding the occurrence of DCL in their neighborhood, regarding the trafficking of minors for CSE? This and others are examples of the absence of follow up and an evaluation that could establish to what degree they have managed to position an idea, we are referring to a qualitative evaluation, according to the nature of the objective of the intervention. As one representative of an NGO responsible for communicational campaigns state: “we are closing off our participation for the campaign coordination. And one element to measure for us that is the clearest is actions realized by ally organizations, which we cannot measure, we have to see how, but it is very difficult to measure, it is how this has reached the common people, beyond the workshops that we have done and there is an evaluation of each workshop and the number of people that have been trained is very high, 400 people in tourism. I don’t know if that really tells you [something or not].”

Despite these limitations, the need and importance to push for social mobilization that manages to fuel public opinion of decreased tolerance of DCL and CSEC is undeniable, at every level, among civil society, authorities, and public opinion. This is one point that another NGO representative affirmed: “I consider that it [social mobilization] is very important and that is to imply a point where society either in parts or wholly, is involved in the problem of child labor, even more so when it is a polemic issue, there are movements that promote the right of children to work, I think that there has to be a mobilization exercise, very large, very wide.” As a complement to this, another NGO representative stated: “This [the ‘Stop child trafficking’ campaign in Chile] has not been a massive campaign in and of itself, therefore yes, we did a survey of 100 citizens that served to elaborate on the strategy, we conducted this survey again but it is not necessarily very decisive because 100 citizens is very few against a campaign that was not that massive, it could be done but I don’t think that in this sense it can be measured, I think that this is the first step toward changing attitudes and the first step, is generating a commitment among the actors that can mobilize others.”

After reviewing the diversity of the means utilized by each of the countries concerning communications, there were some excellent ideas (such as the use of public figures to support the campaigns in Chile or the work conducted to prevent CSE through secure internet access for children), but these were not brought to the other countries. It is clear that it was not discussed how to develop a communicational strategy at the regional level that could create synergies between countries and serve to transfer capacity to the countries with less experience.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

Realizing this evaluation, despite the short time period and the existing limitations (especially not being able to visit the intervention projects), represents a unique opportunity to extract lessons that could serve to enrich future interventions. The lessons that we can extract that serve as a basis for the recommendations are the following:

1. Proposing an intervention project with regional reach represents a significant effort for the agency such as the IPEC/ILO, as well as for the regional office which is responsible for regional coordination. An effort of this magnitude should be sustained by a specific value added due to its regional character, a contribution which would be the result of the possibility to articulate supra-national actions and could resonate in possible learning from that regional action. Said value added would supersede formal advances (such as legal harmonization) and should mean the possibility for a qualitative advance for the regional intervention which should be clearly expressed in the justification of the project.
2. Interventions in issues which elude social policy and programs – usually not priorities in developing countries – that affect the most vulnerable groups of the population – in particular women and children – should be able to rely on a strategy designed by specialists in public policy in order to include an adequate “reading” and include the political context and should

involve the actors with the greatest level of competence and influence in the intervention issue.

3. One of the more effective forms of promoting the involvement and commitment of institutional actors as well as promoting opportunities for cooperation, emerges from mutual knowledge for which it is crucial to identify institutional competencies and create mechanisms to stimulate inter-institutional cooperation for the project and beyond.
4. Establishing relationships for exchange and cooperation requires a willingness to create decentralized mechanisms.
5. Accountability is still an incipient practice in Latin America which means that it is indispensable to ensure the creation of a monitoring system for the fulfillment of commitment, especially when these involves state actors. One example of the mechanisms that stimulate advances in the fulfillment of commitments is (at the international level) the reports that the state regularly produces on the fulfillment of the Convention on the Rights of the Child for the United Nations Commission or presentations that the Prime Minister and five other Ministers give to parliament on the progress made on the fulfillment of the National Action Plan for the Child (at the national level).
6. The commitments assumed by the authorities and the political will expressed to support social programs and policies to accompany the corresponding designation of public resources that make fulfillment possible. This process could be favored by the inclusion of the Ministers of the Economy in the countries so that they may participate in the project design, planning and implementation.
7. There should be a redoubling of efforts to resolve the conceptual inconsistencies between the United Nations organs because these might affect the interventions, and, while this occurs, there should be an internal agreement regarding the most strategic way to manage said discrepancies.
8. Every project requires – as an essential part of its sustainability – permanent debate over the concepts their contexts give that factors such as participation and socialization from a common ground make it possible for those involved to “appropriate” the project and give it continuity beyond the duration of the project.
9. Interventions related to children should take advantage of lessons from the fight for rights for women and use their experiences to inspire strategies, particularly when the intervention issues (such as DCL and CSEC) mostly affect girls. At the strategic level, the policies and programs designed to prevent and detect violence against children can learn lessons from the women’s movement given that the policies and programs work to combat violence against women and have gained a higher profile at the national level than those programs dealing with violence against children.
10. Given the weakness of public institutions, and in particular the GOs in charge of social issues and particularly those in charge of children, it is urgent to jointly explore (consulting with the institutions), the possible foundations on which an inter-sector action could be constructed and oriented toward a greater efficacy for interventions. When an inter-sector action is not possible, we should have a strategy to minimize the dangers incurred from the weakness of the state.
11. One way to improve interventions on behalf of vulnerable groups consists of enriching the factors that fuel the very condition of vulnerability and that make it specific: in the case of DCL and CSEC, beyond the condition of poverty, there are factors such as belonging to a minority ethnic group or a group with different sexual orientations.
12. Conceptual approaches should be develop with a concrete link with reality in order to facilitate transmission, for example, the rights approach cannot be elaborated through an abstract discourse. It should be indicated with precision clear examples of how the exercise of this right has an impact on the population when, for example, we are dealing with the right of the most excluded segments of the population to have quality public services available to them.
13. The systematization and analysis of actions opens the door for people and institutions to learn to identify what makes the difference for the success of an intervention.

14. In interventions related to children's issues, it is recommended to break the isolation that characterizes subaltern issues on the public agenda. There should be a strategic articulation with this issues that will most likely mobilize both the authorities and public opinion. The states with institutional weakness such as those in the region could be favored – at the technical level as well as with resources and public backing – if their sectors/social ministries (traditionally the weakest, with fewer resources and fewer technical capabilities) could learn from more efficient sectors that are results oriented.
15. Interventions on behalf of children require articulating long term processes (such as strategies to combat poverty) in order to position the authorities for a preventative approach that could have greater sustainability.
16. The follow up actions should be envisioned from the design of the project and should include the monitoring of agreements, establishing time frames, responsible and precise targets (in consensus with the authorities) and create a vigilance among the citizenry. These commitments should be divulged in the media in order to increase the capacity of civil society to exert pressure.
17. Interventions that involve changes to the execution of social programs (such as offering closed accommodations from the state) demand, among others, a justification based on the cost and effectiveness of the new proposed model, including training and the eventual turnover in functionaries.
18. The ILO requires the generation of an explicit form, with a tripartite composition in the interventions, in particular in those interventions that do not necessarily deal with issues that are central to the agenda of the companies and unions.
19. Measuring the impact of interventions should be a substantial part of the design of the intervention and should be developed throughout its implementation. There is a need to position action monitoring and evaluation as an indispensable sphere to enrich and give meaning to the action.

Based on these lessons learned, we will sketch some recommendations that seek to enrich future interventions:

1. We recommend developing a strategic view in any intervention, taking into consideration that, the regional character should represent an opportunity for learning between countries and there is a strategic opportunity to commit those institutions with greater influence, decision making capacity, and resources for which the issues (DCL and CSEC) normally do not represent a central priority on the public agenda. The project could gain greater space for the long term in the concerns and agendas of the authorities. Regional spaces such as Mercosur – and more specifically “Child of the South” – to promote the rights of the child, require regular channels that give continuity and regularity to the effort.
2. Dealing with issues that are not well known and rarely debated requires a balance between activism and the creation of spaces for conceptual debate and an approach which establishes a common foundation that offers greater certainty and rigor to those involved in the project. Both elements will provide greater vision for intervention opportunities.
3. Despite the institutional weakness that characterizes the countries of the region, the states constitute key actors that we should commit to ensuring the sustainability of the interventions. This involvement could be realized at various levels (establishing conventions and institutional alliances) but should take into consideration the strategic actors within the state such as the Ministry of the Economy (Finance or Treasury, as each country designates it) with the power to assign public resources and available budgets that will support the political will of the authorities.
4. Issues that deal with the well being and protection of the child occupy a subaltern place in the public agenda due to the subordination of social issues in developing countries. In this sense, seeking strategic alliances with key actors and establishing links with issues that do occupy a central place on the public agenda could probably promote and sustain accountability on the part of the authorities. For example, linking the fight against DCL and CSEC with the state policy of fighting poverty and fulfilling anti-discrimination laws; place these issues in the

framework of existing state commitments to provide quality education and in the context of the “Education for All” campaign.

5. The efficacy of any intervention is partly linked to the capacity of the implementers to rely on an appropriate reading and interpretation of the political context in which they are operating. Knowledge of the political context allows for the identification of windows of opportunity and the visualization of strategic alliances that could broaden the projections of the interventions.
6. The fora and international spaces (regional, supra-national) prove to be strategic when monitoring the fulfillment of commitments and agreements. We recommend the implementation – in future interventions with regional reach – a monitoring system that registers follow up of the agreements – indicating time frames and targets – in particular when these commit the authorities at the highest level and in international spaces in which it is more feasible to pressure for accountability.

*Good Practices*³⁴

We understand “good practices” as: “any experience that, in whole or part, functions to combat child labor and could have implications for practices at any level in another context or situation.”

1. The creation of Local Committees, inspired by the prior experiences of interventions in DCL and CSEC in the region, allow for the concentration of efforts under a common objective and support sustainability. They are difficult to implement, but once created, they have committed the will and support of key social actors. They included GOs, CSOs, and representatives of workers and employers.
2. The identification of tools and norms – at the national, regional and international level – allows for learning from the experiences of others through the incorporation of international standards in countries where there has been a less degree of progress in the elimination of the worst forms of child labor.
3. An institutional map is an incredibly useful exercise on several levels and in particular when the map includes the vision of point of view of all of the actors and is regularly revised and updated.
4. The articulation and coordination among the diverse agencies of the United Nations has demonstrated potential to benefit the fight against the worst forms of child labor and to take advantage of the comparative advantages of each one (in the case of Weaving Networks, the coordination between the ILO and UNICEF).
5. The systematization and production of knowledge constitutes an indispensable factor not only to achieve a greater and better understanding of the reality that we intend to change but principally because it creates a culture of inventions based on evidence that is still in incipient development in the region.
6. The interventions should be adequate and appropriate for the specifications of the population whose rights we wish to promote, in particular when these populations constitute minorities or discriminated segments of society (girls, transgender children, etc.)
7. The interventions on behalf of the rights of the child should always maintain a focus on prevention, even in the cases that involve direct attention.
8. The incorporation of monitoring and follow up mechanisms are an essential part of learning from projects for children and also constitute an important source to measure success.
9. The growing interest on the part of businesses to incorporate social responsibility actions constitutes a window of opportunity that the project has consolidated and that could be a powerful bridge with civil society.

³⁴ Based on the definition developed in “Good Practices: identification, revision, structure and dissemination.” DED/ILO. Geneva, 2001.