



FACTS ON *Child labour monitoring*

Child labour monitoring (CLM) involves identifying children in the workplace and noting the hazards to which they are exposed, then verifying that they have been removed and are in school or some satisfactory alternative. By regularly repeating this process, CLM becomes a means of ensuring that the area, industry or sector under surveillance stays child labour free.

Because a comprehensive child labour monitoring covers the workplace, the school, and sometimes even the community, it is a broader concept than labour inspection alone. The labour inspectorate, in fact, is a crucial partner in CLM. But because child labour often occurs in the informal economy, additional partners that have good access to home-based workshops, farms, fishing areas or even the shadowy world of the illicit sectors, for example, must be enlisted as well in order to find and follow-up on children who are at risk of exploitative work.

Child labour projects began to build a CLM component into their work starting in the mid-1990s. The impetus for this was provided, in part, by international consumers who wanted to be absolutely sure that the products they purchased were not made with child labour. Project staff were also concerned that children, once removed from one workplace, were shifting to other less visible or more dangerous work.

This approach has evolved into industry and regional-based child labour monitoring systems (CLMS) that build on the traditional role and function of the labour inspectorate by expanding it to respond to labour situations that were, for all practical purposes, previously out of reach. Although the details of child labour monitoring systems vary from place to place, the basic elements are similar. "Monitors" are designated to carry out periodic inspections, labour inspectors are trained on what to look for and databases are established, all with the purpose of concretely documenting that the children's situations have improved.

IPEC's experience with CLMS in projects from around the world

Bangladesh: In 1995, the BGMEA (Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association), UNICEF and the ILO signed an agreement that established a monitoring system for the garment industry. This system, which is still

Building a child labour monitoring system

Among the elements of a successful CLMS are:

- **Information:** There must be an on-going effort to locate workplaces where children may be working as well as guidelines to assess the risks, hazards, and conditions that may exist in these workplaces.
- **Documentation:** Databases (electronic or otherwise) are needed for cataloguing and sharing information among the partners.
- **Legal base:** Laws or regulations on child labour consistent with the international standards are essential.
- **Agreement:** A voluntary agreement to be monitored from at least a majority of employers or individual operators in a particular sector helps to secure access and compliance.
- **Partnership:** The partners in the CLMS depend upon the industry and circumstances, but may also involve representatives of a village council, an NGO, or even a religious authority, for example.
- **Inspectorates:** Involvement of the labour inspectorate (also school or health inspectors), which carries an official mandate to ensure that all workers are protected and that children are not working in violation of the law, is one of the of the corner stones of a CLMS.
- **Planning:** A plan for identifying the responsibilities and degree of authority of the participating partners must be drawn up.



in place, verifies that children are not working in the factories and that rescued children are receiving schooling. It includes unannounced visits to factories by monitoring teams, with the frequency depending on their record of compliance. Each four-member team includes two ILO monitors plus one representing employers and one from the government labour inspectorate.

Pakistan: In 1997, in an effort to prevent children under the age of 14 from working in the football manufacturing industry, the ILO, UNICEF and the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) established a two-part monitoring system: an internal, industry-based monitoring system and an external independent compliance monitoring system implemented by IPEC. Children were removed from full-time work in a phased manner, provided with education, and their families offered other support services as needed. As part of the agreement, the SCCI members that joined the programme agreed to transfer all home-based stitching production to stitching centres to facilitate monitoring. Currently well over 90 per cent of the export soccer ball production in Sialkot is being monitored and an independent monitoring board has been established in the area to take over the monitoring functions.

Southeast Asia: The footwear manufacturing sector in the Philippines is characterized by home-based production and in Indonesia by small workshops. Beginning in 1999, IPEC began work to educate families, employers and children in these countries about the risk associated with the use of toxic glues, while taking steps to ensure that the children were not exposed to this and other hazards. It included the monitoring of factories and workshops and the verification of children's participation in education, skills training or that of their parents in income generation schemes. In this case, the monitors were recruited by IPEC.

Central America: An effort to eliminate child labour from commercial agricultural in Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama and the Dominican Republic, IPEC has designed a monitoring system that relies on independent, external monitoring teams and internal, community-watch groups. The external teams comprise ILO-paid monitors and government labour inspectors for some of the regular visits to the plantations. Local authorities and community organizations have been enlisted to create a community watch system to help identify at-risk children and families, mobilize the community and monitor progress.

South America: Small-scale mining in Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru is a highly dangerous activity. ILO-IPEC has created an innovative industry-specific, regional approach to monitoring and verification called the "Special Institutional Monitoring System". The monitoring system is anchored in an inter-institutional agreement headed by the Ministry of Labour in each country and provides for the involvement of labour inspectors, as well as other local, regional and national groups in the collection and analysis of information.

The key here is the word "system": A CLMS incorporates and assigns a monitoring role to new parties based on their differing capacities to access and to assess child labour. Community officials and parent associations can observe children in small workshops and informal sector enterprises. Enforcement officers, such as police and border guards, can observe children being brought across the frontier or children found in criminal activities. Agricultural extension workers have access to children working in the vast and widely dispersed farming sector. Perhaps most importantly, teachers and health workers can document when children are absent from school or if they appear fatigued. Together, partners such as these offer new hands and eyes to the official inspectorate, complementing labour inspectors' traditional access to larger, formal economy enterprises.

Role of the ILO

IPEC is continuing to refine its approach to incorporate the lessons learned and make these systems more efficient and effective. The goal is to make a CLMS relatively easy to adapt and replicate according to the economic sector or geographic region in question as well as contribute to the sustainability of action being carried out by IPEC and its partners. To this end, a large-scale project funded by the US Department of Labor to support the development of child labour monitoring systems began in January 2003. The initial phase of this programme will focus on developing a prototype model of a CLMS, testing and adapting it to different situations and sectors, and developing tools and training to support it. The second phase will take this model to scale in area-based and sector-wide initiatives. The third phase will link the local and area/sector monitoring with national statistical processes, such as national labour force surveys.

Relevant ILO Conventions

Convention No. 138 (1973) on the minimum age for admission to employment and associated Recommendation No. 146

Convention No. 182 (1999) on the worst forms of child labour and associated Recommendation No. 190