



CASE STUDY: Combating child labor in the sugarcane industry in the Philippines

Since 2003, ChildFund has been an active member of a consortium to eliminate exploitative child labor in the sugarcane industry in 11 provinces of the **Philippines**. The most recent four-year phase of this program, *ABK3 LEAP*¹, reached 54,000 children and youth before it ended in 2016. The project led to a **substantial reduction in the percent of children in exploitative labor: from 94% in 2011 to 16% in 2016.**^v

Since our last Impact Report, we have evaluated the *ABK3 LEAP* program.^{vi} The evaluation indicates that our interventions have:

- **Provided a strong incentive for families to send their children to school.** We have improved learning environments, trained teachers, delivered school supplies, and provided opportunities for children who have been out of school to attend catch-up classes.

1. Formally titled *ABK3 Livelihoods, Education, Advocacy, and Protection Against Exploitative Child Labor in Sugarcane*, this project is funded by the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) through World Vision International

- **Dissuaded vulnerable families from sending children to work** in the sugarcane industry by diversifying their income sources and improving their food security. This focus on other economic opportunities resulted in a monthly increase of 72% for participating families.
- **Raised awareness about the hazards of child labor and engaged community child protection structures** such as Community Watch Groups and Child Rights Advocates to monitor, respond to and advocate on behalf of child victims of child labor.
- **Contributed to the widespread adoption of ordinances to prevent child labor** at district level, the adoption of voluntary codes of conduct with sugarcane producers, and the inclusion of provincial mechanisms to monitor child labor violations.

The evaluation identified several **good practices** that have contributed to *ABK3 LEAP*'s success, and which will be applied to other child labor initiatives:

- The program was founded upon a baseline study, which provided **critical evidence** regarding the causes and scale of child labor. The study provided a robust rationale for the program and allowed ChildFund to advocate with communities, government, and sugar industry employers from a position of strength.
- The program took an **integrated approach** that addressed the extreme poverty and lack of economic opportunities that force families to send their children to the sugarcane fields. This combined direct social protection, livelihood, and education support for families with awareness activities to help communities understand the implications of exploitative child labor.
- The program sought to strengthen the **wider system of protection for children** at all levels, through support for community child protection structures as well as government policy-makers.^{vii} According to the evaluation, the intervention leaves a legacy of improved policies, institutional capacity, and local community and government commitment to ending child labor.

KEY RESULTS

The ABK3 LEAP program successfully reached (and exceeded) a number of targets:

- Exploitative child labor in sugarcane fields reduced from 94% to 16%.
- Average monthly income in project households increased by 72%.
- 97% of covered barangays, municipalities and provinces have enacted local policies or ordinances to reduce child labor.
- 11 sugar industry partners and 45 government agencies now have an annual program of activities to address child labor.

- The program informed representatives of the sugarcane industry from the outset about the scale and impact of child labor. Using the evidence, ChildFund was able to achieve a broad **commitment toward eliminating** child labor from the industry and establishing ethical codes of conduct for the sector.

The evaluation cited the potential of using the *ABK3 LEAP* intervention model to tackle child labor in other sectors such as fishing, domestic work, and different agricultural industries. For future interventions, an area-based approach that addresses the specific forms of child labor in a particular geographic area was recommended, as this might decrease the likelihood of children shifting from one form of labor to another. ChildFund Philippines is now considering ways to apply *ABK3 LEAP*'s integrated model to find solutions to child labor in other industries and areas of the country.

