

## CASE STUDY: PHILIPPINES

## Livelihoods, Education, Advocacy and Protection (ABK3-LEAP)

*National laws in the Philippines clearly prohibit the employment of children younger than 15 years of age. Despite this, it is estimated that approximately 5.5 million children are working, nearly 3 million of them in hazardous labour.<sup>1</sup> Roughly 65 per cent of them are engaged in agriculture, including in sugarcane farms and processing plants, where they may work in dangerous and hazardous conditions.<sup>2</sup>*

World Vision's 'Livelihoods, Education, Advocacy and Protection to Reduce Child Labour in Sugarcane Areas' project, funded by the United States Department of Labor, started targeting child labour in the sugarcane industry in 2012. ABK3-LEAP is the third phase of the ABK initiative,<sup>3</sup> which, since 2003, has seen local and municipal bodies work with community groups in the Philippines on solutions to child labour. The project integrates two main strategies: improving opportunities for vulnerable children and their families through education and livelihoods, and improving government and institutional systems for sustained reduction of child labour.

ABK3-LEAP invested in education services to raise the profile and accessibility of education as an alternative to child labour in vulnerable sugarcane-growing communities. These services included school supplies and learning resource centres (catch-up classes) for children at risk of dropping out, teacher training, ensuring a safe and supportive learning environment, mobile education activities, non-formal education, and vocational training opportunities so that working children continued to receive some of the benefits of going to school. Community Watch Groups formed to follow up individual cases of children who were at risk of entering the workforce or who had withdrawn from child labour, and to refer these cases to other support services.



### Form of violence:

- Hazardous child labour.

### Solutions:

- Supporting families and caregivers
- Providing continuum of care and protection services to support the most vulnerable children and keep them in school
- Enacting and enforcing laws that prohibit all forms of violence against children
- Fostering local solutions for sustainability and impact
- Creating safe schools and empowering children as citizens.

### Results:

- 64 per cent of children working in sugarcane, or around 22,000 children, have already left work in sugar plantations
- More than 51,000 children received support to stay in school
- 95 *barangays* implemented local ordinances on child labour
- Over 65 large sugar farms and planter associations committed to stop child labour, and signed codes of conduct.

ABK3-LEAP also created opportunities for families to improve their livelihoods so that school became an affordable option for more families.

In a parallel process, ABK3-LEAP brought together government, schooling bodies, community groups and sugar industry representatives to find policy-based solutions likely to keep children out of the workforce and increase the enrolment of children at both primary and high school levels. Including child advocates was important to the consultation process. *Barangay* (ward-level) children's associations, which had been established in previous ABK cycles, took up advocacy on sugarcane labour as part of their ongoing work to achieve child rights. Local ordinances and children's codes helped to sustain measures to keep children out of child labour and to institutionalise local child protection structures. These structures included the Community Watch Groups, as well as Local Councils for the Protection of Children (LCPCs) and Child Labour Education Task Forces (CLETFs) at the *barangay*, city, municipal and provincial levels.

Interim evaluation of ABK3-LEAP<sup>4</sup> across the Philippines in March 2015 delivered promising evidence that the interventions were succeeding in their goal to reduce exploitation of children within the sugarcane industry. The project had reached 148 *barangays* in 11 provinces, covering over 90 per cent of the geographic area where sugarcane is farmed and processed. Many households who had previously struggled were now able to cover the costs of their children's school attendance. Parents were measurably more committed to withdrawing their children from work and more able to differentiate between acceptable children's work and exploitative child labour. Local implementation of national law through child labour ordinances had been adopted in 95 *barangays*. Important partnerships within the sugar industry, in particular with the Sugar Industry Foundation and the Sugar Regulatory Administration, had resulted in the adoption of voluntary codes of conduct for sugarcane producers in the provinces of Batangas, Bukidnon and Negros Occidental.

All this has reduced child labour in the sugarcane industry by 64 per cent in the first three years of implementation – significantly more than the original project target of 56 per cent.<sup>5</sup> ABK3-LEAP builds on the lessons and successes of previous

ABK projects, which registered a 74 per cent decrease in child labour in the target areas.<sup>6</sup> ABK3-LEAP is heading in a similar direction. Around 54,000 children will benefit by the end of the project, in addition to the 61,000 who have already benefited from ABK1 and ABK2.

## References

1. Philippines National Statistical Office (2011), *Philippines National Survey on Children*, ILO IPEK, available at <[http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@asia/@ro-bangkok/@ilo-manila/documents/meetingdocument/wcms\\_184097.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@asia/@ro-bangkok/@ilo-manila/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_184097.pdf)>.
2. World Vision International (2014), *Sistemas, Familia y Sociedad: ABK3 LEAP, Philippines: Livelihoods, education, advocacy and protection against exploitative child labour in sugarcane. Independent Interim Evaluation*.
3. ABK stands for *Pag-Aaral ng Bata para sa Kinabukasan* or Child's Education for the Future. All three phases of the ABK project have been implemented by World Vision in partnership with Child Fund Philippines, Educational Research and Development Assistance Foundation (ERDA), the Sugar Industry Foundation (SIFI), Community Economic Ventures (CEVI), and the University of the Philippines Social Action and Research for Development Foundation, with funding from the United States Department of Labor.
4. *Ibid* 2.
5. World Vision Development Foundation (2014), *Technical Progress Report: Philippines ABK3 LEAP – Livelihoods, Education, Advocacy and Protection to Reduce Child Labour in Sugarcane*.
6. ICF International (2011), *Independent Final Evaluation of Combating Child Labor through Education in the Philippines, The ABK initiative phase II*, World Vision, Cooperative Agreement Number: IL-16570-07-75-K, Funded by the United States Department of Labor, 2011, p. xi.

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*Some of the children who were sugarcane labourers until ABK3-LEAP supported their families to keep them in school.*