

DEVTECH Sphere

DEVTECH SYSTEMS, INC.
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COMBATING THE WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR THROUGH EDUCATION IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

“Some 180 million children aged 5 to 17 (or 73% of all child laborers) are now believed to be engaged in the worst forms of child labor,” according to the International Labor Organization (ILO) report “A Future Without Child Labor,” prepared for the 90th ILO session in 2002.

The worldwide response to the staggering numbers of children whose lives are threatened by child labor has been unprecedented. 170 member states unanimously adopted ILO Convention 182 on the “Worst Forms of Child Labor” (WFCL) in 1999; as of 2004, more than 150 countries had ratified it.

Official data from the National Child Labor Survey, conducted in the Dominican Republic in 2002, revealed that 428,720 children (ages 5 to 17) were working, out of a population of approximately 8.5 million. However, due to the severe economic setback in 2003 and the increased economic pressures caused by rising oil prices, the level of poverty has increased; thus the number of child laborers has increased. The Dominican Secretariat of Labor has defined the WFCL as hazardous work in agriculture, dangerous urban work in streets or sweatshops, domestic servant work, child trafficking, and commercial sexual exploitation. When the Dominican government ratified ILO Convention 182, it committed to take immediate and effective measures to eliminate the WFCL within ten years.

In 2002, the United States Department of Labor (USDOL) began implementing the “Education Initiative,” designed to:

- Raise awareness of the importance of education for all children and to mobilize a wide array of actors to improve and expand education infrastructures;
- Strengthen formal and transitional education systems that encourage working children and those at risk of working to attend school;
- Strengthen national institutions and policies on education and child labor; and
- Ensure the long-term sustainability of these efforts.



Dominican child laborers scavenging in a municipal dump.

USDOL signed an agreement with the Dominican Secretariats of Education and Labor to enable this initiative to benefit working children in the Dominican Republic.

In August 2003, USDOL awarded a Cooperative Agreement to DevTech Systems, Inc. (DevTech) to implement an education project to combat the worst forms of child labor in the Dominican Republic. The project’s goal (development objective) was to reduce the number of children involved in WFCL by 4,200—commercial sexual

exploitation (450), informal urban economy (850), and dangerous agriculture (2,900)—over a four-year period.

DevTech issued a subcontract to ENTRENA, a Dominican training center dedicated to training U.S. Peace Corps Volunteers, baseball players, youth leaders, and non-governmental organization (NGO) personnel. Together, DevTech and ENTRENA developed a program to assure regular school attendance by the targeted children in the 6 to 13-age group, and the completion of a vocational-technical program by those adolescents who opted out of regular schooling.

The targeted 4,200 children live in seven target regions of the country: three beach areas, two agricultural regions, and the two largest cities. To assure the program's sustainability after the project period ends, DevTech personnel identified and subcontracted with NGOs or institutions that had roots in these target regions to manage project actions. They have signed four subcontracts: The Catholic University of the Northeast manages program activities in the large rice-growing region; a small NGO, Movimiento para el Autodesarrollo Internacional para la Solidaridad (MAIS), manages activities in the beach town of Sosúa, another small NGO, the Fundación Azúcar, manages activities in the beach area of Las Terrenas; and EDUCA, a prominent NGO that has focused its work on promoting educational reform, manages activities in the cities of Santo Domingo and Santiago, in the high mountainous agricultural area in the center of the island, and in the beach town of Boca Chica, just outside Santo Domingo. EDUCA has also developed a network of associate NGOs to implement the program.

The school day in the Dominican Republic is only 4½ hours long. A recent study, financed by EDUCA, discovered that the real time-on-task in the public schools varied from 1½ to 2½ hours! Other interruptions include strikes and frequent meetings for teachers with their union and the Secretariat of Education. It is easy to assume that children work for economic reasons. However, research conducted by our project and other institutions indicates that many children drop out of school to work a full day, because they—and in many cases their parents—do not find schooling relevant, and because parents fear for the safety of their children during the half-day when they would not be in school. Most of the targeted children either have dropped out of school or attend irregularly. Most of the latter fail, and then either repeat grades or drop out.

The project team decided that to assure that children stop working in dangerous situations, and that they regularly attend school and do not fail, it would be necessary to create a complete program for “the other shift,” or the part of the day that children would not be in school. To make school more relevant and attractive, teachers and administrators should receive special attention: training and supervision.

The project team created Espacios para Crecer (Spaces for Growth), a high quality 3½-hour, structured program with three basic components: academic leveling (focusing on math, reading, and writing), recreation (physical education, music, theater, art, and literature), and life skills or personal growth. The program is based on Quantum Learning methodology (www.quantumlearning.com). At the beginning of the 2004-2005 school year, 2,257 children enrolled in 90 Espacios para Crecer centers as well as in public school; at the end of the summer of 2005, 2,226 (more than 98%) had completed the Espacios para Crecer program. Even more important, 90% of the children were promoted to the next grade in school in June 2005. Twenty-eight children were even promoted to a higher grade during the school year! In the large rice region, 1,513 children enrolled in the program in September 2004; all but one child finished the first level Espacios para Crecer program in August 2005. The largest drop-out rate occurred in Boca Chica and Santo Domingo, where it was difficult to keep track of children and adolescents who lived in many different barrios of the sprawling urban area. The “lessons learned”: focus on children in specific barrios and work through organizations with roots in those barrios.

The project also focused on the teachers of the targeted children. The project provided a three-day training course in Quantum Learning to 460 educators. After the first training course to 160 educators (financed with project funds), the Dominican Secretariat of Education was so impressed that it financed courses

for 200 teachers; an NGO, Plan International, financed courses for 100 more teachers. One has only to visit a classroom of a teacher who has received Quantum Learning training to see and feel the difference. Children are excited, disciplined, they participate readily, and they attend regularly.

It has been a challenge for the project team to address the needs of the adolescent workers, (14 to 17 years of age), most of whom have dropped out of school. Public, and most private, vocational education institutions in the country—including the massive National Professional Training Institute—require a basic education (8th grade) certificate for admission. Very few of our targeted adolescents had completed 8th grade. The project team found a private institution in the city of Santiago that has been willing to train 33 adolescents in pastry making, commercial sewing (tailoring), and basic computer skills. In Santo Domingo, a private vocational school offered a special program for 80 adolescents during a six-week summer session; each participant spent a week at a time in six different workshops and received introductory computer and life skills training. In October 2005, the Young Christians Association in Santo Domingo began providing three-month basic courses in comput-

Dr. Jorge Sanguinety, CEO and President of DevTech Systems, Inc., recently served as Dinner Vice-Chair on November 8, 2005 at U.S. Global Leadership Campaign's Tribute to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. The U.S. Global Leadership Campaign, a diverse coalition of over 400 U.S. businesses, humanitarian and development organizations, ethnic and religious groups and educational institutions, is dedicated to supporting a strong International Affairs Budget and promoting U.S. global engagement.

In brief: Integrating Gender in Program Evaluation in Post-Conflict Afghanistan



One way DevTech promotes a sustainable development agenda is through its work in integrating gender in USAID programming. Under the WID IQC for Short Term Technical Assistance, a good example of DevTech's gender-based framework was applied recently in post-conflict Afghanistan.

Between April and June of 2005, DevTech and Pact provided a gender integration specialist—Anne Carlin—to complement the work of a larger evaluation effort in Afghanistan where, between late 2001 and 2005 USAID had provided nearly \$47M in program support. The evaluation team was charged with assessing the relevance, effectiveness, and lessons learned from OTI's mega-program in Afghanistan. DevTech's role—in a context where the Taliban had virtually banned women from the public sphere and rendered Afghan men powerless to protect them—was to assess how gender had been considered in the planning phase, and to understand how it had fared in terms of project outcomes.

Focused specifically on gender, DevTech asked questions like *“Did OTI promote government legitimacy and how did such support impact women?”*, and *“Did OTI encourage participatory, democratic processes in projects it funded and, if so, what impact did these processes have upon women's connectedness to each other, their communities and local authorities?”* This approach also served to underscore the importance of historical context, which made patently clear the fact that gender roles had fundamentally warped under the sustained abuse of the Taliban.

The evaluation included a number of conclusions and recommendations: about 20% of the over 700 grants made (i.e. civic education, independent media, schools and kindergartens, etc.) directly integrated women and girls' considerations, to one degree or another; media and civic education initiatives seemed to have met with greatest success; and, greater investment in rehabilitation, versus reconstruction, should have been favored. See the complete findings of the evaluation on DevTech's website: www.devtechsys.com.

ers and secretarial skills training for 38 participants from the summer program. One rural school with a small computer lab provided computer skills training for adolescents in that community. In the beach community of Sosúa, MAIS provided a six-month training course for beauty salon assistants.

The project also adapted a program for micro-enterprise training that is being taught to a group of adolescents and their parents in the beach community of Las Terrenas. DevTech expects to open other micro-enterprise programs in more target regions in the near future.

Top-level officials of the Dominican Secretariat of Education have expressed their desire to offer a full-day educational program for children. They are committed, under the Millennium Challenge, to guarantee that all children complete basic education by the year 2015 and they acknowledge the need to focus attention on working children.

However, they also know that they do not—and will not in the near future—have the necessary resources to provide a full-day educational program. Thus, they have recognized the possibility of having the government partner with the private sector to provide a quality educational program, Espacios para Crecer, as a half-day complement to the half-day regular school program. During the next year the project team will focus on building alliances as well as working with both sectors to develop funding sources to expand and sustain the program.

Recently, the Dominican Republic's National Professional Training Institution (INFOTEP) signed an agreement with the Office of the Attorney General to facilitate vocational training for adolescents who are involved in the worst forms of labor, regardless of whether they have completed basic education. This agreement is a major step forward in being able to withdraw targeted adolescents from dangerous working situations and to provide them with the

means to acquire new skills to enable them to find decent employment.

The project has committed to enroll 4,200 (100%) of the targeted children, and to assure that 65%¹ persist and complete project interventions. The project team aims to exceed this completion rate and thus leave a legacy, a solid program that is a valuable complement to public schooling.

by John F. Helwig, Ph.D.

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.

¹ Target based on percentage of formal school students reaching 4th grade in four years, according to SEE. Secretaría de Estado de Educación, [Plan Estratégico de Desarrollo de la Educación Dominicana 2003-2012](#), Tomo 1, p. 31. Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, April 2003.

DevTech President's Presentation of Cuba: Realidad y Destino

DevTech's President Dr. Jorge A. Sanguinety presented his book *Cuba: Realidad y Destino* to a full house at the prestigious Casa de America in Madrid, Spain, on September 20, 2005 following an invitation by the Fundacion Hispano-Cubana. Dr. Alberto Recarte, a well-known Spanish economist, presented his comments about the book emphasizing its importance as "a manual to guide the Cuban population and future policy makers when conditions allow to build a market economy in a democratic context." In his presentation, Dr. Sanguinety focused on the need to prepare the public and potential policy makers alike to avoid the pitfalls of many of the ex-socialist countries in their transitions towards free societies.

Subsequent to the presentation in Madrid, Dr. Sanguinety was invited to a book signing event at the Miami Book Fair, November 19-20, 2005. All of the books available at both events were sold out.

DevTech's President Lectures at University of Navarra, Spain

On September 24, 2005, Dr. Sanguinety gave a lecture to students and professors of economics as a guest of the University of Navarra in Pamplona, Spain, focusing on the need to understand the institutional aspects of economic development and the recent studies about social capital in the context of evolutionary Complex Adaptive Systems.

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