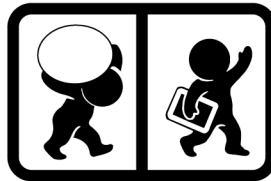


A Report on
Visit to Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica
(2nd November to 27th November, 2007)



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Visit to Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica

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(R.Venkat Reddy and V.V.RAO-MVFoundation, India)

A Summary

Our visit to Central American countries of Guatemala, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Honduras focused attention on the status of child labour and out of school children, the problems faced by children in schools, the current practices and strategies of the NGOs on abolishing child labour and protecting children's right to education, and an assessment of their perspectives on children's right to education.

There were field visits, discussions with the community, youth, parents and children, interaction with the staff of NGO's, group meetings and seminars with NGOs and networks on abolition of child labour and on education, meetings with officials as well as donors. We also met personnel from multi-lateral agencies like IOL/IPEC, World Vision, Save the Children and researchers and academia. In several of these meetings we were surprised at the importance attached to education.

We were touched by the parents and their demand for schools. We saw how they argued for education to combat poverty. At the same time we there were conventional arguments justifying child labour even amongst NGO partners who have put in a lot of sincere effort in their programs.

In a way this gave us an overview of the specificities of each of the areas in which the NGOs were located and the odds against which each of them were working in their respective countries. It also provided us the rare opportunity to widen our own understanding of the problem of child labour and the immense challenges to achieving the goal of universalisation of school education. We returned home feeling very strongly that there needs to be a well-oiled program on the ground if we have to show the governments that it is indeed possible to abolish child labour.

Based on the above we have the following suggestions to make:

1. **Need for Community Mobilisation:** While all the NGOs have a strong presence in the community and have involved them in all their actions, there is a need to emphasize the process of establishing a social norm against child labour in favor of children's right to education as a 'non-negotiable'. This would mean a self-conscious strategy of generating a public debate and discussion on the predicament of children by touching every section in the society, taking stands in favor of children and their rights, preparing community for resolving conflicts and building a social consensus on the issue. It also would mean building local institutions to take up issues relating to child rights. Many NGOs are to be prepared to take up actions in this direction.
2. **Need to have an area-based approach:** NGO's have to re-work their strategies by adopting an area-based approach. This would mean that they would have to concentrate on protecting the rights of all the children, whether they are in schools or out of schools in a particular area. For those children who are out of schools

they need to plan to withdraw them for work. For those who are already in schools they need to plan to ensure that they are retained in schools and continue to do so without any disruption. It is in doing this that child labour is prevented and children's rights are protected. **Ultimately it enables in declaring 'child labour free zones' which would act as an inspiration for all others to join the movement.**

3. **Need to change perspectives on child labour and negotiating with schools:** In doing the above, it is felt that it is necessary to start from the strengths of the NGOs and modify their current strategies. For example, on the issue of abolishing child labour the NGO PENNATS (Guatemala) currently emphasizes on conducting classes for working children. They run a class for two hours and have prepared solid teaching and learning materials for accelerated learning. Can they do this in the perspective of totally abolishing child labour and children's right to education is the question?

Like wise on the school related issues it is found that there are several NGOs doing excellent work on providing 'school reinforcement programs', scholarships to children attending schools, sponsorship programs and so on. In doing so, they have not looked into the problems of children especially the first generation learners that are related to issues of school-governance. There has not been enough attention on resolving these micro-issues and awareness that being pushed out of schools children inevitably join the labour force. The NGOs have to be oriented on the links between abolishing child labour and strengthening of the school system. At the same time there is a need to orient the donors as well to encourage the NGOs to re-design their programs.

4. **Policy Interventions:** Once the NGOs start dealing with the State and public institutions the gaps in the existing programme and policies become evident. NGO's are to be trained in collecting information and data and in preparing the community for engaging with the schools and also lobbying for bringing about changes in the system. These experiences should also inform negotiations with institutions and agencies beyond the local such as the donors, IPEC/ILO, departments of education, welfare, labour, the teachers unions and trade unions, networks and alliances of civil society groups and so on. There is a need to link the AoB and Education International to the Teachers Unions in Costa Rica and Honduras, who showed interest in taking up the agenda. Here Starvi would have a crucial role to play.
5. **Debate with existing alliances:** The SCL must facilitate the NGOs who have come together in alliance with Global March (Costa Rica), FOPREDH (Honduras), CODENI (Nicaragua) and start discussions and debates with the networks on the rights based perspective.
6. **Need for a full time Resource Person:** It would be of utmost necessity to locate one full time person in the region for taking the movement forward on behalf of the Stop Child Labour Campaign. At the moment it is found that the issue of children's rights is not an exclusive agenda of any NGO. It is one among the many issues that they are grappling with. Therefore presence of a person to nurture support, build networks, and share information and in designing training programs is very necessary.
7. **The 'Honduras Declaration' passed in 2005 was significant but the message has not been internalized in the region.** Nor has there been any publicity or follow up of the same. It is necessary to build from that conference and our visits

in the direction of taking forward the ‘non-negotiable’ agenda. There is also a need to have regional level workshops for reviewing the work done so far that is based on a child rights perspective.

While carrying forward all the above recommendations, we found that the COMPARTIR in Honduras is ready to take the agenda forward. They have clarity on the issue and all the elements required leading to the program. They have acceptance of all the other NGOs and stakeholders. They have also established contacts with the community and the system showing capacities to take the movement forward. We think COMPARTIR must be given full support at this juncture. They had also requested for the next level of training for their key personnel on all the components of the program and MVF is willing to collaborate with SCL on this. This would then evolve as a Resource Center for the region and prove that even in Central America abolition of child labour is possible.

We also found that CEADEL in Guatemala, RIVER FOUNDATION in Nicaragua and Defense for Children in Costa Rica have the potential to carry forward the agenda.

We might add that there was a greater impact of our visit when the local NGO facilitating our visit had a lot of experience on the ground on children’s issues such as COMPARTIR and Defense for Children.

M.V.Foundation’s learning’s from the visit:

1. We were exposed to a political and social milieu that is vastly different. In some places there is an absence of democratic space, lack of institutionalization of public institutions, and no opportunities for negotiation with the system. The collapse of social support structures and existence of single parent especially women headed families, abandonment of children and violence in society struck us. In such a context it was useful to look at how NGOs have still been able to create community participation and survive. In spite of such difficulties there was hope and concern for the poor in our interactions .This was very revealing.
2. We were also impressed at the innovations of the NGOs in giving support to school going children, often in remote villages and backward areas. We realized the significance of such initiatives to keep children in schools.
3. In interacting with NGOs so far away and engaging them on universalistic principles, it has given MVF immense confidence. We feel that MVF needs to enhance its own capacities for taking up the new responsibilities as a facilitator and create a vision for its new tasks. We would require regular interaction with SCL regarding this.
4. It was useful to have Starvi from the Teacher’s Union from Albania along with us. It gave a sense of urgency to take up the issue at a global level and constantly reinforce our stands. We would have gained from his presence in Guatemala and in Costa Rica to convince the school teachers and their teachers unions.

We are in the process of sharing our experiences with the core staff of MVF. Each time we talk about this we find that our gains from the visit have been huge.

Our profound thanks to all those in Europe and in Central America for working hard behind the scenes to make our visit so rich. Thank you once again.

GUATEMALA REPORT - (2nd to 9th November, 2007)

HOST : PRONICE

DAY ONE : 5-11-07: *San Filipe Municipality, Quetzaltenango.*

A meeting with CEIPA on the visit was held and this was followed by our field visit to the quarry sites that were on either side of the river. The site was full of stones and boulders that must have been a volcanic eruption. Children along with other members of their family were seen working on the site. The quarries were on government property currently under the military for its training operations. We were told that the quarries were under illegal occupation under the control of middlemen who charged money (100 Quetzals per family/unit) to let them work on the quarries. The nexus between the military and such middlemen is unknown. Even the municipality does not get any revenue. Purchasers (buyers) come to the site and buy the materials obtained (sand and stone chips). The buyers include individuals as well as small traders. The rate at the site for one meter is 40/- Quetzals. Traders sell the same at 100 to 20/- Quetzals. To know the ultimate buyer/beneficiary one should understand the supply chain by probing further.

Persons (employers) operating on the quarries belong to two categories. The first are those who work with the help of their family and the second category, hire people to work. Children's involvement is common in both the cases. Children working there could be grouped into three categories; while the first come with their families, the second are school-going children and since the day we visited the place was a holiday, they had come to work and earn some money. The last group of children do not go to school and have been working there for different periods of time. Wage rates are normally based on the age of the worker, i.e. children/people above 15 years are paid 100/- Quetzals a week and children below 15 years get 50/- Quetzals a week.

The work is very hazardous. Children were seen breaking big rocks with hammers under the blazing sun. In our discussion with the parents and the community about child labour, it was found that there was a tolerance and acceptance of children working on quarries. Even the organizers of the host NGO told us that it was enough to reduce the working hours as children's earnings are indispensable for the poor families to survive.

Meeting with young students

Later we had a meeting with a group of high school students. Earlier, these students were themselves quarry workers. They could discontinue their work and pursue education with the scholarship given by CIEPA. We had a detailed discussion on child labour with the children. They felt strongly that no child should be working and all children should go to school. They were keen to participate in the campaign against child labour.

Some of the children we met regularly participate in the local municipality meetings, and told us that they would raise the issue in the meeting and make it an agenda issue. Some young people were keen to know more about MVF's strategies. We found it interesting that in Guatemala and also in all other countries we visited children participate in the meetings of the local bodies.

Meeting with Women's Group

After the meeting with the students we met members of a women's group. They were being trained in skill promotion, prior to which, even they were working on quarries. In the discussion we found that they liked the training.

When we talked about child related issues, they told us that they often visited the schools where their children studied to find out about their children's performance. They also shared a number of difficulties their children faced in schools. They were not happy with the rules governing children's education. For example a woman told us that her child was unable to write his examination due to some illness. The school authorities refused to yield to her repeated requests asking them to allow her child take a re-exam as it was against the rules. As a result, the child lost an academic year.

We found out that the NGO's had not taken up issues relating to the problems faced by children on a day to day basis in schools with the parents and the community. Mothers did not seem to be aware that they could share these problems with the NGO and get them solved. However during the long discussion we had on child labour with the NGO they told us that they were against child labour too and that they would participate in any activity condemning child employment. It was just that they did not look at the link between their issues to the problem of school-dropouts and eventually to the existence of child labour.

Visit to village, *Newopamrrosal, San Filipe Municipality, Dist: Reo*

The NGO helped in rehabilitation of this village community. Earlier, these families were living by the river bed without any proper shelter. The NGO took the initiative and lobbied with the authorities to procure the place for them to live in. They had also lobbied with the municipality to get the housing project got a sanction for the housing all the 153 families. They had also applied for a school project. All of them agreed that they should build a school first, and then houses for themselves. This school was meant to cater not just for their children but also for all the children living in neighbouring communities also.

Hidden Demand of Poor for Education

Across the globe, poor have been expressing their dream to educate their children, against the popular myth that they don't prefer their child's education. An incident we came across in this Central American country stands ample proof for the demand of poor.

The 153 families who got housing out of the hard efforts wanted that a school be built first for their children prior to the construction of houses. When we asked why so, they said they want better life for their children. Community participation in the school is evident. Mothers of some children are members of the school board. They are unhappy about the school timings. School works in one shift and children participate in employment activities after school. They want the school to run full day, morning and afternoon and want a programme for 3-5 years old children.

The school caters not only to the community living in here, but also to the neighbouring colonies also. People in this colony and the neighbouring colonies are all dwelling in poverties. And despite their poverties it is worthy to note that they prefer education of their children over anything else.

DAY TWO: 6.11.07

Visit to The Head Office Of CIEPA and Market Places, Quetzaltenango

The director *Mr. Ricardo* made a presentation on *CIEPA's* activities. He briefed us about the mission and vision of the organisation and explained the activities of the organisation. Later we were taken to the marketplaces where children were found working in large numbers. The organisation runs schools in the markets for the working children. Children attend these centres for two hours and the rest of the time, they work in the market. Local municipal authorities gave them a site in the market itself to run the school. We interacted with some children who attended schools while working in the market with the support of *CIEPA*.

Meeting with adolescents *ONNATS* (group launched by *CIEPA*)

After the visit to the market, *CIEPA* arranged an interactive meeting with a group called *ONNATS* (consisting of adolescent children) which is actually a network operating within the country and even outside. Many of these children have been erstwhile child labour or school drop outs but due to the scholarships given by *CIEPA* they have been able to continue with their education in schools. In this particular area of Guatemala, *CIEPA* facilitates and monitors the activities of this group. This group strongly believes that children have the right to work and children should work to keep their up their dignity up.

We had a long discussion on the issue of child labour and education as a tool to break the cycle of poverty and deprivation with this group. We told them that as civil society organisations we should demand for a change in the status quo. This would mean laying emphasis on children's right to education and not allowing them to be in the work force. Accepting the 'poverty argument' would be tantamount to accepting what policy makers across the countries have been saying. Our interaction on a rights based perspective for children urged them to ponder about the issue.

DAY THREE: 07.11.07

Visit to CIEDEL an NGO; *Chimaltanango*

On the day-3 dated 07.11.'07 visited CIEDEL, an NGO in Chimaltanango. The Director of *Mr. Gabriel* and staff members. We found that both the Director and the staff members were very clear on the total abolition of child labour. They hold that the only way to abolish child labour is by education.

The director explained the organization's activities, focussing on how they had lobbied with international NGOs to bind the local export oriented vegetable companies (mainly companies exporting vegetables to US). They had conducted studies on how children are exploited in the workplace. The media gave a good coverage on the findings of the study and initiated a debate over the issue. The coverage had a good impact. The US embassy started inspecting whether the production of goods exported to US involved child labour.

In return, the organisation had received threats from traders and exporters. Counter campaigns, theorising that the organisation was damaging the economic interests of the country had gained currency. However, the fact that certain companies came forward to take up the issue is a positive sign that may be explored.

Round Table Meeting

After the briefing session with the Director and staff of CIEDEL, we participated in a meeting attended by the officers of the local education department, labour department and the human rights department.

During the meeting the officer of the Department of Labour showed a lot of interest in area specific approach and child labour free zone strategies. She said that she would gear up the machinery in the campaign and also wished to participate in it in her personal capacity. However, she was concerned about the budget constraints and the shortage of staff.

The officer representing the education department said he was willing to take up the issue of abolishing child labour and would do his best.

The human rights department explained about the actions they initiated on the violators of child rights and said that they encouraged people to submit petitions on violations of child rights when they notice the same.

Visit to Families and Children

Next, we visited a colony, occupied by very poor people. The houses they lived in revealed their state of extreme poverty . One of the children in a family we visited was availing the scholarship programme and the accelerated learning programme initiated organised by CIEDEL.

Under the programme children attend classes once a week which helps with their examinations. Except these weekly classes, they spend the whole week assisting their parents in their work. Girls help their mothers bake breads and sell them in the market. It was very disheartening to see that most of these families were run by single women. Cases of husbands abandoning their wives and children were significantly high. Thus the responsibility of bringing up children and running families fell solely upon the women.

Despite such troubled conditions, it was very striking that they were ready to send their children for education. We understood that there were many procedural problems and unnecessary rules that actually force children to join the labour force. Parents require great support in addressing these issues.

Son in work as Admission Rules Unclear!

While talking to a woman we asked her why her son was not sent to school. The reason she gave shocked us. Three years before when she tried to admit him in school she was told that the school would not take him as her son was too young and so she dropped the idea. After three years, she went to school to admit him once again. School authorities told her that he was too old and crossed the minimum eligible age to get admission into schools. And so he is at work now.

Visit to an Export Vegetable Company *Legumix*:

This company used to employ children previously. Following CIEDEL's campaign against child labour, the company came under the scrutiny of the press for employing children. The press also targeted Legumix when George Bush was in the country leaving the company with no option other than to come to terms with the agitators demands and take quick action against child labour. The company is in discussion with the NGO to take up the project of children's education.

Subsequently we had a detailed discussion with CIEDEL and Legumix on the area specific approach. CIEDEL is keen to collaborate with the company on this strategy.

During the discussion we raised questions on the company's procurement policy. We were interested to know whether they avoid buying products involving child labour. They conceded that child labour is being employed in goods they procure from the farms, and that they had no control over these matters.

At the end of discussion they accepted that everybody related to the company should send their children to school.

Meeting with the Young Adolescents

The organization supports education of young people and conducts spoken English programmes. Children attending these classes are part time learners and part time workers. During the interaction they wanted to know more about MVF's strategies.

When the issue of child labour cropped up during the interaction with them, they expressed that every child should go to school and not work. They could see the value of education. We felt happy when one of the student participants said that 'to end poverty, children should be in school and not at work place'.

DAY FOUR 08.11.07

Visit to: *PENNATS* (an NGO),Gautemala.

This organization works for children working in market places in Gautemala city. They run schools for these children. These schools are vibrant. They had developed three stages in 13 modules and had introduced this material in 23 centres in which a total of 1500 children were studying.

The organisation enjoys good links with the communities. Centres run by the organisation are well recognised by the community.

The school is unique in that community members act as resource people for the centre. A cheese vendor acts a resource person on the subject regarding the production of cheese and benefits of the same.

The local market radio helps the programme in announcing the issues of child rights.

They run these centres in three shifts. There is a good impact of the material on the formal state run public schools. These schools have also adopted the material and are using it in the curriculum for their students. The NGO also maintains good relations with the schools. Communities demand the NGO to run centres.

DAY FIVE : 09.11.2007

Visit to CAHA LUIKA.

Caha Luika is a theatre group with a clear understanding on the issue of child labour. The group works with youth against violence. Ms. Julia, one of the directors of the group had visited MV Foundation earlier. We visited a school run by a partner agency of Caha Lukia, located on the outskirts of Guatemala City. Their partner agency is a Missionary organisation. Children from the neighbouring areas study in this school and are charged fees. When asked, they said they could not support free schooling as they do not have funds and are willing to admit non fee paying children if some philanthropic people/agencies support them. The school has the capacity to cater to the needs of more children.

Workshop On Child Labour

At the end of our visit in Guatemala, a workshop was held in which 20 NGOs participated. PROINCE (an NGO working in the area) hosted the workshop. Barring a very few, most agencies felt that child labour was part of the cultural ethos of Central America. CIEDEL and Save Children, Norway took strong exceptions to these views. NGOs took two extreme stances on the issue. Some of them were very sceptical about the possibility of total abolition of child labour.

One of the important items we discussed was the `area based' approach and Child Labour Free Zone. We presented an account of MVF strategies and shared our experiences on reinforcing parental demand for education in India, and the support generated from the NGOs. We told them that the need for education is more for the poor and the battles waged by them must be supported. We told them that we should not be debating whether the place of children in society lies in schools or workplaces, but take a clear stand on supporting children's right to education. We said that in building processes towards enabling the poor realise their right to education and that governments must be made accountable for the same. The importance of lobbying and showing to the government by a concrete programme through an area based approach that it is possible to live without child labour was important.

Observations

- The gap between communities and schools is clearly evident. Policies of the schools often result in generation of child labour rather than prevention of child

labour. Schools should be made sensitive to the demands of the children, parents, communities and poor.

- It is not true that there is no demand for education from communities. Among the women in Newopamrrosal and the people we met wherever we went, the desire for better education and preference for education among the poor was very strong. There needs to be an agency that builds its work on recognition of this demand.
- There are many areas where CIEPA and the community could work together.
- The director, CIEPA is not in favour of the total abolition of child labour. He thinks abolition of child labour is a western concept and the children of Central America need to support their families. He felt that they could only reduce the work load on the children. Though the director of CIEPA is not in favour of elimination of child labour, some of his staff members are keen to try it out.
- When we were about to leave the office of CIEPA, three to four children who polish shoes for a living, were in the office and polishing the shoes of staff members. They did not think that this was wrong. All the staff members believe that they are helping the children. This incident was extremely shocking to us as well as the members of our team who were helping us in translation.
- Companies' support in addressing child labour may be explored.
- There is a lot of scope for NGOs and the government to work together on the issue of child labour. The meeting we had (during the visit to CIEDEL) with the local officers of the departments of Labour, Education and Human Rights who evinced interest about the programme shows the positive attitude of the machinery.
- It was a good meeting and the positive attitudes of the parties (government departments and the NGO) about the area specific strategy will help in exploring the possibilities for a meaningful cooperation. The organisation seemed to have been convinced about the merits of the strategy.
- The unique interventions of PENNATS and their work have been well recognised by the communities. There is a great demand for these schools. Material generated by this group is a good resource on methodologies.

Recommendations

- With the help of NGOs like CIEDEL, area specific approach and child labour free zone strategy could be experimented with.
- The strategy should be very comprehensive, covering all aspects related to children.
- There is an urgent need for an agency that wishes to work for the elimination of child labour, to concentrate on the admission policies of schools. Parents should be equipped with capacities to deal with schools.

- Agencies must try to arrange for a provision for the admission of older children into schools. All parties concerned should be made to understand that children are engaged in labour force as the schools are not sensitive to the needs of poor children.
- Lobbying with the government needs to focus on the anti-children policies of schools. These issues will emerge only when we deal with the existing schools.
- Data base has to be developed about the status of the children.

HONDURAS REPORT

HOST NGO: COMPARTIR

DAY ONE : 12-11-2007

The programme in Honduras was facilitated by COMPARTIR an NGO which has been organizing a programme that benefits poor children. They run centres for 3-5 year olds, called Children Gardens. We saw the material supplied by the organization to these centres. Furthermore, COMPARTIR has been working with 19 public schools in the area, in which a total of 18,000 children have been studying. COMPARTIR supports these schools. The organization runs community centres and libraries here. On 12th November, we visited the project area of the NGO COMPARTIR. This area falls in the neighbourhood of Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras. COMPARTIR has been working here for the last 15 years. They work with children, women and young people. We visited the houses of the inhabitants. Most of them were migrant poor. Children from this neighbourhood go to the city for work.

Visit to CARE Honduras: Tegucigalpa.

CARE- Honduras has a programme named *Primero Apreando* (meaning: first I learn). The organization has been supporting children in schools. They network with NGOs and are very clear in their strategies to abolish child labour. We were told about the Regional Consultant meeting organised by CARE Honduras in association with ILO, CARE with Ministers of Education and Labour and Bishops of Central American countries. The meeting resulted in the passing of a resolution against child labour.

CARE Honduras mobilized communities through TV campaigns. The organisation was not happy with the teachers and their unions. We shared our ideas about area specific strategy, and our experiences of working with teachers and teacher unions. We told them that teachers played an important role in reaching out to out of school children and enroll them. After discussions with us they said that the CARE Honduras explore possibilities of working with teachers in future.

They also felt that involvement of private sector was also important. Later, Mr. Miquel Anthonia Lopez and Mr. Dario of CARE made presentations covering their interventions under the project 'V CARE'.

DAY TWO : 13-11-2007

Visit to CASA ALLIANSA

We began the day with the visit to CASA ALLIANSA. They work on the issue of street children. They run homes for them. Children and adolescents come to centre and stay there. There is good infrastructure for them. They have facilities to play as well as study. The organisation has been working and lobbying with international human rights groups.

Visit to Yamaranguila Municipality.

This municipality is 250 Km away from Tegucigalpa. . We saw the program of World Vision which supports school children in this municipality. We visited a municipal school and found that the children were very articulate. World Vision trains children

in extra curricular activities like drama, songs and games and in self development activities. Children performed folk dances and we had a good interaction with them.

Families in this municipality have an agricultural background. They are very poor. Teachers told us that parents were keen to send their children to school. Not only do they send them to school, but they also participate in the school activities very actively. They had class wise parents committees and parents contributed to the class activities. The class room of grade 6 had neat flooring. Parents had contributed for the same.

The teachers were very active and took pride in their school. They gave a lot of confidence to children. Dropout rate was very low in this school. We witnessed that the general feeling that *teachers don't work* was a misconception.

Discussion with COMPARTIR Team

While traveling, we had detailed discussions with the COMPARTIR team on area specific approach and the possibilities of working towards declaring one of their project areas as a 'child labour free zone'. The COMPARTIR team who were traveling with us were fully convinced and wanted to show us a potential field area in their project where they could take up the programme on a pilot basis, aiming at total abolition of child labour where every child could be put in school. During the sharing of ideas on the way, the Director wanted us to visit some more centres run by them.

DAY THREE : 14 – 11- 2007

Visit to the neighbourhoods of Tegucigalpa

COMPARTIR organized a field trip to other neighbourhoods. We visited a place called Nuevasuyapa and met the field staff. We visited all the centres. They had good

Caring for Children : Unsung Sacrifice

During the visit to this place we spoke to a woman Lucia Gracia. Though there were only two rooms in her house, she gave away one room to run a day care centre free of cost/rent, to COMPARTIR. The only room she is presently living in was full of materials, with hardly any space to move. When we asked her what prompted her to do this sacrifice, she said she was also a child labourer and knew how hard it is to be a labourer at young age. She further told us that she is ready to give them more. We were very happy when she said children's rights are to be honoured. She exemplifies the common people who are ready to sacrifice for the cause of children.

infrastructure that included their own building, technical training centre etc. They a centres like the Children's Garden, health awareness programme, computer training centre, street children education programme, scholarship programme and day care centres etc.

We also visited a public school here, and interacted with school teachers. During the interaction with teachers we understood that

there was no policy of lateral entry for older children and school drop-outs and a scheme for preparing them to an age appropriate class. Once children were absent for a period of one month they were not allowed in the school. There was no facility of school meals. It is paradoxical that while there were no rules to restrict the entry of children in the market, schools have very rigid rules, restricting the rights of children.

Meeting with COMPARTIR core staff on area specific strategy

We had a detailed discussion on our field visit and the 'area based' strategy for total abolition of child labour and implementing children's right to education with Rosa Maria, Anival, Antonia and Brenda, the core team and decision making body of the COMPARTIR. We explained the components of strategy to them in detail. We answered all their queries and the group showed keen interest to take it forward. They wanted MVF to guide them to take the programme the logical conclusion. They were confident that this strategy would have a greater impact on the state policy. They were also willing to include the department of education, the labour department and other players.

Meeting with FOPRIDEH

Mr. Stavri Liko from Albania Teachers' Union joined the team when we had a meeting with FORPRIDEH this organization is a federation of 74 institutions NGOs', networks, researchers, activists and other development agencies. COMPARTIR is also a member of this federation.. It plays an important role in the policy formulation of the country. It sets up sub committees on each issue and presents them with recommendations to the government. So far they set up committees on justice, democracy, anti-corruption, energy and water, law, transparency and civil law.

We raised the need for a committee on child rights and they were open to the idea and asked COMPARTIR to move this in their next meeting. Stavri from the teacher's union from Albania shared his experiences with the organization. They were very impressed by the efforts of his union in Albania and keen on Stavri interacting with the Honduras teachers union. Stavri asked why the teachers union was not a part of their federation and also pointed out the significant role teachers' unions could play. The federation responded positively and promised to extend an invitation to teachers union.

DAY FOUR: 15-11-2007

Meeting with Teachers Unions-

Representatives (10) of five important teachers unions participated in the meeting. However the main office bearers of the union were not present. Stavri Liko from Albania and us from MVF. made a presentation. A detailed discussion on the governments' role and policies were debated. Participants felt that the government was not spending sufficient money on education and was not meeting teachers' demands sufficiently. The union members were unhappy that one of their union members attended the Berlin conference but never informed them about this conference. Moreover, they were unhappy with Education International.

Stavri asked them to come up with a concrete plan of action and discuss the same with Education International and other trade union colleagues. All teachers' unions agreed to work against child labour and expressed their interest to participate in any such activity.

Meeting with Education Vice Minister:

Later, we participated in a meeting with Mr. Stavri and the Education Minister. Stavri suggested to the Education Minister to consult teachers' unions while formulating

policies. On MVF's behalf, we made a presentation on the area specific approach. The minister liked the ideas of area specific approach and child labour free zone.

DAY FIVE: 16-11-2007

Participation in sticker campaigns on the streets.

Along with some activists we went to paste stickers bearing slogans against child labour. While pasting stickers on taxis, the drivers also joined us extending solidarity. Then we recognised the need for including taxi drivers also in the campaign.

Meeting with the Minister for Labour and the Director General of Child Labour Ms.Griseldu Zeloya

The meeting with the Labour Minister was very interesting. She wanted to engage in innovative programmes concerning abolition of child labour. Her officer was also very keen to know more about MVF and its programmes.

They explained to us about the National Commission of Eradication of Child Labour. This commission was initiated by the ILO IPEC project. All the ministries as well as NGOs' network groups were also involved in this commission. Stavri asked why the teachers union was not involved in this commission. They replied that they were open to the idea of including teachers union.

The minister showed interest in the area specific approach and wanted to do it in a couple of municipalities. The minister asked COMPARTIR to take a lead to ground the project in that area.

We also discussed the school governance issues and how these were unfavourable to poor children and were pushing them out of the system. We told them that such children inevitably join the labour force. They told us that they would write to the Ministry of Education about these issues.

The minister also promised to write letters to all the 138 mayors in Honduras inviting them to participate in the programme on abolition of child labour.

Workshop on Child Labour and Education

The workshop was well attended by NGOs, teachers' union representatives, and officers of the Ministries of Labour and Education.

We made a presentation on area specific approach. We also shared our experiences in Honduras with parents and community members. The focus was on how the poorest of the poor want their children to be educated and the hardships they face. We also shared some case studies based on our field visit and interaction with the community. These case studies (concerning parental demand, institutional inadequacies etc. as experienced in the field) had an impact on the participants.

It was decided to form a committee to take further action on the discussions with us and identify an area that can be taken up for working towards a child labour free zone. The teachers' union representatives were keen about the strategy and assured us that they would actively participate in the area where the pilot project is identified.

Stavri Licho made a presentation on his experiences in Albania, which left a great impact on the teachers.

Observations

- CARE HONDURAS has to follow up on the decisions made in the joint conference of the Ministers and Bishops. CARE Honduras is a good organisation and possibilities for better partnership on the issue may be explored. Partnership with them will strengthen the campaign.
- There is no proper monitoring in the public schools, resulting in a huge drop out rate. Hence there is a need for adopting area specific approach with all the components going into it.

Recommendation

- COMPARTIR has the capacity to take up the 'area based strategy', It succeeded on organizing meetings with different stakeholders. The labour minister was keen to take up the challenge to prove that they could accomplish it too and to show that it was possible to put all children in school. All the players in the NGO sections and teachers unions were positive on the issue.
- COMPARTIR senior staff needs to be given professional inputs on the issue of lobbying and networking on 'area specific strategy'. MVF is willing to train them in India.
- The committee constituted at the end of the workshop needs to be followed up with.
- The decision of the Minister of Labour to write a letter to the Education Minister and to call for a meeting of the Mayors of Honduras municipalities needs to be followed up with.

NICARAGUA REPORT (November 17 – 24 , 2007)

HOST NGO: CIDENIC CONSULTANTS

The programme in Nicaragua was facilitated by CIDENIC CONSULTANTS for Research and Development. CIDENIC is an independent organization that offers its services to organizations, individuals and local and international organizations that promote development in Nicaragua.

DAY ONE : 19-11-2007

Meeting with CENIDH (Nicaraguan Centre for Human rights)

CENIDH is an organization that concentrates on human rights issues such as housing rights, land rights etc. They actively participate in campaigns against child labour and protection of child rights. During the conversation with them, we learned that around 5 to 6 thousand cases of human rights' violations have been dealt with by them every year, of which child rights issues are also included. We asked them how many of these cases were related to children, they had no specific data on this. We suggested that they set up a separate cell to monitor issues and data for child related issues.

Meeting with ANDEN

ANDEN is a teachers union. Three persons represented ANDEN in the meeting. This union comprises of 18,000 teachers in the country. In addition to this, it acts as a federal agency of 135 other small teachers' unions. Stavri, a representative from Albania Teachers' union, shared his experiences with the union. During the conversation we were told that the union was working closely with the ILO/IPEC project and also implementing a project under the AOB funded programme.

They worked in Matagalpa municipality under AOB funding on child labour. Campaigns on abolition of school fees, lobbying for more schools to reach out to more children and enrolling them in schools are some of the activities taken up by them. They do not have a separate programme for child labour, but with the support received from ILO/IPEC, 780 teachers were trained on the issues of child labour and education.

Meeting with CODENI

CODENI is a federation of NGOs working on children. They lobby with the government on policies. The main activities of the federation include advocating CRC and lobbying for policies against child labour. The federation is an active member of the national commission for eradication of child labour. In addition they also take part in building capacities of NGOs and resource development for them. They had also drafted work plans with ILO/IPEC and UNICEF. The project conceived to work in partnership with the government and UNICEF had proved to be a bad experience the national government did not release its share of funds.

The federation is strongly convinced that the best solution for child labour is child education.

Meeting with ILO/IPEC representative

Later, a meeting was arranged with ILO/IPEC representatives. We were told that they work in Matagalpa municipality. They impressed us with the results of the programme

which was encouraging with involvement of 'Teachers' unions'. They were trained on strategies targeting elimination of child labour. A campaign was organised with the participation of teachers and parents successfully. Although there is no funding and the programme is closed officially, the campaign against child labour is still going on.

DAY TWO : 20-11-2007

Visit to INPRHU (NGO) SOMOTO-MADRIZ-Nicaragua

After meeting ILO/IPEC we travelled about 250 Kilometers from Mangua to reach Somoto Madriz where we visited an NGO called *INPRHU*. The organisation has been working on the issue of human development, rural development and attention to childhood, family and the community.

They made a presentation on their activities and shared their experiences on elimination of child labour. In this respect, they stated that they took programs of community mobilisation on the issue of child labour, networking with NGOs; non formal education and support to formal education; running community schools; activities relating health, recreation, culture and sports setting up of childhood committees and children's libraries, environmental education, provision of student scholarship.

This organisation is also a Member of National Commission for Eradication of Child Labour. The presentation was followed by cultural programmes by children. We had a focussed group discussion with parents, community leaders and children benefiting from the scholarship programme of the NGO. Leaders of the community also participated.

Later, we proceeded to the village La Playa. We interacted with the parents about their children and school. Parents told us that they visit the school regularly. The community leaders were not aware of information regarding the number of children attending the school. The local school authorities told us that the school offers education up to 6th grade. There were 248 child studying 1st to 6th grades and another 27 children were not going to school. Some parents were sending their children regularly. Though parents claim that they visit schools regularly, there doesn't seem to be required interaction between parents and schools.

We interacted with the children who benefitted from the school improvement programme being implemented by the NGO. Girls who participated in the interactive session told us that they were able to attend school because of this intervention. They were doing well academically.

A Mother's Wisdom : Education is for Dignity!

During the visit we visited the home of a poor parent (mother). Her story is very inspiring. She is living in such a poor condition that she doesn't get lunch some times (on the day we visited she didn't have lunch). She has four children and all of them are studying 2nd, 4th, 6th and 9th grades respectively. She is a single parent, abandoned by her husband after she gave birth to the 4th child. We went into her home to see what is there in her home. She didn't have anything valuable in her home. We asked her how she was able to manage without any sufficient income to send their children to schools. Her response: *education gives dignity to the children and children should not be put to work*. There is something more to add to this. Her grand child is also there with her, who is also going to school.

Children told us that when the 1st grade teacher was ill treating them, they had complained to the parents, who in turn had complained to the Director (Head of the institute). He had reprimanded the teacher and corrected his behaviour towards children.

The committee demanded that their village be covered to under the Nicaraguan governments reinforcement programme to mainstream older children.

DAY THREE : 21 -11- 2007

Visit to San Corlos

We started the day with a visit to organization *River Foundation* (fundacion del Rio). The organisation was established 15 years ago. This is a border town of Costa Rica. We had to travel to this place by a small Helicopter.

In this small and remote area, we were exposed to their activities and facilities such as library, computer training, skill training, arts and culture and sports for children. They are also implementing school improvement programme for school going children from poor families.

In the evening we enjoyed a good cultural programme performed by children. They sang folk songs.

The organisation gave us a formal presentation on their aims and objectives. We reciprocated by making a presentation on MVF's experiences and stressed on the need to adopt area specific approach and making child labour free zones. They showed great interest to know more about the strategies. Since the organization has a

very good rapport with the community and the government, they felt that an 'area based approach' was a workable model. The Director Mr. Mario Antonio Mallrquin Rodriguez and his colleague Antonio Gomez were keen to know more in detail about the strategies.

Inspirational Stories of Women !

We spoke to three persons in this habitation. The way how positive attitudes towards children help them protect their rights are clearly evident from the stories of these three persons. Marta is a single parent and her story almost resembles the story of the woman in Somota Madriz. She reasons that the right to education of the child has to be honoured whatever hardships parents may have face.

Succoro is a washer woman and single woman also. A self driven motivator, Succoro not just sends her children to school but a campaigner of child rights also. We saw many children playing at her home – a great lover of children too. Neighbours approached her to resolve the problems faced by them and their children, with school authorities against unauthorised fee demands, conditional wearing of uniform and shoes etc.... are a common scene in the village. She asks parents to come out openly in defence of their children's rights. She is very articulate and supports the campaign of the NGO.

DAY FOUR : 22-11-2007

Visit to Nitca Foundation, Managua.

We visited the foundation in the neighbourhoods of the Managua City. The area is large with a population of nearly about 10,000. The organization concentrates on the education of the children. They have a scholarship programme and also support for children attending private schools.

We interacted with the children in the public school and the children studying in the private school supported by the foundation. Teachers at the private school felt happy about the support extended to the children as it enable them continuing their education. They wished that the foundation would expand its activities and reach out to more children. A reinforcement programme is being implemented in this school for older children. The public school teachers were also very happy about being able to retain more children with the support of Nitca foundation. We spoke to an agricultural worker's family. They were surviving with bare minimum revenues and yet sent their children to schools. Later we participated in a meeting with women. They complained about the withdrawal of the milk programme for the children in the school.

A high school was recently sanctioned by the government after intensive lobbying of Nitca. Presently, the nearest high school is located at a distance of three kilometres from this village. Villagers and the foundation had tried for three long years to get the school sanctioned. A construction committee has been formed and a mothers' committee is supervising the construction activity.

We had a meeting with the staff of the Nitca Foundation who showed interest in the area specific approach. The Foundation is very popular and has developed a good rapport with the communities. They train the community on various aspects.

During the meeting with villagers we came across a person who had benefited from River Foundation's programmes- now a university student. He was involved in the campaign. He had been spreading the message in the campus and other places. During vacations he works with the community and helps Nitca.

Later, we had a meeting with Ms. Ana, an education specialist. She said that the government spending was very little on education when compared to the actual need.

She mentioned there was free education in the public schools, with scholarships for eligible children, school meals for over 800,000 children and basic education programme such as afternoon and night shifts for accelerated learning for older children and adults. She mentioned that there were four NGOs a) Save the children, Norway, b) CARE (Primero Aprendo), c) INPHRU and d) CODENI (Children's Rights Coalition) working on education.

DAY FIVE : 23-11-2007

Meeting with CPREV:

This organization works against violence. They give counselling to the youth involved in street and gang violence. We met up with a group of young people previously involved in such violence and now attending the centre.

Workshop on Child Labour

Four organisations participated in the workshop. Of them three were NGOs a) INPHRU b) Foundation del Rio (River Foundation) and c) NITCA foundation and one was the Police Department.

The police had a separate wing dealing with women and children. They had counselling centres in every municipality.

Presentations made by each organisation covered its objectives, activities and goals. Three working groups were formed after the presentations, and group discussions followed on the following issues:

- Success factors that contributed to reducing child labour
- Ideas on other activities to reduce child labour
- Proposal for following up with the Honduras declaration.

Each group made its presentation that was followed by MVF's presentation. In our presentation we tried to shift the focus of the participants from an approach of targeting some specific sections of children to Area Specific Strategies and Child Labour Free Zones. We emphasised the need to show the state that it was possible for Nicaragua to do away with child labour. In this regard the need for adopting 'child labour free zone' strategy and area specific approach loomed large. Participants accepted the logic and said they would be looking forward to a meeting again.

Observations

The teachers Union ANDEN needs to discuss further the provisions to bring back older children into schools, and also the programmes for accelerated learning of older school going children in their meetings.

was very clear in their approach, and it was found that they are a potential partner to take forward the activities.

Though the INPHRU enjoyed a good place in the hearts of the people, and is doing a lot, the issue of older children needs to be effectively dealt with by the organisation. Their interventions on children's issue have to be consolidated and tied together under a cohesive policy against child labour and for children's right to education.

The River Foundation seems to be keen to take up the MVF model.

Recommendations

- With the help of NGOs like RIVER and INPHRU an experiment may be tried out by adopting area specific approach and child labour free zone strategy.
- The strategy should be very comprehensive, covering all aspects related to children.
- There is an urgent need for any agency that wishes to work for the elimination of child labour to concentrate on the admission policies of the schools. Parents should be equipped with capacities to deal with the schools.
- Agencies must try to make a provision for the admission of older children into schools. All the concerned should be made to understand that children are engaged in

labour force as there is an absence of provision for older children to be mainstreamed into schools.

- Data base has to be developed about the status of the children.

COSTA RICA - (26-27th November, 2007)

HOST : DNI-Internacional.

DAY ONE - 26-11-2007

Review meeting with Hivos, San jose.

We shared our field experiences and discussed follow up strategies. Some of the issues that emerged during the meetings are (1) Campaign Against Child Labour setting up a regional desk to monitor the activities in the Central American region. Supporting select potential NGOs and building their capacities developing an area based approach and a strategy for child labour free zone which left a great impact on the participants consolidating all the existing inventions on children towards this goal.

Visit to ILO-Regional Office

Later we participated in an interaction session with the staff members of ILO regional office. They made a presentation on ILO's activities and briefed us about the conference that had been organised by them earlier, on the issue of child labour which was, attended by ministers and bishops. We were told that ILO played a pivotal role in the formation of communities against child labour. They welcomed the proposition of child labour eradication being possible only with universal education. We explained to them about the studies carried out by MVF in this respect and the relation between education and poverty. We were told that ILO had been interacting with Global march.

Visit to Defence for Children

Later, we participated in an interactive session with the representatives of Defence for Children. Which has been working since 1984. M/s Silvia Heraindez, Kari wan Wizk and Ivan Rodriguez joined us for the session. We discussed the poverty argument in connection with removal of child labour at length. We explained to them about area specific approach and child labour free zones.

DAY TWO, 27-11.2007

Visit to CEFEMINA (NGO)

The organisation has been working on women's issues and concentrating on adolescent children (both girls and boys), apart from various other issues. The organisation was working in the Releba area. Ms. Norma Pereira Camachu of the NGO joined us. She gave us a profile of child labour in the area. She told that children were mostly engaged in milk production, growing of vegetables and working in coffee plantations. The organisation receives support from the private sector also in dealing with child issues.

We were impressed that the NGO had clarity on the issue but noticed that it was ignorant of the developments taking place in respect of young children.

Visit to Training Centre in Sanjose University

We visited a training centre run by the NGO on the campus of Sanjose University. Here, adults and adolescent children are imparted life skills on management and organisation issues. People living in abject poverty are benefited from the programme. The NGO has a

good presence in the community and parents belonging to the community wish to educate their children.

Participation in the workshop

Representatives (12) of NGOs, Trade Unions, teachers unions, Departments of Education, and Labour participated in the workshop.

A debate took place on the Honduras declaration (2006). We asked them about follow up actions after the declaration. As they said that there were no follow up actions, we suggested to that they should in by starting a campaign.

We made a presentation on MVF experiences, non-negotiable points, and child friendly institutions. A film shot by MVF, titled *Salute to Youth* was screened.

After the presentations and the screening of the film, debates over issues like poverty, the role of youth in the elimination of child labour, and child labour free zones took place. Participants seemed interested in knowing more about MVF.

Visit to Health Centre and a School

After the workshop we visited the Alajuleita habitation located in the neighbourhood of Sanjose and saw a health centre. We interacted with the health committees consisting of members of the communities. The doctor in the Health Centre made a presentation and said he was looking for better support from the government.

Later, we visited a school in the neighbourhood and interacted with the teachers. In a separate meeting with community members, we were told that the community participated in the school's activities. A good debate commenced over the issue of child labour.

Community meeting

The school offers education for grades 1-5 and runs in three shifts. The community complained that the school does not maintain good standards and teachers do not attend to their duties properly. They demanded that either the school be closed and child labour be accepted, or a different school be started. They said that there was a school far off from their place where the standards of education were good. We were impressed that the community was conscious of child rights.

We felt that the NGO (Defence for Children) needs to intensify its activities, give more inputs to the communities to deal with schools.