



Management Note

to the Final Evaluation of the 'Work: No Child's Business' programme by Syspons

Prepared by: WNCB Programme Management Unit/MEAL expert

Signed off by: Programme Steering Committee and Alliance Coordination Team

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Scope: Work: No Child's Business Programme

Introduction

The Programme Management Unit (PMU) of the Work: No Child's Business (WNCB) programme is pleased to share the external final evaluation of the WNCB programme. Firstly, we want to thank Syspons for conducting this final evaluation in collaboration with WNCB partner organisations, working groups and country teams. We would like to extend our gratitude to key stakeholders including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) of the Netherlands. We particularly want to thank our colleagues and partner organisations in the two case study countries India and Ivory Coast, as well as our colleagues in Jordan, Mali, Uganda, Vietnam and The Netherlands for their supportive efforts and involvement in this final reflection process by sharing their critical observations and reflections across 5,5 years of implementation.

This Management Note (MN) outlines WNCB's response to the main findings of the final evaluation and shares key take-aways for future programming to ensure that children and youth are free from child labour and enjoy their rights to quality education and (future) decent work, as well as WNCB's reflections to the evaluation process.

Purpose of the Final Evaluation

The purpose of the final evaluation was to assess the Theory of Change of the WNCB programme by leveraging existing Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) data alongside two detailed studies conducted in two of our programme's operational settings, namely in Budhpura Rajasthan, India and Nawa, Ivory Coast. The objectives of the evaluation were (1) to enhance understanding of programme impact; (2) to identify scalable good practices at the intersection of the supply chain approach and the area-based approach; and (3) to offer strategic recommendations for programme partners and key stakeholders.

The Terms of Reference for the Final Evaluation was developed by the WNCB MEAL Working Group and reviewed by an external reference group¹. The Final Evaluation was conducted by the external evaluation team led by Lennart Raetzell from Syspons Gmb. The company was

¹ The external reference group consisted of representatives from the independent evaluation service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, the Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB), the Royal Tropical Institute, KIT and, Hivos.



selected by a multi-partner selection committee, and overseen by an external reference group through a competitive bidding process.

Key take-aways: Reflections on findings & recommendations

The urgency to address child labour is unfortunately increasing. In that light, complementary to the evaluation report, we would like to highlight a number of findings and recommendations that we feel are most essential when looking ahead in our pursuit to address the root causes of child labour and provide viable alternatives for children and their families. Sharing our experiences has become increasingly relevant now the WNCB programme has ended, and the WNCB partners are observing a decline in funding resources available on global, national and local level, including in the Netherlands, to support area-based programmes aimed at the elimination of all forms of child labour.

- We are proud to report on the **decreased numbers of child labourers in most partner countries as an outcome of the programme interventions, especially as these areas represent high incidence areas of child labour**. The multi-dimensional (along four pathways), multi-stakeholder (in collaboration with diverse stakeholders), and multi-level (from international to local) approach of the programme proved relevant and effective. The evaluation furthermore shows **how changes in norms and attitudes of stakeholders have positively influenced support for the value of education**, a key component of the area-based approach. Nevertheless, improving attendance rates sustainably remains challenging without structural changes taking place (e.g. changes in infrastructure, quality education).

WNCB take away: [Global estimates](#) show that child labour instances are on the rise; governments need to continue investing in broad solutions to eliminate all forms of child labour as adopted in the WNCB programme. This includes ensuring to look beyond a limited supply chain focus, including and involving all out-of-school and working children, addressing root causes and providing viable alternatives.

- **In its pursuit of achieving sustainable and durable impact, the WNCB programme has reached “exceptional achievements” in improving laws, policies and regulations on child labour in programme countries**. The WNCB partners see a link between the programme’s conscious decision to adopt an integrated approach, which included engaging with stakeholders from the onset to enhance the relevance of WNCB’s objectives, and the evaluation’s conclusions that results have overall been well-embedded in systems and structures (e.g. child protection systems strengthened, laws adopted, guidelines developed, etc).



WNCB take away: The work does not stop here. Now that laws, systems and guidelines have been adopted, stakeholders (incl. governments, CSOs, private sector) should follow-up to ensure all stakeholders practice what they preach if we wish to make a lasting impact. Budgets, capacities and monitoring oversight need to be well-organized to ensure commitments are followed through.

- **Private sector: The effects related to the private sector were most visible at sourcing and production areas where the area-based approach was applied.** Due to the direct involvement of companies at community level, the programme **achieved a heightened sense of responsibility and accountability from supply chain actors** as well as a stronger advocacy engagement by community members. Learning from evaluation states that the programme would have benefited from earlier engagement with well-established partners that have skills and network to connect with private sector actors, especially with companies in international supply chains.

WNCB take away: We encourage a commitment to build on existing expertise and invest in local initiatives that bring together businesses, civil society, and government agencies in addressing the challenges of child labour and create pathways for sustainable development. This includes casting the net wider than the usual supply chain suspects, to also include education professionals, local leaders and gatekeepers in the community.

- **International Lobby and Advocacy:** The WNCB programme contributed to have child rights embedded in the EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (EUCSDDD) as an annex. What is important, is that by including the full UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in its Annex, the Directive requires companies to take specific children's rights into account in their environmental and human rights due diligence assessments. WNCB played a crucial role in this through a plethora of influencing strategies including 'private advocacy' and building on the complementary strengths of the Alliance partners.

WNCB take away: Whilst the EU adopted this landmark legislation to combat child labour in international supply chains, we now count on the Dutch government and other EU member states to implement this into national legislation according to the agreed timelines. Today's insecurities related to EU legislation (i.e. recent debated '[Omnibus proposal](#)'), and a watered down ambition from the Dutch government, are not enough. Taking a position as pathfinder country on ending child labour, we encourage the government to aim for ambitious legislation with a stakeholder focus, creating partnerships with industry leaders to inspire laggards and work as partners in tailor made approaches with individual players in country. And most importantly, always keep in mind the need to combining working with the private sector and focus on supply chains, with an area based approach to combat all forms of child labour.



We should remain vigilant that child labour mainly occurs outside of international supply chains, i.e., in domestic agricultural supply chains, informal sector and domestic work. This means that governments need to look beyond regulating international supply chains and invest in broader solutions such as area-based approaches. Otherwise, the problem will only move into hidden forms of child labour outside of international supply chains, and therefore become even worse.

- The programme invested heavily in a strong MEAL process with the ambition to capture a convincing evidence-base for its programme interventions. While many learnings have been drawn from the MEAL data, the evaluation team shares a number of **considerations for effective and efficient programme monitoring**. Most importantly, **stronger operationalization of the KPIs** in programme countries was needed, as well as more attention to capacity needs associated with such complex MEAL expectations.

WNCB take away: In recent times, the need for investing in a strong evidence base has become ever more important. It is essential to ensure that future programmes do not overcomplicate and/or overburden implementing teams. It is therefore critical to focus first and foremost on the “must-haves” with project partners to understand what knowledge and information is essentially needed to build strong arguments in support of a programme’s strategic choices and (unintended) outcomes. Only then there is room to explore “nice-to-haves” and its associated added value, the required resources and the expected capacity.

Final reflections on evaluation methodology and process

We appreciate the flexibility and open attitude of the evaluation team in receiving our feedback throughout the evaluation process. The report provides a structured overview of achieved results. We would like to share a number of reflections on the methodology and analysis of findings, which in our understanding have influenced the relevance of the findings and recommendations following the final evaluation:

The application of contribution analysis did not deliver the expected results. Whereas the PMU was hoping for insights into the ‘how’, in particular for the two chosen hypotheses, the evaluation report focused predominantly on the ‘what’. A deeper understanding of processes leading to the reported findings is therefore minimized, limiting the opportunity to address the first and second evaluation objectives ‘to enhance understanding of programme impact’ and ‘to identify scalable good practices’. Nevertheless, the evaluation was able to confirm that the combination of the area-based approach (incl. the integration of child protection system strengthening strategies) and supply chain approach was essential in progressing our objectives in a sustainable fashion and at scale.



Concluding remarks

With the realization that we are facing a global challenge to end child labour that is only worsening, we would like to call on all stakeholders to work together and play their role within their respective area of impact and responsibility. Accelerated action is needed to meet new ambitions as defined in the [Durban Call to Action](#) (2022) and to comply with national legislation that will follow from the EU Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (and/or Omnibus law) (2024). It remains important for all stakeholders to collaborate and implement an integrated approach that combines a supply chain and an area-based approach to address the root causes of child labour and promote sustainable alternatives that protect and fulfil rights for all children.