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# Executive summary

This *Synthesis Report* draws together the results of an extensive research and analytical exercise in seven countries that was undertaken to identify "lessons learned" in the fight against child labour. The Country Studies of Brazil, Indonesia, Kenya, Philippines, The United Republic of Tanzania (hereafter Tanzania), Thailand, and Turkey contain a wealth of important, useful information on the complicated process of developing a country child labour programme under challenging conditions. Over the last three years, these Country Studies have found practical utility in their own countries, being used to design policy, prepare three-year plans, and raise awareness among the public and policy-makers. Now, through this *Synthesis*, we hope the Country Studies will have a more far-reaching impact by stimulating discussion on what is "good practice".

Lessons can be learned from the Country Studies at both a policy and programme level. At the policy level, they provide an opportunity to view the phenomenon of child labour against the backdrop of transnational economic and political currents and to study the various aspects of child labour in different areas of the world. The studies reflect the economic boom in Asia, and the economic bite of IMF Structural Adjustment Programmes in Africa. Although this was not their intention, they in fact present a sort of panorama of the first five to seven years of concerted work on child labour by the ILO and its partners. At the programme level, the Country Studies give some indication of the process by which "good practices" were evolved and implemented. Taken as a whole, they make it possible to see patterns of what can obstruct progress, or of what can be useful.

The Country Studies were carried out in 1997-98 by teams of independent researchers. The content reflects the situation at that time. For most countries, this is their first attempt to take a comprehensive look at child labour action – over time and nation-wide. Many of the child labour programmes, which included non-IPEC supported programmes, were relatively new at the time the study was carried out and concentrated simply on getting a critical mass of work underway. They were not, by and large, thinking in an evaluative way nor incorporating evaluation into their programmes. As a result, the country research teams who produced the reports found it difficult to use a consistent and evaluative methodology and relied much more on describing the child labour work to date. A particular methodological challenge for them (which is also a design strength) is that virtually all child labour approaches described in the studies were carried out in combination with other measures. Because these constituent approaches act synergistically, it is not particularly productive to try to disentangle which of them is "most effective"; on the other hand, it is useful to examine how they interact in various contexts, and any constraints or limitations that they contain. On the whole, the Country Studies have produced a "short list" of approaches, extracted from a wide range of methods and processes that have been tried, which the researchers feel are promising as "good practices". This represents quite an achievement.

What is now needed is for child labour practitioners and activists to take these promising approaches and test them over a period of time and under a variety of conditions. We need to determine their cost-effectiveness, the order in which they should take place, and

even more importantly, how they should be undertaken – whether they stand alone or should be strategically deployed as part of a comprehensive, time-defined plan. At the same time, all of us who are working in the child labour field must constantly think in terms of impact. All child labour action needs to be designed so that its effects – especially on the children – can be closely monitored over the period that the work is underway, and then assessed later on as to its long-term sustainability, scope, and ultimate impact. It is perhaps understandable that these first attempts at comprehensive Country Studies have proved more descriptive than evaluative. The challenge is for the future to have the design, the indicators, and have done the necessary assessments to be able to truly say, “these are our good practices”.