

Practical information about the engagement of FSASH/SPASH on Child labour prevention and elimination

Child Labour prevention and elimination is one of the most important issues of the program of both Albanian education trade unions, FSASH and SPASH.

They started dealing with this important problem, by 2000-2001, after 8-9 years of their existence, and can be considered as a second phase of their development, after the consolidation of their structures and after a period of dealing only with members' protection.

Having the information about the objectives and the activities organised by Education International and the Former ICFTU, actual ITUC, knowing the situation of pupils dropping out of school and child labour in Albania, as well as the need of engaging teachers to alleviate the situation, we thought it is our obligation to start working on this issue.

Our work passed through the following steps:

First step: we discussed the problem in our leading bodies in national level and districts level and decided to start working on this issue. FSASH organised a one-day extraordinary congress to discuss the new phase of its activities and its obligations related to the modernisation of education system, including child labour prevention and elimination. Both education trade unions elaborated a working plan, identifying the duties and responsibilities of the leaders and other representatives, especially in district level.

Second step: In collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Science, ILO-IPEC and some NGO-s, we identified the situation of child labour and dropping out of school in districts level. Based on those data, we selected 4 districts (Tirana, (Bathore area), Fieri, Shkodra and Elbasani), where to be focused, because it was impossible to deal with all districts in national level.

Third step: In collaboration with local educational directorates in each of those 4 districts, together with our representatives there, we gathered data and identified the most problematic schools, selecting 4-5 among them, in order to work directly with pupils who had dropped out of school or were at risk of dropping out.

Fourth step: We organised a meeting with ILO-IPEC representatives in Tirana and asked for their collaboration, especially regarding some training activities. They expressed their interest and we organised 5 seminars. It was 4 July 2001 when we organised the first seminar in national level, where participated some 15 districts level trade union leaders and after that, in 2-3 months time, we organised one seminar in each of the selected districts, where participated representatives from all the four selected schools.

The topics of the seminars were concrete matters related to child labour issue, as international standards and Albanian legislation on child labour, real situation in district

and selected schools level, the methods to be used in our actions against child labour and collaboration with other stakeholders dealing with the issue.

Participants in these seminars were the cores of the working groups, those who took the responsibility to organise their colleagues in the respective schools, those who gave the best examples in dealing individually with pupils, not only in the classroom and school environments, but also outside the school, even in their families.

Dealing with organising matters, which consisted of:

- Setting up one Working group in District level, composed of 8 members, local education trade union leaders, representatives from the selected schools and from local education directorate, as well as from other NGO-s dealing with the issue.
- Setting up almost similar working groups in each of the selected schools, composed of school level trade union leaders, teachers, representatives from the school administration, parents and pupils themselves.
- Preparing special questionnaires on child labour issue, aiming to engage as many teachers as possible who will deal with 4-5 pupils that had dropped out or were at risk to drop out of school.
- Identifying teachers who will be engaged and organising a consultative meeting with all of them, discussing the problem, distributing the questionnaires, determining the terms and working methods and so on.

The most important moment is the organisation by the respective teachers of monitoring system and concrete work with identified and selected pupils.

We have used different methods, as:

- Organising public discussions with all teachers engaged and pupils selected, aiming to understand which are the real individual causes of dropping out of school and child labour, what are the needs of each pupil and how can they be met and so on.
- Organising individual work by teachers with working children or those who are at risk to drop out of school, also engaging working group members, pupils' classmates, their parents and so on. This is an effective work, which, of course, needs devotion from the teachers and understanding from the parents and pupils themselves.
- Organising special cultural and sportive activities with participation of all the engaged teachers and selected pupils, aiming to attract and integrate them at school.
- Collaboration with school administrations, as well as local government authorities, especially when the economic situation of the pupils determines dropping out of school and child labour, trying to assist the respective families, through providing any job for any member of the family, providing free of charge text books or food, when there are extreme poverty cases.
- Making analyzes in working groups meetings, round tables, conferences and so on, identifying good practices, problems to be solved, obstacles to be overpassed and so on.
- Using some important publications like: ILO ACTRAV Manual "Trade Unions and Child Labour", SCREAM Modules, Manual on Non-Formal Education and

making propaganda about the work of teachers, good examples from pupils, positive response from local government authorities and school administrations, and so on, through publications, radio and TV programs, newspapers, magazines etc.

Our experience has shown once more that it is very important to avoid organising only seminars, meetings, talking in general. It is needed concrete work. Dealing with individual pupils or child labourers, even with one, two or three of them, is better than only organising seminars or talking about the problem without end.

This is exactly what I have written in the report from my tour in CA:

“..... starting at least with some small activities, being focused in any special area, working with 2-3 pilot schools, mobilising some 25-30 teachers, dealing with some 130-150 pupils (or even less) at risk of dropping out of school or children who have already dropped out and work”

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