



Combatting child labor in Costa Rica

IMPAQ International is working with the Ministry of Labor of Costa Rica to evaluate a national child labor reduction program. This ILAB-funded evaluation will assess to what extent the program is able to reduce child labor while increasing school enrollment.

Despite steady economic growth and efforts by the government to combat child labor, children and adolescents continue to be engaged in child labor in Costa Rica. Based on a 2011 survey, more than 47,000 children and adolescents (or 4.6%) of 5 to 17 years-olds are engaged in child labor across the country¹. Child labor is predominant in agriculture and commerce.²



Child working with chemicals.

The US Department of Labor Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB) selected IMPAQ to evaluate the Working Children and Adolescents (Niños, Niñas y Adolescentes Trabajadores - NNAT) program. The NNAT program is an intervention led by the Ministry of Labor of Costa Rica (MTSS) to combat child and adolescent labor by identifying children and youth who are currently working and providing them a conditional cash transfer (scholarship) that requires the students to attend and remain in school.

This evaluation is part of a cross-country series of ILAB evaluations that IMPAQ is conducting in Malawi, India, Ecuador, and Rwanda.

The Evaluation Method: At a Glance

- ▶ To detect the impact of the child labor reduction program, IMPAQ is using a randomized control trial (RCT), the gold standard of program evaluation.
- ▶ This method provides rigorous evidence as to whether the program reduces the incidence of child labor, as measured by the work status of children and number of hours worked.
- ▶ To detect the program effect, IMPAQ randomly assigned 275 participants into a treatment group (which receives the child labor reduction program) and 275 participants into a control group (not receiving the intervention).
- ▶ The randomization ensures that members of the treatment and control groups average the same child labor, schooling, and socio-economic characteristics at the beginning of the program.
- ▶ After the intervention, any detected differences in child labor incidents between the treatment and the control group can then be

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¹ MTSS/IPEC. (2011). "Magnitud y características del trabajo infantil y adolescente en Costa Rica - Informe 2011." Geneva: International Labour Organisation. Retrieved August 24, 2015 from <http://www.ilo.org/ipecinfor/product/viewProduct.do?productId=22215>.

² U.S. Department of State. (2014). *Country reports on human rights practices for 2014: Costa Rica*. Washington, D.C.