



The Sugar Association of El Salvador Case Study

UL provides training, education, and monitoring services to The Sugar Association of El Salvador (AAES) to assess and track the presence of child labor in sugar fields in El Salvador.

The Challenge

El Salvador's sugar industry is one of the most important in the country, greatly contributing to the country's gross domestic product and creating around 50,000 direct and 190,000 indirect jobs. The Sugar Association of El Salvador (AAES), composed of all the sugar mills that operate in the country, has continuously worked toward the elimination of child labor in sugarcane harvest. Child labor prevention programs are developed together with FUNDAZUCAR, a non-profit organization created by the industry to improve the standards of living of those working in sugarcane production, which include education, awareness raising, government partnerships, among other programs. Despite these efforts, in 2004, the nonprofit organization Human Rights Watch criticized El Salvador for employing children during its sugarcane harvest. In response to the accusations, the AAES coordinated with cane growers, government agencies, domestic and international buyers, and the International Labor Organization (ILO) to complement previous efforts and developed a strategic long-term plan to reduce and eradicate child labor.

As a result, from 2002 to 2011, the number of children working in sugarcane fields had decreased by 89%. To ensure the efficacy of its efforts, the AAES wished to continuously monitor sugar plantations during the harvest season and collect data on the presence of child labor.

UL's Work

UL's Responsible Sourcing group began its work with the AAES in 2005, providing training, education, and monitoring services to build the Association's capacity to assess and track the presence of child labor in sugar fields.

Over the last three harvest seasons, which typically last from November to April, UL has also conducted daily visits to 10% of all plantations in the country to track the presence of children in the fields. In 2010-2011, UL visited 274 sugarcane fields and is set to visit over 280 sites during the current harvest. UL provides weekly data reports to the AAES and analyzes the indicators collected at the end of the sugarcane harvest to measure progress. UL has recorded a decreasing number of children in the fields. During the 2010-2011 harvest, the average number of children per monitoring visit was 1.4, this number decreased to 0.7 in the following harvest, and the current harvest shows an even lower number of 0.5 children per visit. These and other results are presented at both a public stakeholder gathering and during an internal meeting with the Association's Board of Directors.





UL supports AAES by providing training, education, and monitoring services to build the Association's capacity to assess and track the presence of child labor in sugar fields.

Expected Impacts

Through the continuous monitoring of sugar plantations, UL's Responsible Sourcing group provides robust data that allows the AAES to track the prevalence of child labor in sugarcane plantations. With the results from each harvest season, the AAES and its members can develop better education and awareness programs to achieve their goal of eliminating child labor in sugar cane harvesting. The indicators collected also help communicate AAES' efforts to external stakeholders and measure the industry's progress against national statistics.

UL hopes that its work with AAES can contribute to the reduction and eventual elimination of child labor in El Salvadorian sugarcane production.

UL is a leading global provider of responsible sourcing auditing and advisory services, which include supply chain monitoring, research and program development, and training. UL's Responsible Sourcing team has the global footprint to provide services in over 140 countries.

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