

Empowering Local Women and Preventing Child Labor in the Garment Sector

ATLAS SNAPSHOT

Winrock International's Attaining Lasting Change for Better Enforcement of Labor and Criminal Law to Address Child Labor, Forced Labor and Human Trafficking (ATLAS) project worked with governments in Thailand, Liberia, Paraguay, and Argentina to improve their ability to address child labor, forced labor, and human trafficking through strengthened laws, regulations, and policies; improved enforcement of existing laws; and increased coordination between actors.

Winrock's partner Desarrollo y Autogestión (DyA) led implementation of ATLAS in Argentina, where the project successfully strengthened coordination to address child labor, forced labor, and human trafficking in Buenos Aires province at the local level.

One such locality is the 17 de Noviembre neighborhood in Lomas de Zamora. Located just blocks from the largest informal market in Latin America, the neighborhood is a hub for the manufacturing of clothing and other sewn goods through its network of small, informal workshops populated primarily by immigrant women from Bolivia and Peru.

While these workshops provide women and their families a modest living, the high degree of informality and poor working conditions leave them in precarious situations with multiple families often living and working in the same workshop, prone to health issues, economic insecurity, and child labor. Some workshops may also be sites of forced labor or human trafficking. However, municipal and provincial agencies have little official presence in these areas and lack insight into dynamics within the neighborhood.

The ATLAS project aimed to remedy this by facilitating coordination between actors at the local level based upon needs, gaps, and priorities identified by local residents. It did so through a process called social cartography – a participatory community mapping process in which local stakeholders help to map and understand the geographic, social, economic and cultural space.

DyA – in coordination with the Provincial Commission for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor (COPRETI), the provincial Victims Rescue Program, and the municipality of Lomas de Zamora – held four community mapping

workshops with local residents. Based upon the results of this process, DyA, COPRETI, and the municipality developed an Action Plan for the 17 de Noviembre neighborhood with three key lines of action: 1) Improved labor conditions/productive capacities in the garment sector; 2) Improved child care networks to prevent child labor; and 3) Awareness-raising on child labor.



To support this plan, ATLAS worked with COPRETI and the municipality to provide training to local women in decent work and productive processes and launched a local awareness-raising campaign on child trafficking and child labor. Meanwhile, government agencies provided material support and training for child care centers.

As a result of this collaboration and support, on December 16, 2022, local women's groups launched a new, locally produced children's clothing line free of child labor and forced labor called KUBI. Operating under the slogan "Tejemos una infancia libre de trabajo infantil," or "Weaving a childhood free of child labor," KUBI will sell clothing and toys for children from ages 2-12, produced in workshops with safe conditions and free of child labor or forced labor.

The creation of this brand allows women to improve their economic situation by selling their products, informs consumers that materials produced are free of child labor and/or forced labor, and encourages local communities to maintain workshops free of child labor. It also shows what is possible when government agencies and communities work together to implement activities that reflect local realities and priorities.

COPRETI and the municipality of Lomas de Zamora have committed to continue to implement the Plan of Action, and both have dedicated staff to maintaining this work after the end of ATLAS. COPRETI has dedicated a total of 5 million pesos (about \$28,000) for these efforts, which will ensure sustainability beyond the end of ATLAS.