Leveraging Data to Build an Efficient Labor Market in the Northern-Central American Countries Project

Grantee: The American Institutes of Research (AIR)

Final Evaluation Summary | June 2022

MAIN OUTCOMES

★★☆☆
ACHIEVEMENT

★★☆☆
SUSTAINABILITY

★★★★
ACHIEVEMENT

★☆☆☆
SUSTAINABILITY

OUTCOME 1: Governments publish reliable, comprehensive, and current labor market information in user-friendly formats for the general public, and professional audiences

OUTCOME 2: Educational and workforce development programs, employers, service providers, practitioners, and policy makers increase their skill and knowledge on LMI use.

OVERALL GOOD PROJECT PRACTICES

Country-level project steering committees promote institutional communication and collaboration.

Building local capacity with expert technical assistance increases government and private sector's buy in.

Building project interventions through existing agencies, processes, and priorities fosters sustainability.

Adjusting training schedules and recording sessions to accommodate work responsibilities ensures maximum attendance, access, and participation.

Involving credible universities motivates participants to engage in accredited certificate courses.

Close coordination with business associations to implement establishment surveys increases response rates.

💡 LESSONS LEARNED

Sustainability. Interventions should engage non-political stakeholders early on to assess their willingness and ability to procure resources for LMI systems.

Sustainability. Continuous engagement of authorities and active communication about project progress promote using LMI for policymaking.

Outcomes. Indicators should capture all dimensions of outcome statements instead of only focusing on project outputs.

LMI Quality and Use. LMI initiatives should have a two-pronged approach: Bolstering the use of LMI among decision makers and increasing LMI quality, standardization of data collection practices, and digitization.

Relevance. Interventions should ask participants about employees' needs and skills to match training content to learner profiles.

Leadership. In countries with small labor markets, the Project Director role of LMI interventions requires a flexible team approach to distribute responsibilities instead of centralizing them in only one leader.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For USDoL, Other U.S. Government Donors, & Grantees

Consider a **developmental approach** on progress, achievements, and learning using milestones and indicators as criteria to move through project phases.

Significant **project changes** must be reflected in project modifications and project documents (e.g., project monitoring and evaluation system, personnel changes, and budgets). Any changes to government policy priorities that affect the project's assessment must be acknowledged in its theory of change, logic model, and results framework.

Conduct **individual and institutional training diagnostics** to ensure capacity building matches job responsibilities and participants' experience and skill level.

Assess how participating individuals and institutions **apply new knowledge and skills** at work.

Select and implement **outcome indicators** that capture the project's outcome statements.

Develop **strategies to create and sustain effective linkages** through collaboration and coordination between and among key government institutions for LMI advancement and sustainability in each country.

For USDoL, USAID*, & Other Cooperation Agencies

Consider developing and funding **LMI exchange projects**; only a few organizations invest in this type of initiative.

For Grantees

Offer **recorded virtual training and materials** through electronic platforms, when appropriate.

PROJECT DETAILS

AWARDEE: American Institutes for Research (AIR), formerly IMPAQ International, LLC

AWARD: A $4.3-million USD cooperative agreement from the US Department of Labor's (USDoL) Bureau of International Labor Affairs' (ILAB) Office of Trade and Labor Affairs (OTLA).

PERFORMANCE EVALUATION: This material was prepared for the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) by NORC at the University of Chicago under Contract Number 47QRAA20D0045. The views expressed are those of the authors and should not be attributed to DOL, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement of same by the U.S. Government.

PROJECT CYCLE: 03/15/17 – 04/30/22

PURPOSE: To improve the labor market efficiency and performance in the northern Central American countries (El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras).

FIELDWORK: NORC conducted an external evaluation in all three countries (January - March 2022). NORC remotely administered 66 key-informant interviews in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and the U.S.; and an online survey (*n*=125). Respondents included project staff, key project partners, trainees, and representatives of national statistical institutes, labor ministries, academic institutions, and private sector organizations.

https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/leveraging-data-build-efficient-labor-market-central-america

*USDoL: U.S. Department of Labor; USAID: U.S. Agency for International Development.

"The project expert's recommendations were very useful. We have made about 85 percent of the changes he recommended. The other ones will take more time and budget resources, but we also plan to implement them too in the future."
Statistical Agency Representative.

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OUTCOME 2: Educational and workforce development programs, employers, service providers, practitioners, and policy makers increase their skill and knowledge on LMI use.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The project provided training and technical assistance to DIGESTYC* to implement electronic data collection methodologies, including Survey Solutions.

Stakeholder Engagement: The project worked with the Ministry of Information and DIGESTYC to update the CNOES and the CLAESS.

LMI Quality: DIGESTYC implemented many of the project's recommendations to improve survey sampling methods.

Establishment surveys : 233 tourism in 2020 and 133 food-and-beverage-manufacturing establishments in 2021.

Program Users (n=177): 63% female due to the staffing structures in participant institutions.

Analysts & technical staff	69%
Researchers & academic staff	15%
Officers & managers	5%
Admin. staff & assistants	5%
Directors (government)	3%
Students	3%

CHALLENGES

Threats to data quality: EHPM uses an outdated sample frame from 2007, causing some groups to be over or underrepresented.

Data collection insecurity: Several neighborhoods are dangerous for the use of mobile devices.

Data Publication: DIGESTYC publishes annual EHPM results with wide variation in data publication dates. A subset of EHPM data is public, the complete household survey dataset is not.

Limited LMI Use: While the recently developed LMI system, SIMEL has advantages and world class caliber, it can only be as effective as the information input, which is still unreliable and subject to validity threats.

Uncertain Sustainability: Difficult to sustain establishment surveys due to project partner's limited availability of resources.

STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTIONS

55% thought government increased its capacity to publish reliable LMI data in a user-friendly format.

47 to 78% thought government staff had moderate to strong improvement in their knowledge about LMI.

Only 47% thought the project's effort to improve electronic data collection systems was effective.

*DIGESTYC: General Directorate of Statistics and Census
CNOES: National Classification of Occupations of El Salvador
CLAESS: Classifier of Economic Activities of El Salvador
EHPM: Permanent Multiple Purpose Household Survey

GUATEMALA

"I know the importance of using electronic data collection systems. They increase effectiveness and efficiency. I am a big believer in that. But we do not have funds to buy the data collection devices and software. We barely have enough money to conduct a survey." Statistical Agency Representative

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ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Stakeholder Engagement: OCSE* served as the LMI steering committee and strengthened its role as a space for LMI institutions to share information and collaborate on updating the occupational and industrial classification systems.

Survey response: 682 tourism and 106 food-and-beverage-manufacturing establishments participated in both project surveys in 2019 and 2021.

Sustainability (institutional support): The project cultivated ownership of most key project partners except for INE and URL, where institutional willingness was low.

Sustainability (technical assistance): INGUAT intends to repeat the survey for at least two more years; however, no academic partners or other business associations have the financial resources to continue.

Program Users (*n*=301): 56% males/44% females.

Analysts & technical staff	64%
Researchers & academic staff	11%
Unspecified	9%
Assistants	6%
Officers & managers	5%
Directors (government)	4%
Students	1%

LMI Quality: INE declined the project's assistance and has a plan to digitalize the household survey by 2025. INE's sample frame is outdated; it uses the 2002 Census results because the 2018 Census is yet to be adopted.

CHALLENGES

High stakeholder turnover: The election in 2019 resulted in a new administration and a new Minister of Labor and new vice ministers in 2020 and 2021. The Labor Market Observatory disappeared in 2021. INE's director changed in 2020. The project's liaison at UVG left in 2019.

Electronic data collection: Low likelihood of increasing and sustaining its use due to INE's non-prioritization and lack of resources.

Underserved populations: Only 23% of respondent stakeholders think the project helped underserved populations improve their skills to get a decent job.

STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTIONS

👎 Only 42% thought the government increased its capacity to publish reliable LMI data in a user-friendly format.

⬆ 42 to 77% considered government staff had moderate to strong improvement in their knowledge about LMI.

👎 Only 39% thought the project's effort to improve electronic data collection systems was effective.

OCSE: National Employment Statistics Coordination Office
INGUAT: Guatemalan Institute of Tourism
INE: National Statistics Institute - Guatemala
UVG: Universidad del Valle Guatemala

"I don't think the project got to the point that the data were used to develop or adjust employment programs. The certificate programs covered some areas to help participants understand how to use information, but did they actually use it? I don't think so." Private Sector Representative

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ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The project provided training and technical assistance to the statistical institutions in El Salvador and Honduras to implement electronic data collection methodologies, specifically the use of Survey Solutions.

Stakeholder Engagement: The project facilitated interinstitutional collaboration for INE to implement many of the recommendations to improve survey sampling methods and for reactivating and working with the COTICNOH to effectively update and publish the CNOH 08 and the CIIU4 HN.

Survey response: 437 tourism and 100 food-and-beverage-manufacturing establishments participated in the pilot establishment surveys in 2019 and 2022, respectively.

Program Users (*n*=269): 59% females due to the staffing structures in participant institutions.

Analysts & technical staff	47%
Researchers & academic staff	15%
Admin. staff & assistants	12%
Students	11%
Not specified	7%
Officers & managers	6%
Directors (government)	2%

CHALLENGES

Limited Funding Constrains Sustainability: The project's technical support on CSPro and training on Survey Solutions did not lead to the intended outcome of INE implementing new electronic data collection methodologies.

Threats to data quality: INE has neither the funds nor the capacity to increase the annual EHPM's sample size, which should increase to 30,000 from the current sample of 7,200 and expand to cover all 18 departments from the 16 currently covered.

Data Publication: INE does not make complete household survey datasets available to the public.

Political turnover: Key stakeholder staffing remained relatively constant over the project cycle, but the January 2022 elections have brought turnover of key project counterpart staff at both leadership and technical levels.

STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTIONS

Only 47% thought the government increased its capacity to publish reliable LMI data in a user-friendly format.

76 to 87% considered government staff had moderate to strong improvement in their knowledge about LMI.

82% thought the project's effort to improve electronic data collection systems was effective.

INE:	National Statistics Institute – Honduras
COTICNOH:	Interinstitutional Technical Committee of Classifiers of Honduras
CNOH 08:	National Occupational Classifier of Honduras
CIIU4 HN:	National Economic Activities Classifier
EHPM:	Multiple Purpose Household Survey