

# **FINAL REPORT**

**Independent Midterm Evaluation of  
Primero Aprendo Program in Central America and  
Dominican Republic**

**CARE  
DOL Cooperative Agreement Number: E-9-K-4-0045**

**Prepared by:**

**Mauricio García-Moreno  
Jeffrey Tines**

**Evaluation under BPA No. DOLQ059622437**



**MACRO INTERNATIONAL INC.  
11785 Beltsville Drive  
Calverton, MD 20705**

**January 2007**



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ACRONYMS .....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>1. BACKGROUND AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3. METHODOLOGY, STRENGTHS, AND LIMITATIONS OF THE EVALUATION.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>4. FINDINGS OF THE EVALUATION .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>4.1 ANALYSIS OF THE DESIGN .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>4.2 ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS.....</b>	<b>8</b>
4.2.1 <i>Result 1</i> .....	8
4.2.2 <i>Result 2</i> .....	10
4.2.3 <i>Result 3</i> .....	16
4.2.4 <i>Result 4</i> .....	18
4.2.5 <i>Monitoring</i> .....	20
<b>4.3 COORDINATION AND PARTNERSHIPS .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>4.4 MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>4.5 SUSTAINABILITY .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>5. LESSONS LEARNED .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>6. CONCLUSIONS .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>7. RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>35</b>

**ANNEX:  
TERMS OF REFERENCE**

## **ACRONYMS**

CECC	Coordinación Educativa y Cultural Centroamericana
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
DOL	U.S. Department of Labor
EI	Child Labor Education Initiative
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
ILO	International Labor Organization
IPEC	International Program for Eradication of Child Labor
MSI	Management Systems International
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
PREAL	Programa de Promoción de la Reforma Educativa en América Latina y el Caribe
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report presents the evaluation results of the Primero Aprendo Project, which is a consortium of institutions made up of CARE, Catholic Relief Services, and DevTech that has been operating since August 2004 in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and the Dominican Republic. The target populations originally consisted of 2,080 children in 35 primarily rural communities and 86 principal institutions at the local, national, and regional levels.<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of the project is to introduce the right to education for child laborers into a policy framework for key players at the regional, national, and local levels. The objectives of the project are to achieve the following outcomes: 1) increase the awareness of key players, 2) test and validate the education practices to provide schooling and retain children that work, 3) create conditions to sustain a dialogue regarding education and child labor among countries in the region, and 4) develop an agenda of policy options at both the regional and national levels.

The completed evaluation indicates that sensitizing activities have had a major effect in community settings and have increased awareness among parents and teachers with respect to the relationship between poverty, education, and child labor. The results of the sensitization efforts within the municipal environment vary considerably. In some cases, the development of intra-institutional networks supporting the eradication of child labor is observed, and in other cases, no activities of this type are observed.

The completed analysis regarding the project-related educational practices indicates that they have been developed successfully. The enrollment and retention rates have increased in the schools, and consequently the number of hours that children work has been reduced. However, the capacity of teachers and facilitators has not been sufficiently increased, which could affect sustainability.

The validation activities are on the right path. To date, 10 practices have been validated and the remaining will be completed by July 2007. The instruments are considered to be the appropriate tools to assess whether a practice has the potential to i) reduce the number of hours that a child/adolescent works, and ii) retain the child in the educational setting during the pilot project. However, there are various aspects in the application of the pilot projects that the validation does not collect. These features could carry elements important to the design of an educational policy agenda.

With regards to the creation of a sustained dialogue concerning education and child labor, it is predicted that the actions completed are not sufficient to achieve the desired outcome. This objective also seems to exceed the capabilities or resources of the project and the activities directed toward outcome number three could very well be directed toward achieving outcome number four.

---

<sup>1</sup> The actual number increased to 2,780 a few weeks after this evaluation finished its field work. The increment responded to a budget increase.

Although project results indicate that activities from objective number four are just beginning, coordination of projects across the region is weak as observed by the limited degree of technical support has been provided to national coordinators as well as the lack of coordination between Primero Aprendo and the International Labor Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund.

The current relationships that have been established with government organizations are weak, and, across the region, there has been little coordination with representatives from the national government. The project has not designed national strategies that guide the coordination of institutional activities and political lobbying at the national level. Changes in governing power and within government ministries have increased the burden on the project. In particular, Guatemala has made significantly less progress in this area, and therefore, deserves immediate attention.

The effectiveness of regional coordination efforts of the project has been insufficient because of three factors: 1) the difficulties in communication between the project director and his collaborators, 2) the insufficient support from the education specialist to the national and local teams, and 3) the inability of the regional coordination team (Project Director, Education Specialist, and Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist) to devise a regional management approach that would accommodate the physical distance that separates them. These factors have prevented the team from providing appropriate follow-up to the project activities and from solving the various issues that have come up as a result of the project's complexity.

The sustainability of the project depends on the degree to which validated education practices can be successfully integrated into the national educational system. Needless to say, this is a difficult and complex task because of the lack of experience that the majority of the countries in the region have had in the area of improving the quality of education. The only possibility that the project has to successfully achieve this result will depend upon the level of commitment by various key regional and national players who could promote the necessary changes in the education systems. However, to date the project has not set firm goals in this area, and the current strategies may have to be modified for the desired outcomes to be achieved.

# 1. BACKGROUND AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

A consortium of CARE, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), and DevTech have been implementing the regional project *Primero Aprendo* since August 2004 in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and the Dominican Republic. The goal, purpose, and results of the project are as follows:

Goal	Increased number of child laborers enrolled and retained in and completing educational programs.
Purpose	The right to education of child laborers translated into policies among key regional, national, and local actors.
Result	
1	General awareness is raised among key regional, national, and local actors regarding the relationship between poverty, education, and child labor.
2	Best practices are effectively pilot tested and validated in selected locations of participating “laboratory countries”—Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua.
3	Conditions are created for sustained dialogue and knowledge sharing among project countries.
4	A relevant policy options agenda is promoted among key institutional actors in selected participating countries and regionally.

The target population of the project was originally 2,080 children who belong to 35 primarily rural communities in Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua and 86 key institutions at local, national, and regional levels in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and the Dominican Republic. The children who participate in the project work primarily in activities related to agriculture.<sup>2</sup>

The project implements pilot projects of educational interventions (Result 2) primarily in Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua because of the higher incidence of child and adolescent workers and the relative scarcity of programs that combat child labor in these countries. In El Salvador and the Dominican Republic, only activities related to Results 1, 3, and 4 are implemented. In Costa Rica, pilot projects are also carried out. However, these activities target a small population (185 children).

The project design calls for the completion of Results 1 and 2 in the first two years of implementation and Results 3 and 4 in the last two years. Because of these guidelines, the evaluation focused considerable attention on the first two results.

---

<sup>2</sup> The actual number increased to 2,780 a few weeks after this evaluation finished its field work. The increment responded to a budget increase.



## **2. OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION**

The objectives of the evaluation are as follows:

- Help CARE, CRS, and DevTech identify areas in which the project has performed satisfactorily as well as areas in which improvements could be made.
- Assist the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) in identifying and learning from best practices in the conceptualization, design, and implementation of child labor projects.
- Evaluate the degree to which the objectives of the project have been met.

To achieve these objectives, the following aspects of the project were analyzed:

- Design and implementation of the project
- Coordination and partnerships
- Management
- Sustainability and impact

The Terms of Reference (TOR) for this assignment may be found in the Annex.



### 3. METHODOLOGY, STRENGTHS, AND LIMITATIONS OF THE EVALUATION

Given certain budgetary and programmatic restrictions, the field work of this midterm evaluation took place in only four countries where the project is implementing educational interventions: Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. El Salvador and the Dominican Republic were not visited. However, their national coordinators were interviewed. As a result, the material that was used in this analysis primarily came from the four countries visited and express, on the whole, what the evaluators found in them. The evaluation team was composed of two evaluators: one visited Guatemala and Costa Rica and the other visited Honduras and Nicaragua.

In each of the countries, a sample of the communities in which pilot projects were being carried out was visited. The following table presents the communities and educational interventions visited in each country.

**Communities Visited During the Evaluation**

Country	Department or Province	Communities	Educational Interventions
Costa Rica	Puntarenas Guanacaste Puntarenas	Barranca La Cruz Barranca	Learning from Solidarity Intercultural Open Classroom New Opportunities
Guatemala	Alta Verapaz  Quiche	Oxcoco Rabinal Cruz Chich Chichicastenango	Remedial Education Vocational Training EDUBANCOMUN Remedial Education
Honduras	Tegucigalpa El Paraíso	Villa Cristina San Marcos Mata de Plátano	Open Classroom Open Classroom—Educatodos
Nicaragua	Jinotega  Madriz	Dantalí Monterrey El Naranjo Nuevo Guayabo	Eradication of Child Labor First I Learn Remedial Education Together We Build a New Education

Furthermore, in Honduras a focus group with the facilitators and teachers of the Formacion Vocacional practices, Tutor Child, and Alfasic was carried out, and in Nicaragua, interviews of the Vicatario of Bluefields promoters that work in Waslala, Wapi, Hierba Buena, and La Ceiba were conducted.

The analysis that is presented in this report is not separated by country because of the belief that the evaluation should respond to the regional nature of the project and, therefore, present a regional, not national, analysis. Even though each country possesses its own specific characteristics, these were not taken into account in the design of the project but rather a general focus was adopted and used to develop the logical framework. Likewise, the activities

implemented in each country should not be looked at individually but rather how they contribute to, or are part of, a larger regional context. Also, the strategies, instruments, and tools that are used by the project were generated regionally and, therefore, must be analyzed in this same geographic context.

The following techniques were used to collect the information:

### **Document Review**

The following documents were reviewed: Project Document, Project Procurement Cooperative Agreement, Solicitation of Grant Applications, Management Procedures and Guidelines, Progress Reports, Technical and Financial Reports, Project Management Plan, Work plans, and project files.

### **Interviews**

Interviews were held with the following persons:

- Directors of CARE and CRS
- Project Director, Educational Specialist, and Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist
- Project National Coordinators
- Project Field Staff
- Representatives from governmental and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)
- Representatives from the International Labor Organization (ILO) International Program for Eradication of Child Labor (IPEC) in the countries visited
- Beneficiaries of the project—parents, students, and teachers
- External team conducting the validation of the educational interventions

### **Field Observations and Focus Groups**

In each of the communities, focus groups were held with groups of students, parents, and teachers.

### **Feedback**

Once the data collection process was completed in each country, the evaluator presented preliminary findings for consideration to the stakeholders in each of the four countries visited: Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. Upon completion of the field visits, the preliminary findings were shared in Nicaragua with the regional team as well as the national coordinators.

## **4. FINDINGS OF THE EVALUATION**

### **4.1 Analysis of the Design**

The original design of the project changed considerably during the first 8 months of the project as a result of the technical assistance provided by Juarez & Associates and Management Systems International (MSI). The final version of the project represents an innovative initiative, which is consistent with a regional intervention that strives to change educational public policy through the provision of information and awareness-raising to key actors, the development of educational interventions that function effectively in the field, and stimulation of dialogue between key entities in their effort to establish a consensus as well as find answers to difficult questions. Each level of the project—local, national, and regional—adds value through its respective experience and perspective. The organizational structure of the project, in theory, allows all those involved to contribute resources, knowledge, and skills.

Despite the potential advantages of the redesign of the logical framework, the redesign took many months and generated uncertainty among the national and local teams during the first semester of the project. It also delayed the implementation of Results 1 and 2 activities. The project would have benefited from an earlier and quicker intervention by the organizations that provided technical assistance in developing the logical framework.

The logical framework of the project might have benefited by incorporating activities of Result 3 in Result 4. The inherent independent value of Result 3 is not apparent, but rather its value is derived by the contribution it makes to the potential achievement of Result 4. The indicators for Result 3 were also poorly conceived because of the lack of their apparent relationship with the stated result—the creation of conditions for a sustained dialogue.

One important weakness of the design of the project is the assumption that the educational sector in each of the participating countries, as well as regionally, has the capacity to contribute to the successful implementation of Result 4, thereby, achieving the purpose of the project.

The project strategy has attempted to integrate itself into the existing regional framework to expand coverage and contribute to improved quality in education services through the following mechanisms: 1) the establishment of a political reform agenda to educate and retain in school children who work through a common agreement with the educational authorities in the countries of the region; 2) working with regional, national, and local authorities to successfully deliver the outputs of the project, and 3) formalizing and applying educational interventions created by governmental organizations and NGOs. The *Primero Aprendo* project, through its objectives and results, also strives to address the four objectives of the DOL Child Labor Education Initiative (EI).

## 4.2 Analysis of the Results

### 4.2.1 Result 1

*General awareness regarding the relationship between poverty, education, and child labor is raised among key regional, national, and local actors.*

Initially, the project envisioned that an awareness strategy, including a comprehensive set of awareness-raising materials, would be designed, developed, and produced by a private company with extensive experience in advertising and marketing, McCann Erickson. However, for numerous reasons, this vision was never realized. McCann Erickson did produce the promotional material (e.g., posters, brochures, folders), but they did not develop the awareness strategy nor the messages adopted in the promotional materials. The regional team, which relied on the support of various external agents, was in charge of developing the conceptual framework for the strategy. The conceptual framework was composed of the following components: the context of child labor and education; communication; an awareness strategy; and its corresponding methodology of implementation and ideas for sustainability and follow-up.

The awareness strategy, outlined in the conceptual framework, represents a generic, regional perspective that has required modifications and adaptations for its successful application in diverse national and local contexts by national and local personnel. The conceptual framework also outlines the different components of the implementation strategy that are as follows: strengthening of internal project communication procedures; public awareness campaigns; distribution of materials; direct awareness activities: strategies for working with key actors through networks and alliances; and large, mass events. The awareness strategy is directed toward two levels: primary and secondary target groups. The primary target groups are international and regional organizations, national and local authorities, financial and cooperation entities, business sector, and networks and alliances. The secondary target groups are educational institutions, associations, and the media. The central themes of the awareness strategy are: 1) the right to education for all children and adolescent workers; and 2) that education is a critical requirement for the integral development of children and adolescents.

The national coordinators' primary concern vis-à-vis the awareness strategy focused on the need to modify it to the reality of the national context so that it would be more effective. As a means of addressing this concern, the national coordinators were encouraged to develop their own national awareness plans (Activity 1.1.2.1—Plan de Trabajo Anual Regional 2005-2006). The development of national awareness plans by the national coordinators has proven both difficult and beyond the capacity of most coordinators, which suggests a need for technical assistance from the regional coordinator. The regional coordinator of the project proved to be unable to develop a technical assistance system/mechanism to be accessed by the national and local coordinators to assist them in elaborating national awareness plans. The result has been the implementation of national awareness campaigns with limited effect.

McCann Erickson and the project staff produced the following promotional materials: 6,000 brochures, 3,000 folders, and 500 flipcharts; television and radio announcements; a documentary; a Web site; e-mail messages; CD-ROM; DVD-ROM; and a press kit. The

distribution, diffusion, and promotion of the awareness materials were facilitated through three principle means: the media, direct awareness activities such as meetings, and mass public events.

Resource and support materials were also developed by the project on a wide range of topics including contacting and coordinating with the different forms of media, participating in the celebration of national and international days related to children, involving key actors in key activities, creating and strengthening regional and national networks in favor of education for child workers, and developing protocols and support materials needed to facilitate working sessions with key actors. These materials were prepared to support the sensitization work of the national coordinators and the promoters. Unfortunately, these materials were not designed in a manual form and the use of them among the national teams has been limited. The use and implementation of the materials was solely dependent on the skills of the national coordinators to use them in a way that is beneficial.

Public awareness campaigns via television and radio; distribution of materials such as folders, brochures, and posters; and large mass events have been implemented in all of the countries. These targeted, focused activities have been implemented effectively by the national and local coordinators.

The other activities, such as direct awareness activities and strategies for working with key actors through networks and alliances, have proven more challenging for the local and national coordinators because of their limited experience with such activities as well as the limited technical assistance that has been provided to them on how best to implement such activities.

However, the consortium of institutions that implement the project in Nicaragua has had interesting experiences in the creation and strengthening of local institutional networks.<sup>3</sup> This is because the local initiative has fallen not only on the shoulders of the local coordinator but also the local organizations who have resources and experience in the geographical areas in which the project works. Likewise, in El Paraiso, Honduras, the project taken advantage of the resources offered by the governmental organizations and NGOs. In this situation, the implementing organization (CARE) is able to draw on personnel with previous experience in projects that have worked to combat child labor.

According to the awareness strategy, the national and local coordinators are responsible for the implementation of the awareness-raising campaigns. It was expected that they would implement the strategy, its activities, and the support material in an independent manner. However, none of the coordinators received training on how to implement the strategy or on how to use of the materials. This lack of training has limited the application of the strategies. The national teams have not had enough technical support by the regional staff responsible for this component.

As part of the awareness strategy, national and local coordinators were encouraged to solicit the participation of external agencies with experience in communication such as the United Nations

---

<sup>3</sup> In Nicaragua the project is being carried out by the following institutions based on the areas of the intervention: Cuculmecca y Caritas (Jinotega), IMPRHU (Madriz), Vicariato de Bluefields (RAAN, RAAS). The work in Managua is being performed by CARE.

Children's Fund (UNICEF) and ILO to help them in the organization and implementation of awareness activities. This has proven challenging for some of the national coordinators who have not had success in establishing agreements with such organizations. The degree of collaboration between the Primero Aprendo project and these organizations regarding the awareness component varies from country to country.

It appears as if the effect of awareness activities has been greatest at the local level. The level of awareness among parents and teachers with respect to poverty, education, and child labor has increased significantly. Comments in focus groups demonstrated that these parents and teachers have worked with these themes and have knowledge of them. Specifically, it has been observed that parents have an increased appreciation for education and that the teachers have integrated issues related to child labor into their teaching methods. Both groups have also learned that they can influence the welfare of children by adopting specific measures that support children's education.

The results of the awareness campaigns at the local (municipal) level are relatively uneven. In some instances, interinstitutional support networks have been developed in favor of the eradication of child labor and in other instances nothing has been developed (e.g., in the pilot project in Tegucigalpa). These differences seem to be the result of the diverse ability and experience of the local coordinators in this type of work.

#### 4.2.2 Result 2

*Best practices are effectively pilot tested and validated in selected locations.*

The project developed 20 interventions in four countries, applied to 2,080 children who belong to 35 different communities. The majority of the interventions are oriented directly toward providing education to children who have either permanently or temporarily left school to work. The methodologies, modalities, and content of the interventions are varied. In some cases, schools or classrooms have been created. In other situations, accelerated curricula have been implemented at either the primary or secondary school level. In still other situations, vocational education for adolescents or remedial education is available. Some interventions are implemented by the teachers in the schools, while others are implemented by promoters or facilitators. Children sometimes serve as tutors to other children. It is important to point out that the majority of interventions have been applied previously by either governmental organizations or NGOs, but not with the specific purpose of providing education to children who are working, have worked, or are at risk of working.

The following table presents the interventions that have been developed in each of the countries and the number of children and communities that are receiving services.

## Interventions Developed by the Primero Aprendo Project

Country	Name of Intervention	Number of Interventions	Number of Communities	Number of Beneficiaries
Costa Rica	Open Intercultural Classroom Learning from Solidarity New Opportunities	3	2	185
Guatemala	Community Center of Educational Support EDUCOMUN PRONIT PROREPE ALIANZA Seed	6	5	579
Honduras	Open Class ALFASIC EDUCATODOS Child Tutor Vocational Training	5	14	599
Nicaragua	Together We Build Education Spaces to Grow School Report Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor Learn First Remedial Education Room	6	14	717
Total		20	35	2,080*

\*Total number reflects the number of beneficiaries at the time of the field work.

### Local Level

At the local level, the teachers and community leaders confirm that as a result of the introduction of the educational interventions there has been a reduction in school absenteeism and drop out as well as an increase in the number of enrolled students. The activities that appear to have contributed to this positive effect are: 1) identification of and education for children who had remained outside of the educational system; 2) implementation of innovative educational interventions that have made education more attractive and have reduced the levels of absenteeism and drop out among students; 3) development of activities that have helped teachers understand why child labor is a problem and become better prepared to work with children and families involved in this problem; 4) implementation of activities with parents to increase their participation in the education of their children and the improvement of relations with teaching staff; and 5) elimination of obstacles that prevent the enrollment and participation in education of some children by purchasing school supplies and uniforms.

Statements by teachers and community leaders regarding school retention and enrollment rates are confirmed by two other sources of information: the validation studies being conducted and the statistics collected through the monitoring and evaluation process. The available validation studies confirm that the educational interventions have achieved the purpose for which they were created (to provide education and retain children who work in the school system). Likewise, the project statistics indicate that the retention rate among students is 88 percent.

At the same time, the project has successfully reduced the number of hours that children are working as a result of their participation in the educational process (in those cases of the children who previously did not attend) or contributed to an increase in school attendance (in those cases of children who attended previously).

In some communities the parents said that as a result of the project they have obtained a better understanding of why it is detrimental to the educational development of their children to force them to work and not allow them to attend school, and some parents said that, in the future, they will avoid forcing their children to miss school because of work-related activities. Likewise, many parents have developed an increased awareness in the need to enroll their children at the beginning of the school year.

Through focus groups, the evaluators observed that children are attending school with enthusiasm and, for those who have recently returned to their studies, are happy for having done so. Some children expressed an increase in self-confidence and the development of a better rapport with their teachers as a result of activities promoted by the project. Many parents noted that their children are more motivated to attend school and study as a result of the educational interventions.

In some communities, the educational interventions also contributed to an improvement between parents and teachers. The parents have obtained a better understanding and appreciation for the work that the teachers perform, and the teachers have obtained a better understanding of the family conditions and circumstances in which their students live, which contributes to a better understanding by teachers as to why some children miss school or why others may not perform optimally in their studies.

The key local actors such as teachers, parents, and school staff have also expressed satisfaction with the activities that have been implemented by the project. The key local actors, who have been interviewed or participated in focus groups, state that the project's activities contributed to the resolution of some educational problems and that the educational interventions contributed to increased school enrollment and retention. Likewise, the promoters and facilitators of the project have successfully developed good relations within the community and are appreciated for the work that they are undertaking.

In some situations, the project has complemented existing educational interventions by contributing to the school by providing textbooks and other resource materials, playground equipment, and support to the school lunch program. This support has been well received by the teachers, the students, and their parents.

The project has supported training workshops for the teachers and facilitators so that they could become better prepared to implement the targeted educational interventions. The workshop facilitators, as a rule, belong to the organizations that have designed the teaching methodologies/educational interventions and are experienced in how to implement them. However, the majority of the training workshops have been too short and the project has not been able to reinforce the initial training with in-service training or follow-up support. The

majority of the teachers interviewed said that the initial training that they received was insufficient and that they are continually confronted with problems that they do not have the capacity to resolve. They do not have access to technical resource personnel who might be able to assist them in the resolution of problems or in the answering of questions about the educational intervention. This situation has negatively affected both the performance as well as the attitude of the teacher/facilitator.

The work at the local level has been implemented with success, particularly when compared with the educational situation that existed previously. School enrollment and retention has increased, and the number of hours that a child works has been reduced. Teachers and parents are also better informed about the negative effects that work has on the education of children. However, the orientation, training, and technical support that the teachers and facilitators have received are notably deficient, and there have no attempts to remedy this situation.

The other important question is the effect of the project on the reduction of hazardous child labor. The project has defined exploitative child labor as “all work in which the child is exposed to conditions or working hours (more than 20 hours per week in the case of the Primero Aprendo project) that endanger his or her safety and health.” On the other hand, it considers as withdrawn those “children that used to work in exploitative child labor but have stopped doing so as a result of an action sponsored by DOL funds. The term also extends to those children that, as a result of the DOL project, have improved their working conditions and reduced their working hours.”

Almost all of the project beneficiaries that work do so in agriculture (61 percent) or domestic labor (25 percent). Most children work as part of family activities to produce for their own use and do not receive payment. In these cases, the danger of the work is related more to the number of hours worked than to the type of activity performed. In some communities, the children work as agricultural laborers one or two months a year, harvesting vegetables or coffee in conditions that are considered harmful (e.g., extreme physical exertion, inadequate housing, separation from their parents, and long work days).

The project has sought to reduce the participation of children in agricultural labor through raising the awareness of their parents, offering educational activities in the communities, and, in some cases, raising the awareness of the businessmen so that they do not hire minors on their plantations. During the evaluation, it was observed that these strategies are producing results, although a specific study of this matter at the end of the project should provide a categorical affirmation.

Concerning the work that the children conduct for their families, it is necessary to distinguish between children older and younger than 12 years. According to what was seen in the site visits and in the focus groups, the project probably reduced the number of children younger than 12 that work more than 20 hours, as a result of their schooling and other educational activities. Among the population older than 12, who have completed primary education, it is unlikely that the project will have the same effect (i.e., these children working less than 20 hours per week) because of the following factors:

- 1) In rural areas, agricultural and domestic activities are conducted seven days a week and, because school is in session only during the week, most children work all weekend.
- 2) Parents and children think that children older than 12 years are old enough to work. This perception is encouraged by the distribution of responsibilities within the home and in agricultural activities.
- 3) In most communities, secondary education centers do not exist for those children that have finished primary school. Secondary school is more expensive and involves more obstacles for poor families.
- 4) The educational practices that the project has developed for this age group (e.g., ALFASIC) usually do not involve them full-time in educational activities. This allows them to continue to work almost every day of the week.
- 5) The social and economic conditions of the population strengthen the participation of children younger than 12 years in productive activities, because their work helps to generate the income and goods that the family needs. In many cases, they invest the income that they get from their work in their own education, which for some means that if they stop working, they cannot study.

The instrument that the project uses to establish the quantity of hours the children work does not take into account all of the variables that contribute to this phenomenon, such as seasonal labor, the productive cycle, migration, and the differences between ordinary days and weekends. The reliable measure of these variables is not easy; on the contrary, it involves complicated technical activities. ILO has dedicated much effort to this subject and has suggested research models that have been valid, but the technical conditions for their application makes them costly and inapplicable for a project like *Primero Aprendo*, since they have been designed so that governments may use them. The project would benefit greatly if one of the applied research studies (Result 3) established in more detail and precision the effect that the project has on the reduction of working hours for children, disaggregated by age group, sex, occupational category, and level of schooling.

### **National Level**

Because the implementation of educational interventions is an activity that occurs at the local level, all national level activities related to Result 2 have focused on supporting the local-level activities through 1) awareness-raising and lobbying activities with national educational authorities to gain support for the educational activities of the project; 2) the development of partnerships and interinstitutional agreements that support the local-level initiatives; and 3) support for the management of local initiatives.

The national authorities in education (National Ministry of Education staff) have a basic understanding and appreciation of the activities that are being implemented by the project, but their level of familiarity with the specifics of the project and the various educational interventions is minimal. To date the nature of the relationship between the project and national educational authorities has been primarily in the areas of awareness-raising and lobbying. Future plans to introduce technical and political issues relevant to education and child labor will begin with the completion of the validation process of the various educational interventions. However,

the organizations that are implementing the project enjoy a prestigious reputation among the national authorities.

### **Regional Level**

The regional coordination (key project personnel) has played a critical role in guiding the following processes: selecting pilot communities and educational interventions; coordinating the process of the validation of educational interventions; exchanging experiences among project participants; and monitoring activities.

The project selected the countries and communities taking into consideration criteria such as geography (urban and rural areas) and ethnicity (indigenous population and non-indigenous), which guaranteed that the project would cover the different factors of the region. The selection of specific communities also took place in cooperation with institutions that have several years of experience working in the poorest areas of the country, which allowed for appropriate identification of communities with the highest incidence of child labor.

The process of validation was tasked to a consulting firm based in Guatemala (Gish, Paz & Associates). The objective of the validation process is to determine if the educational interventions reach the goal of the project, which is to increase the number of at-risk and/or working children who enroll, remain in, and complete the educational programs. The validation process will provide, using evaluation criteria of outside observers, the validity of each one of the interventions.

The validation methodology looks at different components of the pedagogical methodology and the effect that it has on the criteria of retention in school and the reduction in the numbers of hours worked. The validation methodology seems to be working across ethnic groups, age, and other factors that appear across the different practices. A “good practice” or educational intervention is classified as valid if it successfully meets the following two criteria: 1) reduces the number of hours that a child/adolescent works; and 2) retains the child in the educational setting/school during the pilot project. The validation practice also looks at what components of an educational methodology can be replicated. Gish and Paz have found that some components of a methodology are valid, while other components are not valid. If a methodology has one component that is not valid, then the entire practice/methodology is not valid or validated.

The validation process does not define “withdrawn” or “prevention,” it only states whether a practice contributes to retaining children in school and reducing the numbers of hours they work (it specifies neither how many hours nor what children). The methodology observes an array of institutional and pedagogical variables, and it analyzes their effectiveness to retain children in school and reduce the time they work. The validation process does not assert whether a specific practice has eradicated child labor or not, since it is not an evaluation method. The validation team was emphatic about the fact that the objective of the validation process was not to see if the practices have eliminated child labor, but rather observe whether children are retained in school and whether they have reduced the number of hours that work as a result of receiving quality educational services provided by the practices.

Up to this point, 10 practices have been validated and it is expected that the remaining ones will be ready before July 2007. Because of the nature of the validations, the focus of the analysis is the pedagogical aspects. However, they also refer to the social and institutional context of the practices. Certain social and institutional elements implemented by the project merit an analysis with a comparative approach as these elements could be important for the design of the educational policies for the region. The project considers the practices as elements or tools isolated from one another, however, everything seems to indicate that certain social and institutional elements common to all practices have not been considered as factors with great potential for the monitoring of the education and would warrant being analyzed and being included in an agenda of educational politics.

The project has decided to replicate the validated practices starting in 2007. Only the interventions deemed as “good practices” by the process of validation will be replicated, and the locations will be different from the ones where the pilot projects were carried out. The communities in which the good practices will be replicated have not been selected. It is possible that the criteria for selection would be the same that was used to select the places where the project pilots were carried out.

At the same time, the project has organized meetings and field trips of different kinds between the personnel of the project and key actors of the educational interventions. Activities of this nature have helped to generate a better understanding through the exchange ideas and experiences.

The educational practices have achieved improvement in attendance and retention of the children and through this, they are also decreasing the number of hours children spend working. Nonetheless, the teachers and facilitators of the practices need more training and follow-up as the training they initially received was insufficient, and they do not have support to deal with their doubts and difficulties. The validation of the practices is ongoing and it is expected that this activity will help with its replication. However, there are elements of the practices that require a different analytical approach to help bring them into a public discussion about policies.

#### *4.2.3. Result 3*

*Conditions are created for sustained dialogue and knowledge sharing among project countries.*

In the area of knowledge sharing among the project countries, Primero Aprendo has been in the process of developing a knowledge base that will provide for the sharing of information across the project countries on the issues of education and child labor. The type of products that have been planned, and are in the process of being developed, range from a catalog of “good practices” collected from all of Latin America; a guide for the successful replication of educational interventions validated by the project; documents about the validation of best practices in the pilot projects; and information about educational practices and child labor. A project Web site has also been developed and conferences on educational interventions/good practices in education and child labor will take place.

In the Work Plan for 2005-2006, the project proposed to systematize the educational practices. However, after numerous efforts to implement this process, it was abandoned because of

insufficient financial and human resources to carry it out. The evaluator was unable to obtain a clear, well-articulated explanation of what was meant by the term “systematization” from the National Coordinator in El Salvador who was responsible for coordinating the systematization of the educational practices. The National Coordinator in El Salvador stated that efforts were unsuccessfully made to obtain technical support from the Educational Specialist regarding this activity. This is another reason why this activity was abandoned.

The catalog of good practices was developed early on in the project as a potential resource of different educational interventions that might be considered appropriate for pilot projects. The process of identifying good practices employed various strategies from word of mouth, contacts with international organizations (e.g., ILO projects), and Internet searches. The catalog compiled close to 100 different types of education interventions that were considered potential interventions for pilot projects. The catalog of good practices will be available soon on the Primero Aprendo Web site and will serve as an instrument for raising the awareness of key actors as well as a technical resource for the improvement of education for children who work. The purpose of the catalog was to help the project in its initial phase identify educational practices that could be employed in pilot projects throughout the region.

Upon completion of the validation process a Guide for the Successful Application of Good Practices will be produced for each validated educational practice. The purpose of the guide will be to provide educational practitioners with a document that will outline the process of applying or adopting such a validated process into a new educational venue. This guide will serve as a valuable tool for replicating efforts.

The project also intended to carry out applied research strategies to expand the understanding of the role that education plays in the eradication of child labor. The project has not implemented this activity because the strategy that the regional project initially adopted to identify the research topics proved to be too difficult to apply.

At an earlier stage in the project, when the applied research strategy was still considered viable, the regional coordination approached the same consultant group, Gish and Paz, which is conducting the validation of educational interventions or good practices and inquired into their willingness and availability to undertake the applied research strategy. Gish and Paz informed the regional coordinator of Primero Aprendo that they would not be able to undertake both the validation of the good practices or educational interventions and the applied research strategy simultaneously. The regional coordinator realized that they did not have the in-house capacity to conduct the research themselves and decided to suspend this activity.

As an alternative to the applied research strategy activity, the regional coordinator proposed four targeted research projects: 1) cost/benefit; 2) quality as a factor of retention; 3) relationship between class time and the reduction of working hours; and 4) multi-causal aspects of child labor and its impact on effective programming. Presently, the regional coordinator is searching for research professionals who have the capacity to undertake one or several of the research projects. This activity is still in the formative stage.

Even though there is a shortage of project material on the Web site, once all the materials mentioned above are ready, the Web site will provide useful documents for those who work in fields connected with education and child labor. As noted above, *Primeros Aprendo* will soon disseminate the good practices catalog via the Internet. It is anticipated that subsequent products from the project such as validation studies, a guide for successful application of good practices, and results from the research studies will be disseminated via the Internet as well.

Once the validation of the educational interventions has been completed in mid-2007 and the replication of good practices begun in other communities, national and international conferences and/or seminars will be organized to generate awareness about the results of these experiences. The *Primeros Aprendo* project will work jointly with the *Coordinación Educativa y Cultural Centroamericana (CECC)* and the *Conferencia de Iglesias Episcopales* to inform the different ministries of education (which created CECC) and other regional and national entities working in the field of education about the good practices or educational interventions that have demonstrated significant potential in reduction of child labor. The CECC has National Secretariats in each country of the region. The National Secretariat is someone who is very close to the Ministry of Education. CECC can help with the institutionalization of such interventions with those ministries of education. The activities that will take place in the area of dissemination of good practices have yet to begin because the final products are not ready. It is anticipated that by mid-2007 the products will be completed and ready for dissemination.

All of the project's programmed activities presented in this section do not seem to be sufficient to achieve the third result of the project that strives to create the conditions necessary to stimulate a sustained dialogue and share knowledge between the different countries of the region. This objective, as described, appears to both surpass the capacity and resources of the project (as described in the earlier section on project design) and its activities may be better directed toward Result 4.

#### *4.2.4 Result 4*

*An agenda of relevant political options developed and promoted among key institutional actors in the different countries as well as at the regional level.*

According to the project's work plan, the majority of the activities related to Result 4 will begin in the third year of the project, depending upon the accomplishments of the earlier results. The basic premise of the project is that awareness raising of key actors, validated good practices or educational interventions as part of the knowledge management system, and the creation of conditions for an informed dialogue will lay the foundation for fruitful discussions among key actors and institutions and contribute to the establishment of agreements on a policy reform agenda as well as appropriate strategies.

One of the most important activities that the project has carried out regionally has been the establishment of an alliance with CECC. CECC incorporated in its agenda the educational problems of children who work and it instructed its Executive Secretary to coordinate efforts with *Primeros Aprendo* in searching for resources to replicate successful practices.

The project hired Programa de Promocion de la Reforma Educativa en America Latina y el Caribe (PREAL) to develop six national studies on education and child labor. These studies seek to serve as the foundation for regional and national discussions regarding a political reform agenda in each country. Presently, four of the six documents have been prepared and are ready for publication. The remaining two will be completed in the next few months. Available official statistics were used as the primary data sources for the development of these documents that reflect a global review of the current situation of education and child labor in each of the six countries. Each document also includes an outline of the programs and projects that are being implemented in the field of education and child labor, and the reports provide a series of recommendations for policy decisions.

These documents are a good resource from which to promote discussion about an agenda of policy reforms, yet they are limited by the fact that they do not analyze nor provide information about what advances have been made in Latin America in regards to policies and programs about education and child labor. Over a period of more than 10 years, a great number of policies, programs, and projects regarding these topics have been developed in the region. They have had the support of DOL, ILO, UNICEF, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the World Bank, and agencies of multilateral cooperation. Such activities have resulted in a considerable number of studies and evaluations regarding specific strategies that do and do not work to promote education for school children who work. The project has the opportunity to use the knowledge already generated through these experiences to, in turn, make them into regional and national proposals.

The project has carried out a regional training session to prepare and instruct national teams about the tools and strategies of political involvement, with the idea that they will replicate what was learned with the key actors locally and nationally (activity 4.6). Nonetheless, additional support through technical assistance mechanisms should be provided so that the national staff are better able to mobilize institutions and network in the political arena.

One of the challenges facing this result is for the project to present both the validated practices as well as complementary elements that are critical to a project's success in its efforts to eliminate child labor. To do this, the project will use two instruments: the documents of validation of practices and the guidelines for their replication. The documents of validation of practices have the specific purpose of judging the validity of a hypothesis (the practices achieve or do not achieve the desired outcome) and the guidelines intend to show what steps to take to implement these practices. Both are technical documents directed to operators and not decisionmakers. The project will need to develop material directed to policy analysts and decisionmakers so that they will be able to adequately communicate the experience of the pilot project and promote a discussion regarding the relationship between poverty, education, and child labor.

Achieving this result nationally will depend on the ability of the national coordinators to get NGOs and the government itself to discuss proposals and concrete measures relevant to the issue of education and child labor. Because of the limited experience that some of the national coordinators have with these types of activities, which is evident by the modest results in the work of the institutional networks and the awareness of national authorities, the project could have problems achieving this outcome in every country.

It is not clear what the link is between the regional strategy that surrounds the CECC and the national strategies that originate from the ministries of education and labor, the entrepreneurial and unionized organizations, and the NGOs. There is a need to improve the way in which these activities will be carried out and how they complement each other.

The indicator of this result (4.1) does not adequately capture the outcome that is desired. The fact that the key actors are informed and aware does not imply that 1) they have participated in developing the agenda, 2) they are in agreement with putting it in practice, and 3) they will incorporate it in the programming. A policy agenda is only useful if there are actors interested in implementing it. In that sense, such an indicator would better capture Result 4. It would be better to have an indicator specifically related to the participation of the actors in developing the agenda and in the promises (both individual and collective) to put it in practice.

The project has taken some steps in preparing the foundation for the activities that will be carried out with the purpose of accomplishing the outcome, still there is a need to develop other resources and to clarify the strategy. Specifically, this requires 1) the development of more conceptual documents to help clarify what it is recommended to reduce child labor through education, 2) resolving the problem of insufficient capacity of some of the national coordinators to address this component, and 3) clarifying the relationship between the regional and national strategies.

#### *4.2.5 Monitoring*

The regional team has had a pivotal role in the development of the monitoring system. Two instruments were developed to train and standardize methodological criteria: 1) Criteria for the Selection of Beneficiaries, and 2) Glossary of Terms Pertinent to the Project. A form was also developed to register the children participating in the program, which provides abundant information about the child's educational, familial, and work situation. The project staff at various levels follow the glossary definitions. However, predominantly in Guatemala, differences have been found among local directors who have the responsibility of collecting data regarding variables such as hours worked, salary, withdrawn, and prevented as well as the frequency of the data collection. Indeed, the evaluation found a lack of a clear understanding on the part of local staff, who were responsible for data collection, regarding how to collect data on the number of hours worked. Everyone interviewed in both Guatemala and Costa Rica provided a different understanding of this concept. Therefore, the validity of the data collected on this issue is questionable. In Guatemala and Costa Rica, it would be difficult to unequivocally state that children, adolescents, or youth are experiencing a reduction of hours worked under exploitive, hazardous, or dangerous conditions.

The children who participate in the educational practice *Reporte Escolar* carried out in Waslala and Waspi (Nicaragua) do not conform to the concept of direct and indirect beneficiaries. This practice consists of encouraging the participation of parents in the education of their children. The project considers as direct beneficiaries the children of the parents who participate in those activities, with the exception of those whose children are younger than 7 or older than 14. Nevertheless, the children do not receive any direct services from the program, and therefore, do not fit into the definition of direct beneficiary established by DOL. Although the educational

practice of *Prevención y Erradicación del Trabajo Infantil* implemented in Jinotega (Nicaragua) also has a broad focus on work, which involves all the children in the school, the direct beneficiaries do receive direct services, such as vocational education on the weekends and uniforms and school materials.

On the other hand, it was found that project staff in Nicaragua and Honduras are aware of the definitions that form part of the monitoring system, and are collecting data in conformity with USDOL definitions.

The project has generated an organizational structure that has been relatively efficient in collecting and analyzing data. At the regional level, an international expert from DevTech provides technical assistance in monitoring and evaluation and a national expert manages the regional database. In each country there is an individual, the database administrator, who is responsible for data collection at the local level and, in theory, provides technical assistance to the local coordinators when necessary. One country in particular, Guatemala, has had a difficult time maintaining the database administrator position. This may be one of the reasons why the local-level staff in that country, such as the local coordinator and facilitators, has had a difficult time obtaining a sound and accurate understanding of the terms and concepts.

The project has four criteria to select beneficiaries: i) children between six and 15 years old, ii) children in exploitive work according ILO Convention 182, iii) children in exploitive work identified by government laws according ILO Recommendation 190, and iv) children working more than 20 hours per week. These criteria are expressed in the form that the project uses to register and follow beneficiaries, which is the main instrument to feed data into the tracking system. The form indicates 24 activities, most of which can be considered as exploitive child labor. However, the project does not have a list of worst forms of child labor laid down by the national laws of the six countries, which indicates unequivocally what are exploitive activities. The list would allow the project to classify the activities given in the form in a rigorous way.

Likewise, the project does not have information regarding the number of hours that each country considers as the maximum that children can work. The amount fixed by the project (20 hours) could be higher than the actual time set by the national laws; consequently, it would contravene the rules laid down by the ILO Convention 182. In fact, the majority of national laws do not allow child labor under 12 years old. Additionally, working for 20 hours seems too high to six-year-old children, independent of the activity they carry out. As a result of the application of national laws, the actual number of children in exploitive work can vary, and as a consequence, the total of withdrawn and prevented children can also change.

It is necessary to indicate that the project had to make important changes to the database of information provided by DOL, as the software did not support the required functions for the system to work. Currently, the software works adequately.

### **4.3 Coordination and Partnerships**

Since its design phase, the project was conceived to be implemented by an alliance of three organizations: CARE, CRS, and DevTech. In the process, one international organization

(CARITAS) and three local organizations from Nicaragua (INPRHU, Vicariato de Bluefields, and La Cuculmecca) were added to the alliance. Presently, seven organizations are directly involved in the implementation of the project. These partnerships have been beneficial to the implementation of the project because each organization has contributed resources and valuable experiences to the project.

In Nicaragua and Honduras, the project has developed a wide range of partnerships with local and national institutions. Even though there are differences between the different locations, the project is working at the local level with some of the following institutions: municipal governments, ministry offices of various sectors, and private sector associations. When such partnerships are established, additional resources are obtained to support the implementation of the project, as was the case of El Paraiso in Honduras.<sup>4</sup> In Nicaragua, the project participates in local interinstitutional networks whose objectives are to improve the quality of life of children.<sup>5</sup> Some of these partnerships will probably be long-term and assume an important role in the sustainability of the successes of the project. In Guatemala, the project has not developed either local or national alliances. The project staff does not have experience with this level of work and has focused on community work.

Not all of the local coordinators have the same degree of knowledge of and experience with implementing activities that address networking and partnerships. Given this fact, the degree of success in establishing partnerships varies from community to community. In some countries/communities the level of interinstitutional cooperation has been significant, while in other countries/communities it has been poor. The capacity of the local coordinator to implement activities of this nature appears to be the result of the amount of support that he or she has received either from his or her organization, which also varies from one organization to another.<sup>6</sup>

The quality of the alliances and work in the area of local interinstitutional coordination depends on the institutional framework and capacity of the implementing organization. For those organizations that are decentralized and have a local presence at the community level working in the area of children's rights, their capacity and experience lends itself to working with other organizations, as is the case of Nicaragua.

---

<sup>4</sup> The following example demonstrates a successful case at the local level. In the district of El Paraiso in Honduras, the office of the project operates at the site of the Ministry of Education. An association of producers finances 50 percent of the resources that are put into one of educational practices. The municipality decreed to the town's staff to monitor the attendance of children in the school and a technical education center that offers vocational skills to the child beneficiaries of the project.

<sup>5</sup> The case of the Los Sistemas de Transferencia y Contratransferencia, coordinated by the Ministry of Families in Nicaragua, in Jinotega and Somotos is interesting. These systems were created to find solutions for specific violations of the rights of children in the rural areas with the participation of governmental organizations and NGOs. The coordinators of the institutions were also provided with capacity building skills in topics related to problems in children. The project has received approval from the Ministry of Families to pilot test those systems with the goal of evaluating the feasibility of implementing them in the rest of the country.

<sup>6</sup> There are six institutions that work at the local level.

At the national level, with the exception of Guatemala, the project has established relationships with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labor. Also, the depth and nature of the alliances between the project and such organizations depend upon the negotiation skills of the national coordinators, which vary from one country to another, and therefore, produce different results. In Nicaragua and Honduras, the project has begun partnerships with national unions of businessmen, and in Honduras, the project has established a relationship with the national teachers union. In Guatemala, there has been no national presence of the project.

The project has also developed a cooperative relationship with ILO-IPEC. Even though there is no regional cooperative agreement between the project and ILO-IPEC, the majority of the countries have worked with the national ILO-IPEC offices in their respective countries. For the most part, this relationship is directed toward strengthening the activities of the national commissions for the eradication of child labor. The project has also used awareness-raising material produced by IPEC. Nevertheless, there are numerous potential opportunities for cooperation between the project and ILO that could be explored. ILO has significant experience and prestige in the area of public policy, which could be taken advantage of by the project to help it achieve Result 4. A regional alliance with ILO and eventually with UNICEF, given their regional influence in educational policy, could provide further energy to the work that is being undertaken with CECC.

Two other external factors have influenced the development of national partnerships. One is the strength and soundness of the national commissions for the eradication of child labor and the other is the current political atmosphere that each country is experiencing. In the places where the commission for the eradication of child labor is successful, the project has had a greater ability to coordinate with other institutions. In the same way, the governments that are in the middle of their mandate have been more able to offer better opportunities to establish solid alliances than those governments that are either at the beginning or end of their administration.

As previously noted, at the regional level, the project has developed alliances with CECC and with the Episcopal Conferences (Conferencias Episcopales).

There are significant differences between the four countries visited with respect to outcomes. These differences are the result of three factors: 1) disparate knowledge and experience on the part of national coordinators and promoters in the area of institutional coordination; 2) the need for the different countries to improve their capacity to coordinate with other organizations; and 3) a lack of interinstitutional cooperation and partnership criteria. Also, the links that have been established up to this point with government organizations at the national level are weak and, in most cases, have been limited to only informing authorities about the project. Although the activities of involvement in public policies will be conducted in the upcoming years, a foundation strong enough to effectively work at the national level has not been established. In this regard, the project in Guatemala is critical and it requires immediate attention.

#### **4.4 Management and Administration**

The three main organizations (CRS, CARE, and Caritas) that share principal responsibility for implementing the project *Primero Aprendo* have substantial experience and credibility in

implementing community development projects. This experience is accompanied by a perceived sense of trust and credibility in the communities where the pilot projects are being implemented, which has been gained from their continued presence in such communities across a wide range of projects. This relationship of trust and credibility between the implementing partner and local community has been critical to the successful implementation of the education pilot projects.

A critical factor in the success of this project has been, is, and will be the ability of these three organizations to work together effectively in the coordination and implementation of activities across three levels: local, national, and regional. Even though each organization has its own mission, the professional values of respect, fairness, communication, and integrity, to name but a few, have allowed the staff of the organizations to work together as a team toward a common goal. Rivalries and jealousies of any form that could affect the project have not been perceived.

Taking this into consideration, these organizations are new to some of the important topics for the project: awareness, education, and child labor, identification of good practices and educational interventions, dialogue, and management of knowledge and of public policy reform. The three organizations also do not have a trajectory implementing regional projects in Central America. For these reasons, implementing the project has included significant challenges for the regional, national, and local staff in terms of management and technical issues.

The management structure of the project responded to the need to distribute and coordinate the work load across different participating organizations and countries. Likewise, the idea of distinguishing between laboratory and specialized countries arose from the need to give a role to those countries that would not be involved in the implementation of educational interventions (i.e., laboratory countries). At the same time, the distribution of responsibilities across the different organizations originated with the idea of giving all of the partner organizations active functions and leadership roles. The following table summarizes the functions that the principal organizations have assumed in the project.

### **Organizations Participating in the Project and the Roles They Play**

	<b>CARE</b>	<b>CRS</b>	<b>DEVTEC</b>	<b>CARITAS</b>
<b>Costa Rica</b>		Education Specialist Educational interventions Awareness-raising Validation		Community-level work in Guanacaste and Puntarenas
<b>Guatemala</b>	Community-level work in Quiché			Community-level work in Quiché
<b>El Salvador</b>	Catalog of good practices			
<b>Honduras</b>	Community-level work in El Paraíso	Community-level work in Tegucigalpa		
<b>Nicaragua</b>	Project Director Project doordination		Specialist in Monitoring and Evaluation	Community-level work in Jinotega
<b>Dominican Republic</b>			Public policy	

The management structure demonstrates the complex organizational problems that came as a result of implementing a project with multiple institutional actors and with outcomes expected at the local, national, and regional levels. Thus, the resulting structure did not have at its base the outcomes expected for the project, such as good management for required results; rather, it had the distribution of activities among the different implementers. The level of technical complexity of the second outcome (development of experimental models) would have required a more centralized organization to have greater technical control of the process and more meticulous supervision.

The implementation of activities by various organizations who possess different organizational cultures and different personnel policies in different countries added more variables to the already diverse list of educational interventions. These variables created difficulties for the implementation of pilot projects, which required a more homogeneous approach across the region. At the same time, the relationship between the educational interventions, the educational research, and the situational analysis of each country would have benefited from a different organizational approach to the one that was implemented, one that would take advantage to the greatest extent possible what had been learned from the pilot projects. The hiring of outside consultants in the areas educational research and situational analyses did not allow for the sharing of information nor the involvement of national and local coordinators in the process.

In each country, organization developed different implementation models. In Nicaragua, for example, relationships were established with local organizations that were present in the communities where the project was implemented. However, in Honduras, CARE and CRS geographically divided the work and implemented the activities directly. In Guatemala, CARE works directly in some communities and in other communities it has linked up with Caritas. At the local level, there is also organizational diversity. For example, in Jinotega two local organizations are responsible for the project work in the communities where they have years of experience; while in Tegucigalpa, one local coordinator with limited experience in the critical topics of education, child labor, and community mobilization is responsible for all of the project activities. These types of differences have generated differences in the results of activities at the national and local levels. The project coordination has not been able to address this issue to end the disparities in capacity.

The selection of national and local staff for the program was to the responsibility of the implementing organizations. Each organization assigned staff to the project that they considered to be most suitable. In some cases, the assigned individuals had no experience in similar projects and as a result were not prepared to implement some of the project activities. This created an excessive diversity in the working staff, which has been evident in disparate results, such as those analyzed in previous paragraphs.

The coordination of the project also did not provide sufficient methodological guidance in training activities and technical assistance in the field that would have made the staff's level of knowledge and skills more similar and that would have provided them with greater clarity about the roadmap to follow and the goals to accomplish. The gap and unevenness observed in the work regarding interinstitutional coordination and partnerships is where this problem is most predominant.

The regional coordinator has developed strategies and directives for some of the subject matters of the project. Unfortunately, the national coordinators and promoters have not been adequately trained to implement them. As a result, some of the coordinators and promoters have had difficulty in putting these directives into practice.

DevTech was initially responsible for implementing the strategy of political involvement and the contacts with PREAL. However, because DevTech was not contractually allowed to contract with a third part (PREAL), the regional coordination team decided to take back this role from the coordinator in the Dominican Republic and give it to the Regional Director. This fact weakened the role of that coordinator, restricting the realization of activity 4.6 (training in policy reform) that is not well coordinated with the rest of the activities of Result 4. The involvement of the national coordinator in El Salvador on the regional level has also been limited to the development of the catalog of best practices.

The three members of the project's coordination team (Director, Education Specialist, and M&E Specialist) are separated by distance, each one in different countries. This has hampered the efforts to coordinate the orientation and supervision of the national and local activities of the project. This is especially true when it comes to Results 1 and 2. Despite the complex factors previously mentioned, the project's regional coordinator has been able to establish a workgroup that seeks to find common objectives and that has identified with the project beyond their institutional affiliations. The Regional Coordinator has also made sure that all involved organizations actively contribute to the development of the project.

The management capability of the Regional Director has been diminished by his difficulty to adequately communicate with the national coordinators and take their comments and observations into consideration, according to the testimony of some of them. This difficulty is particularly serious in a complex project such as this one, as it keeps problems from being detected and solutions from being reached because of the great organizational differences.

The technical support provided by the education specialist has been insufficient, as the national teams have not been able to rely on the support needed to answer their questions about the implementation of the awareness activities and the application of educational practices.

The technical support provided by the M&E Specialist has been more effective, as he has adequately trained national and local coordinators in the monitoring system and has organized an efficient network of data collection and input. Despite this success, discrepancies exist in some of the variables such as the number of hours worked each week by the children and the frequency with which some teams collect this information. The problem seems to be inadequate communication between national coordinators and local implementers.

The difficulty in the communication between the director and his collaborators, the insufficient support by the education specialist to the local and national teams, and the distance that separates the three members of the coordination team, have prevented the team from being able to provide appropriate follow-up to the project activities or to resolve the problems discussed in previous paragraphs.

## 4.5 Sustainability

The sustainability of the results of the educational interventions should be analyzed in two aspects: 1) by the pilot projects and replications that the project implements; and 2) by the degree to which the Ministries of Education and other organizations adopt the validated interventions. With respect to the first aspect, it appears as if the educational interventions will come to a successful end with the target populations. The interventions have been well received and are working well. The questions that are being asked by the communities are: What will happen with the educational programs once the project ends, and who will continue to support the educational interventions? These questions can be answered depending upon the methodology that was employed by the intervention. Even when pilot projects are not an end themselves but rather a mean to built practices applicable in different contexts, it is important to consider the sustainability of the pilot projects as methodologies.

In the case of simple educational interventions that do not require special resources or the purchase of specific material, the teachers should be able to continue to implement them with some assistance from an institution that specializes in the intervention and annually provides training. Open Classroom and School Report are two of these types of interventions.

In those cases where the methodology requires more extensive training and specialized material and resources, there will be the need for the implementing institutions to continue to support these interventions through in-service teacher training, provision of materials and resources, and mobilizing the local communities so that the educational interventions can continue. This will be the situation for such educational interventions as Educadores, Alfasic, Together We Build Education, Bilingual Education, Vocational Education in Rabinal, Prevention/Eradiation of Child Labor, and Spaces to Grow.

The sustainability of the types of educational intervention where the project has facilitated the integration of children into some programs through scholarships will be determined by the availability of alternate sources of funding to continue to provide scholarships. One example of this approach is vocational training.

Other experiences have involved the opening of schools in communities where schools did not exist previously such as in La Chiripa (Jinotega) and Wapi in Nicaragua. In both instances, the schools have been able to secure funding from the government to pay the salaries of teachers, but the sustainability will depend on the stability of those teachers.

In all of these situations, the presence of an external party (the project promoter or local coordinator) has been critical to the implementation and development of the educational practices. Such individuals will continue to be important in the time period required to ensure that the educational interventions are accepted and adopted as part of the “regular” school program. The primary role of the promoter or local coordinator has been to promote the program within the community, but not on providing technical assistance in educational matters. It may be possible in the next phase of the educational interventions to widen the role of the promoters so that they assume more of an educational resource role and can support the work that is being performed by the teachers.

The adoption of the educational interventions by other organizations, principally the Government, is something that will be decided at the level of public policy and, therefore, will depend upon what strategies the project adopts to achieve Result 4. The introduction of educational interventions in the countries of the region is a very complex task, given the abysmal record that the countries in the region have had in trying to improve public education. The best option for success is to establish sound commitments from multiple outstanding regional and national actors/organizations that promote educational system change and that can pressure the Ministries of Education in the region.

## 5. LESSONS LEARNED

It is too early to establish definitive list of lessons learned and best practices because the project is in the process of trying to achieve its objectives. However, there are some preliminary lessons learned that can be reported.

Parents living in rural areas are determined to assume the costs of sending their children to school instead of placing them in a manufacturing or domestic labor environment. There are three factors that strengthen or hinder this willingness: 1) accessibility to educational services, 2) availability of funds to cover the cost to enroll children (e.g., school supplies, uniforms, shoes), and 3) the attitude and commitment of the school teachers toward the education of the children. The project has demonstrated that addressing these factors will increase enrollment and retention.

According to the outcomes of the project, the creation and implementation of knowledge skills/strategies, that are geared toward changing cultural patterns and modifying public policies as they relate to the issue of poverty are not issues that marketing companies can easily solve. Organizations and professional experts in social marketing are better equipped to achieve such tasks.

The work in the area of public policy, in countries where there is a weak institutional social sector, requires strategies developed for the intermediate term, especially if the work involves a regional project that wants to influence the policies of various countries. Such strategies should be placed in the project and its logic model/frame and should start as soon as possible. Specialists in public policy and child labor should also be included as part of the permanent staff of the project.

The implementation of a complex project, such as this one, in which various organizations in multiple countries participate, requires that attention is focused on the organizational design and that its operational structure is designed based on the desired outcomes using the instruments and concepts of Managing for Development Results.

It is appropriate that the redesign of the logical framework is conducted during the first trimester of the project so that the teams will begin the implementation activities with a strong foundation. This will allow not only better planning of the actions but also a greater sense of certainty on the part of the staff.



## 6. CONCLUSIONS

The project is implementing 20 educational interventions in 35 communities across 4 countries that provide educational services to 2,080 children. Originally, the project was expected to implement 18 educational interventions across three countries that would have provided educational services to 1,880 children. These results demonstrate the operational capacity that the project has at the community level. The majority of the educational interventions have been implemented well and the personnel of the project are well accepted by the communities.

The findings from the focus groups of children, parents, and teachers demonstrate that the project has successfully increased awareness about the relationship between poverty, child labor, and education, which is reflected by the increase in the number of children who have enrolled in schools and the reduction in absenteeism. The findings from the focus groups regarding a reduction in absenteeism are confirmed by the attendance data collected by the schools. Nevertheless, most of the children remain engaged in work activities, albeit at reduced hours, outside of the designated time for school. The relationship between the teachers and the parents has improved in some of the communities visited, and both parties have demonstrated a better understanding of the negative effects of prioritizing work over education on the life of the child. Also, the benefits of some of the educational interventions are felt not only by the direct and indirect beneficiaries of the project but also by all of the children who attend the school because they benefit from an improved quality of the education in general. The most notable weakness observed in the work that was being implemented at the community level has been the limited training of the teachers and coordinators in the educational interventions and the lack of pedagogical follow-up (additional training) for their work.

The validation process of the educational interventions is moving along at a good pace. Currently, 10 validations have been completed and the remainder will be completed by July 2007. The means used to validate the educational interventions are appropriate. However, there is a wealth of information that is being generated by the pilot projects that is not being incorporated into the validation process and that will potentially be lost. This includes the qualitative data collected through observations, interviews, and anecdotes in the validation process that do not “fit” into a concise indicator. There are many things that are happening within the community, the family, the school, and within the life of an individual child that are not being recorded nor communicated because of the narrow focus of the objectives of the validation process. There is a wealth of important ethnographic qualitative data that is being collected as part of the validation process that will never be shared with DOL, national governments, and the like. For example, some of the information being generated by the pilot project may be important in the design of an educational public policy agenda, such as the institutional and social conditions required to implement the practices and the key role of the promoters.

The result of the work being performed at the local level (municipal, district, or departmental) is inconsistent with respect to the awareness-raising activities and in the development of institutional networks. In some locations, the project personnel have done an excellent job in coordinating different institutions as well as orienting the local-level activities, while in other locations these same activities have not been implemented well or not implemented at all. For

the most part, these differences across communities and/or countries are the result of the ability and experience of the local level project staff.

At the national level, the results are more limited. National authorities in education and labor have been approached by the project staff but they have not succeeded in establishing a good foundation for the work on public policy. The project has not designed national strategies that guide activities of institutional coordination for political lobbying at the national level. The situation is further weakened by the changes in governments and the rotation of senior level personnel, which has not allowed the project personnel to develop working relationships with government counterparts. In this area the ability and experience of the national coordinator is critical. In the case of Guatemala, this issue is critical and deserves immediate attention because no actions have been implemented there at the national level.

At the regional level, the project has developed an alliance with CECC, an organization composed of education ministers from Central America. This organization will play an important role in the creation and adoption of an educational policy agenda that will contribute to the reduction of child labor. Also, the support of the Episcopal Conference in each country has been established for the same purpose, yet regional alliances with ILO-IPEC and UNICEF have not been developed. These organizations have significant experience in the area of education and child labor public policy development, not to mention the strong links that they have with national governments.

Certain important regional activities critical to the success of the project have suffered setbacks or have not been implemented. It was expected that the public relations firm McCann-Erickson would contribute to the development of the awareness strategy in addition to the development of the materials; however, this did not occur. They only helped in the production of the promotional materials. Also, the planned research activities of 3.2 and 3.3 in the logical framework were never implemented. They have been subsequently replaced by alternate research activities that are in their initial phases. The activities of “systematization” of good practices outlined in the Work Plan 2005-2006 were later considered unrealistic, because of the lack of human and financial resources, and were eliminated.

The imbalance that is seen in the local and national work can be explained for the most part by the weakness in the management of the project. The organizational structure that is not aligned with the desired outcomes, the lack of experience of some members of the local and national staff, and insufficient methodological guidance and technical assistance in the field have led to each national and local coordinator to rely on his or her own experience.

The project management has been affected by the difficulties in communication between the project director and his collaborators, the lack of support by the education specialist to the national and local teams, and the distance that separates the three members of the coordination team. This has prevented the team from being able to provide appropriate follow-up of the project activities and to solve the problems that have been analyzed.

It will be necessary to make some changes to the way in which the project is managed if it is to fulfill Result 4 and the project’s purpose. The way in which the project has been managed up to

this point has provided good results at the community level as it has found support in institutions and staff with a vast knowledge and experience in groundwork. Nevertheless, this is not sufficient to confront the area of public policy, an area that requires more activities of interinstitutional coordination, formation of alliances and partnerships, design of the proposals, and political lobbying. To face this challenge, greater partnership and communication are needed among the members of the regional team and the national coordinators and more technical support to the national and local coordinators.



## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

### *About the educational practice—*

Additional training of and follow-up for the teachers and other personnel who are responsible for implementing the educational interventions should be provided. This is critical for the successful completion of the educational interventions and for sustaining the project outcomes.

It is necessary to increase the awareness efforts with the parents. To accomplish this, the project could use the Open Class and School Report practices, which have proven to be effective when working with parents.

The period of replication of the validated practices would be a good opportunity to combine in the same school some of the practices that are complementary. Up to this point, these practices have been considered to be isolated and independent methodologies, but from what has been observed, some of them could be applied simultaneously to improve the educational outcomes. Open Class and School Report, for instance, can be used in every school to improve parents' participation; Educadodos can be implemented to enroll children older than 12 years old, and Remedial Education Room would be useful for every children needing after school classes. In that way, the schools would offer a menu of programs tackling different problems with specific solutions.

The additional analysis of the educational practices should be done to identify the common elements that facilitate or impede them, taking into account not only the pedagogical aspects of the interventions but the social and institutional aspects as well. Such analysis should have a comparative approach and should be oriented toward developing the educational policy recommendations. This would help the decisionmakers to better comprehend the potential of the interventions, and it would be a useful companion piece to the validation documents of the practices and the guidelines for its replication.

To obtain more accurate data regarding the effect of a project, one of the applied researches should be devoted to recording project outcomes. A survey can be taken on a sample of children to study the effects of the project on such variables as hours worked, enrollment, persistence and completion split by gender, age groups, type of work, and school grade.

### *About the work oriented toward public policies—*

It is recommended that the documents of situational analysis developed by PREAL be complemented by other documents that analyze policies, programs, and projects, which have been conducted in Latin America regarding education and child labor. Such activities have produced a number of studies and evaluations about what is effective and what is not effective in schooling children who work and eradicating child labor. Such an analysis could be the result of a combined effort of organizations that work in the region such as the World Bank, IDB, ILO-IPEC, UNICEF, and U.S. Agency for International Development. An effort of this nature would integrate the knowledge generated by various organizations, it would include prestigious actors in a dialogue about policies, and it would promote debate.

A strategic alliance with UNICEF and ILO-IPEC should be developed with the purpose of developing a combined action in the area of the public policies of each one of these countries. As previously mentioned, both organizations have experience in this area and work with the governments, elements which are required by the project to accomplish Result 4.

Because the dialogue is only a means to achieve policy reforms, Result 3 and its activities should be subsumed in Result 4. In this way, the logic frame would express more clearly the approach of the project.

*About the project management—*

Find support from experts about team building to overcome the communication difficulties between the director and the project team. It is a priority that the team formed by the project director, the monitoring and education specialists, and the national coordinators work cohesively to strengthen its capability to work and communicate effectively in seeking to achieve the desired outcomes.

Develop a work plan that includes the necessary mechanisms for the education specialist to support the national and local teams. The project should analyze the possibility of relocating the education specialist to the project headquarters in Managua to improve the coordination process of the regional team and work more effectively with the national teams.

An analysis of the capability of each one of the national coordinators to carry out the activities pertaining to the Result 4 and the interinstitutional coordination should be performed. This analysis should be used as a foundation to develop a technical assistance plan and training of the national teams according to their specific needs. The team might require the support of external experts in these fields. The project deficiencies within Guatemala urgently need to be addressed.

The role of the national coordinators in El Salvador and the Dominican Republic should be better articulated. The next stage of the project, focused on policy involvement activities, will provide many opportunities for the coordinators to be effectively linked to the project.

The project should identify and analyze the better practices of interinstitutional work carried out by the project and replicate them in the places that demonstrate weakness in this area. To facilitate the process of sharing experiences, it might be possible to take advantage of the internship approach already tried by the project, which involves promoters visiting different project sites.

*About the monitoring system—*

As part of conformity to USDOL's definitions, the concepts of exploitive work, beneficiaries, prevented, and withdrawn should be reviewed, taking into account the definitions that the national laws of the six countries have adopted vis-à-vis the ILO Convention 182.

**ANNEX**

**TERMS OF REFERENCE  
FOR  
Independent Midterm Evaluation of  
CARE, “Combating Child Labor through Education in Central America and the  
Dominican Republic, ‘Primeros Aprendo.’ ”  
September 12-November 6, 2006**

**Cooperative Agreement Number:** E-9-K- 4-00045

**Financing Agency:** USDOL

**Type of Evaluation:** Independent Midterm Evaluation

**Date and Duration of the Evaluation:** 42-43 days

**Preparation Date of final TOR:** July 21, 2006

**Total Project Funds from USDOL  
Based on Cooperative Agreement:** US \$5,500,000

**Vendor for Evaluation Contract:** ORC Macro  
Headquarters, 11785 Beltsville Drive  
Calverton, MD 20705  
Tel: 301-572-0200  
Fax: 301-572-0999

## I. Background and Justification

The U.S. Department of Labor's (USDOL) international technical assistance programs have grown quickly over the past decade. In total, the Congress has appropriated more than \$500 million to USDOL to fund international labor projects through its Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB). These funds are used in a wide variety of projects that cover a range of labor issues, including international child labor issues, and a wide geographical distribution.

In recent years, the work of the International Child Labor Program (ICLP), one part of ILAB, has expanded significantly to include research on international child labor; support for U.S. government policy on international child labor; administration of grants and contracts with organizations engaged in international efforts to eliminate exploitive child labor; and efforts to raise awareness within the United States and abroad about international child labor issues.

Since FY 1995, Congress has appropriated over \$300 million to ILAB, to administer international child labor projects. Of this amount, over \$200 million has been earmarked by the Congress to support the International Labor Organization's International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor (ILO/IPEC); \$148 million has been appropriated to support efforts to address child labor through the promotion of educational opportunities for children (the basis for USDOL beginning its Child Labor Education Initiative); \$700,000 has been allocated to support other technical cooperation efforts; and \$2.4 million has been allocated to support research and awareness-raising activities.

In FY 2001, ICLP began funding the Child Labor Education Initiative (EI), which seeks to improve the access and quality of basic education for children who either have been involved in the worst forms of child labor or are at risk of becoming involved. EI projects are designed to ensure that children in areas of high child labor are withdrawn and integrated into educational settings, and that they persist in their education once enrolled. In parallel, the program seeks to avert at-risk children from leaving school and entering child labor.

EI projects nurture the development, health, safety and enhanced future employability of children around the world by increasing access to basic education for children removed from child labor or at risk of entering it. Child labor elimination will depend in part on improving access to, quality of, and relevance of education. Without improving educational quality and relevance, children withdrawn/prevented from child labor may not have viable alternatives and could resort to other forms of hazardous work. EI projects may focus on providing educational services to children removed from specific sectors of work and/or a specific region(s) or support a national Timebound Program that aims to eliminate the worst forms of child labor in multiple sectors of work specific to a given country.

The EI has the following four immediate objectives:

1. Raise awareness of the importance of education for all children and mobilize a wide array of actors to improve and expand education infrastructures;

2. Strengthen formal and transitional education systems that encourage working children and those at risk of working to attend school;
3. Strengthen national institutions and policies on education and child labor; and
4. Ensure the long-term sustainability of these efforts.

Evaluations of EI projects, which are funded through cooperative agreements with many different organizations, will be important to:

1. Help individual organizations identify areas of good performance and areas where project implementation can be improved;
2. Assist ICLP to learn more about what is or is not working in terms of the overall conceptualization and design of EI projects within the broad ICLP technical cooperation program framework; and
3. Assess the degree to which objectives relevant to the country-specific situation they address have been achieved.

***Primero Aprendo Project (Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic and El Salvador)***

In August 2004, CARE received a four-year cooperative agreement in the amount of \$5,500,000 from USDOL to implement an EI project in Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic and El Salvador. The goal of Project *Primero Aprendo* is to contribute to the progressive elimination and prevention of child labor through education in Central America and the Dominican Republic. Its purpose is to combat exploitive child labor in the region and to strengthen government and civil society's capacity to address the educational needs of working children. The project outputs are as follows:

- **Output 1:** To raise general awareness among key regional, national and local actors regarding the relationship between poverty, education and child labor;
- **Output 2:** To effectively pilot test and validate best practices in Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua;
- **Output 3:** To create the conditions for sustained dialogue and knowledge sharing among project countries; and
- **Output 4:** To promote a relevant policy option agenda among selected key institutional actors in selected participating countries and regionally.

The direct action components of the project are located in Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica. At the same time, Costa Rica will coordinate the public awareness component, El Salvador will take the lead in researching region-wide best practices and in developing and maintaining a best practice data base; and the Dominican Republic will shepherd processes and activities related to policy analysis and advocacy.

## II. Scope and Purpose

The scope of the evaluation includes a review and assessment of all activities carried out under the USDOL Cooperative Agreement with CARE. The evaluation should look at the project as a whole and assess its overall impact in relation to the objectives as outlined in the Cooperative Agreement and project documents, including an assessment of the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of these efforts.

For the purpose of conducting this evaluation, Macro will provide a highly skilled, independent evaluation team of two evaluators to conduct this evaluation to: a) determine if the project is adhering to its workplan both in terms of meeting scheduled milestones and achieving results as defined in the Logical Framework and Project Monitoring Plan; b) assess the level of performance in each target country thus far; c) identify if/how the project has incorporated the sustainability of project efforts into project implementation, and d) provide recommendations on steps the project may take to improve implementation during the remaining project period.

The contractor/evaluator will work with the staff of USDOL's International Child Labor Program (ICLP) and relevant CARE staff to evaluate the project in question.

**NOTE: ICLP is providing fundamental questions based on our experience with the project. However, any relevant observations gathered by the evaluator in the field that falls outside of the scope of these questions are encouraged and valued.**

[The evaluation of this Child Labor Education Initiative project should seek to address the following issues:](#)

### **Project Design/Implementation Issues:**

1. How has the project's design fit into overall government and regional programs to combat child labor and provide education for all?
2. Does the project design seem to be adequately supporting the four EI goals? If not, which ones are not being supported and why not?
3. At mid-term, is the project on track in terms of meeting its stated purpose and outputs in the project document? If not, what seem to be the factors contributing to delays?
4. Were the project purpose and outputs realistic?
5. In terms of project purpose, is the project able to accurately measure results in terms of DOL common indicators (withdrawal/prevention, persistence transition)? If not, why not?
6. Is the common indicator database developed by DOL and used by implementing organizations, the appropriate vehicle by which to measure and aggregate results? What types of financial and LOE burden is it placing on implementing organizations?
7. Did DOL technical assistance on project design and monitoring help the

project staff enough to warrant its cost and continued implementation in future projects?

8. Is educational quality also being pursued as part of the project strategy? Can it be measured and what has been its impact, if any, on project common indicators (of enrollment, persistence and completion)?
9. What other major design/implementation issues should be brought to the attention of the implementing organization and DOL?
10. Are activities 3.4 and 3.5, sufficient to both *generate* and *sustain* dialogue on best practices? Are the indicators a good measure of progress toward this result? How might they be improved?
11. What criteria does the project use to select pilot models for its database of best practices? Are these criteria effective (sufficient)? Is the project consistent in applying the criteria?
12. What challenges has the project faced in determining which pilot models are most successful and why? To date, has the project determined which pilot models should be considered “best practices”?
13. Would the percentage reported in indicator 4.1 (“Percent of key institutional actors informed and aware of policy reform options”) be sufficient to show that Output 4 has been achieved? How could this indicator be improved?
14. USDOL would like to receive more information in the technical progress reports on certain activities included in the Logframe (1.3 and 4.6) that have not been incorporated into the Project Monitoring Plan (PMP). How could the PMP be improved to measure progress in these areas?
15. Based on guidance provided in USDOL’s Management Procedures and Guidelines (MPG) on direct beneficiaries<sup>7</sup>, the project developed criteria for selecting target beneficiaries to receive services in pilot models. Are all country directors and project staff in agreement on what constitutes a “direct beneficiary”? Has project staff adhered to the criteria for each pilot project (per USDOL guidelines)? (In particular, we are interested to know if children identified as “direct beneficiaries” in 1) School Report Practice/Bluefields, Nicaragua, and 2) Prevention and Eradication of Child Labor /Jinotega, Nicaragua, have been properly identified as such, or are they receiving indirect services?)
16. USDOL has received information that some of the children that the project is reporting to USDOL as withdrawn/prevented are not fully withdrawn/prevented but are working fewer hours so that they can attend school. Based on guidance provided in USDOL’s MPG on children withdrawn and prevented<sup>8</sup>, do all project staff have the same understanding of what the accepted criteria are for reporting a child as withdrawn/prevented for USDOL Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) reporting requirements?
17. Has the project allotted sufficient project time to advocate policymakers for the adoption of best practice interventions and policies? Please

---

<sup>7</sup> See MPG, Annex G, pages G-11 through G-16 for helpful definitions.

<sup>8</sup> See same pages listed in FN1.

comment.

**Partnership and Coordination Issues:**

18. What have been the major issues and challenges of initiating partnerships in support of the project?
19. What have been the major challenges and opportunities, if any, of implementing coordination with the host country governments, particularly Ministers of Education and Labor, as well as other government agencies active in addressing relating children's issues?
20. What have been the major challenges and opportunities, if any, of implementing coordination with the ILO/IPEC in host countries?
21. What have been some of the challenges and issues in working with local NGOs and other local organizations?

**Management and Budget Issues:**

22. What are the management strengths of this project?
23. What are management areas, including technical and financial, could be improved?
24. If the grantee did not have legal presence in the target countries prior to award, what impact has that have on project implementation?
25. If the grantee did have legal presence and programs in the countries prior to award, what impact has that have on project implementation?
26. How successful has the project been in leveraging non-project resources?

**Sustainability and Impact:**

27. What steps have been taken so far to promote sustainability and continuation of education strategies for combating child labor beyond the life of the project?
28. Was the project's initial strategy for sustainability adequate and appropriate?
29. What appears to be the project's impact to date, if any, on a) individual beneficiaries (children, parents, teachers, etc.), b) partner organizations (local NGOs, community groups, schools, etc.), and c) host government and regional policy structures in terms of system-wide change on education and child labor issues?
30. What lessons could be learned to date in terms of the project's accomplishments and weaknesses in terms of sustainability of interventions?

**Country Specific Issues:**

See above, questions 10-17.

### III. Deliverables/Outputs of the Evaluation:

In carrying out an evaluation of the *Primero Aprendo* project, the contractor/evaluator will conduct pre-evaluation consultations and meetings with USDOL and the project implementer (both at CARE headquarters and in Managua, Nicaragua); conduct the evaluation; and write a draft and final evaluation report.

The contractor will carry out the following activities as part of this evaluation:

- a. Conduct briefing meetings at the beginning of the process with ICLP staff.
- b. Review documents related to the project being evaluated.
- c. Conduct a planning meeting with all members of the evaluation team to develop evaluation design methodology.
- d. Conduct interviews with key staff at the headquarters and other locations (by telephone) of the grantee and implementing organizations and with key field staff.
- e. Conduct the evaluation in country with key informants, including children served by the project, government authorities, community groups, teachers, and parents to collect findings that answer the general questions provided in the evaluation terms of reference.
- f. Plan and conduct a stakeholders' meeting to present initial findings at the end of the evaluation.
- g. Summarize findings of the stakeholders meeting to insert into evaluation report.
- h. Write a draft evaluation report.
- i. Conduct debriefing of findings of draft evaluation report with field staff of the implementing organization.
- j. Conduct debriefing of findings of draft evaluation report with ICLP.
- k. Write a draft evaluation report and submit directly and solely to Macro. The draft will then be provided by Macro to ICLP and other key stakeholders for written comment.
- l. Produce reports in English and Spanish that are reviewed by both members of the evaluation team.
- m. Produce a final evaluation report based on comments received and noting in a separate summary document the evaluator's response to each comment.

An evaluation report in the format prescribed by ILAB/ICLP, which includes at minimum the following sections, is to be submitted to ILAB/ICLP:

- a. Executive Summary
- b. Evaluation Objectives
- c. Methodology of Evaluation
- d. Findings
- e. Lessons Learned and Good Practices
- f. Conclusions
- g. Recommendations

#### IV. Evaluation Methodology:

While the substantive content of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the report shall be determined by the independent evaluator, the report is subject to final approval by ILAB/ICLP in terms of whether or not the report meets the conditions of the TOR. A first draft is

due no later than 10 working days after return from an evaluation mission, and a final draft is due no later than 10 working days after receipt of comments from ILAB/ICLP. All reports including drafts will be written in English.

The following is the proposed evaluation methodology. While the evaluation team can propose changes in the methodology, any such changes should be discussed with and approved by ILAB/ICLP provided that the indicated range of questions is addressed, the purpose maintained and the expected outputs produced at the required quality. The evaluation will include a desk review, an evaluation mission to CARE project sites, consultations with stakeholders (including ILAB/ICLP, policy makers at the regional, national, and municipal levels, CARE (HQ, and field) project staff, CRS staff, Dev Tech staff, district officials, teachers, parents, and community leaders, and with beneficiaries (including teachers, parents, and children) and direct observation of project activities, if possible.

#### **Timetable and Workplan:**

The total duration of the evaluation process including submission of the final report should be 39 days for Evaluator 1 and 37 days for Evaluator 2. The tentative timetable is as follows:

<b>Tasks</b>	<b>Work Days</b>	<b>Dates</b>
Desk Review – Evaluators 1 & 2	<b>4 days</b>	<b>Sept. 12 - 15</b>
Evaluator 1 & 2 arrive in Managua from home base	<b>1</b>	<b>Sept. 17</b>
Evaluator 1 & 2 joint meetings in Managua	<b>2</b>	<b>Sept. 18 -20</b>
<b>Evaluator 1</b> - visit rural site locations for Nicaragua evaluation	<b>9</b>	<b>Sept. 21 - 28</b>
Stakeholders’ meeting (Nicaragua)	<b>1</b>	<b>Sept. 29</b>
Travel to Honduras	<b>1</b>	<b>Sept. 30</b>
Honduras evaluation	<b>5</b>	<b>Oct. 2 - 5</b>
Stakeholders’ meeting (Honduras)	<b>1</b>	<b>Oct. 6</b>
Return to Nicaragua (to coordinate findings with Evaluator 2)	<b>1</b>	<b>Oct. 7</b>
Regional stakeholders’ meeting	<b>1</b>	<b>Oct. 11</b>

Review findings and coordinate on report writing	<b>1</b>	<b>Oct. 12</b>
Depart Nicaragua for home base	<b>1</b>	<b>Oct. 13</b>
Post-field report writing	<b>16</b>	
<b>Evaluator 2</b> – travel to Guatemala	<b>1</b>	<b>Sept. 21</b>
Guatemala evaluation (rural locations)	<b>9</b>	<b>Sept. 22 - 29</b>
Stakeholders’ meeting Guatemala	<b>1</b>	<b>Oct. 2</b>
Travel to Costa Rica	<b>1</b>	<b>Oct. 3</b>
Costa Rica evaluation (including one rural location)	<b>3</b>	<b>Oct. 4 - 5</b>
Stakeholders’ meeting Costa Rica	<b>1</b>	<b>Oct. 6</b>
Return to Nicaragua to coordinate findings with Evaluator 1	<b>1</b>	<b>Oct. 7</b>
Regional stakeholders’ meeting	<b>1</b>	<b>Oct. 11</b>
Review findings and coordinate report writing	<b>1</b>	<b>Oct. 12</b>
Depart Nicaragua for home base	<b>1</b>	<b>Oct. 13</b>
Post-field report writing	<b>15</b>	

### **Sources of Information and Consultations/meetings**

- Project document
- Cooperative Agreement
- Solicitation of Grant Applications (under which Cooperative Agreement was awarded)
- Management Procedures and Guidelines
- Progress reports
- Technical reports
- PMP
- Workplan
- Project files, as appropriate (baseline survey, follow up survey to baseline research, tools developed during project implementation, and other background documents)

### **Consultations and Meetings: (tentative list to be provided by CARE staff)**

- CARE and subcontractor staff engaged in the *Primero Aprendo* Project
- ILAB/ICLP Staff
- Government Ministry officials
- Project Stakeholders
- Beneficiaries

See Appendix for more details of proposed methodology from the evaluators.

## V. Inputs

Macro will provide all logistical and administrative support for their staff and sub-contractors, including travel arrangements (*e.g.*, plane and hotel reservations, purchasing plane tickets, providing *per diem*) and all materials (*e.g.*, access to computers, telecommunications, office supplies) needed to provide all deliverables. Macro will also be responsible for providing the management and technical oversight necessary to ensure consistency of methods and technical standards.

Macro will coordinate and organize the logistics surrounding the meetings and field visits in Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala and Honduras, including transport to field sites and the logistics surrounding the stakeholder workshops.

In cooperation with ICLP and Macro, CARE will schedule and finalize meetings and support the travel costs of participants involved in stakeholders conferences, focus groups, and individual interviews. CARE will also cover the costs of the stakeholder meetings. Macro should contact CARE's Project Director, Nick Mills (direct phone: 505-278-0018, email: [nick.mills@ca.care.org](mailto:nick.mills@ca.care.org)) to discuss logistical issues.

## **APPENDIX USDOL EDUCATION INITIATIVE**

The evaluation of an USDOL EI project should strive to:

- 1) Help individual organizations identify areas of good performance and areas where project implementation can be improved:
- 2) Assist ICLP to learn more about what is or is not working in terms of the overall conceptualization and design of Education Initiative projects within the broad ICLP technical cooperation program framework; and
- 3) Assess the degree to which objectives relevant to the country-specific situation they address have been achieved.

Need to assess the following components of the project:

- 1) Relevance;
- 2) Effectiveness;
- 3) Efficiency; and
- 4) Sustainability

Assess the following:

- 1) Determine if the project is adhering to its workplan both in terms of meeting scheduled milestones and achieving results as defined in the Logical Framework and Project Monitoring Plan;
- 2) Level of performance in each target country thus far;
- 3) Identify if/how the project has incorporated the sustainability of project efforts into project implementation; and
- 4) Provide recommendations on steps the project may take to improve implementation during the remaining project period.

Methodology will include the following procedures:

- 1) Document review;
- 2) Interviews with project implementation staff;
- 3) Interviews with key actors at regional, national and local levels;
- 4) Visit pilot projects
- 5) Conduct focus groups.

**Note:** The evaluation will address the issues and use questions that have been outlined in the Terms of Reference; however, the questions that follow will also be included.

**Project Design/Implementation Issues:**

1. For projects of this nature to achieve their objectives, an enabling environment must be created across different levels, what is the project's strategy? What has been achieved and what is hoped to be achieved before the end of the project in the following areas:

- a. development of a strong political will, both national and regional, and a commitment toward education policy reform that addresses the root causes of child labor and will ensure the sustainability of the impact of this project;
- b. linkages in action across and between the provision of quality education and the alleviation of poverty;
- c. innovative partnerships with governments, international organizations and financial institutions, and civil society to promote and ensure child labor sensitive development interventions; and
- d. social mobilization and campaigns highlighting the problem and mobilizing national, regional and international development partners.

2. What have been important landmarks in each country, and at the regional level, since the inception of the project, to eliminate child labor and ensure that at-risk and working children gain access to education?

- a. legal context;
- b. enforcement and monitoring;
- c. child labor policies and programs;
- d. education policy;
- e. community based safety nets;
- f. governance.

3. What national and regional policy approaches are being designed to address the following child labor issues:

- a. educational access and quality – content and the quality of teaching, inability of poor households to afford the direct costs of education.
- b. reduction of opportunity costs of education for poor households.
- c. protect the rights of children through policy reform, enforcement and awareness raising and social mobilization of the negative consequences of child labor.

4. Has the project been designed to integrate and coordinate its interventions into regional/national strategies? If so, how is this progressing?

5. What is the project strategy vis-à-vis the (a) creation of enabling regional and national environments; and (b) targeted interventions?
  - a. Enabling environment strategy – what is it? What are its components?
  - b. Targeted interventions – what are they? What do they include?
6. The project strategy focuses on “targeted interventions” in the areas of awareness, partnerships and coordination, and model projects and “best practices” in its first phase; followed by the development of an “enabling environment” through advocacy and policy development in the second phase. Is this “sequential approach” as effective and efficient as a joint “enabling environment” and “targeted intervention” approach? If so, why?

### **Partnership and Coordination Issues:**

1. How has the planning and consultative process been implemented at the regional and national levels? What have been the steps of the planning and consultative process with national governments, regional bodies and civil society organizations? What have the various entities contributed to the development of the project design/strategy and/or implementation of activities?
2. What is the “model” for cooperation/collaboration between agencies/organizations/institutions that has been developed? What results have been produced by this “model”? What is the basis for the conceptualization of the “model”?
3. What role has regional bodies, government ministries, and the like played in the determination of the developmental objective, immediate objectives and project strategies? What is the degree of “ownership” that regional, national, provincial and/or district governments/entities feel toward the successful implementation of the project?
4. How has the project assisted national governments, regional entities and social partners, i.e., NGOs, employer organizations, to design and implement short and long-term strategic interventions for the protection, prevention and withdrawal of working children from child labor situations?
5. What type of interventions has been used for community mobilization? Have local communities and community-based organizations been involved in the analysis of the causes of child labor and the development of solutions to the problems?
6. Careful and systematic planning at the community level involving children, parents, teachers, employers and community leaders is critical to ensure the successful withdrawal of children from work, what has been the project’s strategy in this area?
7. Are national governments and/or regional bodies in a position to formally adopt the policies that have been revised or formulated?

8. The success of the project hinges on its capacity to develop strong linkages and collaboration with relevant activities, on-going or planned, under government or donor-funded projects, and filling in gaps directly where the project may have the comparative advantage, has this been done? To what extent?

9. A broad partnership of national and international development partners will be required to reach the ambitious goals of the respective governments, what is the project doing to make this happen

### **Management and Budget Issues:**

1. At each national level, has a national child labor coordination committee been established for the purpose of the overall co-ordination of child labor activities? If not, in the long-run, who will assume the overall coordination of child labor issues once the project comes to an end? Also, at the regional level, what body has been established to assume such responsibilities at the regional level?

2. If such a body exists, and will assume responsibility for child labor issues upon the completion of the project, does it currently participate in meetings that involve strategizing, planning, review and advising on the implementation of the project?

3. What entities are being developed at the provincial or community levels to implement all of the coordination activities?

### **Sustainability and Impact**

1. What is the degree of “ownership” that is felt toward the project and its activities by national governments, regional bodies, etc.?

2. The key to sustaining the impact of policy interventions is the degree to which operational programs and schemes are able to use the policy framework, what is begin done to ensure that program design and implementation are, and will be, supported by policy?

3. What institutional capacity building activities are being implemented to develop the capacity of regional and/or national child labor coordination committees so that education and child labor initiatives will continue to be supported upon completion of the project?

4. The key to sustainability for targeted interventions is their integration into district and community level structures and process in the context of governance and decentralization. Does the project strategy address this by involving communities in the: (a) creation of community and district level knowledge bases; (b) identification and targeting of at-risk families; (c) mobilization of communities for monitoring purposes; and (d) strengthening the capacity of the community and district structures to integrate child labor issues in their planning of social services and development?